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# Introduction: The Need to Transnationalize

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The need for a transnational agenda on a global scale is paramount. The commonly shared concerns of issues of health and climate change are increasingly compounded and counteracted by questions of political aggressions and the discrimination against forms of diversity worldwide. The resurgence of nationalistic solutions and hegemonic activities of repression jeopardize established transnational avenues of diplomatic and academic collaboration as a fertile process of communication in which we learn from and understand each other. Local and regional cases of dispute and division might find a resolution in making connections to similar, often until that point unknown problems in other parts of the world.

This issue of *JTAS* addresses these questions and offers solutions in the stunning combination of a Special Forum on “Teaching and Theorizing Transnational American Studies around the Globe,” a panoply of new publications in the *Forward* section, and a new format for the *Reprise* section. The editorial board is very grateful to Yuan Shu and Selina Lai-Henderson for having initiated and collected research on teaching experiences outside of the United States by colleagues engaged in Transnational American Studies. Their own transnational background and affiliation with academic institutions in the US, Asia, and Southeast Asia proved to be a prerequisite for this new approach to theorize the field. The experience of Americans teaching abroad in a non-English language environment is an encounter with many new aspects including university systems, curricula in foreign-language departments, and most obviously a group of students enrolled for a degree in English with an American literature and/or culture component. Students consider it a privilege to have a native speaker and to gain first-hand knowledge about the United States from an American citizen. To what extent the teachers’ syllabi for courses meet with the students’ expectations or need adjustments is subject to changes. In many of the contributions to this Special Forum we read about a twofold learning process, a transnational education for both students and teachers. On the one hand, this concerns rules and regulations about how foreign-

language departments are run, curricula administered, and the status of American Studies. On the other hand, in their choice of course topics, the American teachers reflect their foreign experience and their reaction to local conditions. Hence, we follow how a course on comparative ecocriticism, taught at the University of Bergen in Norway by a professor from Texas, turns into a discussion of the similarities of business strategies of oil-producing states and the colonization of Indigenous communities as well as transindigenous activism. And we learn about the differing conditions encountered in Europe or Asia, what kind of changes exist in the conception of American Studies in teaching in the city-state of Singapore or the other Southeast Asian countries of Indonesia, Vietnam, and Thailand. In addition, the academic and ethnic backgrounds of teachers make a difference in both pedagogical and theoretical matters. Teaching in a summer school at the University of Wuhan is a different kind of challenge for an African American scholar than for his white American colleagues and he finds himself coping with the legacy of W. E. B. Du Bois's visits to China and the recognition that his Chinese students seem to be more interested in their Chinese perception of the US than in embracing the critical perspective of racism or an Afro-Asian alliance. More concerned with trying out new concepts and forms of teaching are two contributions by native residents in Japan and Taiwan. The usage of US "aerial archives" for a course on American-occupied Japan after the Second World War leads to the idea of "aeriality" as a new concept to theorize and do Transnational American Studies and which moves away from geographical boundaries to a planetary view and metageography. The introduction of graphic narratives in the Taiwanese classroom proves to be a better way to deal with militant aggressions and racism than conventional reading assignments. The editors of the Special Forum situate the contributions in the context of existing approaches to transatlantic and transpacific studies and rightly argue for the need to shift scholarly attention to pedagogical areas often neglected in the field; they thus recognize the hidden potential in the experiences of teaching American topics abroad for theorizing Transnational American Studies and for offering a new look on the corollary grand narratives of US imperialism and American exceptionalism.

*Forward* Editor Jennifer Reimer put together an impressive collection of newly released monographs which together reconfirm powerfully the value of transnational experiences and Transnational American Studies research, including pedagogy. In the introduction, she groups the twelve monographs according to current transnational issues, such as Asian American film history as a needed corrective to the dominant Euro-American film industry or the encounter of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders from the perspective of journeys in the Pacific and their representation in literature. Transatlantic connections are the subject of literary and cultural relations and in particular the construction of a Mediterranean bond between Italian and Greek Americans. Literary historical studies include a new edition of the transnational Black Nationalist James Theodore Holly, and an award-winning study of the "Politics and Poetics of Cholera in the Nineteenth Century" in English, German, American, and

Canadian literatures, an English-language translation from the German monograph. It is also fascinating to see how American women influenced French haute couture in Paris over the years, to learn about the biography of Puerto Rican Pedro Albizu Campos and his transnational cooperation with Fenian Irish nationalists, and the transcultural education of American Beat poets, received in Mexico, including “hitherto understudied women.” In line with the Special Forum, Jennifer’s list ends with a book on documenting study abroad programs for American students and two excerpts from the volume which she coedited with Stefan Maneval, *Forms of Migration*, with a focus on Arabian transnational experiences. Overall, this is a very rich and unusual collection of new Transnational American Studies publications to read.

In the *Reprise* section, Brian Russell Roberts has established a new format in which he presents and contextualizes his carefully selected reprints, arranged according to an overarching theme and concept. He opens with the transnational perspective of two-sided wormholes, which have a European and an American side, Columbian and pre-Columbian, and are the product of insects active in libraries as well as nature. This extension of the human field of perception allows for a transdisciplinary examination at the intersection of the sciences and the humanities, as exemplified in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Gold Bug” as the subject of investigations into the author’s own research on conchology; a 1910 article by an entomologist; as well as two recent articles on the insect’s role in a novel. With his choice of these four reprints, Brian advances a new approach to the transdisciplinary field of Transnational American Studies.

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to thank Yuan Shu and Selina Lai-Henderson for putting together the Special Forum and together with their contributors launching a focus on the pedagogy of Transnational American Studies, shepherded expertly by Special Forum Editor Pia Wiegink and copyedited by Vanessa Evans. Their common plea for an indispensable education abroad and its inevitable inter- and transcultural learning processes is reconfirmed in Jennifer Reimer’s unusual combination of new books on the subject. We owe Jennifer gratitude for her successful negotiation with publishing houses for permission to print excerpts. Great thanks also go to Brian Russell Roberts for his innovative curation of the *Reprise* section.

This year’s American Studies Association convention took place in New Orleans, and we were able for the first time after an absence of three years to get together and organize a reception for *JTAS*, thanks to Nina Morgan, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and a grant from Stanford University. The International Committee of the ASA announced the recipient of this year’s Shelley Fisher Fishkin Prize for International Scholarship in Transnational American Studies, and the IC chair, Selina Lai-Henderson, organized a special award ceremony for the 2022 winner, Dr. Mahshid Mayar (University of Cologne), to praise the superior Transnational American Studies scholarship of her *Citizens and Rulers of the World: The American Child and the Cartographic Pedagogies of Empire* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2022). We look forward to publishing a chapter in the Spring issue. Unfortunately, our shift to the new publication schedule of

*JTAS* was slightly delayed. We now present to you the Fall issue of 2022, made possible by the contributors, the anonymous readers, the members of the editorial board and—last but not least—Sabine Kim and the editorial team.

Season's greetings and best wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.