Proceedings from the International, Multi-lingual Colloquium,
"Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality"
Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canada
April 24-25, 2008

Actes du Colloque
International Multi-langue,
"Le Canada et les Amériques: Perspectives Pluri-disciplinaires sur la Transculturalité"

Actas del Coloquio Internacional Multilingue,
"El Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas Multidisciplinarias sobre la Transculturalidad"

Editor/Éditrice/Editora: Asef Benessaïah
Proceedings from the International, Multilingual Colloquium, 'Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality', Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canada, April 24-25, 2008

Actes du Colloque International Multilingue, 'Le Canada et les Amériques: Perspectives Pluridisciplinaires sur la Transculturalité', Collège Universitaire Glendon, Université York, Toronto, Canada, 24-25 avril 2008

Actas del Coloquio Internacional Multilingüe, 'El Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas Multidisciplinarias sobre la Transculturabilidad', Glendon College, York University, Toronto, Canada, 24-25 de abril del 2008

Editors: Afef Benessaiah
Publishers: Margarita Pelciano
Editorial assistant: Francesco Di Rosa
Book layout: Alicia Brown
Proof readers: Martin Boyd, Esmé Collaver, / Margarita Pelciano
Supervision of printing and production: Sergio Glaessmann
Communications Officer: Glendon: Marika Kemény
Cover design by Digital Photography 'Ill eun no' by graphic designer Sol Mass, www. adman.com

Published by:
ANTARUS Publishing House of Spanish Culture,
York University, Toronto, October, 2008

Printed and bound at York University Printing Services

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means without written permission from the publisher, except in case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews.


ANTARUS Publishing House of Spanish Culture
Glendon College, York University
York Hall 122 – 2295 Bayview Ave.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M4N 3M5

This publication was made possible with the support of Heritage Canada/Patrimoine Canada, Multiculturalism and International Affairs.

In addition, we would like to thank the Secrétariat aux Affaires Intergouvernementales du Québec (SAIC), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Agence universitaire francophone (AUF), York University (Division of the Vice-President Research & Innovation-VPRI), and the Office of the Principal of Glendon College at York University for their respective financial support to the conference 'Canada and the Americas: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality' (Toronto, April 24-25 2008) of which this publication is the most direct result.
INTRODUCTION


"Canada and the American Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Transculturality", an international multi-lingual colloquium held at the Glendon campus of York University in Toronto, April 24 and 25, 2008. The Conference offered an inter-disciplinary intellectual space aimed at favoring knowledge transfers, research collaboration, and the strengthening of inter-institutional partnerships between Canadian researchers, and scholars from Latin America and the Caribbean. The conference offered five consecutive panels in four languages (simultaneously translated), where the following key themes were explored: 'Towards a Transcultural Indigeneity'; 'Experiences of Translation across the Americas'; 'Interculturality, Transculturality and Globalization'; 'Migration in Global Cities'; and 'Hemispheric Imaginaries: creolité, mestizaje, americanidad or hybridity'.

— Afef Benaissaich, Editor


"Le Canada et les Amériques: perspectives pluri-disciplinaires sur la transculturalité", un colloque international multi-langue qui a eu lieu au campus Glendon de l'Université York à Toronto les 24 et 25 avril 2008. La Conférence a offert un espace intellectuel interdisciplinaire favorisant les transferts de savoirs, la collaboration en recherche et la consolidation de partenariats inter-institutionnels entre chercheurs canadiens, et de l'Amérique latine et les Caraïbes. La conférence a offert cinq tables rondes consacrées en quatre langues (traduction simultanée), au sein desquelles les thèmes suivants ont été explorés: 'Vers une indigénéité transculturelle'; 'Expériences de traduction dans les Amériques'; 'Interculturalité, transculturalité et mondialisation'; 'Migrations et cités globales'; 'Imaginaires hémisphériques: créolité, mestizaje, americanidad ou hybridité'.

— Afef Benaissaich, éditrice


"El Canadá y las Américas: Perspectivas multidisciplinarias sobre la transculturabilidad", un congreso internacional multilingüe que se llevó a cabo en el campus de Glendon de la Universidad York (Toronto), en abril 24-25 del 2008. El evento ofreció un espacio intelectual inter-disciplinario propio para el intercambio de saberes, la colaboración con miras a la investigación y el fortalecimiento inter-institucional entre académicos del Canadá y América Latina y el Caribe. Se presentaron ponencias en cuatro idiomas organizadas temáticamente en cinco sesiones redondas que abordaron lo siguiente (traducción simultánea): 'Hacia una indígenidad transcultural'; 'Experiencias de traducción en las Américas'; 'Interculturalidad, transculturalidad y mondialización'; 'Migraciones en ciudades globales'; 'Imaginarios hemisféricos: creolité, mestizaje, americanidad o híbrido'.

— Afef Benaissaich, Editora
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .................................................. 1
Afef Benessaiah: "Understanding Transculturality" ................. 1

PANEL I: Multiculturalism, Interculturality, Transculturality .... 15
Marie-Chantel Messier: "Appartenances de droit et sociabilité en contexte pluriculturel" ........... 17
Pascal Gin: "Transitions épistémologiques de la transculturation" .... 25
Daniel Moro: "On Interculturality, Multiculturalism, Transculturality.
Hybridity and their Environments" ................................ 33
Lisa Rhodes: "Mixed Blessings: Mixed-race Canadians and their
Growing Impact on Canadian Society" .............................. 37
Nicola van Schendel: "Construction des identités américanophiles
et potentialité transculturelle: le cas du Québec" ................. 43

PANEL II: Hemispheric Imaginaries: "Croisement/Hemispheric/Américanoid" or Hybridiety .......... 51
Patrick Imbert: "Imaginaires hémisphériques transculturels" ........ 55
Zita Berzins: "Imaginaires collectifs et mobilités (trans)culturelles" ... 62
Winfred Stiermetz and Sarah Phillips Castelli: "Canada and its American Transnational Navigations of the Literary" ... 69
Diana Taylor: "Powerful Performative: From America to "Hemispheric Studies" .... 79
Dietmar Thom: "Transculturality and the Colonial Legacy of Popular Belief in Northeastern Argentina" ....... 85

PANEL III: Migration in Global Cities ........... 93
Brigida Cairns: "Dia Do Cigano: Immigration and Identity
among the Gypsies of Southeastern Brazil, 1936-2007" ... 95
Pablo Fernandez, Adjuntas Rouse and Rodrigo Salinas: "El caso de tres Cogioni de vivencias social en Santiago de Chile" .... 103
Armando Silva "Dimitrion estética de los imaginarios urbanos" .... 111

PANEL IV: Experiences of Translation Across the Americas .... 115
Lyne Fils-Aimé: "Translation in Canada and Cuba:
Some Thoughts on Derrida and Vrettos" ... 117
Lilian DePaula: "Translation in Dialogues with Indigenous Educatioires in Brazil" ... 125
Joshua M. Price: "Hidden Assumptions: Ethics and Politics of Bilingual Dictionaries
in the Colonization of the Americas during the 16th and 17th Centuries" ... 131
Patricia Wilson: "La constelación del sur: la traducción
durante el auge Editorial en la Argentina" ........ 143

Biographies ..................................................... 149
UNDERSTANDING TRANSCULTURALITY

Afef Bensattah, International Studies,
Glendon College at York University

ABSTRACT: As a general introduction to the material presented in these conference proceedings, the main goal of the chapter is to discuss transculturality* and locate it as a term within a multidisciplinary field of studies, concerned with cultural interactions under globalization. It first distinguishes transculturality from other terms used as closest equivalents by some of the authors in this book, such as transculturation*, multiculturalism or interculturality*. Transculturality is mostly argued as a separate concept designating cultural processes and identity formations not exactly captured by these alternate terms. Second, the chapter provides a typology of approaches that use transculturality in three main perspectives: essentialism, universalism or relativism, and pluralism. Transculturality is posited as a relational view of cultural encounters, one that allows the multiple cultural ascriptions experienced by individuals and communities in highly diverse societies to be described and understood.*

Transculturality captures some of the living traits of cultural change caused by globalization in highly diverse contemporary societies. Most importantly, it offers a conceptual landscape for viewing cultures as relational webs and flows of significance in active interaction with one another (expanding on Geertz). As a provisional definition to be further explored and discussed in the coming pages, transculturality suggests departing from traditional, yet very current views on "cultures" as fixed frames, or separate islands neatly distinguished and differentiated from one another. Instead, it invites, as suggested by Welsh, to view the entanglement and blurry lines between presumably distinct cultures, and carefully examines the "global situation" (following Tsing) of individuals, communities and societies, increasingly drawing from enlarged, tremendously pluralized cultural repertoires, in their everyday life practice and imaginary.

In this perspective, the present publication explores transculturality in the Americas, a continental space in which cultural diversity of South to North seems a constant imaginary and where mobile reconfigurations from the quotidian encounter with difference are tangible prac-

* As discussed in this chapter and subsequent chapters in this volume, the significance of this term is often debated and its usage in the present context does not necessarily coincide with its primary adoption. Subsequent uses of this term will no longer be in boldface.
UNDERSTANDING TRANSCULTURATITY

Transculturalization was coined by Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s, and expanded more recently by post-colonialist anthropologists, sociologists and commentators (Pratt, Buzz & Benson Millington) in order to study the processes of resistance and appropriation occurring between culturally differentiated populations, coming into close contact with one another since colonial times. Central to the term is the power configuration in which these contacts occur, where non-dominant groups engage in the process of appropriating and transforming to their own ends - some of the cultural practices and representations of the dominant group; a process not seen as exclusively one-sided. Transculturalization - as studied in its origins - was also mostly set in national locations where culturally dominant and non-dominant groups closely reflected the socio-economic divisions in the studied society: such as the case of the Cuban slavery economy that included populations of African, indigenous and European origins.

Although powerful in essence, the term did not come into use until more recently as social and cultural anthropologists have revived it to study cultural change in post-colonial societies. In particular, Marie-Louise Pauw has adapted transculturalization to a world-system reading, re-contextualizing national locations in systems of power relations between centers and peripheries. Hence, she views transculturalization as "how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from the materials transmitted to them by a dominant metropolitan culture" (6); she also invites researchers to view their practice as transcultural interaction, in which they can come to be perceived and remade by research subjects as personalizing some of the traits of the dominant metropolitan culture. In practice, the re-appropriation of the term by contemporary fieldworkers invites - among other things - an auto-ethnography, a self-reflexive and critical disposition for the researcher to place herself or himself in the larger, world-systemic power relations configuration to be studied locally.

Central to the term transculturalization, and its uses, is the focus on inequalities in power distribution and configuration, where culturally dominant and subordinate groups are clearly identified. For instance, in the case of the Americas, transculturalization as a concept could apply analyze the historically sedimented interaction between socio-economically and culturally marginalized groups - such as indigenous or Afro-descendant communities - and the dominant groups of European ancestry. A second core feature of the transculturalization literature is the national setting in which most studies are conducted: transculturalization is largely studied in small localities such as neighborhoods or villages from given nations, in which a strong sense of "national culture" is seen as the dominant referent from which the resistance and appropriation strategies and practices of local actors are examined.

Based on these core features, the historical sedimentation of power relations between subordinate and dominant groups and national units of analysis, the concept of transculturalization differs from its geopolitical predecessor, placing itself within a transnational literature concerned instead, with cultural mobilities under globalization or, more simply with how people increasingly draw from multiple cultural repertoires in their everyday life. In other terms, transculturalization is not a substitute for, or a better word than transculturation: it is simply a concept that designates different processes, which are not adequately captured by the latter.

Other concepts often discussed in close relation to transculturalization include multiculturalism and interculturality. The first term is more often used to characterize specific public policies for managing culturally diverse societies of the industrial world; leading case studies generally include Canada, New Zealand, the United States and the United Kingdom (comprehensive discussions about multicultural policies in the world are provided by UNESCO, Issues 1 and 2 and Inglis). In the Canadian context, multiculturalism has been in use since the 1970s, both as a descriptive term for qualifying cultural diversity in the population, and as a set of programmatic
measures conducted by the State to support and encourage such diversity with a non-assimilationist approach. The "mosaic" or "melting-pot" conception of multiculturalism includes immigration, labor market, education, public media policies, and regulations as well as support for the arts and culture, thus sustaining the general view that respect for cultural pluralism is central to Canadian culture (see Canadian Multiculturalism Act). Hence, multiculturalism is often linked to the idea of a "rich mosaic" of cultures and communities that perceive themselves as culturally distinct collectivities, expressing the need to define and to cultivate their right to difference (as proposed by David Mace in this book). Defined in this way, the term applies to cases of historical struggles led by national minorities or marginalized collectivities on the basis of their distinct linguistic, ethnic, racial or religious sense of shared identity.

What is key to the term of interculturalism is also the premise that the cultures in interaction are discursively systems of their own, historically held separate – as is the case in North American Indian reserves – as distinguished from one another along racial, linguistic or ethnic lines, as tends to be the case for Latin American indigenous people. Interculturalism, in short, reinforces the idea of culture boundaries and difference, emphasizing distinctions between cultures, more than highlighting "power", commonalities or connections across cultures in close contact. This vision can be highlighted as residing on a particular understanding of culture inherited from classical anthropological which posits cultures as largely independent "systems" or "entities" of norms, rules, significations and practices proper to specific collectivities, with isolated communities of native or tribal peoples of the developing Third World countries being the preferred case studies (a leading proponent of this view is Bronisław Malinowski). While only partially adequate (because absolute isolation of human settlement is exceptional), the conventional understanding of culture viewed as discrete units is even more untenable when it comes to studying modern societies in which cultural diversity means more permanent contact, exchanges, and transformations of a more complex nature than interculturality seems to suggest with its greater focus on what is distinct and separated.

While divisions between cultures could be argued as a parallel vision not always supported by historical or more current sociological evidence, the right to difference expressed by interculturalism is perhaps less challengeable – at least in the context of the Americas, where respect for diversity, rather than assimilation, has come to be considered one of the preferred models of State intervention. Conversely, interculturalism can be primarily assessed as a very useful concept for precise situations involving questions of the right to difference – or social struggles expressing such right to difference – in given communities and collectivities.

Central to the concept of interculturalism is the view that cultures are not exclusive entities, yet their relationship can often be of conflictive in nature. This view is not only partial; it can also lead to viewing the world as a dangerous place where latent conflict and more open violence are inevitable. By comparison, transculturalism clearly differs in that, first, it does not necessarily hold cultural distinct entities under an "us/them" dichotomy and second, it does not presume conflict or tension as such as relationality, connectedness and understandings that can be potentially shared across cultures and viewed as increasingly proximate. Transculturalism does not presume that conflict across cultures does not exist, but rather stresses a more dialogical view where conflict and cooperation, difference and similarities, misunderstandings and understandings are viewed as part of the fuller picture of cultural interactions. The two concepts designate different cultural processes, but more importantly, perhaps, they also reflect theoretical premises about how culture is defined which can be considered widely divergent. To use a visual metaphor, they offer distinct lenses of varying contrast and degree from which the world is observed: a binary view, emphasizing opposites and differences; and a kaleidoscopic view, encompassing the whole, as well as connectedness and sharedness. To continue with the metaphor of the camera
Understanding Transculturality

Central to the use of the notion of transculturality is the heightened inter-disciplinary landscape in which many authors inscribe their work. Far from constituting a concept exclusive to one particular field of study, it is a flexible concept used for a range of purposes by a large array of disciplines, including psychiatry, nursing, business and management studies, urban design, visual arts, ethnomusicology, international relations, anthropology, literature, philosophy and sociology among the leading disciplines. Also striking is the fact that the term is used merely as a synonym by the authors who employ it: for many authors, it is a neologism that could be easily substituted by "cross-cultural", while for others it designates rather distinct processes, not only cutting across cultures but going beyond them, based on the premise that it is difficult to sharply isolate cultures from one another. Below I will present a typology of existing approaches using the term transculturality which will help clarify its use and usefulness in current research, proposing to regroup the vast body of literature on this concept under the three tendential poles of essentialism, relativism/paradigmatic, and mobilization.

Essentialism

A first group of authors follows Caribbean writer Patrick Chamoiseau, for whom transculturality is the passage of cultural contents in time and space, and cultural currents themselves are composed of the "correlation and interpretation of distinct imaginaries." This conception can be deemed nullly essentialistic in that, in spite of highlighting the constitutive plurality of the cultural currents examined ("inter-retro-action"), it also speaks of a cohesive force by using the term "current", which suggests strength and directionality (one is in the current, or out of the current, but rarely in-between). It tends to designate the coherence of certain traits, beliefs, and practices that transcend geography or history, as is the case for diasporic populations, or populations of any given ethnic ancestry that define themselves under the shared umbrella of a collective identity that is not territorially ascribed. Chamoiseau applies this concept to the idea of 'créolité' (creoleness), a cultural identity mostly associated with Francophone West Indies of African ancestry and which may sometimes be ascribed to communities around the world of African origins established through slavery and having developed a hybrid expression of their own within the idiom and practice of the dominant culture. Chamoiseau specifically illustrates this process through his fascination with the wealth of local vernacular language and expressions in the French of Martinique. Expressive of a collective imaginary, he explores these ideas in several novels, including Désir, and in essays of a more sociological nature such as "Éloge de la créolité." Chamoiseau's conception of...
transcultural as the ability of a given number of cultural identities to transcend time or space—however plural they may be—is particular to the field in that it invites examination of the specificity or distinctiveness of these composite identities in order to better understand their capacity for cohering and sustaining themselves. A similar perspective can be associated with scholars studying cultural identities which are not territorially bounded. Leading examples in the literature from the Americas are those studies using terms such as *indigen* or *Afrocentric* and perhaps some of the literature on African Americans, all of which tend to propose the existence of core traits that constitute the essence of a given collective. In this particular use, and by extension, transculturality refers to the varying degrees of capacity of given cultures viewed as cohesive and distinctive frameworks of meanings and practices, spanning across time, migrating across space, and adapting themselves to new contexts, yet retaining their distinctive traits. Although the term may not be perfect because authenticity and culturalChemists often characterize these cultural identities as hybrid or highly relational in origin but currently stable, the perspective can be viewed as *essentialism*.

Relativism and Universalism

A second body of literature views transculturality as the possibility for identifying clusters of significance and practices that are similar across cultures. It is also identified as the need for cautiously understanding the differences between cultures when studying a given phenomenon in a multicultural context. The first tendency can be viewed as universalist, while the second builds more on the premises of relativism. Both orientations have much to do with interdisciplinary dialogues involving anthropology and cultural studies, along with studies in health, education, and social work. For the most part they also discuss transculturality as what cuts across cultures and can be considered alike.

In particular, scholars in psychiatry and psychology have pioneered the use of the term transculturality with the establishment of a "transcultural psychiatry" movement in the 1950s, studying the currency of mental diseases across cultures, and concerning themselves with discussions on whether certain core diseases have existed in all cultures, or if illnesses and their symptoms have tended to be culturally specific (see the excellent historiography provided by Bains as well as the discussions of Western-centric in the development of psychology by Pewe-Novak). The second tendency has sought to establish the universal nature of diseases as biological entities, regardless of their symptoms—mostly accepted as varying across cultures—which could help develop an international chart of mental diseases useful to health professionals around the world. The second tendency has emphasized the culturally specific nature of mental illness, in which cultures are viewed as shaping illness but also as controlling the specific manner in which we conceive of it, name it, and treat it (Pewe-Novak; Bains).

Beyond the conceptual debate, both tendencies have opened the way for culturally sensitizing mental, and more generally, physical health practice to non-Western understanding of illness (deciding either to define treatments that are universally valid—regardless of cultural contexts or variations in symptoms—or to examine and appropriately treat transgressions with greater attention to patients' cultural or ethnic background, without applying Western medical concepts to non-Western cultures and experiences with illness). The second tendency, in particular, has been influential in English and American psychiatry—as well as in general health practices—with the establishment of transcultural health societies and institutions sensitive to addressing race biases in the treatment of ethnic and racial minorities for instance, researchers showed that members of ethnic minorities were disproportionately "psychiatrized" and diagnosed as schizophrenic. A non-racist, transcultural approach specifically addressed the fact that universalizing conceptions of illness could distort the diagnosis and treatment of illnesses that could be otherwise understood and treated if practitioners were more competent in understanding their patients' cultural backgrounds, including race, language and spiritual/religious beliefs.

UNDERSTANDING TRANSCULTURALITY

Beyond the fascinating debates and conversations regarding human health and illness from a culturally sensitive perspective—and whether symptoms, diagnoses and treatments could be universal—highly relativistic—transcultural psychiatry and health studies opened up a series of further interesting directions for the study of transculturalities. Among these is the current research in international relations on the possibilities of articulating "transcultural understandings" in global justice frameworks (Claret); the research in cultural psychology on the possibilities of establishing *a metalinguistic expressive common knowledge* or meaning across cultures (research in business studies on developing cultural skills and strategies allowing workers and businesses to perform and competently interact within multicultural environments, including foreign culture environments (Shaham and Harris); research on urban studies and design on landscape public spaces that are adaptable to a diversity of cultural practices and contexts (Chang); and research in social work and popular education on transcultural mediation with immigrant families and communities in local landscapes (Lamour). However, this line of literature is similar to its predecessors in psychiatric studies, in which transculturality is generally understood as a close equivalent to *cross-cultural*, which is often limited to identifying core practices and understandings that potentially cut across cultures in their universalistic tendencies, or practices advocating culturally sensitive social or professional interventions, while trying to greater account diversity and difference across groups and communities in their relativistic orientations. As compared to the first essentialist perspective emphasizing transculturality as the passage or the crystallization of cultural currents, this second universal/relativist perspective offers a second possible lens on transculturality as the potential and limitations of identifying phenomena cutting across cultures.

Pluralism

The third body of literature on transculturality can be termed pluralism. It views transculturality not as much as the passage of given cultural currents or as identifying whether some core understandings and practices cut across cultures as a fluid, transformative process stemming from cultural diversity in which people and communities no longer perceive themselves as single culture. Central to this third perspective on transculturality is the view that cultures are not entirely stable or always clearly distinct from one another, and where, as an alternative to the "dualizing" and "one-dimensional" view suggested by a set of cultural identities, there is a particular emphasis on the *transformability* of a culture to its entrenched and related forms.

The Africanist, Jacky Bouja defines transculturality as "la reconnaissance réciproque d'un univers de significations partagées" (the reciprocal recognition of a universe of shared meanings) (29). This conception not only points towards the possibility of cross-cultural understandings—as does the universalistic view on transculturality—but more importantly, it questions the separateness of cultures that were socially and historically constructed as different for the sake of nation-building and the legitimation of colonial rule. Bouja shows, through a study of Malian Dogon—often held in anthropological literature as an archetype of traditional African culture—that Dogon were never isolated from neighboring communities and groups, whether because of trade, alliances or confrontation, and that the very sense of "tradition" was developed in constant interaction with surrounding groups and communities. This view, in short, mainly emphasizes the relatedness of cultures, arguing the inadequacy of viewing them as isolated islands, having developed autonomous systems of signification posed as frontiers between the "us" and the "them."

Relatedness is at the center of transculturality viewed under a pluralistic lens. Using the term within a global contemporary framework, philosopher Wolfgang Welsh defines transculturality as the *Consequence of the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures [...], which also interpenetrate or emerge from one another" (197). It furthermore designates the entanglement with new realities and the validation of new hybridized workspaces [which] usually have
the consequence of unsettling hitherto stable or monolithic identities (101). This is central to this perspective is the idea that transculturality allows for the illustration of these composite identities and social interactions that complicate the view of culture as monolithic and set within clear boundaries. In addition, the character of contemporaneity of transculturality is emphasized. It is a fluid and dialogical process of cultural construction – particularly more visible in the current era of globalization – where individuals, groups and communities from differing cultural backgrounds are in more continuous contact in their daily transactions.

Also important to this view, is the idea similarly developed by Welsh from a post-modern stance, or a cosmopolitan liberalist position such that expressed in Hannerz and Bielec, that in current time, individuals and communities are developing the competence to continuously shift between cultural flows and worlds and compose a new sense of self that is not monocularly ascribed. This can be the case for second and third generation immigrants such as Chinese in the United States – who do not recognize themselves as entirely Mexican or as entirely Americans, where no more than a bypeth exists between the two, or in the case of Peruvians of Chinese ancestry who feel at ease with both Andean and Asian heritage; communities living in border zones between countries, or mixed linguistic communities such as Franco-Ontarians in Canada. The preceding are examples of individuals living in global locations continuously exposed to a variety of cultures; and, more generally, people who have come to develop a practical or imaginary sense of home-ness in the world and world-ness at home, who can no longer entirely recognize themselves in a single national or ethnic culture (as specifically explored by Patrick Imbrie in this volume).

Similarly, transculturality can also be used to qualify productive production in music, literature, food, film, clothing, and, more generally, in works of art that compose the bringing together of materials from differing cultures to create new shapes, genres and discourses which seek not only to remain significant for the cultures which they are referencing, but also to produce new meanings that can no longer be examined in view of their original components. The music industry (and perhaps even more particularly the world music industry) offers numerous examples of cultural borrowings re-inscribed in a variety of cultural contexts as well as in genres, instruments, techniques, rhythmic and melodic exchanges and transactions between musicians (see some of the excellent work in ethnomusicology on world music as transcultural practices in Steingasse or the material of the online journal Transcultural Music Review). Their production is not so much a cosmopolitan worldensible aggregating sounds from diversified cultural origins as a creative project to rearrange sound materials from around the world, and to develop new musical genres constructed through the cultivation of difference. The example can be applied to viewing transculturality in sociological terms. The term does not descriptively apply to individuals and communities circulating what Etienne Balibar calls “instrumentalized cultures and selecting what fits from each, as much as it designates a disposition and an awareness of rearranging one’s sense of cultural identity, playing with an expanded repertoire that is neither nationally nor ethnically bounded. In this sense, transculturality is an open-ended project of fluid contrivance more than a stable state with fixed attributes, it is a continuous journey with no predictable destination other than that of openness to others.

A few words of conclusion are needed before leaving the reader to explore this book. In this chapter, I have used two main metaphors to illustrate transculturality: a visual one, playing with the degrees of contrast that can be applied to a photograph (the lower the contrast, the higher the detail and gradation in color and form), and a musical one, illustrating the term as a creative project – going beyond the mere assembly of different genres or instruments – to articulate a new musical form of its own logic. I could have continued with biological examples including a discussion on how we live in the survival of the fittest — which is cooperative and most adaptable — against the theory of natural selection of the fittest by any means, as competing theories on the survival of species in the animal and vegetal world. In all examples and metaphors lies the core idea that cultures need to be interpretively viewed as interrelated webs of significance in which individuals can increasingly circulate to make sense of their experiences (following Geertz’s invitation to redefine culture as human creation and culture as open-ended “webs” rather than autonomous “species”). In all metaphors is also the idea that contrast and conflict are only one view of cultural interaction, and a partial view at that, unless one were to subscribe to Hobbesian perspectives, for which human social life is endless struggle, violence and fear.

Musical, visual or biological metaphors also help in explaining transculturality – in terms that make sense for the non-specialist – precisely because it is a cultural form no longer reserved for the elite or the privileged, of accessing the world and leisurely traveling the globe and choosing whether or not to adopt, adapt or reject. The term suggests that, under global contemporaneity one no longer needs to travel great distances to experience the world and bring home what pleases while leaving behind what does not. The world can be experienced at home in most of its diversity, without traveling much further than a few blocks, without moving too far away from one’s computer, sound system, library or kitchen. Such diversity at home and in the world can continue to be viewed as the fragile cohabitation of surviving cultural species, and cultural encounters with others as sources of anxiety, tension, or conflict. To be sure, transculturality does not necessarily exclude the possibilities of entanglement and conflict. Rather, it introduces elements of desire and seduction along with these more familiar forms of interaction — including the desire to live in and understand otherness — seduction by such otherness where beyond difference what is sought is to establish a sense of understanding which could reduce the distance with what is perceived as different.

NOTES

1 The more current are the media and popular debates raised around the “Consultation Commission on Accommodation Policies Related to Cultural Differences” (also known as the Bouchard-Taylor Consultation). While welcomed by some for many reasons, among which is the opening of a public space to speak about the “identity matrix” in Quebec, for others, it talk about tactics in the population or immigration policies has been perceived as biased, and the interministerial Commission – which heard testimony throughout Quebec for public hearings between 2007 and 2008 — was also the object of heightened criticism, some of it being because it failed to produce popular expressions of tolerance and (gave) way to the public debate, and because the Commission’s final report remained too political to bring the debate further than the recognition of existing “national issues.”

2 “Transcultural Music Review”.

3 The expression was used in an interview with Patrick Chamaillé conducted in the late 1990s by Michael Parenteau, Transmigrare de la diversité available at the website “Fonctionnaire’s literary site dedicated to the promotion of novels of cultures”

4 This view of transculturality as that which transcends cultural frontiers largely corresponds to the definitions provided under the UNESCO, as in Canada.

5 McGill University pioneered this movement with the establishment in 1996 of a project on Transcultural Research in Mental Health Problems, with its scholarly journal, Transcultural Psychiatry. The university still builds a special program in the Faculty of Medicine called the Social and Transcultural Psychiatry Program. See http://www.mcgill.ca/eapgs10/ (last accessed May 1, 2008)

6 Pew-ner-Apelgren highlights, for instance, that depression is experienced and understood differently in Black Africa and the Western World. Perv for the former it tends to be associate with a punishment complex, for the latter, with a sense of vulnerability. A similar argument is made by Predelle de la Tour describing a project of transcultural mediation with African immigrants families established in Parisian suburbs, whose mental hardships tended to be interpreted as signs of persecution from powerful forces.

7 See, for instance, the ambitious project under the Transcultural International Institute created in 1988 at Bologna University by sociologist Umberto Eco and anthropologist Alan LeFlohich, together with African and Chinese scholars, the chief concern of these projects is to develop "recontextualized anthropology" exploring familiar (Western
European models of knowledge in order to better take into account other knowledge models and to narrow those models into terms that are valid for the cultures of the observed and the observer. For the institut, a transcultural approach is to progressively establish a meta-language - a storehouse corpus of words and key-concepts - in order to better understand confusables and misconstruedishes arising from intercultural exchanges. The institution is particularly interested in the cultural relations between Europeans and non-Europeans to answer the growing demand for new knowledge about cultures. Here the term transcultural seems not only a solution for cross-cultural, but also is suggestive of the core differences between the cultures studied (European/Non-European). Heur, one of the institution goals is to establish transcultural methodologies understood as universal - which would cut across intercultural situations or relations. See also transcultural.pdf (last accessed June 15, 2008)

WORKS CITED