Thematic, Programmatic and Methodological Approaches of the Annual Publication

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Novecento Transnazionale (*Transnational 20th Century*) is an academic annual journal aimed at proposing a theoretical and critical stance on key aspects of 20th century culture and history. This theoretical perspective will not consider historical processes and practices as proceeding in a one-directional perspective, following a single path, but as multiple, complex and interrelated movements.

The term "transnational" indicates that contemporary modern cultural structures cannot be related to those of traditional cultures founded on geographical and language-specific contexts. Transnational knowledge takes a special interest in the processes of delocalisation – and therefore in the transnationality of cultural expression, which has become increasingly evident as a result of migratory movements and new communication technologies.

We are living through a transnational era, in which geographical areas and cultures can no longer be said to have specific boundaries. The outlines are now of a different nature: the search for identity cannot be limited only to a nation, or belonging to a country, or within a specific culture. It is now necessary to move through different contexts, relationships and exchanges. The borders have changed: during the last three decades they have opened up, been transformed or extended, and even those that have remained the same, have been subject to being crossed and altered.

"Transnationalism" takes on different meanings depending on the manner in which it shows itself (the transnationalism of migrants, of artists and diasporas, cultural nomadism, the dialectic of belonging/not belonging, inclusion/exclusion…). There are thus different levels of transnational expressions which need to be distinguished and analysed. In practice this means that new possible meanings of the term "transnational" may be brought to light, which will not seek to hide any differences but which will present them as a new cultural reality to be opened up for discussion.

Key words now associated with "transnationalism", for example, are: "flux", "boundary", "hybrid", "margin", "threshold", "interstice", "fluid", "diffused", "border", "crossing", "remappings", "opening up", etc. To map the fields of interest of this transnational and intercultural exchange, it has been necessary to create images and metaphors of movement which are meant to deal with analyses of places, products and subjects present in the cultural flux. These transnational processes have also led to the creation of new forms of subjectivity.

The sense of not belonging expressed by some transnational subjects brought up between different languages and cultures needs to be evaluated, not as the result of a natural condition but as the outcome of an artificial attribution of value/disvalue which is linked to the modern idea of nationhood.

The concept of "transnationalism" lays claim also to that of "transculturalism" and, in another way, to "globalization", terms which also both need to be continually reconsidered. By "transcultural", we mean a process of construction of a new and original understanding of reality which comes about through the interaction of different cultures. To speak of a transcultural perspective means to position it in a dimension that encompasses both geographical space and wide-ranging and unrestricted movement of the sort emphasized in today's world by the fluidity of transnational communication.

The concept of "globalization" is linked to these others, since it implies an increase of interconnections ideas, objects and actions of various kinds, on a world-wide level, as well as a conscious understanding of the diversity of the cultural characteristics of different peoples. This process, even if it is not completely new in human history and has not had the same outcome in all places, underwent an acceleration in the 20th century, particularly during its second half.

In the brief summing-up afforded by this introduction, however, some reflections are offered on the present state of the question of contemporary "transnationalism" in the three areas of principal interest to this publication (comparative literature, contemporary art and cultural anthropology), reflections "in progress", on the basis of which experts and specialists in various disciplinary fields will be invited to submit their own contributions in the form of articles and original papers.

Cultural anthropology offers an interesting perspective from which to analyse some of the changes which took place in the world during the 20th century. This particular perspective is based on theories and methodologies which focus their areas of research on both the cultural connections of the globalised world and the "local" social practices that enable these connections. From its very beginnings as an autonomous academic discipline, it has been a characteristic of anthropological study to focus simultaneously on the specific and the general. The specific is represented by the study of a society's culture – that is its cognitive model and the practices which are a result of this – while the general relates to theories and practices present among the whole of humankind, and the use of cultural similarities and differences to propose generalisations. Anthropologists have thus always considered the problem of connections, interferences, exchanges and relationships of dominance between the global (almost always identified with western culture) and the local.

For example, the voluntary or forced movement of individuals and groups from their place of origin brings about not only a separation from that physical space but also distributes culturally different modes of thought into the world. It is a physical redistribution which is, at the same time, cultural, because people take with them their knowledge, their beliefs and symbols, their understanding of the world, their artistic and narrative languages which become intertwined with and then modify the ways of life both in the host communities and in the diasporas, as well as in those places from which they departed.

In *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), Arjiun Appadurai has proposed an interpretative key, critical of the preceding anthropological paradigm, which lays the foundations of an anthropological transnationalism that identifies five dimensions contributing to the diffusion of ideas and exchange of information: he calls them "global-scapes". The ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes and ideoscapes refer to the interconnections but also to the fluidity and variability in these areas of global exchange. They represent the landscapes of identity of groups who

are no longer contained by territorial boundaries and who are no longer, assuming that they ever were, culturally coherent. From this point begins a critical re-evaluation of the concepts of space, of localization and/or globality, and also of imagination, which has led to the definition of two paths of enquiry: the first is represented by the analysis of the crisis of the "nation-state" whose true nature has been shown, according to Appadurai, by the ways in which transnational destabilization has taken place; the second involves, rather, a self-critical restatement by anthropologists themselves, who have for so long insisted that these links between concepts such as geographical space, identity, language and ethnicity were indissoluble, considering them as the inextricable and necessary supports of the concept of culture. In recent decades, while leaving modernity behind us, it has become clear that contemporary cultural forms are more and more widespread and communicated across different boundaries. The transnational phenomenon reveals itself in practice in the delocalisation and re-localisation of people, objects and ideas which overcome any limited or defined space by overflowing and/or imagining them. Transnational cultures therefore transform into meeting places between real and virtual structures of meaning which communicate via social networks that no longer have any fixed point in a single physical space. The major worldwide change which took place in the second half of the 20th century, in particular, was brought about by the steady flow and size of migrations and by the unexpected speed of developments in information technology. The latter, with its immense bank of information on every sphere of knowledge, allows us today to easily become aware of the existence of different visions of the world, in no way inferior to our own and whose creativity is expressed in the creation of a distinctive world view, i.e. by its way of making sense of reality.

The transnational problem of the knowledge of cultures recalls to mind the problem of local identity, where a sense of belonging is once again linked to a sense of belonging to a place. Here the cultural aspect is of great importance which, while being a symbol of the transnational process, focuses on the relationships and exchanges between "local" cultures and thus also on transculturality. This concept has a long history in anthropology, reaching back to Bronislaw Malinowski, who took his cue from the definition of *transculturación* by Fernando Ortiz in *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940). In his introduction to that work, Malinowski describes it as a process from which a new reality emerges transformed into a new and independent phenomenon. In 1944 Margaret Mead established the *Institute for Intercultural Studies.* She defined its concerns as "advancing knowledge of the various peoples and nations of the world, with special attention to those peoples and those aspects of their life which are likely to affect intercultural and international relations." (1994-2009). More recently, Hannerz has defined it as a more general interconnectedness, like an increasing awareness of humanity and the world as something unique. It is a process which is growing, but in many ways and at very different rates it is irregular and entirely new (Hannerz, 1996).

Speaking of a transcultural perspective means therefore that this perspective must be located in an ethnographic dimension, a multi-sited research and analysis focused on the interdisciplinary overlapping highlighted today by the flow of information which is itself also transnational. It is necessary to analyse the cultural flows, or flows of meaning, which even as they are in circulation are influenced by and have an influence upon the global circulation of meaning. They are flows which, according to Hannerz, imply an infinite series of shifts in a changing space and time, mediated by external forms accessible to the senses and to various interpretations; a series fraught with uncertainties which lead to lack of understanding and shifts in meaning but also to innovation.

Some recent theoretical contributions in the field of comparative European literature, focusing on the study of literary and cultural transnationalism (Rosendhal Thomsen, 2008, D'haen, 2012), have offered interesting reflections on the cultural policies of exclusion and inclusion which affect the development and transmission of a literary canon (on either a national or a continental European level), offering particularly interesting points for consideration about the meaning of such terms as "transnational", "transcultural" and of the concept of a "canon" related to contemporary literary production from authors originating from a multicultural and plurilinguistic background. They live and work in one, or even more than one, of the national European contexts and have, in the course of time, moved from one part of Europe to another (limiting ourselves here to our own continental context, in the full awareness that this is a global phenomenon).

In the sociological field, Steven Vertovec acknowledges the need, in the Introduction to his 2009 work *Transnationalism*, to take account of those areas of human activity so far unconsidered from a transnational point of view. After describing the constants and variants of "migrant transnationalism" and tackling the major critical objections to the concept of transnationalism itself, Vertovec's essentially sociological perspective takes no account of cultural phenomenon of an aesthetic type, such as literature or the field of "aesthetics" in general. Such an opening should nevertheless lead to a consideration of the effects of transnationalism in certain specific contexts, including that of literature and also in its relationship to different artistic forms. The overcoming of a sense of non-belonging in a transnational subject has been made possible owing to the diffusion of a mind-set ready to consider the existence of a human subjectivity clearly not, or no longer, rooted in a single language, culture or national milieu, etc. (Cohen, 1997).

A positive consequence of this change of mentality could be, for example, a major opportunity to clearly perceive that this sense of non-belonging expressed by transnational individuals does not have an existential or natural character, rather that it is the result of an artificial perspective that attributes the quality of truth primarily to the monocultural and monolinguistic paradigm on which the nineteenth century concept of nationhood is built. Several recent volumes in the comparative field, including the two mentioned above by Theo D'Haen and Mads Rosendhal Thomsen, permit us to reposition Vertovec's narrative in the field of literary studies and to deepen the meaning of the use of the category of "transnationalism" in critical reflections on contemporary literature, particularly that of European origin. Only an analysis of the many meanings and ways of using this category in contemporary critical discourse will be able to bear fruit in an attempt to give a general and credible account of European transnationalism in 20th century literature and up to our own time.

Both studies explore the semantic history of "world literature", with its different models of "globalized" literature and its relationship to the study of the canon of literature in a comparative context, before re-contextualising, in their separate ways, the concept of "world literature" in the contemporary setting. In particular, both volumes give special emphasis to literature produced in European languages by authors of non-European nationalities and cultures, although they do this in a completely different fashion: D'haen introduces the issue of "postcolonial" and "allophone" (initially in the sense of francophone) as a product of the West ("Postcolonialism can be seen as a projection of, rather that resistance to, Western thought", D'haen 2012, 151) and therefore not as generally representative; whereas Rosendahl Thomsen specifically concentrates on "migrant literature", defining it as an

expression more, even if not uniquely, descriptive of transnational literature. As regards the publication of the manifesto, "Pour une littérature-monde en français" in "Le Monde" (16 March 2007), by 44 authors from the so-called "francophonie", D'haen correctly notes that in the comparative sphere, Emily Apter in 2006 had already identified the possible movement of the francophone world away from the colonial shackles binding them to France via the coming to life of a transnational dimension of the French language in the "linguistic contact zones all over the world in which French […] is one of many languages in play" (Apter 2006, 55). This introduces a range of new possibilities of meaning of the term "transnational", moving beyond the ties between ex-colonial and European nations, as well as beyond the cases of migrant writers, who, in the same way as writers in exile or those from a diaspora, have transformed the very nature of "classic" authorship in the course of the 20th century.

Similarly, the research into "new canons", as suggested recently in Italy with regard to the studies of Anglistics (De Zordo e Fantaccini 2011), but whose critical and theoretical results can be equally well applied to other disciplines, is similarly/likewise relevant for the purpose of re-designing a framework which might represent the contemporary European literary scene in a more nuanced fashion, as well as avoiding the trap, also present in Italy, of reducing transnational literatures to sub-sets of the national canon. This could also open up the possibility of creating, via a comparative theoretical and critical apparatus, a concept of a national literature intersected with a transnational dimension and which takes form in the literary creations drawn from the numerous stories of dispossessed and dislocated people. Another equally global aspect is that of literary translingualism, which has significant implications for the existence and recognition of literary texts today in a transnational and transcultural context and has been noted in recent studies that cannot be ignored (Kellman 2000 e 2003; Cronin 2003, 2006).

Considering modern art from a transnational perspective requires not only the definition of certain aspects which have led to a completely new understanding of the modern art world; such as the special influence of international art exhibitions on the consideration of art in a historical perspective, the close relationships among the market, museums and galleries, geographical changes and their transformation through re-drawing of boundaries, the function of criticism in strategies of success, the processes of inclusion or exclusion and the relationship between contemporaneity and global events. The question of "transnationalism" then also has an impact upon the history of art itself, from the beginnings of modernism up to the present. Methodology, writing and the effects of the history of art can be reviewed and reconsidered from a perspective which no longer holds history to be a one-way system of cause and effect which is, as a matter of course, Western. It should be seen as a complex and dynamic interplay of cultures, events and histories. The history of art is itself probably a Western invention.

In this network of histories and facts, the Western model of history must be analysed again. It is not enough, in fact it is a deception, to integrate or add to the history of art of the western world those other "chapters" which had been forgotten, marginalised and probably excluded. The rewriting of modern history calls for a complete reconsideration of methods, resources and models (Pollock 1999). Such a viewpoint is deeply critical and will allow for episodes and chapters of history and of the history of art of the 20th century to be rethought. A concept which appears immediately vulnerable from a transnational perspective, and not just in the field of art, is that of modernity itself: how many waves

of modernity swept across the 20th century landscape? How did they come about? Did they meet, or reject each other and what difference did they make? It is important to understand that a transnational perspective demands above all a new historiography. As far as the history of art is concerned, concentrating mostly on the post-1945 period, with an important dividing line in 1989, is of particular importance.

Could we then ask ourselves if it is globalisation itself which has led to exchanges and to cultural relations or whether this is only an "interpretation" of a situation which exists since the beginning of the 1990s, via a shortened perspective, although still at a distance, of changes which have transformed politics and economics over a period of several centuries. Scholars of these relationships claim to understand how such connexions lead to conflicts on the one hand and examples of new intercultural connexions and convergence on the other. Samuel P. Huntington in 2007, in *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, advanced the first theory, while Ilija Trojanow and Ranjit Hoskoté, in *Kampfabsage: Kulturen bekämpfen sich nicht, sie fließen zusammen*, supported the second. Paradigms of conflict or cooperation bring the narrative of history itself into doubt and, in another way, so does the act of moving and relocating oneself to other countries, more or less far from one's country of origin.

The history of art in the 20th century, above all the second half of that century, is fragmentary. "Una storia transnazionale" reveals the discontinuities rather than the continuities of the history, throws the progress of history itself into doubt and lays down the basis for a new historiography. This is a history which seeks to move forward through the gaps, along the edges and in the niches of the grand systems of art as well as of thought.

Certain events have been fundamental to thinking on these themes. The relationship between art and intercultural processes in the era of globalisation was the central theme of an important exhibition at the ZKM Musuem, Karlsruhe, "The Global Contemporary. Art Worlds after 1989" (2011), an exhibition which gave a major theoretical contribution to the consideration of problems under review by scholars all around the world, of the relationships of art and globalization, of art and the new geopolitical structures of the world. In particular, among the many papers produced during the exhibition, Peter Weibel and Hans Belting touched on critical aspects bearing on the reconsideration, in an intercultural manner, of the very concepts of modernity, modernism, postcolonialism and even globalisation. This re-thinking has developed into a critique of the concept of modernity, from the relationship between inclusion and exclusion, both produced and affirmed by it, to the launching of a revision of the paradigms informing writings about the history of art itself, that are now created from many and different histories originating from every part or outskirts of the world.

Another exhibition, entitled "Inklusion-Exklusion" had already, back in 1996, tackled the specific theme of inclusion-exclusion at the heart of the complex exchanges between countries, races and types of contemporary culture. These exhibitions and the debate generated by them have continued and developed the theoretical consequences already brought about by previous exhibitions. Among these were, "Magiciens de la terre" (1989) at the Centre Pompidou, curated by Jean-Hubert Martin and "The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Post – War Britain" (29 November 1989-4 April 1990) at the Hayward Gallery, London, curated by Rasheed Araeen. The relationship between inclusion-exclusion finds itself at the centre of a current trend for rethinking the concept of modernity itself. Hans Belting has expounded the theory that the very ones who have been "excluded", no longer wish to be "included"

in any sense in the geography of the Western world. These artists are Arab, African and even Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese or Latin American and they are seeking to develop new models, relevant to their different social and cultural identities. Since 1989, the art of these "other" countries no longer seeks to be included, nor does it simply wish to request or anticipate its elimination from any process of inclusion-exclusion. The art of those countries, formerly almost completely excluded from the art world until recent decades, is now a part of the new transnational landscape, in which differences and identity are presented as new cultural realities, ready to be open to comparison.

edited by

Franca Sinopoli, Carla Subrizi, Mariella Combi

(Sapienza University of Rome)

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