

CULTURAL TRANSFER (Draft CFP for *Word & Text* 2 / 2014, 9.3.2014)

Eds. Dr Manuela Rossini & Dr Michael Toggweiler (IASH, University of Bern, Switzerland)

The editors of this planned issue of *Word & Text* conceptualize “cultural transfer” as the global mobility of words, concepts, images, persons, animals, commodities, money, weapons, drugs and other things (Stephen Greenblatt). Such a broad and pragmatic understanding might also be the starting point for an interdisciplinary debate on transfer processes that focuses on their textual and largely cultural mediation. However, the acknowledgement of the fluidity of words, texts and images etc., stresses not only the flow of objects but also the fluidity of the persons involved as well as the instability of the landscapes in which these processes take place. Borders and places, even if imaginary, are constantly ‘on the move’ so that it has become increasingly difficult to identify origins and ends or even signposts and directions of cultural processes, especially with regard to textual traces. Thus, culture itself may be read *as* transfer (Lutz Musner) and, more specifically, as an ongoing negotiation and differentiation.

Demarcations of borders, however, are very real. Discursive definitions of “culture” prove highly effective and “imaginary communities” (Benedict Anderson) are potent political agents. The analysis of cultural transfer and culture *as* transfer has to take into account the dramatic situations of contact zones, the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion as well as the conditions of selection, translation, adaption or mutation within unequal power relations.

The necessary acknowledgement of an oscillation between fluidity *and* stasis with regard to “culture” does neither stop short at an abstract diagnosis of rhizomatic lines of flight (Gilles Deleuze) of endless *différance* (Jacques Derrida) nor does it in any sense privilege a return to an understanding of culture as something coherent, substantial, or even metaphysical. This is why the present issue attempts to replace these mutually exclusive notions by the adjectival form “cultural” (as suggested by Arjun Appadurai) in order to allow for the analysis of differences, contrasts, hybridity as well as similarities, shared features and interstices between all sorts of categories (languages, classes, genders, roles, social fields, groups, and nations). Thus, cultural transfer does not mean transfer *between* static and essentialised “cultures” or the transfer *of* “culture” but rather a differing game *and* its very real yet unstable discursive effects (differences, identities) *within* the framework of the “cultural”.

Such an approach and conceptualization allows “cultural transfer” to become a heuristic device for talking about difference and similarity with regard to textuality in its broadest sense. What we need now is a stocktaking of more specific heuristic readings, the formulation of problems (Deleuze), models and terminology (genealogy, emergence, translation, adaptation, articulation, transfer, transit, empathy, difference, similarity etc.). The planned issue invites contributors to critically engage and take up a position in such a programmatic discussion of cultural transfer – always grounded in specifics and singularities.

We welcome interdisciplinary approaches, ranging across critical theory, media studies, literary and cultural studies, linguistics as well as other disciplines in the humanities.

The deadline for abstract submissions is **27 June 2014**. Those selected are then expected to send the full article by **15 September 2014**. All submitted articles will be blind refereed except when invited.

Accepted articles will be returned for post-review revisions by **15 October** and are expected back in their final version by **30 October**.

Please send a proposal of **1000 words** (including 1-2 paragraphs on your general understanding of “cultural transfer”) to the editors of the volume who will also answer any question you may have: Manuela Rossini: rossini@iash.unibe.ch and Michael Toggweiler toggweiler@iash.unibe.ch