On the Theory of a Transcultural Francophony.
The Concept of Wolfgang Welsch
and its Didactic Interest

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ABSTRACT

What distinguishes transculturality and how can it be analysed as an academic discourse? Starting with Wolfgang Welsch's definition of "transculturality", this article first reproduces the historical evolution of the term from Fernando Ortiz to post- and transmodernism. This application-oriented reflection on characteristics of transculturality clarifies how Transcultural Studies have developed from a critical consideration of multi- and especially intercultural processes, and which position they have taken in current theoretical debates. Their didactic relevance is demonstrated in the example of Romance Language Studies which, by definition, are a transcultural model par excellence. As shown by the case-study of Franco-Romance Studies in German-speaking areas, it appears to be overdue, in terms of curriculum, to have an extensive critical look at the world-wide transcultural project of international Francophony as well as at the paradigm of hybrid exchange processes between heterogeneous cultures.

KEYWORDS

transculturality, francophony, transcultural studies, Germany

1. Current status of transculturality

The most compelling metaphor for what we currently receive as "transculturality" (Welsch 1999) was coined in Germany and introduced around the turn of the millennium by the philosopher Wolfgang Welsch who held a chair of Philosophy at Jena University until 2012 (cf. Carroll 2006). Welsch speaks of a "network", a "web" or, as a more cultural variation, a "design by network" – *Netzwerk-Design* – which he envisages in order to distance himself from Johann Gottfried Herder's (1744-1803) depictions of single cultures as autonomous 'islands' or fictitious "balls", "bowls" or, as we might say today, "bubbles":

> Plurality, in its traditional sense of individual cultures is dwindling [...]. Instead, a different kind of plurality of different life-styles grows, according to a transcultural blueprint. [...] With this come differentiations [...], yet no longer concerning geographic or national specifications, but rather in the realm of cultural exchange. In this regard, they have only just become truly cultural [...]. The new cultural formations exceed the reaches of traditional concepts, thus creating new relationships. This also results in the world, in its entirety, adopting a design by network rather than a design by separation. (Welsch 2002)

Through this "design by network" metaphor, Welsch visualises the "new structure [...] of *current cultures*" (Welsch 2003, 19; italics by W.W.). According to Welsch these cultures "intertwine" and "strongly characterise through their syncrisis" (ibid., 19). There is "absolutely nothing foreign remaining" within them (ibid., 21), to the extent that that which is "original" and that which is foreign have grown indistinguishable (ibid., 22). "We are cultural mongrels": by this Welsch means that man today is "determined by several backgrounds and cultural relationships" (ibid., 23). Welsch's concept of transculturality in societies in which more and more individuals have personal contact and which provide a vast range of (sub-) cultural discourses, that also take place via the internet (in the "web"), holds "a dense and integrative [...] understanding of culture" (ibid., 27) as its ultimate aim. As the cultural challenge of the twenty-first century, Welsch presents his vision as "the weaving of new, transcultural networks". He believes it to be necessary that, in future, the "threads" for this "web" should come from the transcultural formations that already exist today (ibid., 38).

Welsch adapts the term of transculturality because his intention is to flag up "the hybridisation of existing cultures, i.e. their mutual levels of integration amongst the population and the circulation of merchandise and information" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 11). In order to outline the reflections set out in the title regarding the *Theory of a Transcultural Francophony* from the point of view of German methodology, I will first summarise the history of the concepts, characteristics and scientific contextualisation of the term *transculturality*. In doing so I will enable not only the subsequent underlining of their didactical relevance within the field of academia – especially concerning Franco-Romance Studies – but also a focus on *Francophony* as a socio-cultural exemplification, and also as a most promising field of scientific application.

1.1. History of the concept

As is made clear by Welsch and his recipients, the term transculturality is not a new one. It was used for the first time – as "transculturation" (in the English translation: the Spanish original uses the term of "transculturación") – in 1940 by the Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz, in his sociological study *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el Azúcar* (translated into English in 1947 as *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*), and subsequently reappeared in various academic disciplines in the 1990s. Karl-Heinz Flechsig stresses the early, pedagogical differentiation between "multicultural" and "transcultural" in cosmopolitan education already addressed by Traugott Schöfthaler in 1984 (Flechsig 2003, 57). Eckerth/Wendt report that the first usage of the term was in 1990 in second-language-acquisition pedagogy with reference to the use of "'transcultural learning' to enhance 'intercultural learning'" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 12). According to his own statements, Welsch started to have recourse to the transcultural theorem in 1992 (cf. Welsch 2003, 13) with the intent of methodologically establishing and consolidating his philosophical approach. He takes over the dynamic connotation of Ortiz's previously labelled "transculturation" (Ortiz 1970, 97) through the detachment of its sociological context and generalising it more in terms of the philosophical category of transculturality, thus having it serve his own interests in epistemological knowledge and cultural theory.

As a matter of fact, transculturality itself is the result of a systematic further development of the concepts of multiculturalism, and particularly of interculturality as a symptom of "a changing perception of culture" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 9). Already in the 1960s Britain's conducting of Cultural Studies (at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham) had set the path for the terms to grow more and more autonomous by the 1980s with Stuart Hall's creation of his notion of *Culturalism*, a term which dissociated the concept of culture from Structuralism. While the intellectual emancipation from the Centre in Birmingham and the growth in influence of Cultural Studies as a field of study are still being fulfilled in many places, the scientific literature, has moved in a contrary direction: it has already developed to a scale where one may struggle to learn and acknowledge it in its entirety.

When we consider that, since the nineteenth century, it has been in the nature of the development of the humanities to form and elaborate their theoretical foundations by an ongoing examination of other paradigms, the emergence of a multitude of possibilities for scientific analysis consequently results from the pluralisation of the cultural concept that exists today. Generally speaking, the recent revival of the term transculturality, which goes back to the Ortiz's sociological analyses, expresses the need to escape this level of characterisation through metaphors. This is a method which has been used with equal success to characterise the various theorems of prominent, post-war thinkers, as well as those of the "holy trinity" (Rössner 2003, 104) – Forsdick and Murphy speak of a "triumvirate" (Forsdick/Murphy 2003, 7) – Said (with his metaphorical concept of the Orient), Bhabha (Third Space) and Spivak (Subalternal Talk). As a counter movement, it now seems that the keyword status of transculturality in academia has given rise to the use of a more prosaic formula which is both neutral and scientific in its nature. The intention of such a formula is to consolidate and trace links between

disparate, very complex positions in Cultural Studies and to classify them under a more distant, seemingly more objective, all-encompassing umbrella term.

Thus, Wolfgang Welsch reverts to the term "transculturality" in order to render it functional as a technical term in the fields of Philosophy and Cultural Studies. It should not be considered contradictory that his manner of explanation was quite metaphorical (resorting to the idea of a network or a web), with its usage intended to offer clarity of representation and understanding. Rather, this method was used in order to indicate a much more empirical outlook on the term. Welsch himself prefers to pay "special attention to pragmatic approaches" (Welsch 2003, 29) by tending to break away from the hermeneutic "benefits of understanding" to make the realities of life much more prominent and eventually deduce that therefore "an adjustment of the envisioned mindfulness is needed" in order "to help move away from matters of understanding and to approach the common, pragmatic points" (ibid., 30).

His initiative appears promising. The fact that, parallel to Welsch's work, the great variety of application-modes and multilateral, pluricentric extensions of meaning regarding the terms "transcultural" and "transculturality" is moving forward in scientific practise is proven through a whole range of "transcultural" publications predominantly of Germanophone (even if published in English language or multilingual) but more recently also of Anglophone provenance. Among them we find, firstly, proposals for terminological neologisms (e.g. "trans-difference", cf. Allolio-Näcke et al. 2004; or "translocation", cf. Hühn 2010) and, secondly, a focus on translation and linguistics initiated by Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (*La république mondiale des lettres*, 1999). This book did not yet refer to the term "transculturality", but envisioned it and led to a transcultural opening in French linguistics (Erfurt 2005) or elsewhere and English second-language-acquisition pedagogy (Doff/Schulze-Engler 2011).

Thirdly, we can detect an emphasis on themes such as the gender perspective (Febel et al. 2007, Gippert et al. 2008) and the transcultural peace discourse, often in combination with didactical relevance (Datta 2005, Göhlich et al. 2006, Darowska et al. 2010, Arata Takeda 2012) and reflects, in short, the basic idea of Moisés Naím's title *The end of power* (2013). Last but not least, specific subjects of interest emerge among the foci of these publications, such as interdisciplinarity, communication issues and media discourse (Lezzi et al. 2003, Hepp 2006, Grell et al. 2010, Wrana et al. 2014), or Europe-related migration discourses (one of the first being Brinker-Gabler 1997, followed by Müller-Funk/Wagner 2005, Bekers et al. 2009, Kimmich/Schahadat 2012). These are often related, in their turn, to the transcultural peace discourse. Publications dedicated to stock-taking either on the level of primary (Lenz/Gratke 2006) and secondary literature (Langenohl et al. 2015), or on the level of exploring social and cultural change (as with Delrez/Marsden 2004, or Brosius/Wenzlhuemer 2011) with a wide thematic range, aim to cover aspects that go far beyond diverse theoretical approaches, continental borders and academic disciplines. In this manner, the phenomenological reflection on the topography of the Other, once initiated by Julia Kristeva in France (*Etrangers à nous-mêmes*, 1988) and then picked up by Bernhard Wadenfels in Germany (*Topographie des Fremden*, 1997), leads from the notion of "foreign" implications or of an ethnological "outland" to the rediscovery of Ortiz's approach in Welsch's ground-breaking theory of transculturality and directly to his aim to "approach the common, pragmatic points".

1.2. Characteristics

What appears crucial here is that Welsch concludes that contemporary methods of exchange possess a predominantly *cultural* quality. Still more specifically: in his own words, they have "only just become truly cultural" (Welsch 2002). Since they replaced the original, geographic or national theoretical models, the differences, when conceived as cultural, seem to have become much more distinguishable and nameable. Naturally, the differences are not the concern of Transcultural Studies. Instead, the focus, from a socio-philosophical point of view, is on identities as a hybrid construction that have developed through discourses, and on culture itself as a discourse: "It is only through discourse and through a common action that transcultural realities can form" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 14). However, if we now presume that culture is associated with discourse, one could reasonably deduce conversely that it is also possible to define transculturality through discourse analysis. Before I analyse the scientific discourse on Francophony[1] as an example in the second chapter of this article, it is necessary to examine the previously mentioned term "transculturality" in a slightly more critical and detailed manner.

Whilst the concept of interculturality is based on the premise of firm entities that are the theoretical premise for any exchange "between the cultures", the transcultural paradigm differs in that its aim is the precise opposite: to break down the entities, to shift beyond borders, leaving them behind through introducing variation into limitations or converting them to release their potential. At the forefront of his thoughts regarding transculturality, Welsch heads his thoughts regarding transculturality with a quote from Wittgenstein which alerts us to the fact that with regard of "the future of the world" one has to consider that the world does not "walk in a straight line but in a sinuous manner, constantly changing direction" (Welsch 2003, 13). Such continuous changes of direction, which have no doubt raised Welsch's profile when considering the programme of contemporary, cultural thought, generate a typical momentum for transculturality that directly produces those spontaneous "new relationships" of which Welsch's transcultural network is composed.

Such formation of international relationships implies that "cultures are not objectively given but rather constructed by specific discursive contexts" (Hu 2000, 135). As a result, we are left with the vast ambiguity and unpredictability of transculturality, due to the fact that it can arise from any conceivable discursive context. It is a new structure that waits to be detected, in light of the fact that in our heads "the idea of 'cultures as monads' [...] [is] not entirely obsolete and [...] has kept at least a few traces" (Breidbach 2003, 222).

Transculturality exists far beyond the implication of a cultural complexity; rather it postulates the commensurability of all cultures, both in a collective and an individual sense. This is precisely what generates transcultural constructivism and cultural transversality from what was originally a simple hierarchy.

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1 In order to stress the linguistic and transcultural potential of this notion, and even if often not translated in English, but – sometimes inconsistently – referred to as „francophonie", „La Francophonie", „Francophonia" or „Francophone space", in this article, the term „Francophony" with a capital „F" refers to all French-speaking areas, groups and cultures, i.e. to the various communities of populations and people world-wide who speak French for communication and/or in their daily lives. It is not intended as a synonym of the International Organisation of La Francophonie and doesn't entail any implication of language policy. For further details cf. chapter 2.2.

Due to the world's ever-increasing levels of internationalisation, migration and cross-media networking, there is a constant requirement for a mutual "viability ('negotiation') of the meanings of social and linguistic interaction" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 13). This applies to all individuals on both a societal and a personal level. In this way, new interdependent "transcultural forms of life-styles" (Welsch 2002) are moulded: in the eyes of Wolfgang Welsch these have replaced the individual and traditional cultures that previously existed. The varied life-style of individuals today in terms of how they organise their daily routine, their behaviour as architects of their own biographies, their self-invention and their methods of social interaction are, for Welsch, an object of research and the embodiment of a new understanding of culture labelled under the term of transculturality.

1.3. Critique

Welsch's concept of transculturality seeks to eliminate the obscurity produced by the vague contents of intercultural dialogue. The dynamically connoted prefix *trans* represents, in this context, an orientation *beyond* the kind of dichotomies suggested by the static, black and white intercultural division of "friends and enemies", which fortifies the idea of the Self and the Other. Transculturality reveals this pattern of thought as problematic and tries to transcend it through attempts to disprove representations of stable identities which for a long time have had their legitimacy doubted, and to refute the homogeneity and coherence of cultures and genders by proposing, instead, a topographical design of "in between" spaces.

However important the elaboration of the impact of culture on human coexistence in modern societies may be, Welsch tends to propose a contradicting view regarding this factor. Welsch's theory of a networking world is a hybridity-model *per se*. His claim for clarity is by definition incompatible with the architecture of his intellectual construction. Welsch brings greater precision and evidence solely to the morphology of the cultural relativity and to the taxonomy of the research object (leading essentially to its enlargement), and yet he eschews such precision when it comes to give parameters for how to act methodically. Testing the methods of analyses remains therefore a challenge for the future, and its importance and applicability can be proven only through scientific practice.

We see the authority of this critique when we consider the examples that Welsch employs in order to advance his theory. In an attempt to demonstrate that history has always been transcultural, he cites a long extract from the theatrical success *The Devil's General* (*Des Teufels General*, 1946) by Carl Zuckmayer, which "magnificently [describes] the history of transculturality" (Welsch 2003, 25). However, he leaves unexplained the difference between the two criteria of classification – "transcultural" versus "hybrid" – when referring to European history. Moreover, despite Welsch's references to literature in the form of Zuckmayer's text, he does not once raise the question of the relevance of literature in any realm of Transcultural Studies. Instead, Welsch interrupts his reasoning by citing Albert Dürer's travel behaviour as an example of the "historical transculturality" which – according to Welsch – permeates the European history of art and culture (ibid., 26). The fact that the question of a possible transcultural literature or a possible transculturality of literature as well as a literary analysis based on the transcultural paradigm remains unanswered in his thesis, clearly signifies that much more intense and systematic dedication is required, going far beyond Welsch's groundwork – particularly concerning future discourse analysis of Francophony and its transculturality.

1.4. Common points

The difficult relationship between history and transculturality derives from Welsch's particularly pronounced reference to the present. His questions are always concerned with "current" culture or the explicit consideration of "our cultures" (Welsch 2003, 19) or even "a present and future constitution of cultures" (ibid., 24). Here, Welsch is claiming that the diagnosis of transculturality refers solely "to a transition, namely a phase of transition. It is a temporary diagnosis" (ibid., 24). By doing this, he reduces the fundamental, philosophical concepts of space and time to a human measure. The consequences of transculturality are unpredictable not only in terms of the future but also in terms of historicity and the conditions of historiography for our era. To what extent are global rhythms and tempos still periodically existent in accelerated postmodernity or, for that matter, the alleged "transmodernity"? Will they eventually collapse or alternatively, will they become ascertainable on a free base?

Welsch puts forward the idea of a homeland that one can choose individually. In its postmodern sense, transgression means the questioning of borders, norms and models of order. In Welsch's definition of transculturality, "homeland" must support individual decisions regarding multiple belonging as a homeland in the traditional space-related sense has become obsolete.

> It is becoming the case that more and more individuals choose their belonging themselves. People can find their true homeland far from that in which they were born. Ubi bene, ibi patria, in classical Latin. Or, in the words of Horkheimer and Adorno: "Homeland is a state of having escaped" […]. Hence "homeland" is not an naturally inherent or immutable categorisation but rather a cultural and human choice. (Welsch 2003, 40; italics by W.W.)

This conclusion is neither necessarily nor exclusively the result of transculturality; it could have just as easily derived from intercultural principles. In spite of how unsatisfactory interculturality may be from a conceptual point of view, there are some essential points of contact between transculturality and interculturality. One of these is the concept of identity, in the context of the image of a homeland, as the representation of the core of every individual and of every culture. The literary theorist Reinhold Görling associates spatial relations with heterotopic or "fluid identities" (Görling 1997, 12). When one considers the terminological ambivalence of interculturality and transculturality, it is rather evident that one must more extensively examine the "identity" aspect to a much greater level than has hitherto been achieved. Moreover, the question of identity – as the category of the homeland to which Welsch refers – has broad political implications. Postcolonial research considers these implications when examining other problem areas such as violence, power, sovereignty and resistance (cf. Reichardt 2005, id. 2016), or issues relating to the Diaspora, or all processes involved with the difficult balance between periphery and centre.

On the level of theory, it must not be forgotten that the new Transcultural Studies of the 1990s came only as a result of the debates about intercultural processes which involved many advanced, widespread and substantial ideas, particularly regarding didactics and second language acquisition but also philosophy and sociology (cf. Schulze-Engler 2002, 68 ff.; Thum/Keller 1998, 36/37). In this connection, it is likely that a significant body of theory has been adopted from intercultural research. Whilst the concept of cultures as spheres has become obsolete, academic methods and disciplines can still be visualized as well-defined circles. The research areas of interculturality and hybridity – as well

as the fields of Postcolonial and Transcultural Studies – seem to be forming a crossover that provides very promising perspectives especially for Linguistics but also for Literary and Cultural Studies. The use of these hybrid intersection areas is one of the most urgent research desiderata – particularly with regard to French Studies, as we will now see – with the aim of adequately exploring not only the complex issue of identity but also that of difference.

2. Didactic interest: Francophony

Relying on the thesis that culture can be considered a discourse and that transculturality might be demonstrated by analysing that discourse, I would like to now show how transculturality can provide Romance Studies in general – and, equally, Francophony in particular – with a potentially key concept via "concretely experienced processes of an advanced social differentiation" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 18). The scientific discourse on Francophony is meant to paradigmatically elucidate the extent to which this field of research is able to change the course of academic reference – and, moreover, how it links different disciplines together and prepares multiple modes of applicability for them.

Literary Studies, Technical Didactics and Linguistics all define the term "discourse" rather differently. In principle – if we apply the term "discourse" as coined by Michel Foucault in his main work *The discourse of language* (*L'ordre du discours*, 1971) – transcultural research trends within the world of Francophony are concerned with contamination processes, reciprocal, transversal and multilateral dynamics in exchanges, as well as the introduction of new discourses. The characteristic nature of the current academic discourse generally results from theoretical hypotheses about postcolonialism, hybridity and intercultural encounters, and the crossovers and/or confrontations that originate, in their basic theoretic approach, from the theory of difference (Ferdinand de Saussure, Jacques Derrida) and from poststructuralism (particularly that of Jacques-Marie Emile Lacan).

However within Francophony, both the fictional discourse (that is to say the literary and cultural practice-related discourse etc.) and the non-fictional, transcultural (academic and culturally critical) discourse are still under construction. Romance Studies in German language only recently began to intensively discuss postcolonialism. Moreover, they are barely revisiting the transcultural paradigm at a level worth publishing. Conversely, English Studies have achieved both of these feats. As we shall see, this is in flagrant contradiction to the various trends that have already been seen in the field of Francophony since the 1930s and that can retrospectively be considered as innovative. However, until now they have not made a lasting influence on German-speaking scientific discourse.

In other words, the discussion of Franco-Romance transculturality is only now taking shape within this country. It arrives lagging behind cultural practice which has been spawning specific phenomenologies of this type internationally for a long time. This means that the theoretical transmissibility and quantitative and qualitative applicability of Anglo-American research to the postcolonialism and transculturality that preceded them should be on firm ground. The didactic relevance of the transmission of a transcultural Francophony is clear: not only in schools, but also on the level of teacher training and university courses. Without an academic application and propagation of transcultural parameters, Romance Studies not only fail to satisfy their own, theoretical, French and Francophone history, but also run the risk of being eclipsed by other humanities disciplines or of being captured by English Studies of transcultural Francophony (cf. Forsdick/Murphy 2003).

It is right in terms of the European reconciliation process that the German production of knowledge – based on research results that are gained from French and Francophone Studies that are rooted in many disciplines – should be growing increasingly important.

If culture is to be understood through discourse on the one hand, then, on the other hand – according to the transcultural theory – we must consider the existence of complex discourses on culture. Within these discourses, one encounters all philologies, but especially ethnology – or the "new critical anthropology", as Christopher L. Miller (Miller 1998, 254) so lucidly put it. Certainly, literature that is specifically transcultural in this sense does not exist. However, transcultural criteria can be used when analysing a literary text – e.g. as horizontal categories – with the aim of producing new knowledge and forms of reading. In the course of the Linguistic Turn and paradigm shift which Bachmann-Medick has declared to be an interdisciplinary programme and labelled, metaphorically, *Culture as Text* (*Kultur als Text*) in reference to Clifford Geertz (Bachmann-Medick 1998), transcultural Francophony must take its place at the interdisciplinary intersection of Literary Studies with other academic disciplines, such as Technical Didactics, Linguistics, Anthropology and Ethnology, Sociology, Political Science, Translation Studies, Historical Science, Area Studies, Media Studies, and Cultural Studies.

At this point, we realise that strengthened academic cooperation must continue to be pursued, and must be regarded as an urgent necessity. Additionally, we must continue to consider it indispensable, given the current state of research in Cultural Studies, to create an interdisciplinary network. In general, both university workaday life and the outlook of German research are still very far from establishing such a transcultural contact zone. A symptom of this deficit appears in the form of an explicitly Franco-Romance, theoretical demand, still absent in German-speaking areas: it should aim at the programmatic combination of study results that correspond to the state of knowledge of adjoining disciplines, e.g. of Postcolonial Studies that are applied within the (leading) English Studies and Romance Studies (who have only recently grown interested in Postcolonial Studies). This article aims to help remedy this deficiency, although, as you will see, different strategies have recently emerged which give hope for a more successful campaign of publication. In principle, the route to a transcultural Francophony does not involve structural change (in the management of universities, for instance) or a mandatory curricular implementation of the transcultural paradigm. Transcultural theory requires a rather more developed and widespread process of acceptance, combined with a "rethinking" mode. According to Plöger, it should progress "from 'thinking in models' to 'reflecting on models'" (Plöger 1999, 25) – both from the "upper" (i.e. from inside and outside of science) and the "lower" (i.e. from the side of the citizens, starting from a social base).

2.1. Practice of Romance Studies

A look at the state of German research on transcultural conceptions of Francophony shows that many, scattered articles exist in published form, concerned with travel literature, French Technical Didactics and specific cultural identities. Overall, however, only a few, rather general pieces of work on Francophony indicate the profile of transcultural publications in recent years. Even then, they do so quite broadly. Specifically, these are those pieces that try to strengthen the discourse of decentralisation and deterritorialisation.

In principle, their interdisciplinary perspective is meant to ensure the exceeding and deliberate overcoming of borders both on a nation-state-related and on a national-culture-related level. This "glocal" location between globalism and pluralism, transnationality and multinationalism has released itself from the traditional model of national cultures. It tries to elaborate upon the concept of deterritorialisation already outlined by Deleuze/Parnet, both theoretically and aesthetically, in the 1970s (Deleuze/Parnet 1977). Birgit Mersmann strengthens this in a meditation on the absorption of foreign cultural elements in an attempt to create a prognosis for current culture:

> The ability to assimilate foreign cultures into our own depends on the extent to which a national culture may represent a world culture and, thus, be present on a global scale. By recognising the heterogeneities within a nation, which are often considered an indication of a high and rich culture, the national cultural model is revealed as a construction of identity, and the transnational model of hybrid culture is promoted to a model for a modern and realistic world culture. (Mersmann 2002)

In universities, more than virtually any other place, societal mechanisms of culture, identity, way of life and individualities concerning historical discourse and meta-historical reflection on transculturality all depend on language. This can be distorted transculturally, such as in the case of the Francophony project.

2.2. Francophony

The so-called Francophony refers back to two different concepts. The first meaning – usually written with a small letter: francophonie – could be defined as a political-cultural concept, whilst the second – usually written with a capital letter: Francophonie – started to emerge since the 1960s and has been operating, since 1997/1998, officially as IOF (International Organisation of La Francophonie), as an institution active on an international level. As Francophony, within its first meaning (i.e. as "francophonie"), is currently growing more and more integrated into Romance Studies programmes in universities, it is particularly suited to the realisation of a transcultural way of acting, seeing that Francophony is a heterogeneous construction *par excellence*. It brings together outlines of linguistic, cultural, political, institutional, economic and scientific ideas. Like Romance Studies, which is superior on an academic level, Francophony brings a variety of disparate cultures together under one roof (whether institutional or simply conceptual). This transcultural effort represents a commitment to maintain the "rhetoric of individual cultures" (Welsch 2002) and opposes global homogenisation. Ingo Kolboom notes that Francophony continues "as a new type of international society" (Kolboom/Mann 2002, 466) a "strategy of global cultural pluralism" (ibid., 467), whilst referring to

> [...] the new constellations [...] and threats, those which have been discussed more and more since the end of the 20th century given the cultural-linguistic and techno-ecological consequences of globalisation under English influences, especially in the Francophone world but also quite recently in the Hispanophone and Portuguese world [...]. (Kolboom/Mann 2002, 467)

It would be fatal to succumb, vis-a-vis such remarks, to the danger of confronting and falling back into a cultural-national controversy. However, an unprejudiced, transcultural view sheds light on a comparative perspective of university faculty tolerance. It implies cultural statelessness and a ubiquity in the Görling *Heterotopia* sense (as a presentation of non-localised wealth) and does not see

Francophony as a new attempt at supremacy, but simply as one program like many others. It is only able to more precisely judge transcultural matters through general interactions that are either compared or contrasted with other similar projects and collective situations. Comparative Studies and Transcultural Studies should not be mutually exclusive, as long as Comparative Studies does not apply an out-dated concept of culture. Instead, these studies should promote awareness of related systems, and of the leap made by monolingualism (just as much philological as cultural) in multilingualism and translingualism.

2.3. Thought leaders

A spirit of modernity taking shape in such conditions, in the manner in which Welsch views transculturality, is the result of decisive experiences, long-term evolutionary processes and both mental and social modes of questioning. The importance for transculturality of the balance of force relations in the hegemonial field of power has already been mentioned. Before the postcolonial thinkers Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak were able to lay the decisive foundations for transculturality, French-speaking intellectuals were particularly involved with the preparation of this theoretical terrain.

It is not possible to discuss all of this here in full. However, the purposes, intentions and projects involved in a Francophony, include Said's groundbreaking study, *Orientalism* (1978) which was preceded by a critical analysis of Michel Foucault's power theorem. This text already includes many crucial components of transculturality, and questions the historical and societal settings of power in a primarily socio-philosophical perspective. Said's literary analysis of the negotiation of power and supremacy leads to a further reflection on the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, which is a particular theme of Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (*Surveiller et punir*, 1975), and characterises the term "Oriental" discourse in the postcolonialist sense.

On the other hand, it is clear that Said's transfer of political policies to the realm of literature – which even today can be seen to evoke transculturality – was not in any case exclusively a Foucault-related-debate. As John McLeod (McLeod 2003) convincingly demonstrates, Frantz Fanon, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan also played a very important role as thinkers on this matter. Moreover, Albert Memmi, Jean-Paul Sartre, Aimé Césaire, Glissant and Léopold Sédar Senghor all belong to the category of Francophone and French founders of postcolonial thought: they all anticipated and guided Anglo-American Postcolonial Studies which include references to Foucault's reflections on governmentality.

2.4. Language

Following this evolutionary logic, transculturality seems to side less with a paradigmatic shift than with a change in perspective. Just as postcolonialism managed to escape the conceptual blockade that was colonialism and was therefore a prerequisite for the continuation of theoretical discourse, the explanatory approach of transculturality can contribute to the practical conception of globalisation for the entire world. If Foucault still assumed that discourses of differences were essentially the same as discourses of power (cf. Foucault 1978), then transculturality would in fact stand for the opposite

of all of all Samuel P. Huntingdon's claims (along with his postulate of a *Clash of Civilizations*) and instead – after the events of 11th September 2001 and all terroristic attacks that followed more than ever – would stand for a concept of peace.

The result is the conciliatory, dialogic structure of transculturality that, as its primary duty, tries to rename the obsolete 'Other' in many different ways. To this end, transculturality must find a language that can be understood in order to preserve culture and its enrichment beyond that of simple, nationalistic models. It must be stressed that this process should not involve the dominance of one or the submission of another specific language (e.g. French) or group of languages (e.g. that of the non-European French). Transculturality is rather based on cultural polyvalence and performance: "In the place of the former cultures – that we always present as a kind of *national or regional culture* – now appear different *forms of life*" (Welsch 1994, 147; italics by Wolfgang Welsch).

Whilst Welsch formulates the position in favour of differentiation rather than dissimilarity, and for diversity (cultural diversity, i.e. *diversité des cultures*) rather than difference (difference of cultures, i.e. *différance des cultures*), Gisèle Holtzer brings back anthropological terms such as "miscegenation", "mixing" (Holtzer 2003, 33) and "multi-affiliations" (ibid.: 38) to list manifestations of transcultural hybridisation. She does this using the example of French Rap adaptations or changes (owing to an Arabic and Asian influence) in French culinary habits (cf. ibid., 33). Thus, transculturality will also lead to an expansion not only of linguistic concepts but of concepts of languages – just like French Studies or Francophone culture, it is beginning to be defined more and more by Francophony as well. As a final example, reference can be made to so-called *Franglais*, a dialectical fusion of equally measures of American English and Canadian French found in the east Canadian province of New Brunswick and the northern US State of Maine, where it has developed over more than a century and is still spoken today. In truth, all languages constantly borrow elements from one another and have always done so. For transculturality, there is no such thing as a "pure" language or, for that matter, a "pure" culture.

3. Conclusion: transcultural Francophony

The same applies on a theoretical level: Postcolonial Studies are, as McLeod demonstrates, the result of a fruitful exchange between the Anglophone and Francophone ways of thinking – they are hence equally *Franglaises* (McLeod 2003, 201). Consequently, transculturality must work using a combination of methods in the fields of linguistics, culture and scientific theory in order to create a new relationship between the specific and the general. The desire for cultural openness and a new, polycentric location that it demands is, however, as Eckerth/Wendt put it, neither a protection against "ideological weakness" (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 11) nor a way of ensuring that the "cultural invariance" (ibid.: 11) of Welsch's thoughts guarantees a mutual understanding in the form of "universally transcultural structures" such as "birth, initiation and death" (or the so-called "McDonaldisation"), as both civil and biological shared points (ibid., 18; note 2).

Phenomena such as internal colonisation find themselves opposing individual auto-localisation in a global culture or *culture mondiale* (Eckerth/Wendt 2003b, 15). According to the principle of negotiation in transculturality debates, it involves putting the paradigm of internationalism of cultural phenomena – which in itself tends to promote a *mondialisation*, i.e. globalisation or, in other words, something more like a universalism inspired by the West – in relation to either localisation (*localisation*) or

a particularism (*particularisme*) – that is to say to a stronger regionalisation (cf. Holtzer 2003, 31). Given the origin of Francophone cultures opposing any centralism, in-depth studies of the concepts, such as the new Francophony and its universality (*universalité*), have a liberating future – something that Gabrielle Parker highlights as evidence. During the completion of postmodern decolonization, even Paris, bastion of French language and culture, is once again a possibile location for the Francophone Academy i.e. *Académie francophone* (cf. Parker 2003, 100). The hope is that decentralization will lead to a new localisation of transcultural reciprocity, by means of a return to genuine values under modified conditions.

I have tried to show the importance of developing new models of how to reread texts in order to grasp manifestations of transculturality – especially for the theory and research of Literary Studies and the French language. The intellectual project and the daily-life-related practice of Francophony in cultural, literary and linguistic articulation show how fundamental thoughts can be transferred, realised and animated. Transculturality does not by any means (despite its link to empiricism) imply a betrayal of the humanities or even a methodical arbitrariness and randomness. Instead, it continues to demand of us constant, critical work, demanding that we consider and realise adequate differentiations, to consciously and deliberately build contexts as well as to transmit historical memory in order to maintain the diversification of the world – it is anti-global but in a global way.

Notes

1. This essay was first published in a German literary journal in 2006 (Dagmar Reichardt: "Zur Theorie einer transkulturellen Frankophonie", in *PhiN. Philologie im Netz*, 38/2006, edited by Paul Gevaudan, Hiltrud Lautenbach, Peter Schneck and Dietrich Scholler, October 15, 2006, pp. 32-51; online on web.fu-berlin.de: http://web.fu-berlin.de/phin/phin38/p38t2.htm) and then online in French in 2011 (Dagmar Reichardt: "La Francophonie du Nord au Sud: Manifestations du transculturel dans la littérature et le théâtre francophones", in *Relief. Revue électronique de littérature française*, vol. 5, 2/2011, online on www.revue-relief.org). The present English version was translated by Harry Jervis and slightly revised and updated in July 2016.

2. All footnotes have been removed from the English version and can be found on the German publication's website: www.phin.de.

3. All non-English quotes in this essay i.e. all translations from originally German texts authored by somebody else than Dagmar Reichardt, were translated by Harry Jervis (particularly, among others, the more extensive quotes taken from: Welsch 2002, 2003, and Mersmann 2002).

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