



# Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化

Journal of Global Cultural Studies

7 | 2012

Transcultural Identity and Circulation of Imaginaries

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## Editorial

[English Version]

Florent VILLARD

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### Édition électronique

URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/transtexts/478>

DOI : [10.4000/transtexts.478](https://doi.org/10.4000/transtexts.478)

ISSN : 2105-2549

### Éditeur

Gregory B. Lee

### Référence électronique

Florent VILLARD, « Editorial », *Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化* [En ligne], 7 | 2012, mis en ligne le 01 décembre 2012, consulté le 22 septembre 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/transtexts/478> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/transtexts.478>

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# Transtext(e)s

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### *Texte intégral*

- 1 The theme of this latest number of *Transtext(e)sTranscultures* provides the occasion to remove a misunderstanding regarding the meaning of the concept *transcultural*, primarily by indicating that which it does not mean. To be quite clear, “transcultural studies” in our theoretical imaginary is diametrically opposed to that which substitutes the substantive *intercultural* for *transcultural*; *intercultural* being a term frequently considered, owing to a lack of intellectual rigour or to just plain ignorance, as synonymous with the term *transcultural*.
- 2 The intercultural perspective whose vacuous humanism pretends to favour tolerance and the respect for cultural diversity today infuses its hegemonic discourse through numerous disciplines and is totally instrumentalized by the acritical language of marketing and the Business School. The “dialogue of cultures” and the fashion for “ethnic products” reiterates in the commercial sphere, while conforming to the latter’s demand for economic efficiency, a cultural interpretation of human societies as first developed in the nineteenth century in support of the construction of modern nation-states.
- 3 Intercultural discourse legitimates a representation of the world in which, in a Heideggerian manner, a language, a culture and a people are systematically (con)fused. This culturalist equation constitutes a prerequisite to imagining the world as fragmented into civilisational and national communities. In contrast, the transcultural approach signals the transcendence of an anthropological

definition of culture rendered obsolete by the history of recent colonialism and politically problematic because intimately imbricated in ethnicist and nationalist ideologies.

- 4 Without wanting to deny the importance of this intercultural reading of the world in contemporary social imaginaries, the transcultural approach aims to establish its historicity and uncover the ideological significance of such a reading.
- 5 The performative and reifying dimension of that which manufactures and diffuses the identity-biased categories of culturalism constitutes the blind spot of the “dialogue of cultures.” Reintroducing the question of power into intercultural discourse renders possible the recognition of its implicit constructivism and the acknowledgment, along with Christine Delphy, that “hierarchy does not come after division, it comes with it — or even a quarter of a second before — as intention.” Groups are created at the same moment both distinct and hierarchically ordered.” The historical postcolonial conjuncture of the world demands that we focus our attention on multiplicity, metissage, hybridity while liberating ourselves from old dominant epistemologies, normative categories of identification, and from the classification and verification of identities.
- 6 The ambition of this journal, then, is to investigate not what lies “between” but “beyond” and “across” these cultural categories while focussing on the diasporic circulation of practices, of texts, and of imaginaries without effacing the question of power. The contributions to this seventh volume of *Transtext(e)sTranscultures* consecrated to the question of the “Transcultural Identities and the Circulation of Imaginaries » are in line with this logic. For instance, there is Sophie Coavoux’s article on the question of ethnic, cultural and gender identity in Christos Tisolkas’s *Loaded* (1995) and Jeffrey Eugenides’s *Middlesex* (2002). Hailing from the American and Australian Greek diasporas, the protagonists of these two novels “seem to be caught in a series of identity dilemmas.” They attempt to escape from the categories and definitions to which society, and its discourses and its institutions, assign them.
- 7 In his her study of the representation of the Chinese and the question of multi-ethnic casting in “intercultural theatre,” Vanessa Lee skillfully reveals the deep-seated difficulties of European and North American theatre in ridding themselves of old Orientalist stereotypes and in transcending an ethnocentric western perspective, notably in the choice of actors to play parts in works borrowed from a non-European repertoire.
- 8 Wu Yujun proposes a historical and philosophical approach in his assessment of the recurrent issue of the construction of a modern Chinese national identity. His solidly dialectical interpretation confirms the crucial importance of the West as “Other” in the making of a modern Chinese national consciousness.
- 9 In his “Theoretical Propositions for Asian Studies,” Michael Dutton asks why “Area studies” show themselves incapable of freeing themselves from a descriptive methodology in which Asia still remains confined to its status as a locus of field work and an object of applied research. Dutton demonstrates an exemplary use of the theoretical tenets of postcolonial criticism in the interrogation of the epistemological effects of a Euro-American history which made impossible the production of theoretical thought grounded in an empirically and geographically Asian context.

10 The complex relations between the luxury goods industry, contemporary art and cultural identity constitute the problem broached by Gilles Guillot in his article on the commercial strategy of Louis Vuitton on Taiwan. The author puts forward a convincing critique of the French company which has taken over public space and appropriated elements of the island's cultural and artistic heritage in attempt to impose its image on Taiwan and in Asia in general.

11 Raphaël Languillon-Aussel takes a long historical perspective in his analysis of the social imaginary of Japan. Taking the architectural project "Tokyo Sky Tree" as his starting point, proposes an original reflection on the "culture of flows, of impermanence and of rebirth" in a society marked by the historical consciousness of its vulnerability.

12 Concluding the present volume of *Transtext(e)sTranscultures*, the rich essay of the cultural critic Geng Zhanchun 耿占春 provides a commentary on a collection of poems written by the Xinjiang poet Shen Wei 沈苇 in the wake of the riots in Urumqi on 5th July 2009. A consequence of the colonial practices of the Chinese presence in Xinjiang, the explosion of inter-ethnic violence between Han Chinese and Uighurs — resulting in the death of at least 197 members of the civilian population (mostly Han) and the arrest of several thousand rioters — followed the lynching of two Uighur workers in a toy factory at Shaoguan in Guangdong Province. Evoking the censorship of these events, Geng Zhanchun notes that the void left by the absence of commentary in China's societal and digital space was filled by the contradictory monologue of official media whose main characteristic was "the presence of a mouth but the absence of ears." These poems written just a few days after the drama, constitute the only instance of voice emanating from an "independent and subjective individual who observed these events at close quarters." Through his poetry, Shen Wei offers a singular space of rhetorical freedom in an otherwise suffocating climate. By inventing "a new language rising up on the corpse of the old," he uncovers what is the unspoken and the obscure of this now open conflict and proposes a poetic narration of a tragic social and historical situation in China's "Western territories."

13 5th July

A hundred and ninety catastrophes hover over a hundred and ninety corpses  
 As if a hundred and ninety souls floated in the smoke-spewing sky  
 Henceforth, sorrow as blood-tie, as sovereign, as that which unites us  
 Under the upturned roof, the hope that God may forgive ever undone human nature  
 Awakened demons and monsters pace the streets and alleyways, committing odious acts,  
 Terror transforming the town into its oasis of entertainment

14 7 July

Grasping sticks the Han roam the streets,  
 Like warriors in the jungle  
 As if the stone age were back  
 A postmodern vigilance clinging to the corner of the mouths  
 Of bandits fleeing in disarray in little groups  
 In the remotest cellars, they sniff out  
 Their dreams of flames and méchoui

15 Cited in Geng Zhanchun, "When sufferings come face to face: A Reading of "Requiem" a collection of poems by Xinjiang poet, Shen Wei».

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## ***Pour citer cet article***

### *Référence électronique*

Florent VILLARD, « Editorial », *Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化* [En ligne], 7 | 2012, mis en ligne le 01 décembre 2012, consulté le 22 novembre 2013. URL : <http://transtexts.revues.org/478>

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## ***Auteur***

### **Florent VILLARD**

Florent Villard is Maître de conférences at the University of Lyon 3. His doctorate on the Chinese theoretician Qu Qiubai (1899-1935) was completed in 2004. His current research focuses on language and nationalism, and cultural history.

### *Articles du même auteur*

**Editorial** [Texte intégral]

[Version Française]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化*, 7 | 2012

**(Re)Inventing 'Realities' in China** [Texte intégral]

Editorial [Version Française]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化*, 5 | 2009

**(Re)Inventing 'Realities' in China** [Texte intégral]

Editorial [English Version]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化*, 5 | 2009

**China in French Tourist Industry Discourse: From Orientalist Imaginary to Chinese Postmodernity** [Texte intégral]

Paru dans *Transtext(e)s Transcultures 跨文本跨文化*, 1 | 2006

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