# Review

of International American Studies

# CONSTELLATING AMERICAS

ISSN 1991-2773

RIAS Vol. 9, Fall-Winter № 2/2016

Review of International American Studies
Revue d'Études Américaines Internationales
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall–Winter № 2/2016
ISSN 1991–2773

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PUBLICATION REALIZED BY

UNIVERSITY OF SILESIA PRESS
IN KATOWICE

University of Silesia Press in Katowice
ul. Bankowa 12b
40–007 Katowice
Poland



ABOUT RIAS
*Review of International American Studies* (*RIAS*) is the double-blind peer-reviewed, electronic/print-on-demand journal of the International American Studies Association, a worldwide, independent, non-governmental association of American Studies. *RIAS* serves as agora for the global network of international scholars, teachers, and students of America as a hemispheric and global phenomenon. *RIAS* is published by IASA twice a year (Fall–Winter and Spring–Summer). *RIAS* is available in the Open Access Gold formula and is financed from the Association's annual dues as specified in the "Membership" section of the Association's website. All topical manuscripts should be directed to the *RIAS* Editors. General correspondence and matters concerning the functioning of RIAS should be addressed to *RIAS* Editor-in-Chief.

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**COVER ART:** Monika Grotek–*Constellations*

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# THE QUINTESSENCE OF THE QUINTESSENTIAL

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Let us imagine, for a moment, that we have become characters in our own Robinsonade (in a time long before Daniel Defoe chronicled Robinson Crusoe's epic journey). Engaged in a half-magical, early Renaissance exploratory endeavor, like so many others before us, we set out full of hope into uncharted waters in a well-provisioned ship, certain that our quest will end in the success we seek, the discovery of heretofore unknown lands, full of untold riches that will be ours for the taking. Fuelled by an uncommon mixture of hope, desire and determination, we rush headlong into the indiscernible future, filled with visions of the life of gods we will lead upon our successful return, heavily laden with the wealth of our exploits. But it is, unfortunately, not to be: not long into our journey, we are beset by a raging storm, whose almost demoniac power shatters our ship—and our hopes—to bits, a situation from which we only just barely escape with our lives. The intangible imagined life of gods that was ours just a few hours before is brutally and abruptly transformed, now finding objective reality in the shards of our ship washing up on the hated shore that we were in fact blessed to find, though tortured by the painful realization that it is nothing like the shore we had hoped, imagined or sought to find. The storm having dealt with our clothing in much the same way as it did our ship, thus presenting us with an unaccustomed physical reality of near nakedness, this new shore, previously unknown to our imaginations, greets us with an immediate inhospitability that finishes the job by also stripping us figuratively bare, leaving us completely naked to our own understanding as well. We are shipwrecked—castaways—most definitely not gods, lacking now not only the force that imagined a potential god-like existence, but the hope it generated. Of determination, however, we must

put that to good use, and quickly. Life now takes on a very different quality, one of a more stark contact with the laws of nature than ever we have felt before. We are hot, we are hungry, we are cold, wet, exposed, and excoriated by the wind, whose fingers, gentle or sharp like claws, are a constant presence. Life is now raw existence, and in that existence, we grasp only the enormity of the sea and its deep mystery, the enormity of the heavens, its broiling sun by day and its shimmering stars at night, and the thankful—or thankless—certainty of land underfoot.

It is at this juncture that we may most fruitfully encounter the essays contained in this issue of the *Review of International American Studies*, which highlights several works from the 7th World Congress of the International American Studies Association, held in conjunction with the American Studies Association of Korea's 50th International Conference in Seoul, South Korea, August 17–19, 2015. The conference theme, "Constellating Americas," seeks a more complex international engagement in the field of American Studies, one that would foster a greater de-centering of the US within the field than even the inherently international approach of transnationalism has up to the present accomplished. By borrowing Walter Benjamin's notion of the constellation as a theoretical construct allowing for a different way of thinking about the interrelationships between the US and other instances of America within American Studies, the emphases of the conference bring about a radical shift in the field imaginary, pointing to both a horizontal and a vertical path toward greater interrelational understanding, the one reaching outward in space, the other in time.

Returning to the extended metaphor with which this Ed/Note began, shipwrecked, one's hopes for the achievement of imagined desires are demolished; but the unhinged imagination remains, going out to sea and settling on the horizon, where hope may yet furtively live, or rising to the night sky where it may restlessly flutter in the figuring and refiguring of the phantasmic patterns it recognizes between its multitudinous celestial bodies. In this regard, if the assertion of the unachieved dislodging of the US-centric perspective in American Studies advanced by the conference may be viewed as an intellectual shipwreck of sorts, the US becoming the figurative island one seeks to "constellate" into a more rela-

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tional reality, then the horizontal path to this change in the field imaginary becomes akin to the aims of celestial navigation. Among the ruins of our figurative shipwreck may have been found a mariner's astrolabe, an early instrument used to determine position on the earth by calculating latitude through the identification of positional relation to celestial bodies, the most important often being that of Polaris, or the North Star. Position, both physical and intellectual, is crucial, because it is the point from which subsequent movement originates. For early navigators, the night sky was important because the location of Polaris helped them to determine all relative positions. In a sky filled with millions of stars, the constellations provided relational patterns, transforming what could have been an otherwise overwhelming actuality to one more manageable by establishing the relative positions of other celestial bodies. By filtering this incomprehensible mass of stars through the imagination, a constellation, or pattern of interrelationships, is created, and suddenly the multitude of stars becomes intelligible not just in terms of their relationships to each other, but to the world of whatever culture imagines them.

And so it is with the infinite relational possibilities that exist between the cultures of the Americas. Like Ptolemy's *Almagest*, which catalogues the 48 classical constellations in their imaginary relational positions, our efforts in the face of "constellating" the Americas are limited only by our own imaginations. The possible patterns by which we may understand the interrelationships between the cultures of the Americas are infinite, and it is to us to explore and find them. This issue of the *Review of International American Studies* represents just one beginning on this path in search of a new kind of discovery. As the early 20th-century American author, Kate Chopin, describes, it is a timeless endeavor, reaching to the stars:

> Ah! that moving procession that has left me by the road-side! Its fantastic colors are more brilliant and beautiful than the sun on the undulating waters. What matter if souls and bodies are failing beneath the feet of the ever-pressing multitude! It moves with the majestic rhythm of the spheres. Its discordant clashes sweep upward in one harmonious tone that blends with the music of other worlds—to complete God's orchestra.

It is greater than the stars—that moving procession of human energy; greater than the palpitating earth and the things growing thereon. Oh! I could weep at being left by the wayside; left with the grass and the clouds and a few dumb animals. True, I feel at home in the society of these symbols of life's immutability. In the procession I should feel the crushing feet, the clashing discords, the ruthless hands and stifling breath. I could not hear the rhythm of the march. (Chopin 2008: 158)

Timeless, Chopin recuperates Aristotle's *On the Heavens*, in which he describes the relation between the two spheres of the earth and the heavens in terms of elements. Fire, air, water and earth comprise the earth, the elements of which one immediately becomes aware in any shipwreck, real or imagined. But the heavens are something else again. For Aristotle, the heavens, the home of the celestial bodies, must be described by a circular motion not possible for the other elements, which must move only up or down. Timeless in their circular, unending trajectory, for Aristotle the heavens are therefore described by another element, ascribable only to them, where such eternal continuity is the norm. Later commentators on Aristotle called it "aether," of which the Latinate name is "quintessence." Let us, then, view this volume of the *Review of International American Studies* as serving that function: of quintessence to the several quintessential essays it contains from the Seoul Conference, and beyond. In both the nominal and verbal meanings of the term "essay," these hopeful efforts seek to lead the way—to the imagining and reimagining, in endless variety, of new constellations of the Americas, prosecuting a more truly international, International American Studies.

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# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

August 17, 2015, Seoul, South Korea

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I

Dear congress participants, as president of the International American Studies Association I have the privilege of opening our Seventh World Congress. This is the second time we are holding a IASA World Congress in Asia, and I want to begin by thanking our Korean colleagues for the terrific work they have done on all fronts in order to make sure this meeting would be as successful and intellectually stimulating as our previous ones. They began by putting together an incredibly well crafted, rich, and detailed congress proposal, which the IASA Council accepted enthusiastically. Then they moved forward by working in close contact with the IASA Council and Officers, making sure that the idea of bringing together the IASA and the American Studies Association of Korea, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of its founding, would be realized to the benefit of both organizations. I have strong hopes that this collaboration will continue in the years to come. I cannot mention all the people who, here in Korea, worked hard to make sure no detail would be overlooked, but I do wish to express my special gratitude to Professor Chulwon Cho, the President of the American Studies Association of Korea, for ably supervising the on-location organizers that made this congress possible. Another person who deserves a very special thank you is Eui Young Kim. She has proven to be both a tireless organizer and the kindest of contact persons. She replied to the hundreds of emails I sent her

promptly and gracefully. Her patience and courtesy have been remarkable, and we should all be grateful to her for having devoted so much of her time to the organization of this event.

We should all, likewise, be thankful to the IASA Officers and Executive Council members for the crucial support they provided. They helped to select paper proposals, they worked on the program committee, they served as judges for this year's edition of the Emory Elliott Prize. This is a prize the IASA cares about a great deal not only because of Emory's invaluable role in supporting the cause of international American Studies (both inside and outside our organization), but also because Emory was a friend of so many of us. Unfortunately, as you already know, over a year ago, we lost another dear friend who, like Emory, played a key role in building and consolidating the IASA, and at the time of his passing was still a member of its Executive Council. Tatsushi Narita was a remarkable scholar, whose important work on T.S. Eliot in an international and transcultural perspective generated a great deal of interest, and won him invitations to lecture and pursue his research at a number of distinguished institutions, including Harvard and Oxford. Tatsushi was also the author of the Wikipedia page on the IASA in Japanese and in this, as in any other endeavor he undertook, he displayed immense care and attention. I know former IASA President Jane Desmond will not mind if I quote a few lines from the message she sent to the Council when the sad news arrived. These lines express, I am sure, what many of us felt: "I enjoyed working with Tatsushi on the Executive Council of IASA for many years, and know too that he was a strong advocate for his students and junior faculty joining the profession. I remember especially with affection his hand-made New Years cards that he mailed to several of us … each year a different design and crafted with his artist's eye. It was so generous of him to keep us together in this way across so many national boundaries. American Studies has lost one of its key interlocutors on the national stage." I would like to ask you to observe a moment of silence to remember Tatsushi Narita, the scholar, the artist, the friend.[1]

1. A list of Tatsushi's major publications, along with a bio, can be found at <http://www.amazon.com/Tatsushi-Narita/e/B0089V3D9C>.

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Two years have gone by since I had the honor of opening another IASA congress in Szceczin, Poland, and 12 years have passed since the historic first IASA congress in Leiden, the only one, I must admit, I had the misfortune of not attending. Since then, as we met in Ottawa and Lisbon, and then in Beijing and Rio, I have been involved with the governance of our association, first as Council Member, then as Vice President under Jane Desmond's wise leadership, and, finally, for the last four years, as President. As you can imagine, it is with mixed feelings that I speak to you today. It would be simply dishonest on my part not to admit that I am experiencing a sense of relief at the idea that, in a couple of days, I will no longer have any managing responsibilities, and I will go back to being a simple "grassroots" IASA member. It would be equally hypocritical, however, to make no mention of the slight sadness I feel at this moment, knowing that an experience to me as significant and intense as the IASA presidency has ended. It is not for me to say whether I have been up to the task. What I can, and what I indeed wish to say today on my years as president, are essentially two things. First, I wish to thank all the people who helped me in manifold ways over the course of these four years. I cannot mention all of them here as the list would be way too long. Let me at least say thanks to all the IASA members who served on the Executive Council from 2011 to 2015, to our current Executive Director Manju Jaidka, and our current Vice-President and Treasurer Manuel Broncano, and to former IASA presidents Djelal Kadir, Paul Giles, and Jane Desmond, and to *RIAS* editor-in-chief Cyraina Johnson-Roullier. Their counsel and advice has been invaluable. But what is even more invaluable and long lasting—what is the most truly rewarding part of my presidential experience—are the bonds of friendship I have formed with so many of the people I have just mentioned as well as with many others. These friendships will go on, I hope, for many years to come. I also wish to take this opportunity to thank my graduate assistant Pilar Martinez Benedì, who, besides helping me in all sorts of ways, has devoted so much time and energy to ensure the survival of our website after our old server was hacked.

The second topic I wish to touch upon is, of course, the state of the IASA. Let me begin by saying that, in terms of sheer

numbers, our membership has slightly but constantly increased over the years. Most importantly, we have acquired new members in areas of the globe where we were formerly absent. I am thinking in particular of Africa. We now have members in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, but also in Senegal and Ghana. Moreover, we have also put pressure on our members to pay their dues regularly each year. Our efforts have met with some success, and I trust the new governing board of the association will persist along this road. For an organization that relies only—let me repeat it, *only*—on its members' dues, and enjoys no institutional support whatsoever, the modest, scaled-by-country-and-academic-rank contribution we ask, is simply vital. And let me remind all of you that the money we collect goes entirely, and exclusively, to support IASA collective activities. It is used, that is, to publish our journal *RIAS* (of which I will say more in a minute), to pay for our website, and to fund the Emory Elliott Prize. Not one single penny thus far has gone to reimburse the work or travel expenses of the members of the governing body of the association, whose President, officers, and council members must all seek outside funding to take part in IASA activities such as the World Congress.

We should be grateful to the friends and colleagues who have kept the IASA alive and well over the years, in an age of aggressive, ruthless neo-liberalism that has seen the slashing of higher education budgets nearly everywhere. Academics, in most of the many countries I have some contact with, have often seen their workload increase considerably but not their paychecks. Moreover, they are often presented by politicians and the corporate media as belonging to a privileged caste, reluctant to embrace the principles of competitive globalization. Under these conditions, it is hardly surprising that many academics, including many IASA members, are hesitant to take on responsibilities that cannot be of use to the advancement or consolidation of their careers. Unfortunately, in many academic venues working for the IASA is not, or at least not yet recognized as a form of service to the profession deserving official recognition. This is most likely one of the reasons why some of our initiatives have not met with the quick success we hoped for. The case of our journal, *RIAS—The Review of International American Studies*, is in many ways paradigmatic. *RIAS*, as many

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of you know, started out as a newsletter, but the IASA Council later decided to turn it into a full-fledged, peer-reviewed journal. This decision was initially greeted with excitement, but moving from project to actual production was more difficult than we expected. I will not go now into all the details of a story to which we will have to go back during the IASA general assembly, at the tail end of this Congress. Here I only want to say that, leaving aside the technical, logistical, and of course, intellectual problems connected to the production of a scholarly journal, the *RIAS* project has proved difficult to manage because it requires a level of continued commitment that is not easy to reconcile with the other professional responsibilities we all have. I do hope, however, that after signing a contract with the University of Silesia Press, thanks to our colleague Paweł Jędrzejko, and with the journal now on the Open Journal System platform, all the basic production problems have been solved. With the help of all of you—I want to say it again, by slightly raising my voice—*with the help of all of you*, of all the IASA members who are here today, and the many who are not but very much wished they could be here, *RIAS* will not only survive, but prosper as the excellent scholarly journal we all wish it to be. In this connection, let me add that a new issue of *RIAS* has just come out, and it can be read on the journal's website, where you can also download either the whole issue or individual articles, and archive them on to your pc. This issue, I am happy to say, includes the three plenaries from our Sixth World Congress.

II

*Have you seen the stars tonight?*
*Have you looked*
*At all the family of stars?*
—Paul Kantner

Moving now from logistical to more properly intellectual matters, as I did in my previous presidential address in Szczecin, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some thoughts on the theme of this year's world congress. I do not have the inordinate ambition, with what will be for the most part rather sketchy and unsystematic remarks, to offer an intellectual template for the days to come. All I wish is to present you with some

observations on one or two of the several interesting points raised in the text that introduces this congress's Call for Papers. Let me begin by saying that, when I read this nicely constructed text, the first thing that came to my mind was that we were leaving behind the sea-imagery of the Szczecin congress to embrace the starry heavens above. From the boundless oceans, our critical eyesight was being redirected to the even larger, infinite sky over our heads. From a liquid space, difficult to map and yet, as I suggested in my address of two years ago, by no means impenetrable by economic, national, and transnational forces, we were now being asked to project our critical imagination onto the ungraspable, airy skies, and to borrow our metaphors no longer from seafaring but from astronomy and, perhaps, even from its degraded twin, astrology. Constellations, galaxies, stars, and orbits: these are some of the extremely suggestive keywords we have been asked to think about in relation to the field of American Studies and, in particular, of international American Studies.

Yet the ocean and sky imageries are less distant from each other than one may at first realize. In fact, a beautiful literary passage joining the two immediately came to my mind as soon as I read the Seoul Congress Call for Papers, and I thought of it in relation to the Szczecin one. It is a passage from, guess what?, *Moby-Dick*, of course—the one in Chapter 110, where Ishmael describes Queequeg's sudden fever, and his request that the ship carpenter build for him a coffin-canoe similar to the ones he had seen white people buried in.



> [T]he fancy of being so laid had much pleased him; for it was not unlike the custom of his own race, who, after embalming a dead warrior, stretched him out in his canoe, and so left him to be floated away to the starry archipelagoes; for not only do they believe that the stars are isles, but that far beyond all visible horizons, their own mild, uncontinented seas, interflow with the blue heavens; and so form the white breakers of the milky way. (418)

Long before science fiction would replace exotic islands with remote planets, and the uncharted seas with interstellar space, Melville was already fantasizing about canoes turning into starships and the sea foam transfigured into nebulas.

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This is not the first time in the novel that Ishmael sees the watery world as an analogue to what Ralph Waldo Emerson referred to in *Nature* as "the City of God" (9). In chapter 57, "Of Whales in Paint; in Teeth; in Wood; in Sheet-Iron; in Stone; in Mountains; in Stars," Ishmael insists that "a thorough whaleman" can discern images of whales where others would see none. Thus, if graced with a lucky point of view, while travelling through the mountains, you might be able to "catch passing glimpses of the profiles of whales defined along the undulating ridges."

> Nor when expandingly lifted by your subject, can you fail to trace out great whales in the starry heavens, and boats in pursuit of them; as when long filled with thoughts of war the Eastern nations saw armies locked in battle among the clouds. Thus at the North have I chased Leviathan round and round the Pole with the revolutions of the bright points that first defined him to me. And beneath the effulgent Antarctic skies I have boarded the Argo-Navis, and joined the chase against the starry Cetus far beyond the utmost stretch of Hydrus and the Flying Fish.
>
> With a frigate's anchors for my bridle-bitts and fasces of harpoons for spurs, would I could mount that whale and leap the topmost skies, to see whether the fabled heavens with all their countless tents really lie encamped beyond my mortal sight! (245–46)

By projecting the hunt for the whale into the skies, Ishmael emphasizes how much his oceanic adventure is both real and metaphysical—a hunt for a marketable commodity, and a search after knowledge and the very foundations of Being.

Of course one can be hardly surprised by Ishmael's intense attraction to the arabesques of the night sky, which is shared by writers and poets of all times and countries, as my colleague at Sapienza, Piero Boitani, has recently illustrated in his monumental *Il grande racconto delle stelle*—the great story of the stars—a six-hundred page account of how, from antiquity to postmodernity, both literature and the visual arts have looked at stars in order to articulate human beings' hopes and utopias, their fears and terrors, their sense of beauty and their existential dread. However, I want to resist the temptation to dwell on the many wonderful instances of what the Latins used to call *contemplatio coeli*—the contemplation of the sky—in the literatures and the arts of the Americas, in order to focus, instead, on the hermeneutic impulse that shapes our relation to the celestial bodies in the first place, and which

is so well illustrated by images like that of Ishmael's "starry archipelagoes." I wish to do that by asking a few questions on what I take to be the most important word in the thematic description of our congress, the word *constellation*. What is so attractive for literary and cultural studies in the image of the constellation? Why of late do many of us like to refer to the texts we choose to study together, or the ideas we strive to bring in conversation with one another across continents as well as across disciplines, as constellations? Why, while in the past it was customary to speak of canons and traditions, nowadays many scholars often prefer to speak of constellations?

The comparatist Mads Rosendal Thomsen, for example, has proposed that we map world literature as a series of literary constellations comprising "very different texts [that] share features that make them stand out on the literary canopy" (4). The notion of the constellation allows critics to mediate similarity and difference, the near and the far. Constellations, as astronomers like to repeat, are not "real," by which they mean of course that while the stars we see at night are unquestionably real, concrete objects whose existence is independent of our point of view, constellations are indeed products of our imagination, invented lines connecting dots that are distant in both time and space—some of the stars we contemplate, for all we know, might have died a long time ago, though we still see them shining. There is, simply put, nothing "natural" about a constellation. Whereas canons are supposed to be the expression of some underlying national *geist*, constellations seem to be indifferent to notions of totality and can draw together different cultural objects heedless of their provenance, their time of production, their status. Even though, as Theo D'Haen, one of the founding fathers of the IASA, has observed, Thomsen does not mention Walter Benjamin, it is virtually impossible not to think of Benjamin's, and perhaps also Theodore Adorno's reiterated use of the term, as being an inspiration for Thomsen's concept of the literary constellation (D'Haen, 2012: 160). As Martin Jay has written, the concept of the constellation was important to the two German thinkers because it signified "a juxtaposed rather than integrated cluster of changing elements that resist

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reduction to a common denominator, essential core, or generative first principle" (14–15).

By allowing for the drawing together of disparate elements not on the basis of some common "essence" or origin, the concept of the constellation is especially attractive to both comparatists and international Americanists, who, as suggested by the drafters of the congress's Call for Papers, have employed it—either implicitly or explicitly—to reconfigure the field of comparative American studies. To quote another example, in an essay tellingly titled "Against Totality," Florian Sedlmeier proposes the tracing of what he calls "intermedial literary constellations" as "a microscopic foil to the literary historiographies of planetary totality" (64), which he sees as the shared goal of the opposite yet complementary methodologies of theorists of world literature Gayatri Spivak and Franco Moretti. Literary constellations would then stand in the same relation to the millions of extant but panoptically unknowable texts comprising the universe of world literature, as astronomical constellations do in relation to the millions of known and unknown, visible and invisible stars of the unmappable, infinite skies over our heads.

One of the most interesting embodiments of a constellational strategy might be found in a work, which, while often quoted as exemplary of the transnational turn in American Studies, actually never mentions the word constellation. I am referring to Wai-chee Dimock's *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time*. Though Dimock never claims to be "constellating" American texts with texts and cultural artifacts from other parts of the world, and from ages as remote as ancient India and Egypt, by connecting Henry James to *Gilgamesh* and Thoreau to the *Baghavad Gita,* she compellingly and boldly reconfigures the landscape of American literature with the aim of reviving "our very sense of connectedness among human beings" (5). What distinguishes Dimock's literary transnationalism from the one practiced by the majority of other participants in the transnational turn, is that, as Bruce Robbins has noted, its aim is to combine cosmopolitanism in space with cosmopolitanism *in time*. The concept of "deep time" is meant by Dimock to facilitate the creation of new literary and cultural constellations subverting not only older, institutionalized notions

of what a "national" literature might look like, but also somewhat conventional comparativist canons built around homogenous time frames. It is one thing, in other words, to study, say, Whitman and Dickinson by resituating them within the transatlantic context of English and European Romanticism, and quite another to connect them to ages and countries as remote and heterogeneous as the stars forming a constellation are from each other.

Dimock's work has been both praised for its erudition and visionary imagination, and criticized for, among other things, unwittingly colonizing the whole planet under the banner of American literature. According to Djelal Kadir, for example, while Dimock intends to show how American texts are traversed by deep time, the reverse movement implied in the subtitle of the book grants American literature an appropriative capacity so that "her book betrays a record of inadvertent complicity, reflexive appeasement, and expedient collusion with her own imperial time" (372). This is not the right occasion for an in-depth analysis of Dimock's work. My intention, in calling attention to her book, is simply to show that even in a praiseworthy attempt to rethink literature beyond customary geographical as well as chronological boundaries, there is always the risk that, as our Call for Papers reads, American Studies will remain "very much within the bounds of a single constellation centering on the US." More importantly, perhaps, her study shows that even a constellational notion of literature and culture—a notion of literary and cultural space not only as wide as the planet, but thousands of years "deep"—presents problems of its own. Indeed, as Frank McGurl has written, if Dimock's idea "is to plumb the depths of deep time, why not scrap the idea of 'American literature' altogether?" And why not radicalize—as McGurl himself aims to do with his own project of the "posthuman comedy"—"Dimock's expansion of the timeframe in which we view the institution of literature, reclaiming the term deep time from her essentially Braudelian usage [...] measured, at most, in thousands of years" and returning it to "its original geological meaning" (537–38)? The question, of course, is what might be the fate of American Studies from a post-human or even a non-human perspective—what would happen, in other words, if rather than thinking of ourselves as the tracers of constellations, we

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were to gaze at the stars and found ourselves, as McGurl puts it, "unable now to shake the knowledge that reason, too, is sure to be engulfed in a larger darkness" (539). These are questions that go well beyond the already ambitious scope of our Congress—questions we might want to explore in future gatherings of the IASA. If I raise them here, it is only to emphasize that the constellation can be much more than a fancy name for bringing together the small and the large, the close and the distant, the high and the low. Simply put, there are philosophical, cultural, and of course ethical implications in the idea of constellation that need to be explored as much as the actual constellations we draw on our scholarly canopies.

One of the most obvious places to begin such exploration, as I already hinted, is Walter Benjamin's and Theodore Adorno's work. What Susan Buck-Morrs has written of Benjamin's constellations, in particular—that they were "discontinuous" and "[l]ike atoms, like cells, like solar systems they each had their own center: without hierarchy, they stood next to each other 'in perfect independence and unimpaired'" (94)—resonates beautifully with our Call for Papers' invitation "to re-center American Studies on separate, parallel and/or intertwined histories of [...] diverse constellations." One of the greatest attractions of the concept of the constellation is in fact that—as I have insisted thus far—it can aid the project of thinking and feeling beyond the nation that is of course one of the main *raison d'etre* of the project of international American Studies in general, and of the IASA in particular. For both Benjamin and Adorno, the dialectical process of constructing constellations was a way—to quote Buck-Morrs again—"to juxtapose seemingly unrelated, unidentical elements, revealing the configuration in which they congealed or converged" (99). Drawing constellations was a way, that is, to preserve the contradictory nature of the world and illuminate both how similar objects might in fact be radically heterogeneous, and how different, or even opposite ones, could coalesce into unexpected similarities. What is especially significant for our purposes is that this process would allow the seemingly paradoxical invitation to re-center American Studies without, however, reneging the de-centering project so crucial to transnational and international American Studies.

If I have chosen to stress in the title of my talk this need to re-center explicitly mentioned in the Congress Call for Papers, it is not so much because I think that, like all critical "turns," also the "transnational" or "international" one has its ebbs and flows, so that after much de-centering and de-constructing it is now time to search for an origin around which to begin rebuild a disciplinary field now in ruins. The way I interpret the call to re-center American Studies along a potentially endless number of discrete, yet perhaps—but only perhaps—parallel or tangentially connected constellations, is not as an appeal to return to *one* centered system, but as a request to claim responsibility for the centers that we create as international cultural critics. Let me try to say this a bit better. In a famous, wonderful line of his often-opaque book on German Baroque drama, Benjamin writes that, "Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars" (34). The first thing to say about this comparison, in my view, is that it preserves the materiality of objects. Just as you would have no star-maps without stars, ideas could not take shape without things. Ideas, however, belong to a different order as compared to objects. Ideas, as Benjamin insists, "are neither their concepts nor their laws." "Ideas are, rather, their virtual arrangement, their objective interpretation" (34). Ideas, as the Italian critic Romano Luperini puts it in his comment on this Benjaminian passage, impart a meaning to things that is both "objective" and "virtual" in the same way that also a constellation is both objective and virtual (Luperini, 1990: 102). No constellation can exist without an objectively given configuration of stars; however, for the pattern to take shape you need the meaning making gaze of the interpreter, whose outlook is of course in turn shaped by social and cultural conventions, though it cannot be simply reduced to them.

To re-think American Studies under the sign of the constellation, therefore, means not only to be constantly reminded that all the traditional configurations of old were conventional, debatable ones, but also that the new ones we have been able to draw, depend on the erection of new stargazing posts that are ultimately arbitrary too. While a center-less American Studies is not only a practical impossibility, but, at least to my mind, more a dystopia than a utopia, a polycentric disciplinary field would be

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one in which we accept full intellectual and ethical responsibility for the constellations we create.[2] I realize I am not saying anything new. Jane Desmond, some years ago, was already arguing eloquently in favor of what she called "prismatic American Studies"—a disciplinary field shaped by "multiple points of view and scholarly standpoints" in which all participants would be at one and the same time "insiders" and "outsiders," "near" and "far." In her essay, however, Desmond was also careful to emphasize that whatever conversation one wished to create between culturally, methodologically, and even linguistically diverse points of view would not be necessarily a smooth, easy undertaking, but one likely to be fraught with frictions as much as with intellectually stimulating exchanges. That is why, I submit, when the Congress organizers call simultaneously for a re-centering of the field that would be consistent with the promotion of "center-less multidirectional exchanges," the image of heavenly bodies orbiting one another, might be a touch too idealistic in its quasi-Dantesque evocation of a well-balanced rotation of celestial spheres. This might indeed be the moment to mention that constellations can be as liberating as they can be constrictive. It is surely no accident that the first occurrence of the word "constellation" in this Congress's Call for Papers is from the Flag Act of 1777, as if to remind all of us that any "new constellation" can sanction rebellion (against the British Crown, in this case) as much as oppression (of slaves, Native Americans, women, lower classes). The US Flag has been, especially since the Civil War, a totem pretty much up for grabs, brandished in turn by both the Left and the Right, by pacifists and warmongers, by Klan members and Civil Rights activists. Several books and countless essays have been written on the flag wars, and all the legal and political controversies related to the public use of the flag: an eloquent testimony to the fact that constellations can be put to widely different cultural uses. They might be—as Walter Benjamin hoped—instruments for redeeming a world

2. My idea of the literary constellation may be close to what Shu-Mei Shih describes as a "literary arc." "Instead of aiming for global synthesis, the notion of a literary arc links multiple nodes, and a text can enter into relation with other texts anywhere along it, illuminating specific issues within a time period or across time periods" (434).

of ruins and violence, but we need never lose sight of the fact that stars have been often pasted on flags waved in calls for bloody national sacrifices, thus helping to usher in the violence and ruins from which we then need to be redeemed.

The remapping of American Studies we hope to accomplish with our Congress—to stick to the metaphor of the night sky that has reigned over my talk—will of course be a provisional one. There will be many stars that will not be captured by our constellations and others that will belong in more than one star map. Moreover, just as we know that there are literally millions of stars that remain invisible to the naked eye even on the clearest night, we should always bear in mind that our constellations can capture only a small part of the starry heavens. They are but partial maps, and always in the making. The stories they tell us, like the myths of old, are forever shifting and changing. This, far from being a source of discouragement should be a healthy reminder that while our business as critics and scholars has to do with the production of knowledge, the desire to know often begins with a sense of wonder and bafflement, so similar to the one we experience as stargazers. The fear that science might erase what, in another but I think ultimately related context, Francis Scott Fitzgerald described as "something commensurate to [man's] capacity for wonder" has been registered in so many poems and stories featuring night skies. Perhaps the best-known example from US literature is Walt Whitman's "When I Heard the Learn'd Astronomer." Ultimately "tired and sick" (228) not so much by learning as by science's suffocation of man's penchant for the sublime, the poet leaves the lecture-room and wanders off "in the mystical moist night-air" to look "in perfect silence at the stars." Complicating further Whitman's scenario, Benjamin would note in his essay "To The Planetarium," that

> [n]othing distinguishes the ancient from the modem man so much as the former's absorption in a cosmic experience scarcely known to later periods. Its waning is marked by the flowering of astronomy at the beginning of the modem age [...]. [T]he exclusive emphasis on an optical connection to the universe, to which astronomy very quickly led, contained a portent of what was to come. The ancients' intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance. For it is in this experience alone that we gain certain knowledge of what

is nearest to us and what is remotest to us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modem men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights. (92–93)

Though it is rather unlikely that the community of Americanists gathered here for a few days—diverse and exciting as it surely is—will produce the intoxication of those collective rituals that made cosmic experiences possible, I hope that our being together *as a community* in Seoul will allow all of us to experience something richer and more rewarding than an individualized frisson. By sharing our knowledge and comparing our star maps, we might be able to reach a communal ecstasy of sorts: not the ecstasy bordering on insanity of saints and seers, but, more modestly, that of finding ourselves, if only for some brief moments, "displaced" and "out of place," both etymological meanings of the Greek *ekstasis*. I wish all of you, all of us, an ecstatic congress, full of wonders and surprises to be enjoyed collectively.

Thank you.

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Review of International American Studies
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall–Winter № 2/2016
ISSN 1991–2773



# RE-SIGNIFYING "ASIA" IN THE TRANSNATIONAL TURN OF ASIAN/AMERICAN STUDIES

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## I. ASIAN AMERICAN CRITIQUE AND INTER-ASIA CULTURAL STUDIES: RETHINKING THE COLD WAR CONDITIONS OF US EMPIRE IN (EAST) ASIA

For the current work on liberal democracy, universal humanism and human rights law in both American studies and Asian American critique, the question of whether or not the US remains a superpower in the post-Cold War globalizing economy is still at stake.[1] In their discussion, Hardt and Negri argue for the emergence of empire as a construct of multiple competing forces without the centralized regulatory power of an individual state. New forms of global governance entailed by various flows of culture, capital and people denote the decline of US imperialism as a dominating hegemon in this global era (XV). Whereas scholars such as Hardt and Negri theorize a supranational constitution of empire that is marked by the deregulations of free market across national boundaries, many others call for a reexamination of the history of US imperialism and its re-articulation of hegemonic power as a new world order. To declare the end of US imperialism, as Inderpal Grewal argues, dismisses economic and social inequalities occasioned by the earlier colonial histories that continuously

1. I would like to thank the IASA selection committee for including me in this special issue. This essay is part of my ongoing reflection on the broader questions of colonialism, imperialism and the Cold War. I would like to express my gratitude to Lisa Lowe, Lisa Yoneyama, Amie Parry, Todd Henry, Jin-kyung Lee, Pin-chia Feng, Chandan Reddy, Naifei Ding, Josen Diaz, Junghyun Hwang for their valuable help and insights in the process of thinking through this paper.

provide advantages for the conditions of US hegemonic power at present (21). According to her understanding, the transnational project of neoliberalism advanced by the US rewrites the American ways of living, and ideas of liberal democracy into consumer cultures in global circuits of what she terms "transnational connectivities"; that is, how the new technologies of communication, production and consumption contribute to the transnationalization of US nationalist underpinnings of freedom, humanity and rights (22–26). Critically reviewing the US reconstitution of neoliberal governance in the global market economy, Wendy Brown lays out a set of characteristics of US neoliberalism, those including neoliberal economic rationality, market profitability, and forms of self-governing moral subjects of democratic values, and capitalist development for the social functions of state power and market economy. She observes a blurring of democratic values and capitalist development in so far as democracy serves as the ends and means of capitalist accumulation and teleological development to be viewed as moral ethics of rationalization. US-led capitalist modernity in this sense underlies the hegemonic power by advancing American exceptional democracy through the overseas market expansion. Market-driven economy, modulated and adopted both within and outside the US soil, has been imagined as the most effective, if not solely viable, path of democratic transformation. As democratic values are being conflated with the neoliberal economic rationality, the entwined relationship between democracy and neoliberalism recreates the self-governing subjects complying with the morality of market economy in which capitalist development has been rendered the most viable form of historical progress. In other words, the integration and reorganization of economy and polity has transformed the political and social life into economic calculation where the autonomy of each has been dissolved (4–9). Aihwa Ong's accounts of "mutations" in citizenship and sovereignty offer another perspective of understanding US neoliberalism as flexible technologies of governing and self-governing that are deployed in a variety of regimes and ethnographic contexts in East and Southeast Asia. Ong's study reminds us of a contextualized understanding of American neocolonial relations as "the situated entanglements of geopolitics, market logics, exceptions, and ethical

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discourses" to illuminate how American neoliberalism has been experienced and operated in a transnational network of cultures. In her illumination, the interplay of neoliberalism as exception and exception to neoliberalism in Asia detaches citizenship from its adherence to state-regulated legality, and reformulates citizenship into alignment with market logics and strategies (15–18). Her revisiting of flexible citizenship in the neoliberal context of Asia challenges Hardt and Negri's dominant formulation of "empire" as a homogeneous entity of globalized capitalism because the historical complexity of Asian labor politics needs to be examined within the mutually constitutive forces at the global, national, and local levels across the regions in Asia and the Pacific.

As this scholarship stipulates the contemporary global conditions of neoliberalism in complicity with the consolidating US neocolonial domination as a world-transforming project, this essay pays particular attention to the US neocolonial Cold War conditions of power asymmetries in an inter-Asia context. After Japan's defeat, the post-World War II era heralded a critical moment for anti-colonial and anti-imperialist movements across the regions of Asia and the Pacific; however, the desire for decolonization and independence in Asia was soon codified by the Cold War divisions that were mobilized in the US conduct of the Korean War and Vietnam War. Functioning as a decided project of historical, political and ideological reformulation of power, the US Cold War restructured geopolitics in East Asia that fortified the national divisions of demarcated areas, and also reorganized the dominant understanding of the Cold War—a discourse that pits the purportedly oppositional knowledge production of democratic capitalism against social communism. In his influential book *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American-East Relations at the End of the Century*, Bruce Cumings observes that US economic and military hegemony in Asia is a continuation of Japanese colonialism. As he maintains, post-war Japan serves as subordinate partner to this US imperialist project in Asia in which the US continues its hegemonic power through the management of the Cold War and its allies with post-war Japan under the rubric of Western civilization and international developmental capitalism (16). Japanese colonialism in East Asia, including the colonial relations with Korea and Taiwan, has been

extended by the US hegemony in contemporary US-Asia relations that are entangled with the rising power of China throughout the Cold War until post-Cold War eras. To put it differently, the discourse of "globalization" in East Asia is deeply tied to a post-Cold War restructuring of knowledge and power from "the state's concern with the maintenance of Cold War boundary security to transnational corporations that, as the organized expression of the market, saw no geographic limit on their interests" (179).

Also looking at how Japanese colonialism and US imperialism are mutually constituted, Lisa Yoneyama's critical project demonstrates another compelling path to investigate the transpacific Cold War historical and cultural formations of war, memories, redress, violence and justice. In her discussion of memories in/of war in *Hiroshima Traces*, she has shown the power configurations of war memory as critical sites for interrogating transnational administrations and negotiations that are interwoven with the geopolitical histories of US, Japan and the associated East Asian countries such as China, Korea and Taiwan (44). In this critical methodology, she reads cultural significations and political effects of remembering, recounting, and recollecting the memories of the past as discursively and materially articulated in cultural productions and spatial reconstructions. In her continuous pursuit of this topic, she presents an invigorating critique of how the US administration of post-war world order confines the pursuit of historical justice and redress to the US legal parameters while obscuring our critique of Japanese war crimes and the Americanization of postwar justice. Bringing the critique to a focus on the US Cold War militarism and post-Cold War redress movement, Yoneyama is able to show how globalization of political economy and militarism reinforce the imperialist project of US hegemony across the globe. In particular, she advances our understanding of how the trans-war historical justice has been largely incorporated in and negotiated through the US juridico-political regime of redress and reparation by producing the Asian/American redressive subjects, a process she calls "Americanization of redress and historical justice" (57). The Americanization of postwar justice, as Yoneyama maintains, recasts the US war against Asia as a "good war" and reframes US war memories into a dominant national narrative of human-

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ity, democracy, and freedom by obscuring the imperialist violence generated by the US war involvement in these regions. This "imperialist myth" therefore precludes the possibility of redress for the injured subjects of the liberated as their liberation is itself an indication of reparation made to them prior to the violence inflicted upon them (80–81). Her analysis not only illuminates the complicity of Japanese colonial legacies and US Cold War imperialism, but also alludes to the emergence of the transpacific redressive subjects and cultures that complicate our conceptualization of Asian/American.

As Yoneyama's intellectual project performs transpacific Asian/American critique of the Cold War constitution of US neocolonialism and Japanese imperialism, Kuan-Hsing Chen's *Asia as Method* presents a correlated inter-Asia project of decolonization movement. Primarily engaging with the intellectual fields of Post-colonial Studies, Globalization Studies, and Asian Studies by foregrounding Asia as a focal analytics, inter-Asia cultural studies encourage a shift in inter-referencing to examine the interconnections of Asian countries as a condition of possibility for the Third World decolonization process. The process of decolonization, as Chen argues, requires a critical unpacking of the Cold War formations of US imperialism in Asia through a self-reflection on how the internalized imperialist mentalities and the Western worldviews are installed in our historical knowledge production (3, 4, 119, *et passim*). In his timely critique, the "discourse of the Southward Advance" in Taiwan—the ways in which Taiwan evokes its national supremacy and superiority in seeking resources, labor, and capital from the economically disadvantaged Southeast Asian countries—evinces Taiwan's "subimperialist imaginary" in its own formulation of ethno-nationalism entwined with Japanese colonialism and US imperialist desire (17–18). As postwar anticolonial nationalism in Asia has been embroiled in the Cold War historical systems of knowledge formations, Chen contends that de-Cold War, specifically referring to de-Americanization, becomes the most crucial process of the decolonization movement in Asia.

Critical of US racialized history, Lisa Lowe was one of the very first to articulate how the US wars in Asia have occasioned transpacific labor migration in the process of US empire building. Lowe's

landmark work places the history of Asian immigration as an index to the US state building and neocolonial expansion through the US war interventions in Asia until the global restructuring of economic development (7). Central to her argument, Lowe insists on Asian American cultural critique as a critical knowledge interrogation of the governing technologies of racialization and gendering through legal administration of citizenship (11). Rather than seeing Asian American as an identity category, she theorizes Asian American critique as an analytics of US power formations that are constitutive of Asian American racialization. Bringing Asian American cultural critique into critical conversation with inter-Asia cultural studies, I propose to rethink the transnational Asian/American historical conjunctures articulated, rearticulated and disarticulated within the geopolitical routes of intellectual activisms embedded in decolonization movements. One the one hand, I contemplate on the conditions of possibilities by linking Asian American cultural critique to inter-Asia cultural critique as a transnational project of social transformations. I assert that the theoretical insights of Asian American critique and inter-Asia cultural studies can be historical resources for each other, furthering intellectual sophistication and social transformation, as well as enabling a transpacific investigation of Asian and Asian American subject formations across differences of race, gender, sexuality, class and other organizing categories.

## II. (UN)LIKELY "THIRD WORLD" INTIMACIES

Exploring the relationships between literature, history and society, scholar of transnational feminisms, Neferti Tadiar, provides a critical methodology to analyze literature as a way to contemplate the political potential and social struggle that allows the space for the submerged histories of social experience and cultural life to emerge out of the national/capitalist narrative of developmentalism. Rather than regarding literature as representing the social realities or as a means of transcendence of humanity, she looks to literature for "creative possibility." In her formulation, literary works serve as "both ethnographic material (ethnography of social imagination as much as of actually lived life) and theoretical resource for writing an alternative history of the present,

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a history that foregrounds the creative work and transformative potential of marginalized social experiences and their unrecognized role in making of the contemporary world" (18). Her insight inspires my discussion of the nonfiction narrative in *Our Stories: Migration and Labour* by Yu-ling Ku. In conceiving literary work as a dense site of social dynamism and human experiences, I look at how the migrant narrative in *Our Stories* enables a transpacific exploration of the suppressed histories of the Cold War formations in Asia and the Pacific, and render legible the obscured intimacies among transnational migrant workers across the national divisions.

*Our Stories* is a nonfiction novel that consists of three sections of narratives organized around Ku's experience as a labor activist as well as her recollection of her own family's history in terms of both intra-regional and inter-regional migration and movement. The narration of labor and migration in *Our Stories* suggests that we consider the ways in which social and cultural practices of inter-Asian migration are often embedded within longer histories of colonialism, occupation, modernization and war. In linking the emergence of Asian modernity to the larger Cold War historical and political formations, the migrant narrative in *Our Stories* sheds light on multiple sites of inter-Asian migratory routes including the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan and China. Through a Cold War geopolitical remapping, *Our Stories* renders legible the transpacific entanglement between US Cold War, inter-Asia modernization and Chinese globalization by showing the inter-regional migration from Mainland China to Taiwan and vice versa as a result of economic integration and capitalist development. As Amie Elizabeth Parry points out, Ku's writing "rewrites or at least problematizes a Cold War version of positivist epistemology in Asia—a positivism whose modernity and authority is linked to rapid industrialization, and its attendant values and structures of feeling" as she exploits Cold War category to rearticulate the history of various life stories (Ku, 2011: 178). According to Parry's analysis primarily through her discussion of the first section "We/Us," *Our Stories* employs multiple narratives that transverse linear temporalities and geographies, recreating the historical intimacies of cross-racial labor migrations by bringing the multiple layers of temporalities into particular localities/cities/streets to make

legible the historical connections of domestic and transnational labor migration (179). In Ku's depiction, the distinctive ambience of the Zhongshan North Road in Taipei that had been recalled by Shu-hua, for example, illuminates a situated picture of the historical conjunctures of the Taiwanese migrant workers and their shared alienation and "foreignness" with the foreign migrant laborers. At the age of 18, the Taiwanese migrant worker Shu Hau, who migrated from a rural area to Taipei city in the 1960s as a hairdresser, finds this place particularly compelling because of its exotic aura and urban glamour; yet, she cannot help but feel like a stranger, alienated because of the urban transformations and industrialization as a result of the Cold War involvement in Asia's capitalistic development.

> As a unique place that was 'rented out' to foreigners who were living in Taipei at that time, the mixing of cultures and tastes had turned it into a foreign land in a local place. As Taiwanese, Shu-hua and Jiu-xiong felt strangely foreign to the place; they even felt somewhat shy and embarrassed, yet at the same time excited and curious. It had opened their eyes to a new and different world that seemed to remain beyond their reach. (Ku, 2011: 25)

The ambivalence of excitement and estrangement emanated from the urban splendors invokes precisely the historical memories of the Cold War, from the outbreak of the Korean War until the Vietnam War, which "rendered Taiwan like the Philippines, as key military base for the invading American army," turning this city area not only into a "back-up service" place for military needs but also a "paradise for American GI's rest and recreation" along with the flourishing of sex tourism and American consumerism (Ku, 2011: 26). As Ku comments on the inter-Asia historical interconnections of labor, migration, and national development through the lens of the Cold War, she narrates:

> Shu-hua, like many Taiwanese of her generation, who lived precisely at this historical juncture of the Cold War, only knew they should work doubly hard for their livelihood, save as much as they could earn, so as to leave poverty behind. Few among them realized of course, that the Philippines, which shared a similar fate to Taiwan as an American military outpost in the Pacific, was similarly locked within the global politics of Capitalism versus Communism. They were living on the same side of the iron curtain and had much in common with Taiwan. However few

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> Taiwanese like Shu-hua, were conscious of the fact that in both places, protest movements against American imperialism and the White Terror were being ruthlessly and brutally repressed, persecuted and crushed by their respective governments in collusion with the American state. (Ku, 2011: 27)

Through a juxtaposition of narratives about Shu-hua and Meriam, a Filipina migrant worker who was later married Shu-hua's son Chin-yi, Ku manages to render a non-linear narration about cross-generational memories and transnational migratory routes without rehearsing a dominant configuration of historical development. The historical nonlinearity in Ku's narratives facilitates a different understanding of the dynamic relationship between foreign migrant workers and Taiwanese subjects, projecting a shared space of mutual historical formulation as a result of the Cold War conditions in Asia. As Zhongshan North Road, where St. Christopher Church is located, starts to attract foreign migrant workers at the turn of the century to gather for Sunday mass in English, this street gradually transforms itself into one of Taiwan's most distinctive ethnoscapes. As a Taiwanese subject, Chin-yi experiences an unexpected sense of foreignness being in the unfamiliar environment where a mixture of English and Tagalog are spoken, and the normally "quiet and solemn" migrant workers become "self-confident, self-assured and high-spirited beings" (32). The shared foreignness among the varied historical subjects across generations, gender, race, and nationality significantly directs our attention to the sidelined discussion of inter-Asia connections by US Cold War modernity.

In foregrounding the Cold War conditions as that *Our Stories* pressingly lays out, I would like to extend my discussion particularly through the examination of the third part "The Long Journey" to envision another critical genealogy of (un)likely illegal alliances among the *queer* subjects, queer in the sense of denoting non-normativity, illegality, and ephemerality. "The Long Journey" begins with a narrative of an *illegal* runaway migrant worker, Maria, and her spouse Edgar, both of whom migrated from an impoverished rural area of the Philippines. Ku describes how Maria, being a runaway migrant worker, reaches out to the TIWA office for assistance because she is pregnant, and is due to deliver in a month. All she

asks is that TIWA find her a safe place to deliver her baby secretly. The unlawful operation needs to be kept underground for she is afraid of being deported in the event of a police discovery. As Ku depicts, migrant domestic helpers and caretakers in Taiwan have been de-sexualized as subjects that have to "forgo their sexuality and sexual desires" (15) within this national and legal framework of laboring conditions. The fear of deportation that comes along with pregnancy puts them in a precarious and underground position at the margins of the law and society. Differently put, the domain of their sexuality and desires becomes where the technology of state power turns into the rule of law to deploy the state's political interests. The desexualization of their desires is a stringent re-politicization of their sexualities along the line of the rule of law, which is why "[t]hey usually relied on word of mouth to find a hospital that would agree to carry out the abortion" due to their illegal status. Ku's narrative also tells us that one of the outlets for their sexual desires would be seeking prostitution; however, their opportunities for *legal* sex were further deprived as the Taiwanese government abolished the licensed system of legal prostitution: "some of the employers of these migrant workers might still take them to Guisui Street's licensed brothels for safe and legal sex occasionally, so that these workers could have some sort of outlet" before its abrogation (215). I argue that it is informal economic exchange rather than the dominant national legal system that renders legible the queer contacts of these illegal subjects of the runaway migrant workers, the prostitutes, and the illegal "secret doctors" (*miyi* [密醫] in Taiwan) whose relationship need to be reimagined more than within the legal framework of human rights, national development, and neoliberalism. There is an informal class of medical reproductive labor in Taiwan that consists of laborers who were produced as supplements to the demand of a US-defined medical project of modernity in the 1950s–70s, but were driven underground by the professional society of the state as their practices were declared illegal as mi-yi, so-called "secret doctors." The *illegal* contact among transnational migrant workers and *miyi* outlaws bring to the foreground the obscured genealogy of the shared laboring experiences of the (Taiwanese) *mi-yi* informal caregivers and the (Filipino) "runaway" domestic and care workers

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across from historical timeframes, but also strikingly gestures toward the queer intimacies of the two at the present moment as one lives by performative illegal *miyi* labor, and the other looks for the "mi-yi" for illegal operations. The shade of each other ironically brings much needed light to each other's historical experiences of laboring, and their illegal status as social beings under the shadow of the Cold War.[2] As Parry elaborates, "the Cold War functions in the narration as an overlooked and obscured explanatory framework that sheds a very needed light on many conundrums of daily existence, while connecting Taiwan's migration patterns to larger historical shifts that are also formative of Asian American immigration" (177).

The uneasy alliance of illegal subjects points to how the exercise of state power compartments their histories into the nationalized legal structure that has brought them together but prevented them from seeing each other. To perform a critique of state violence in rendering another level of queer intimacies among the illegal subjects, I turn to another story about Hu-chong Ling and Ida based on a real legal case in *Our Stories*. In discussing this story about a disabled Taiwanese man and a female "foreign" caregiver, I explore the (im)possibility of reading a space of intimacies predicated on unconditional hospitality and forgiveness in a Derridarian sense, through the shared sense of loss. Ida is a live-in caregiver from Indonesia hired to provide assisted care for her Taiwanese employer Hu-chong, who became paralyzed due to a severe spine injury after a car accident. In a personal care residence, Ida offers the extremely labor-intensive home care for Hu-chong, who depends on Ida as "the key to his mobility and activities" (250). As a home caregiver for an ill patient like Ling, Ida has the most demanding round-the-clock care work, including housekeeping, nutritious meal preparations, assistance with personal hygiene,

2. Here I am referring to my research that traces the genealogies of the "mi-yi" (translated as "secret doctors") to explore how the scientific discourse of modernity converges with state politics that redefined the legality of medical knowledge and practices, thereby subjugating informal labor and non-orthodox practices to the margins of society. Part of this research has been published in *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*: "Governing 'Secrecy' in Medical Modernity: Knowledge Power and the *Miyi* Outlaws."

and incontinence care. After four months, Ida leaves without notice and becomes an absconded migrant worker. As Hu-chong sadly recalls, it was during the Chinese New Year holidays that Ida left him on the bed unattended. He felt overwhelmed by fear and desperation when thinking that he would have perished alone because of hunger or from being immersed in his own excrement. If his neighbor had not heard his scream for help, he would have died on his bed. Given the situation that Ida had run away, Hu-chong as an employer would be punished for his neglect of duty according to the state regulation and therefore would be deprived of his right to hire another migrant worker until Ida was found. Hu-chong told the State Attorney, "She ran away, I was nearly murdered, why should I have to prove that it was not my fault?" Driven by anger, disappointment, and fear, he decides to file a lawsuit against Ida for the offenses of abandonment and murder with intent (260).

This case can be simply translated as hostility between the native employer and the foreign employee. Rather than reading the already reified antagonism, I endeavor to provide another reading of queer intimacies into this case. One of the discernible levels of the intimacies is first registered through the ways in which Ida performs immaterial and affective labor in the domestic sphere of Hu-chong's house, where she provides the domestic and care services maintaining the sanitary conditions and the living functions of her employer's body by washing and feeding him that requires intimate bodily contact and affective care. The domestic space of family and bodies as an administered site of production and management has been made clear by Michel Foucault's discussion of biopower. Ann Stoler elaborates on Foucault's biopower by identifying the colonial racial configuration of intimacy. Stoler explains that the matters of intimacy, namely domestic arrangements, care and sexual services, divisions of domestic labor, and family relations and ideology, are the tangible domains of colonial power relations. It is through the domain of the intimate that one is able to trace the affectivities of colonial politics and imperial power (Stoler, 2010: 7). Alongside Stoler's discussion of the intimate in the late 19th century's European colonial power over its Asian colonies, I continue to pursue the ongoing contemporary neocolonial politics in the inter-Asia contexts of former colonies.

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Within the uneven development of global economy that continues the neocolonial domination of the global north over the south as well as geopolitics of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries since the 1980s, I analyze the forced "excremacy" between Hu-chong (Taiwan) and Ida (Indonesia) as more than a residual of former colonial prescriptions and practices. Rather I pursue the loss of family and intimacies as an index of the international division of labor within which third world formerly colonized women perform domestic reproductive labor and affectivities of "care" for the middle-class families of industrialized societies.[3] I use the word "excremacy" (excrement and intimacy) to suggest the asymmetries of power organized around the categories of race, gender, sexuality, class, and national economic relations in the reproduction of care, and the disagreeable consequences of the *shitty* intimacies between global capitalism and nation-states. Hu-chong feels betrayed by Ida's escape from "home/work," and it pains him whenever he recalls how well he had been treating Ida, even considering her as a "real" family member. The intimacies between Hu-chong and Ida allow us to reflect on the logic of patrilineal kinship ideology as "family" and the violence implicated in the institution of marriage and family. I suggest Ida's escape should be regarded much more as a betrayal of the forced "excremacy" than as a betrayal of Hu-chong himself. The betrayal of the "excremacy" therefore elicits another level of intimacies between Hu-chong and Ida: that is, their shared domesticity and disability, the alienation from their own bodies as "propertyless" subjects who do not own the autonomy of their movement. In other words, Ida's escape from the intimate relations unravels their forced intimacies constructed around their vulnerabilities. Only as the forced "excremacy" is fractured at the moment when Ida breaks it will another level of cross-racial intimacies possibly surface.[4] The momentary flash of possibilities for such intimacies

3. My use of this word "excremacy" to refer to the first level of forced intimacies is inspired by Chandan Reddy's comments on an earlier version of this part of discussion. I would like to express my gratitude to him for his suggestions and insights.

4. My discussion of cross-racial intimacies is informed by Lisa Lowe's "The Intimacies of Four Continents," in which she addresses the potential

is quickly foreclosed when Hu-chong arranges to bring in an indictment against Ida.

Rather than reading Ida's escape and Hu-chong's accusation of her as a complete rupture of their relations. I argue on the contrary that both Ida's escape and Hu-chong's lawsuit perform a critique of law and reveal major limitations in the discourse of rights. Ida's case is not a particular incident but a symptomatic example of multiple structures of juridical, political, and capitalistic oppressions facing the migrant workers. The reason behind Ida's flight is unknown. However, the moment when she plans her escape from Hu-chong, she is already defying the law, the contract, and her disability/domestication from the alleged *protection* ensured by the law and human rights. Her violation of the law implicates her distrust and critique of law that is supposed to protect her rights as a human being. If Ida's flight can be regarded as a critique of the unjust law, then how can we analyze Hu-chong's legal resort as a critique of law itself? In his three statements that explain why he wants to file the lawsuit, he first of all reiterates his hurt feelings and blames Ida for her heartless abandonment of him. Secondly, he stresses the unfairness of the fact that illegal migrant workers have a better chance to earn more money than law-abiding workers. Lastly, he points out that he would have died in a pool of his own waste had he not been discovered (Ku, 2011: 260). Upon a closer examination of his statements, one would realize the real object/person he files complaint against is what/who could have made him die. What is killing him on his bed is not Ida. It is the power of state policies that disclaim his right to hire another domestic worker as punishment for his *impotence* in insufficiently domesticating/disciplining his *maid*. What is killing him is that the government will not grant him the rights to apply for home healthcare services provided by the state if he has already applied for foreign domestic helpers. To put it differently, his real object/person of complaint is the state violence of the law, not Ida. That reason for why he can only hold Ida accountable tells exactly the impossibility of law and rights. His appeal to law for justice is eventually confined

alliances of rebellions that derive from inner contradictions of the intimacies of four continents.

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by the law that has held him against Ida, for both of them are located within the preoccupation of legal justice. The same legal system limits their pursuit of justice within the confines of state-recognized legality, preventing them from filing their charges against the state violence that is unjustly entrenched by law. The impossibility to claim justice guaranteed by the state compels me to contemplate on the rupturing possibilities of the cross-racial intimacies that exceed the bounds of the nation, the contingent coalitions of their shared critique of state, law, and human rights.

Soon after he files the lawsuit, Hu-chong does feel regret. In his second investigation at court, Hu-chong decides to drop the indictment against Ida even though the police have not captured her yet. He tells the judge and everybody in court, "Between fairness, justice, and tolerance, I choose tolerance" (261). The Chinese characters, bao-rong (包容), translated "tolerance", are not entirely about tolerance, or sympathy for practices that are different from or conflicting to one's own. Bao in Chinese suggests embracing, being receptive to and accommodating whatever may come, with an implicated cosmopolitan mentality. Rong means to allow, to forgive, to tolerate, to open up to include what you like or dislike. Hu-chong's speech suggests the different possibilities of gesturing towards hospitality that are not entirely exhausted by the law as it signifies how he tends to open himself up and embrace whatever may come to his life as a form of forgiveness. I do not mean to dismiss the implicated hierarchies between Hu-chong and Ida, but I suggest that his attempt to withdraw the charge recasts his doubt on law, and signals a gesture of moving and thinking of redress beyond the realms of state-governed rights. However, the judge explains to Hu-chong that his charge is irrevocable because murder is an indictable crime. This indicates how the emerging justice of forgiveness is immediately contained by the juridico-political system again. Namely, the queer intimacies of (un)likely alliances are constantly being interrupted by the law. Despite the legal interruptions, the possibilities of human experiences—those immeasurable affectivities and the adamant sediments that have been produced and reproduced by the speech/act of "I chose bao-rong"—should not be completely relegated to the footnotes of history. I suggest we regard the "unexhausted" laboring effects

and acts in the novel as significant traces of the longer histories of colonialism, the US Cold War, and neoliberal globalization that continue to reshape our new world order.

This cross-historical query about the queer intimacies of (il)legal alliances endeavors to explore an alternative of ethics to enable the emergence of different historical imaginations. The scope of my analysis that underscores inter-Asian connections re-conceptualizes a transnational framework of Asian/American perspectives without collapsing the potentials of literary and cultural studies to the late-Cold War politics of comparative "area" studies within nationalized divisions and disciplinary demarcations of knowledge. In this reading, I have theorized "Asia" at the critical conjectures of Asian American cultural critique and inter-Asia cultural studies by putting these fields into conversation with each other alongside the novel. I have done so with the goal of furthering our collaborative intellectual effort to imagine the uneasy but necessary connections of Asian/American cultural critique and Inter-Asian cultural studies as fields that provide visions of social transformation.

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Review of International American Studies
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall–Winter № 2/2016
ISSN 1991–2773



# MONEY, POWER, AND IMMIGRANT SONS IN CHANG-RAE LEE'S *NATIVE SPEAKER*:

## Looking for the American Father

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"It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single country in possession of a good fortune must be in want of immigrants." This reading of Chang-rae Lee's novel, *Native Speaker,* takes its cue from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* to examine the role of money and social position in the desires—overt or disguised—of immigrants arriving in the United States, desires plotted, dramatized and performed in much of Asian American literature from the earliest publications in Chinese-language poems chronicled as Gold Mountain songs to contemporary non-fiction texts and novels.[1]

Born in 1965 in Korea and accompanying his parents to the US in 1968, Lee is categorized as a one-and-a-half generation American, whose formation of self, acculturation or assimilation, and command of English are fairly distinctive from that of first-generation immigrants like his parents.[2] Lee's first novel *Native Speaker* appearing in 1995 when he was only thirty, and still broadly considered the best of his five novels, is ostentatiously a domestic tale, a marriage plot of a relationship gone awry, with the Korean American husband, Henry Park, psychologically working on himself

1. See Marlon K. Hom's translations of Cantonese songs published in 1911 and 1915 and Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir *The Woman Warrior*, where the immigrant mother persists in working in the fields despite her age and attainment of material comfort.

2. See Chang-rae Lee's "The Faintest Echo of our Language" (1990). This autobiographical essay/creative non-fiction narrative discusses, in particular, Lee's relationship with his mother and issues of language and assimilation.

to win back his dissatisfied white wife, Leila, the narrative concluding in a strongly suggested happily-ever-after reconciliation scene. On one level, this mating-marriage tale is a male version of chick-lit; but on every other level that matters, the marriage plot serves as romance appeal to a more complicated convergence of three other US/or US-related narrative traditions—the immigrant story of assimilative struggle and eventual success toward full American national identity, often taken as the master plot for many ethnic American narratives, whether non-fiction or fiction[3]; second, the genre of espionage/detective novels, like Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*[4]; and third, socio-political-economist fictions, such as Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* and William Dean Howells' *The Rise of Silas Lapham,* that dramatize the tragic dynamics between ambition, money, power and moral loss. This last tradition, particularly assertive in a socio-political domain constructed on a capitalist superstructure, continues to drive much of the American imagination, as demonstrated in popular culture, in films such as *Wall Street*, *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*, and *The Wolf of Wall Street*.[5]

*Native Speaker* meshes these four major novelistic traditions, to offer a late 20th century narrative of the formation of the new immigrants in the US, a nation with a different melting pot dynamic, where earlier Euro-and, particularly, Anglo-norms are contested by multicultural, multilingual forces driven by globalized hyper-capitalist superstructures. In this unsettled setting, the common 20th century master plots of white-as-native tensions with non-white-immigrant-as-the-Other are interrogated, fragmented and re-assembled in a kinetic metropolis of multiple

3. Mary Antin's 1924 *The Promised Land*, Lin Yutang's 1949 *Chinatown Family*, and Carlos Bulosan's 1943 *America is in the Heart* offer exemplars of this national assimilation narrative.

4. See Tina Chen's "Impersonation and Other Disappearing Acts: The Double(d) Agent of Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker.*" *Double Agency: Acts of Impersonation in Asian American Literature and Culture*, for a discussion of the novel's deployment of the genre of espionage narratives.

5. Ashley Clarks' 2014 review "Ten Great Films About Money" does a nice summative survey of movies from 1936 to Martin Scorsese's 2014 *The Wolf of Wall Street* <http://www.bfi.org.uk/news-opinion/news-bfi/lists/10-great-films-about-money>.

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Otherness, in which money and power, two intrinsically intertwined forces, rule. In the novel's increasingly melodramatic narration of disillusionment, violence and murder, its more primal emotional trajectory arguably is not heterosexual romance, with which the novel begins and ends, but with the quest for a male identity congruent with the US nation. In the novel, male identity is problematized by its embedded contextualization in multiple-tongued, duplicitous and abject ethnic identities, still subordinate or subaltern to white-Anglophone-centric norms. The elder Korean male figures (the father, the political mentor), present in the novel, fail to, or cannot, serve as American fathers.[6] Without fathers able to nurture the immigrant son to a psychologically successful manhood (dramatized as a subject possessing authentic agency with the capacity to sustain intimate and social relationships), the novel's late 20th century re-inscription of the quintessentially American theme of quest for individual self takes the English language (also allegorized in the figure of the upper-class white wife, Leila) as the sentimental trope by which a national manhood is to be achieved—a post-immigrant salvation that is figuratively and literally articulated.

We see this male immigrant drama most clearly in the protagonist, the one-a-half-generation Korean American Henry Park, and his initial alienation from his father and his Korean origins. The complication in Henry's filial aversion, a manifestation of what the cultural theorist Rey Chow has dubbed as *ethnic abjection*, must be understood not simply as a character. Rather, Henry's developing contempt, hostility and rejection of his first-generation Korean father and the culture that the father represents, serve to emphasize the social dissolution of kinship structures brought

6. John C. Hawley in *Ideas of Home: Literature of Asian Migration* studies the complex father-son relationship in *Native Speaker* to examine this recurring theme in Asian American literature. Hawley argues that the revelation of Kwang's duplicity causes Henry to reluctantly accept his father, acknowledging that despite the father's flaws, his hard work and honest sacrifice stand as positive masculine attributes. I argue that Henry's negotiations between his biological and surrogate fathers suggest his struggle to reconcile conflicting self-constructions, a struggle that concludes in a celebration of new immigrants to the US in their raw, still unassimilated states, yet each shaped by the spirit of capitalism toward an American identity.

from Korea to the US, a territorial/cultural migratory disruption from where come the disintegrative pressures on originally robust familial relations.[7]

The earliest Korean immigration to the US dates from the Japanese imperial colonization of Korea in 1911, after which, under the Gentleman's Agreement between Japan and the US, Korean colonized subjects were permitted to enter the US as cheap field labor to work in the Hawaiian sugarcane plantations.[8] Benefiting from this treaty Japan negotiated, Korean women were permitted to join their husbands, unions often formed through proxy marriages, as in the picture bride practice. But unlike the representations of this first wave immigration, fairly well covered in earlier literary texts such as Kim Ronyoung's *Clay Walls* and Mary Paik Lee's *Quiet Odyssey*, *Native Speaker* focuses on the second and even third-wave Korean immigration after the Korean War of 1950–1953, a war that resulted in the 38th Parallel (DMZ) division between the communist North, and the democratic South Korea. This mid-fifties to seventies migration included many educated, military-trained men, who settled in metropolitan sites like Los Angeles and New York, and who, with intense, unrelenting focus (a quality the novel sometimes notes as overlapping with a ruth-

7. Rey Chow in her cleverly titled book's play on Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* theorizes that literary representations generally offer "numerous sociocultural and/or geopolitical situations in which difference has led not so much to emancipation as to oppression (135). The dramas in Henry's developmental trajectory, as a hybrid Korean-(born)-US-acculturated subject, desiring integration with native-speaking whiteness, yet internally marked by his original difference as alien/outsider, are narrated through a monological interior point-of-view that is characteristically abject in affect; that is, as Chow notes of ethnic writers, Henry's confession of self is characterized by "anger, pain, melancholy, shame, and abjection" (138).

8. See Sucheng Chan *Asian Americans: An Interpretative History* for a succinct recounting of the early history of Koreans, then Japanese subjects, migrating to Hawaii and the West Coast. In contrast, Ronald T. Takaki's "Struggling Against Colonialism: Koreans in America" focuses on well-known Koreans, such as the agricultural entrepreneur Kim Hyung-soon, and their rise to success. Takaki's conclusion that these immigrants established associations and other socio-economic instruments to help one another succeed in America, accounts for the dynamic that drives the rise of a John Kwang, who more inclusively deployed such collective financial instruments for his New York multiracial constituencies.

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less drive), did not wait for their second-generation children to make fortunes for their community. Instead, with the wealth accumulated over a mere few decades of entrepreneurial labor, the post-Korean War immigrant parents set the bar high for their children's full assimilation into, and success in, the US—also in terms of education in top-tier universities facilitating the entry into elite American society.[9] The drive for the attainment of success in education is, after all, related to traditional Korean Confucianist ethics that foreground the values of education and familial as well as communal relations that rest on mental and spiritual self-discipline. In the US, however, these two benchmarks—elite education and elite social mobility—demand, as a prior given, proficiency (if not fluency) in American English. In *Native Speaker*, the elided distinction between this prior given, the purchase of English fluency for success and the status of English fluency itself—the command of the language possessed only by a native speaker—serves as a major plot priority, the two-as-one (English fluency and native-speaker fluency) scoring the major achievement that marks success in the United States.[10]

9. Park's *The Korean American Dream: Immigrants and Small Business in New York City* investigates the Korean American grocery/produce business, particularly in the Korean-American community in Queens, New York, to conclude that Korean merchants use entrepreneurship to pursue their version of the "American Dream," while at the same time attempting to preserve "anjong" or "stability." Other studies, such as Susan Lee's, argue that ethnic cultural ideologies help shape the 1.5 generation of Korean Americans; the hierarchical structure that Korean families and communities brought with them to the United States involves obligations that individuals must fulfill to have a position, and thus also a proper place, in their society. See also Pyong Gap Min and Rose Kim's "Are you sure you don't want to become a doctor?"—a study of the 1.5 generation and of pressures placed on children growing up with traditional Korean parents.

10. Young-Oak Lee's "Language and Identity: An Interview with Chang-rae Lee" looks at broader issues of language identity and interactions between individuals who do not share a common language. The interview also illuminates how and why the intimacy between Lelia and Henry is stressed by psychological incompatibilities, with their different language formations resulting in divergent cultural values. Henry, however, by identifying himself with English as a language of multiple registers rather than the English of a "native speaker," develops a more receptive openness to difference in others and in himself.

In the representations of Henry's struggle with his Korean father, both Mr. Park and Henry use English as a weapon for social dominance. Of the father, the novel notes:

> Sometimes, when he wanted to hide or not outright lie, he chose to speak in English. He used to break into it when he argued with my mother and she would plead, "No, no!" as though he had suddenly introduced a switchblade into a clean fistfight. Once, when he was having some money problems with a store, he started berating her with some awful stream of nonsensical street talk, shouting "my hot mama shit ass tight ass tight cock sucka," and "slant-eye spic-and-span mothafucka" (he had picked it up no doubt from his customers). I broke into their argument and started yelling at him, making sure I was speaking in complex sentences about his cowardice and unfairness [...]. I kept at him [...] using the biggest words I knew whether they made sense or not, school words like "socio-economic" and "intangible." (63)

In the battle of English words, the acculturated Princeton-educated son is bound to prove superior to the Korean engineer-trained turned inner-city grocer. The irony that perhaps only first-generation immigrants can appreciate lies in the father's deep approval of this generational superiority, his prideful acceptance of the upward aspirational separation of his son from his own Korean immigrant origin. When the father opens a new store in up-town "Madison Avenue in the Eighties," he urges Henry "to show [the rich customers] how well [he] spoke English, to make a display of it, to casually recite 'some Shakespeare words'" (53), nudging him into a role of "princely Hal," as Henry sardonically notes, that he is to play as evidence of the family's success in achieving parity with the American elite.

In the novel's complex representation of how Korean American immigrants in the 1990s understood (and arrived at) success, the father's capital accumulation and Henry's elite educational achievements reproduce the stereotype of Asian Americans as the model minority. But the novel repeats this stereotype with a difference—that difference being in its layered unpacking of the costs of such success both on the individual and on the collective: the family, community, and finally—the American nation. If the father accepts Henry's contempt of his poor English skills as evidence of his son's, and hence the family's, success in the US,

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bearing the damage to his traditional status as patriarch silently,[11] the costs for Henry, apparently the victorious beneficiary in this hierarchical reversal, are much stiffer. His superior English proficiency that endows him with the American success also serves to interpellate him as a classed subject who holds himself above his father's immigrant strivings. To Henry, his father was his "low master," one who "knew nothing of the mystical and neurotic," insensible of every intelligence and ideal save "certain rules of engagement."

> Your family was your life, though you rarely saw them. You kept close handsome sums of cash in small denominations. [...] You never missed a mortgage or a day in church. You considered the only forces to be those of capitalism and the love of Jesus Christ. (47)

This passage reproduces the standard vision of the US as a nation built on the Protestant ethics, in which material success is the chief sign of Christian grace generated by the American dynamo of material progress (based on scientific and technological development). It is the process that, already in 1903, Henry Adams saw as the overtaking of the earlier, European-oriented, social mythos of the Virgin, which incidentally is a thesis that (in the same historical moment) Max Weber would argue in his study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.[12]

It is no wonder, therefore, although dramatically surprising, that Henry seizes on his father's dying hours, incapacitated by a stroke, to berate him:

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11. —a filial inversion that the Korean mother stoutly rejects: "my mother [...] whacked me hard across the back of the head and shouted in Korean, *Who do you think you are?*" (63).

12. Henry Adams in his autobiography *The Education of Henry Adams* offers a late 19th century personal narrative that notes, with an ambivalent tone, the transformation of a civilization structured on hierarchical values (the spiritual ethos figured in the Virgin) to one in which science and technology (in the figure of the dynamo) are preeminent. Adams' binary schema may be glimpsed in the dramatic conflicts rising out of Korean immigrants' Confucianist hierarchical values and the technological rationality that undergird late capitalist US society.

> I spoke at him, that propped-up father figure, half-intending an emotional torture [...] for the way he had conducted his life with my mother, and then his housekeeper. And his business and beliefs. (49)

While his father had remained silent through the years of economic struggle, his wife's cancer and death, and other traumas, Henry now wants to wreak "an emotional torture" on him as he lies dying, to break through his stoicism—the father's personal and cultural characteristic valorized in Korean/East Asian culture, associated with uncomplaining patience, fortitude, endurance, resignation and similar traits that endow subjects with the capacity to survive extreme hardships. But Henry's revenge fails: "Nothing I said seems to penetrate him" (49), he admits.

This seeming absence of affect, ironically, is also what Henry's wife, Leila, dislikes about Henry. His abhorrence of his father's emotional distance is a projection of the protagonist's recognition of his own Korean-socialized, and thus American-alienated, self: a subject set at a distance from self-actualizing relationships, and prey to self-loathing. In leaving the marriage, Leila listed those characteristics of Henry that had led to her decision: not "a cheap parting shot," Henry thinks, but "terse communiqués from her moments of despair" (5). And among the listed features are many that Henry sees as faults in his father: a neo-American, emotional alien, anti-romantic, stranger. Leila's list recognizes the integral identification of son and father—"poppa's boy"—even as Henry actively denies it (5). "He's just a more brutal version of you," she tells her husband (58); but for Henry, the modern American son, his father

> was obviously not modern. [...] He was still mostly unencumbered by those needling questions of existence and self-consciousness. Irony was lost on him. [...] For most of my youth I wasn't sure that he had the capacity to love. (58).

Ironically,[13] it is the same doubt, the doubt concerning Henry's capacity to love as demonstrated in his absence of affect, that motivates Leila to leave her husband after their ten-year-old son Mitt dies in a tragic accident. Henry recalculates his immigrant

13. —the irony lost on Henry at this point of his character development.

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father's sacrifice ("you worked from before sunrise to the dead of night" [47])—not as an act of familial love, but as a result of the capitalist drive. Thus, Henry notes,

> I thought his life was all about making money. He drew much energy and pride from his ability to make it almost at will. He was some kind of human annuity. (45–54)

Henry thus makes an observation that separates capitalist success from human striving and dehumanizes that striving reducing it to a mere financial instrument: the father's humanity, no matter how flawed, degraded to an annuity. The father's American success in accumulating wealth and his work ethic intrinsically related to his psychological stoicism that collectively result in the family's social mobility, all exert an intense pressure on the second generation to succeed on terms defined by this first generation's economic success. This social mobility pressure explains the rupture between the son and the father. Henry, enmeshed familially in this materialist dynamo, laments that he shared no mental or affective commonality with his father. "What belief did I ever hold in my father?" (48), Henry asks rhetorically, thus verbalizing the irreconcilable distance that lingered even after the father's death when the son admits to the "troubling awe and contempt and piety [he] still hold[s] for his [father's] life" (333–334).

And yet, in the same early chapter, the novel also carefully contextualizes that apparently discounted, discredited, first-generation Korean American's triumph in capitalist America. This historical context instates a fresh representation of the American immigrant story, a late 20th century narrative that does not simply parallel earlier Chinese American upwardly mobile tales of laundry businesses (as in Lin Yutang's *Chinatown Family* and Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*), or the Japanese and Filipino American narratives of hard labor in the Hawaiian plantations and Californian fields (see Milton Murayama's *All I Asking For is My Body* and Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart*). Although *Native Speaker* covers a similar Asian American immigrant thematic trajectory, from alien subject to assimilation, it is distinguished by its incorporation of financial instruments specific to the Korean immigrant community, which play a pivotal role in the plot complications and which

ultimately offer a vision of immigrant ethnic identity radically different and new both in Asian American cultural productions and in US literature.

Henry as protagonist is hailed into being by ideologies shaped by the US state apparatuses that his father uncritically accepted ("For him, the world—and by that I must mean this very land, his chosen nation—operated on a determined set of procedures, certain rules of engagement. These were the inalienable rights of the immigrant" [47]). This American ideology includes a classed and raced structure that intensifies prejudices against poor and colored people who are held up as examples of the lack of success in material striving, their capitalist and social failures demonstrating the absence of God's grace that incites and excuses outright racist sentiments. Beginning his financial climb as an owner of grocery stores located in inner cities, serving black customers, his father, Henry acidly notes,

> after all those years [...] felt nothing for them. [...] a black face meant inconvenience, or trouble, or the threat of death. [...] For a time he tried not to hate them. [...] Eventually he replaced the black workers with Puerto Ricans and Peruvians. The 'Spanish' ones were harder working, he said, because they didn't speak English too well, just like us. (186–187)

In passages such as this, *Native Speaker* may be said to have boldly seized the third rail of ethnic representation, to move beyond the standard binary of white-ethnic/other power relations, beyond the dualism of superior and subaltern, native citizen and immigrant newcomer, English and non-English speaker, two poles equivalent to the empowered and the powerless, oppressor and victim. The Korean immigrant who both internalizes and reproduces, albeit in differently manifested ways, the class and race discriminatory ills of the US society, expands and complicates the American race relations to incorporate a new immigrant ethnic to a classed national elite. This complication is not merely a reimagining of US immigrant experience: it en-plots a paradigm-shifting text that instates the transformed socio-political realities of late 20th century immigration. First, we note that the first-generation Korean characters serve as nominal figures, as do all the ethnic immigrant characters that crowd the novel's New York setting.

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"Ethnic nominalism" identifies a group labeled with an ethnic marker by objective characteristics, e.g. forms of family and kinship ties. The categorization assumes all members sharing these characteristics will identify with that very ethnic group. Thus, employing him as an industrial spy or private investigator, Henry's firm assumes he will nominally identify with—and therefore understand—the Koreans in New York, specifically the subject under surveillance, John Kwang, who is believed to be running for the position of the mayor of New York City. At a deeper narrative level, such focused ethnic nominalism shapes representative figures, with the father, Henry and Kwang as characters in a national allegory of power, conflict, and emergent identities, much in the way in which Fredric Jameson had theorized the deployment of the allegory as a genre for third-world national imaginaries.[14] In this figuration, the father's economic success, Henry's second-generation 'assimilation,' and the generation gap manifested in their psychological conflicts also testify to the persistence of broad race and class hostilities, sedimented in the US history of Indian removal, slavery and civil rights legislative struggles, that remain unresolved. Except, in this immigrant story, it is the newest immigrant, the Korean American, who has internalized all of the above to enact and reproduce the historical injustices in race and class discriminatory formations.

But even such a shift in the paradigm, to insert Asian/Korean American internalized and overt racist relations with other Americans of color, and particularly with African Americans, is reductive, and does not apprehend the layered complications of new immigrant realities in *fin de siècle* 20th century US. For that more comprehensive understanding, the dramatic action has to be read in its historical setting, the 1980s' context of the first burgeoning of Korean American socio-economic achievements. In New York City of the period in which the novel's action is set, Koreans formed 85% of produce retailers, 70% of independent grocery retailers,

14. Despite Jameson's too broad collapsing of representations coming out of emergent nation states with the literary strategy of the allegory in his essay, reading the novel's deployment of characters as nominal figures through Jameson's concept of national allegories illuminates the ways in which these nominal characters operate to thematize an allegorical meaningfulness to the various threads in the narrative.

80% of nail salons, and 60 % of dry cleaners. Korean enterprise in the US did not fit most immigrant entrepreneurship theories. These small business owners were drawn from professional ranks, were highly educated, but had turned their energy to enterprises requiring little English proficiency.[15] Their initial success rose from their access to capital raised on the communal loan system of the *ggehs*, a financial instrument open only to members of that ethnic group. Mr. Park's entrepreneurial success appears thus to figure this socio-economic reality.[16]

15. Eui-Young Yu and Peter Choe's "Korean Population in the United States as Reflected in the Year 2000 U.S. Census" offers a broad history of Korean Americans and their current significant presence and strong role as small business owners.

16. For some background on the significance of *ggehs* as socio-economic instruments in Korean American communities, see Douglas Frantz's "Hanmi Bank Uses Ancient Lending Practice to Help Koreans" discussion of a Korean bank with branches in the United States that took the form of the *ggeh* (spelled as *kye* in his article) and applied it to bank loans. Using the *kye* as a legitimate banking practice opened the door for the legitimization of *kyes*. President and CEO of Hanmi Bank, Benjamin B. Hong, acknowledged that he hoped to bridge the gap between the Korean and American cultures in helping immigrants with *kye*-style loans. In 1993, Jack Doherty analyzed Judge Edward M. Ross's, a Superior Court Judge's, ruling that confirmed the illegality of private loan systems such as *kyes*. Doherty's sources, however, suggested that not only would Judge Ross' ruling make way for *kye*'s enforced by contracts, thus making the practice legally acknowledged, but that this system would flourish also because of *kyes*' importance for the Korean-American community. Judge Ross's ruling confirmed the incongruence between the US financial laws and the Korean *ggeh* practice, emphasizing the US banking structures' unwillingness to comprehend and support it. Cultural Studies scholars have noted the pivotal role the *ggeh* plays in the novel's dramatic actions. Daniel Kim's 2003 article argues that *Native Speaker* deploys the *ggeh* as the unifying dramatic force to create an interracial rather than Korean or Asian American community. Because John Kwang's *ggeh* was not set up solely for Koreans or Korean-Americans, the dramatic action both undermines and re-constructs the fundamental structure of *ggeh*'s as one that demands new inter-racial, integrative social bonds to replace legal bonds that have proven unhelpful to immigrant communities of color. Jodi Kim's *MELUS* article, contextualizing the novel in the history of the Cold War on Korean politics, examines the ways in which non-legally bound exchanges of money behind closed doors may prove detrimental to the ideals of democracy and capitalism. Kim suggests that minority groups that move undocumented capital around, the way

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In the same way, therefore, his antipathy toward blacks that plays a significant part in alienating Henry must be differently understood, not as a character flaw (the way that Henry views it in his father), but as a material construction formed by superstructural pressures rather than by private and individual prejudice. The incidents of tense, violent encounters between Mr. Park and black shoppers—or criminal predators (the two indistinguishable to the besieged shopkeeper)—re-inscribes the overt clashes between Korean American businesses in inner city neighborhoods and their black customers that were commonly reported in the 1980s and early 1990s. One of the first such incidents took place in Brooklyn, in May 1990, following the first boycotts held in 1988 against Korean-owned stores to protest their racist treatment of blacks.[17] These simmering tensions rising out of competitive class and race structures, culminated in May 1992. A Los Angeles Korean American storekeeper, Soon Ja Du, shot a black teenager, Latasha Harlins, whom she suspected of stealing a container of orange juice. She was convicted, but during the turmoil resulting from the not guilty verdicts for the police whose brutalization of Rodney King was caught on tape, the rioters in Los Angeles turned their resentment and wrath against Korean businesses.[18] They burned down a mini-mall and over a thousand buildings, most of them Korean shops in South Central L.A. *Native Speaker* alludes explicitly to this history of inter-ethnic violence and economic conflict:

*ggeh*'s do, can purchase themselves racial-minority representatives within the government, the way *Native Speaker*'s John Kwang's supporters do.

17. Felicia R. Lee's *New York Times*' December 1988 article quotes "Blacks like Robert (Sonny) Carson, who has been involved several black grass-roots protests, and the Rev. Lawrence Lucas, pastor of the Resurrection Roman Catholic Church at 276 West 151st Street in the Harlem area of Manhattan, [who] said such capitalism had historically left blacks on the outside as they watched successive waves of immigrants take over their neighborhood stores and become rich from black dollars that leave black communities."

18. See Eric K. Yamamato's *Interracial Justice: Conflict and Reconcilaition in Post Civil Rights America* (249–250) for a brief contrast between the ways in which these conflicts were perceived by blacks and by Korean citizens through Korean media. A fuller examination of this history is found in Kwang Chung Kim's 1999 edited collection *Koreans in the Hood: Conflict with African Americans*.

> The press was having a field day. They had multiple boycotts to cover. Vandalism. Street-filling crowds of chanting blacks. Heavily armed Koreans. Fire in the night. (192)

Using a summative technique and then Henry's sympathetic analysis of Kwang's inter-ethnic dilemma, the novel offers a nuanced, Korean-empathetic point-of-view that it had previously withheld in the portrayal of Henry's father:

> [Kwang] couldn't even speak out against the obvious violence and destruction, after black groups had insisted they were 'demonstrations' against the callousness of Korean merchants and the unjust acquittal of the Korean storekeeper who'd shot and killed Saran Harlans [...] What I was noting most was the liberty [reporters] took with the Koreans [...] The Koreans stood there, uneasy, trying to explain difficult notions in a broken English. Spliced into the news stories, soundbited, they always came off as brutal, heartless. Like human walls. (193)

In this setting of violent Korean-black hostility, the master critique of the coercive assimilation machine, the melting pot, into which every ethnic immigrant is allegedly thrown, in order to emerge normed as a monolingual middle-class Anglo-American, fades into the background, albeit it never disappears. The novel instead crucially revises the ways the new immigrant, like Mr. Park, is able to take on the powers of the (white) race and (upper) class elite, through a strategic seizing of state-legitimated apparatuses of capital accumulation, *and* through the added advantage not available to non-Koreans: the quintessential Korean financial instrument of the *ger* or *kye*, spelled in the novel as *ggeh*.

Increasing his profits through labor exploitation is only one of the capitalist tools Henry's father deploys (54). But his other business strategies, according to the novel, are intuitively figured, a testimony to a native genius in the field of business. When Henry questions his father on reasons for a pricing decision, the father responds: "'Stupid boy,' [...] clutching at his chest. His overworked merchant's chest. 'It's feeling.'" (55). The 'feeling' for business explains his capacity to make money, as the novelist notes, "almost at will" (55). Thus, while Henry views his father critically as a non-modern man, Mr. Parks' ability to make money proves Henry's analysis is false; the power to succeed as a capitalist in the US demonstrates instead the father's power as a subject

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fit to act, to resist those social forces that might impede his business genius, and thus his gaining an independent autonomous dimension, with an ability to change and transform his initial immigrant abjection in order to eventually arrive at some form of elite status in the US.

The novel makes visible, critiques, and finally celebrates the central significance of money and work in the formation of a new American identity.[19] *Native Speaker* achieves this reconciliation of moral merit with money striving through the distinction between money as a trope for immigrant survival and assimilative desire and money as covertly and corruptly liaised with power. That is, money, the figure for capitalist striving, is not one thing and does not operate across groups and individuals as one reified dynamic. For example, assigned by his private investigation company to uncover information on the charismatic John Kwang, probable candidate for the New York City mayor, Henry meets Kwang's constituents in the working-class, heavily immigrant, borough of Queens. He comes to understand his father in the larger context of first-generation American nation formation: a complexification that gradually leads him to soften his harsh judgment of his father's capitalist drive. He is now able to empathize, after his commingling with diverse ethnic immigrant small businesses through his work assisting the assemblyman Kwang, who represents this polyglot citizenry:

> [R]espect is often altered or lost in translation. [...] in the mixed lot of peoples, respect (and honor and kindness) is a matter of margins, what you can clear on a $13.99 quartz watch, or how much selling it takes to recover when you give one away. [...] The Vietnamese deli, the West Indian takeout. Stay open. Keep the eyes open. You are your cheapest labor. Here is the great secret, the great mystery to an immigrant's success, the dwindle of irredeemable hours beneath the cheap tube lights. Pass them like a machine. Believe only in chronology. This will be your coin-small salvation. (188)

Henry, having observed similar strivings among ethnic immigrant small businesses, arrives at a differently angled focus of judgment

19. Parallels can be made with how Jane Austen's novels similarly criticize, yet finally accept and even celebrate, the central role of money in the social relations that result in marriage.

than the one he had made of his father, understanding at this point how incommensurate cross-cultural ethics can be: "respect is [...] altered [...] lost in translation" (188).[20] His youthful mockery of his father's pricing his stock at .99 cents now turns to respect, and respect well-deserved in light of efforts that succeed on small margins; "coin-small" gains that nonetheless he can now recognize as "salvation" (188).

Immigrant striving, literalized on the small margins of profit of the .99 cent pricing strategy, is plotted against the huge sums passed on covertly to John Kwang, whom Henry initially imagines as a more desirable father figure. Unlike Mr. Park, Kwang lives in a larger nation—one composed of apparently every immigrant ethnicity, and one in which he negotiates his way confidently. Henry finds Kwang's genius in political leadership more admirable than his father's business talents. Kwang is always impeccably groomed and dressed, he's articulate, an immigrant who has successfully assimilated into multiracial America, with a vision in which class, race and gender differences are integrated into an inclusionary ideology. He explains to Henry:

> I felt welcomed by the parades of young black men and women. [...] I tried to feel what they were feeling. [...] back here, the black power on the street! [...] I thought *this* is America! (195)

Kwang's vision moves beyond the binary of black/white nation formation, apprehending the delicate position of a "minority" politician who must win votes across ethnic lines:

> Everyone can see the landscape is changing. Soon there will be more brown and yellow than black and white. And yet the politics, especially minority politics, remain cast in terms that barely acknowledge us. (196)

20. As an ethnic *bildungsroman*, Henry's final reconciliation with his Korean father is borne out in sociological studies that focus on young adult Korean Americans and their relationships with their Korean immigrant parents, as in the strains in parent-child relationship that come from ownership of a family business, and the difficulties of language barriers rising out of the parents' monolingual Korean or limited grasp of English. See Hyeyoung Kang, Okazaki Sumie, Nancy Abelmann, Chu Kim-Priet, and Shanshan Lan's "Redeeming Immigrant Parents: How Korean American Emerging Adults Reinterpret Their Childhood."

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Persuaded, even seduced, by Kwang's class and race activism, Henry looks up to Kwang as a surrogate father matching his assimilated ideal of one who speaks English fluently and eloquently, who identifies with a multi-ethnic community, is anti-racist and works for social uplift of the dispossessed and working poor—everything his father was not.

Moreover, Henry sees Kwang as the new American, who has succeeded in maintaining positive Korean traits, such as the language and love of family, even as he has been transformed into an American who speaks to and for a polyglot multiracial nation. As he is drawn ever more closely into Kwang's intimate cadre of assistants, however, he is disillusioned to discover that Kwang's public performance of male suavity and control is inauthentic, and that Kwang's patriarchal core persists privately in his physical abuse of his wife, extramarital philandering and aggressive ego-dominance, a darker trait in contrast to Mr. Park's focus on serving as the protective breadwinner for the family.

The only commonality Mr. Park and Kwang seem to share is their use of the Korean practice of *ggehs*. Mr. Park "got his first infusion of capital from a *ggeh*, a Korean 'money club,' whose members contribute to a pool that is then allotted out on a rotating basis. Each week you gave the specified amount; and then one week in the cycle, all the money was yours" (50). The *ggeh* depends on mutual trust; no legal document tracks the members' contributions; and the member who scoops the collection for the week does not have to account for how he will use the money, although the aim of the club is to enable an infusion of capital, an indispensable first step for starting a business, and which is impossible to obtain as a bank loan without a credit history or some kind of guarantor: two prerequisites new immigrants often lack. Characteristically, Henry's father launched his business with the assistance of the *ggeh*, but

> in the end [he] no longer belonged to any *ggeh*, he complained about all the disgraceful troubles that were cropping up, people not paying on time or leaving too soon after their turn getting the money. In America, he said, it's even hard to stay Korean. (51)

Where Mr. Park abandones his dependence on the *ggeh* as he achieves his own independent means, Kwang exploits this communal resource in a criminal endeavor to gain political advantage in a concealed pay-to-play strategy. Kwang opens his *ggeh* to all ethnic communities; collecting the funds secretively, he controls the disbursement of these means, and does so to buy influence, loyalty and recognition, the assistance provided to struggling immigrant families and businesses being a crucial step toward consolidating his political power. When Kwang's Dominican assistant Eduardo is killed in a mysterious bomb explosion, Henry learns that Eduardo had been operating this illegal money machine for Kwang, and that Kwang now plans to recruit Henry to keep the extensive lists of in and out payments that Eduardo had been recording:

> a listing of names and addresses, names and ages of children, occupation, name and address of business or businesses, estimated yearly income, nationality, year-to-date dollar figures, percentage changes. Then, to the far right, double-underlined, the dollar amounts. (275)

Here is no "coin-small salvation," no small profit margin. The money that drives Kwang's political machine is private and covert, but, like Mr. Park's business profits, ironically, it is derived from operations grounded in a unique code of honor:

> The money comes in weekly, some of them giving as much as $250 and $500, others as little as $10. Most give fifty. We welcome them all. Ten dollars a week is what it takes to start, ten dollars for the right of knowing a someone in the city for you who are yet nobody. But then no one, no matter the amount, has his ear over another. It matters only that you give what you can. You give with honor and indomitable spirit. You remain loyal. True. These are the simple rules of his [Kwang's] house. (277)

This operation, altered or translated into US legal terms as a pyramidal laundering scheme (281) for influence peddling, is viewed by the urban, working-class ethnic participants in terms that speak to honor, indomitable spirit, loyalty, and truth; even the churches "funnel" contributions, "not just from Queens and the other boroughs but from Nassau and Westchester and Bergen counties" (278).

In the representation of the incommensurable cross-cultural status of Kwang's secret money machine, the novel, through

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Henry's evolving sensibility toward money as a signifier of American experience and national formation, illuminates a different hinging of immigrant story with money. In recording the money contributions, Henry has "steadily become a compiler of lives. [...] writing a new book of the land" (279). This recording of financial information on immigrant individuals finally grows Henry's character, enlarging this modern man expanding his self from the initial "existentialist" solipsist identity to a collective self that is finally able to understand—and identify with—immigrants like his father, through apprehending the meaning of money for these people:

> The story is mine. How I come by plane, come by boat. Come climbing over a fence. When I get here, I work. I work for the day I will finally work for myself. I work so hard that one day I end up forgetting the person I am. Forget my wife, my son. Now, too, I have lost my old mother tongue. And I forget the ancestral graves I have left on a hillside of a faraway land, the loneliest stones that each year go unblessed. (279)

If Kwang's *gehh* signifies a form of capitalism based on an ethnic collective, the one anathema to the individual-oriented responsibility upheld by the American banking system—its "illegality"—may therefore be assessed as a matter of values lost in translation. Henry's explanation suggests the cross-cultural confusion of the understanding of money as symbolic value and money as power dynamic:

> Small *ggeh,* like the one my father had, work because the members all know each other, trust one another not to run off or drop out after their turn comes up. Reputation is always worth more than money. In this sense we are all related. The larger *ggeh* depends solely on this notion, that the lessons of the culture will be stronger than a momentary lack, can subdue any individual weakness or want. This the power, lovely and terrible, what we try to engender in Kwang's giant money club, our huge *ggeh* for all. What John says it is about. (280)

This kind of overly explicit, anti-dialogical expository prose, usually a stylistic drag on a dramatic narrative, achieves here a swift clear summation of abstractions often untried, with good reason, in the realist novel. At the same time, framed through Henry's point of view, ironically reframed as his still uncritical acceptance of Kwang's public position—that the money operation is about the community, the culture of collective power—this concept

becomes undermined as Kwang's private flaws are discovered. The giant *ggeh* now appears to be all about Kwang's individual weakness and lack, an instrument he exploits for political ambition to feed the needs of his dominating ego. Kwang's villainy is complete when Henry learns of the latter's responsibility for the explosion that killed Eduardo.

If this thematic take were all the novel is about–how money rules in the US and how it corrupts individuals, society and politics–*Native Speaker* would be less of an achievement. But the novel pushes beyond the stale criticism of capital to a surprising denouement. While Kwang's ambition is not driven by the desire for money but for power (311), that ambition, like Mr. Park's drive for money, is also empathetically represented as an immigrant desire for a place in the nation. At the dramatic moment of Kwang's public humiliation, escorted by the police arriving in squad cars, Henry strikes at the mob assaulting Kwang in a moment of decisive identification. He sees in him "a broken child, shielding from [Henry] his wide immigrant face" (343). That is, the phenomenon negatively represented in mainstream discourse as the immigrants' compulsive drive for money and power, may be more sympathetically translated as constituted by the inexorable material conditions that the immigrants encounter. In exposing the list of contributors to Kwang's *ggeh,* Henry's investigative firm also exposes the identities of hundreds of illegal immigrants, now caught in the net and facing deportation. Kwang is publicly vilified most of all for his assistance to illegals: The demonstrators

> chant that they want to kick every last one of them back to where they came from, kick him back with them, let them drown in the ocean with 'Smuggler Kwang'. [...] people stand behind two sewn-together sheets spray-painted with the words: AMERICA FOR AMERICANS. (331)

The moment of juncture between money, power, immigration and American identity is the moment when the novel moves beyond reductive dualistic representations of good and evil to a nuanced, layered humanistic review of immigrant motivation, translatable across cultures:

> Kwang's particular thinking [...] the idea of the *ggeh* occurred as second nature. [...] He didn't know who was an 'illegal' and who was not,

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for he would never come to see that fact as something vital. If anything, the *ggeh* was his one enduring vanity, a system paternal; how in the beginning people would come right to the house and ask for money and his blessing. [...] He had no real power over any of them save their trust in his wisdom. He was merely giving to them just the start, like other people get an inheritance, a hope chest of what they would work hard for in the rest of their lives. (334)

Henry's experiences with these struggling illegal immigrants finally endow him with the capacity to see himself in the same immigrant narrative:

By rights I am an American citizen [...] And yet I can never stop considering the pitch and drift of [the immigrants'] forlorn boats on the sea. [...] They know they will come here and live eight or nine to a room and earn ten dollars a day, maybe save five. They can figure that math, how long it will take to send for their family, how much longer for a few carts of fruit to push. (335)

With the news of the pickup and probable deportation of the illegal immigrants uncovered in Kwan's *ggeh* list, Henry says to Leila: "Imagine, though, if they told my father he really had to leave [...]. Can you see his face? It would be the death of him. Or worse." (336)

The tragedy of the deportation of the illegal immigrants is the dramatic action that finally transforms Henry's sensibility, one might say, almost reversing his development, from the modern upper-class American, exquisitely educated in irony, to a pre-modern immigrant American driven by basic needs:

We listen to their [...] stilted English. I know I would have ridiculed them when I was young: I would cringe and grow ashamed and angry at those funny tones of my father and his workers, all that Konglish, Spanglish, Jive. [...] But now I think I would give almost anything to hear my father's talk again, the crash and bang and stop. [...] I will listen for him forever in the streets of this city. (337)

"Listening forever" to the polyglot-inflected language of ancestral immigrants as an empathetic identification between the native citizen and the new arrival is the complex convergence where the novel leaves the reader.

The relations between money and immigration in the novel focus chiefly on the history of second and third wave Korean Americans, but this freshly nuanced drama of first generation

and illegal immigrant desire for success also significantly layers a multi-ethnic representation onto the narrative. Much like Jane Austen's novels of money and the marriage market, *Native Speaker* finely portrays the social conditions of capitalist America and the fears and desires of immigrants constrained within, yet also negotiating and ethically valued as subjects in this drama of money, desire and national identity.

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Review of International American Studies
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall-Winter Nº 2/2016
ISSN 1991-2773



# UNPREDICTABLE AMERICAS: RESIGNIFYING AMERICANESS UNDER A RELATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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*Just as the constellations were projected into the heavens, similar Figures were projected into legends...*
*Carl Jung*

## VISIONS OF AMERICA

The iconography allegorically representing America as a savage, nude woman is abundantly known by all of us. I go back to these images to remind you of painters such as Marten de Vos (Fig. 1 and 2), Jan van der Straet (Fig. 3) and Philipe (or Philips) Galle (Fig. 4), on one side representing Europe as a woman richly dressed, while on the other America is represented by a lack—of vests, ornaments and emblems of wisdom and power beyond the scenery where she is placed.

Fig. 1. *America*. 1551-1600. Marten de Vos (drawing) and Adriaen Collaert (engraving). Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marten_de_Vos_Adriaen_Collaert_America.jpg>.

Fig. 2. *Europa*. 1551–1600. Marten de Vos (drawing) and Adriaen Collaert (engraving). Source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Marten_de_Vos_Adriaen_Collaert_Europa.jpg>.


Fig.3. *America*. 1575–1580. Jan van der Straet (drawing). Source: <http://www.banrepcultural.org/blaavirtual/exhibiciones/historia-natural-politica/hnp-01.html>.


Fig. 4. *Allegory of America, 1547-1612*. Philippe Galle (engraving).Source:<http://iberoamericasocial.com/de-monstruo-alegoria-de-america-las-amazonas>.

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While Europe inhabits a cultivated garden (grapes, flowers) and is surrounded by domesticated animals, America is surrounded by uncultivated land, wild animals and even scenes of cannibalism. Therefore, from the first representations of America, a hierarchy of cultures is established to the detriment of American culture, intimidating and characterized by a lack of vests, laws, and faith, and associated with barbaric practices such as cannibalism. Nevertheless, we have to consider that nudity was often a predominant in Renaissance painting, the period when these images were created, and nudes could be representations of innocence and eroticism inspired by a paradisiacal nature, and the unavoidable fact that many American tribes wore little or no clothing (Ziebell, 2002). It is also necessary to remember that most of the painters had never been in the New World, basing their work on travel narratives, mainly those of André Thévet, Hans Staden and Amerigo Vespucci.[1]

Thus, there is an ambivalent character in these visions of America, which at the same time produced fear and wonder in Europeans. In travel narratives written by its "conquerors" or through iconography, images of America are marked by exoticism, by a superficial vision of an America as yet unknown, or known only by its coastline. It would be necessary to penetrate further inland to deconstruct this initial stereotyped, superficial vision associating the Americas with primitivism, wild nature, wide spaces, anti-intellectualism and, moreover, with "l'experience d'une privation et l'angoisse du vide," to quote the Quebec theoretician Pierre Nepveu.[2]

Thereby, from the first contact a mystified representation of America inscribes itself in the social discourse and in the collective memory of several generations—after all, it was constructed from forged ideas and translated into preconceived images. In this sense, the whole history of literary ideas in the Americas is a history of reappropriation, of attempts to take the reins of a foundational narrative that will be, at the same time, a narrative of deconstruction of the ste-

1. A. Thévet (1516–1590); H. Staden (1525–1579); A. Vespucci (1454–1512).
2. "[...] the experience of deprivation and the anguish of emptiness [...]." Pierre Nepveu (1998: 7–11).

reotypes and clichés which molded the first American profile as it was revealed to the world.

## RECENTERING AND THE FIRST TRANSCULTURAL PRACTICES

During the first five hundred years since the "discovery" of America we have been invested in deconstructing this feeling of supposed cultural dependency that makes us look far away (at Europe) in search of a *tertium comparationis*. The most successful strategy has been to search for a long memory, not in Europe any longer, but in the autochthonous cultures. The awareness of recentering points to transcultural practices initiated in the first centuries after the conquest, when the Guarani reproduce models from the European baroque with altered skin color, eye format and indigenous adornments added to sculptures that should merely replicate European models.

The sculpture speaks for itself: between 1710 and 1735, The Seven Peoples of the Missions situated at the South of South America, in territories occupied today by Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and Paraguay, lived their manifest apogee through architecture, music and sculpture. The Jesuits offered the Indians models from the European baroque, slowly subverted by the autochthones who introduced elements from their own reality and created the first copies of composite and transcultural art. In this image of Saint Michael the Archangel (Fig. 5), one notices the substitution of the dragon—traditional in the European model—with the image of a "bandeirante" [flag bearer], the name given to the Portuguese men who hunted Indians for slavery. Though the model comes from traditional sources, "The indigenous hand broke the aesthetic blockage imposed by imported patterns, in the saint´s face—Saint Michael presents the features of the Guarani ethnicity—and in the substitution of the dragon for his predator" (Trevisan, n.d.).

Fig. 5. Mission Art, image of Saint Michael Archangel, 17th century. Source: <http://elmissioneiro.blogspot.com.br>.

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In *Los passos perdidos* (1953), Alejo Carpentier helps us see the occurrence of the same phenomenon in a Mexican chapel on whose frontispiece there is the sculpture of an angel (a model from the European baroque) playing *maracas* (or rattle), in an obvious imbrication of sacred European art (the angel) linked to popular, profane American culture (*maracas*). Here, it is evident that the processes of the hybridization of cultures have just begun.

These examples from the visual arts make evident the phenomenon of material hybridization and the subversion of ritualized models that gave shape to the art of the New World from its onset. In this sense the theories which defended the thesis of Latin American cultural dependency were groundless. The subversion of models and the introduction of American "impurity," present from the first moments of our cultural formation, emphasize the tendency in American art of constituting itself "in-between" (Europe and America), to use Silvia Spitta´s expression. These examples mark the beginning of what we today call "Americanness," or the equivalent of turning our eyes to what is near us (the Americas), nourishing the imagination of our artists as an alternative source of inspiration (mostly sought on the other side of the Atlantic, in Europe).

## CULTURAL ANTHROPOPHAGY AND CREOLIZATION

When he launched *The Cannibal Manifest* (1928) within Brazilian modernism (1922), Oswald de Andrade pointed to the need to the search for our cultural ancestry among the Tupinambá. When Édouard Glissant referred to the supremacy of "archipelago" thinking (autochthonous, *pensée d´archipel* in French) over system thinking (European rationality, *pensée de système en français*) in advocating the creolization of cultures, he was walking in the same direction, of the searching for our long memory in the heart of America itself (1990: 34). When he identifies himself with anthropophagy as a Tupinambá practice at the time

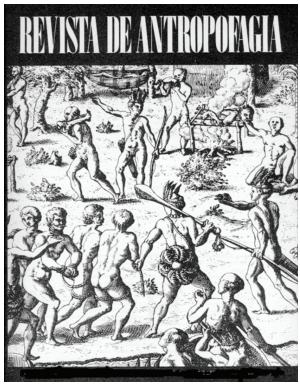


Fig. 6. *Revista de Antropofagia*, 1.1, May de 1928.

of the arrival of our "discoverers," Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954) is making a turn towards practices from before the European presence on American soil. *The Cannibal Manifesto* advocates that cultural formation in the Americas should be inspired by anthropophagic practice, which foresaw the "devouring" only of courageous enemies so that through the digestive process they could absorb their virtues. Thus, anthropophagy was not practiced in Brazil only to satisfy hunger, but as a ritual to be imitated in the sense of absorbing the cultures we admire (European, Indigenous, African) as a conscious and selective process which passes through digestion. What matters is transformed into vital energy and what does not matter is eliminated. Such a proposal from the beginning of the 20th century remains surprisingly current for it implies the surpassing of a reductive and binary vision (Europe vs. America), since it is founded on a complex process of identitary interactions and negotiations. Cultural anthropophagy comprises a proposal for the construction of a Brazilian cultural identity grounded on heterogeneity, in transcultural passages among the diverse cultural heritages absorbed and in the acceptance of a necessarily hybrid character in American culture. "Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question" (Andrade, 1928).

In the multiethnic and pluricultural Caribbean region, the tendency to essentialism which characterized Negritude will be substituted by Creolization, defined as "un agrégat interactionnel ou transactionnel des éléments culturels caraïbes, européens, africains, asiatiques, et levantins, que le joug de l´Histoire a réunit sur le même sol," "an interactional aggregate (of reciprocal influences) or transactional (reciprocal concessions) of Caribbean, European, African, Asian and Levantine sources united by the game of history on the same soil" (Bernabé et al, 1989: 26). Hence it is the fruit of a *maelstrom* of signifiers in one signified. The authors of *Éloge de la créolité*, Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphael Confiant, distinguish Americanness, Antillanité and Creolité as concepts that could, at their limit, cover the same realities. The processes of Americanization and the feeling of Americanness resulting from them are useful to describe different stages in the negotiations and adjustments among populations from different ethnic origins to the New World.

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In the wake of *Éloge de la créolité*, Édouard Glissant theorizes about diversity and relation in his *Poetics of Relation* (*Poétique de la relation,* 1990) and recommends transcultural encounters in the Caribbean under a relational perspective, underlying constant transformations operating between one culture and another. By embodying cultural plurality in the Caribbean, the author postulates cross-cultural understanding as the necessary ground of an increase in inter-and trans-American relationships. These relationships do not imply loss or imitation since they originate something new in the scope of inter-hemispheric mobilities (Benessaieh, 2010: 235).

## AMERICANNESS AND TRANSCULTURAL MOBILITIES

Far from proposing the existence of a large, homogeneous narrative, the notion of Americaness (*Americanité* in French, *Americanidad* in Spanish, *Americanidade* in Portuguese), seeks to analyze displacements and re-semantizations of myths throughout the three Americas and points to the work of reappropriation that characterizes American cultures beyond the narrow notions of nationality. To think of Americanness today as a heterogeneous construct implies leaving aside binarisms such as civilization/barbarism; and center/periphery, which have been characteristic of most American studies until virtually the end of the twentieth century in favor of including the Diverse and the excluded third, and which did not free us from the fixation on European cultures.

During the nineteenth century, American countries were so committed to defining their national identities that they forgot their shared condition of belonging in America and stopped calling themselves Americans. Perhaps this is because the United States took the appellation "American" for itself, in a self-evaluatory metonymy designed only for "US Americans." Speaking of Americanness nowadays is, in a certain way, the awareness of belonging to America and of proclaiming ourselves Americans, despite the heterogeneity characteristic of our continent. In *Reinventing the Americas*, Bell Galé Chavigny and Gari Laguardia assert that the "reinvention of the Americas must begin with exposure of the rhetorical incoherence we commit each time we designate the United States by the sign America, a name that belongs

by rights to the hemisphere [...]" (Laroche, 1992: 195). When we talk about Americaness we need also to reference Anibal Quijano and Immanuel Wallersteins' 1992 article "Americanity as a Concept or the Americas in the Modern World-System." For them, Americanness or Americanity corresponds to the definition of America´s identity.

Americanness in Latin America begins with the processes of transculturation and hybridization, with the added value of unpredictability. When speaking about Latin America, Gérard Bouchard speaks of unfinished Americanness, or *Américanité inachevée* (2000: 202). We believe incompleteness is an advantage since identification processes are in a permanent state of becoming: the conclusion of the process is not exactly what matters, but the fact that exchanges, interpenetrations and de-hierarchization processes continue to happen and the idea of a shared Americanness between North and South may create conditions for the relation(ship) to which Glissant refers (1990: 23).

Maybe it is in the framework of the American mythical imaginary that we are going to find the codes to decipher and reinvent Americanness. It will be necessary, as Mignolo points out, to wait for the emergence of new *loci* of enunciation to bring to the surface that knowledge which was considered subaltern during colonization (2000: 3–45). To rediscover in orality, in popular wisdom and in border *gnosis* new ways of inhabiting the Americas and of defining our belonging to them may be a way to access Americanness as resistance and as recovery of colonial difference.

The definition of Americanness is, then, linked to the originality of our cultural experience, "through a continental history that takes us to the knowledge of our own selves," as specified by Jean-François Côté (2008: 36).

## RECONSTELLATING AMERICAS

In this last section, I would like to discuss the validity of the concept proposed in the framework of this meeting—that of constellations—to go beyond the concept of transnationalisms. Let us examine, then, the polysemy and the avatars of the expression. To begin with, constellation, from the Latin *constellatio*, points to a set of stars, and at first was used in astrology. In current astronomy

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it points to "an area around an asterism in the celestial sphere, that is, a pattern recognized as that of stars."[3]

Seen from earth the stars in a constellation seem close together but they may in fact be light years away from each other. To see formations such as the Southern Cross or The Big Dipper, we have to demarcate a constellation with frontier lines that delimit the Figure it names. Constellations may also slowly change configuration until they disappear.

The term "constellation" was used more than once as a scientific metaphor. We will mention two examples, Carl Jung and Gilbert Durand. To Jung, the collective unconscious seems to consist of mythological motives or images. Thus, mythology may be taken as a sort of collective unconscious projection. We can see it more clearly if we look at celestial constellations where original chaotic forms were organized through the projection of images. That explains the influence of stars as proposed by astrologists. These influences are nothing more than unconscious, introspective perceptions of the collective unconscious' activity. As constellations projected in the sky, similar Figures are projected into legends and fairy tales or in historical characters. Constellation is, then, a Jungian term referring to the "activation of a psychic personal complex or an archetypal content."[4]

Gilbert Durand, in *Champs de l'imaginaire*, called constellations, or "semantic basins" (*bassins sémantiques*), the images belonging to the same semantic field "identified by specific imaginary regimes and privileged myths" (Durand, 165). In light of this idea, we can understand that constellation may be used as a metaphor concerning certain syntaxes of the American collective imaginary. In that sense we would be close to Patrick Imbert´s proposal in his latest work, *Comparer le Canada et les Amériques*; *des racines aux réseaux transculturels* (2014). In it he talks about social networks (*réseautage*) from the perspective that culture should favor the encounter of individuals through sharing, for "it allows the exchange and management of knowledges in globalization processes of networking (*réseautage*/network)" (238).

3. Source: Wikipedia <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constellation>.
4. *A Glossary of Jungian Terms* <http://www.terrapsych.com/jungdefs.html>.

Constellations have a bi-dimensional character, for the celestial sphere is perceived as flat, but, considering the distance of stars from each other, they can be imagined as a solid image, where each star would be a vortex and, in that sense, tridimensional. The concept of networks (as neural networks, for example) is also tridimensional and both can be used as metaphors for the tridimensional character of transliterary relations. According to computer scientist Pierre Lévy:

> Networks allow us to share our memories, our competences, our imaginations, our projects, our ideas, and to make our differences, and singularities reflect on each other, become complementary, in synergy. (Lévy 1998)[5]

Lévy even discusses the formation of communities of knowledge (*communautés de savoir*) and wonders about the possibility of these communities to merge into a "universal conscience" (*conscience universelle*)—a "connected intelligence," to quote Derrick De Kerckhove, who created this expression: "thought is no longer hierarchic today, but interactive."[6] Most probably, neither the choice of the "constellation" metaphor, nor that of "connected intelligence" will be final solutions for scholars of literatures of the Americas. It is of interest, however, to point to the current need for reconfiguration, since nowadays "migrant and transnational" taxonomies have stopped contemplating a whole range of writings that go beyond certain conventions and boundaries.

Studies of the Americas under a comparative perspective that tries to identify points of convergence and to observe the diverse trajectories of founding myths that will constitute different constellations in their migrations through the Americas, are relatively recent and have given origin to this new terminology: Americanness, creolization, transculturation, migrancy (migrant literatures) and transnationality (transnational literatures). These

5. "Les réseaux permettent de mettre en commun nos mémoires, nos compétences, nos imaginations, nos projets, nos idées, et de faire en sorte que toutes les différences, les singularités se relancent les unes les autres, entrent en complémentarité, en synergie" (Lévy, 1998).

6. Source: Wikipedia <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence_collective_sur_Internet#Internet.2C_le_r.C3.A9seau_c.C3.A9r.C3.A9bral_plan.C3.A9taire>.

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concepts emerge when we start to understand the precariousness and the insufficiency of the concept of national literatures to describe the cultural mobilities characteristic of the American continent. Spatial, temporal, migrant, transnational and nomadic mobilities of all kinds rendered useless the limiting practices usually associating literature and culture to national space.

It has been very important to think in terms of passages, transcultural movements and their reciprocal fertilizations that gave origin to new cultural products outside traditional classifications, as those based on the concept of nation. These literatures came to be called migrant (mainly in the francophone space) and transnational (mainly in the Anglophone space) and call attention to dislocations, to cultural hybridization and to the fact of having originated in contact zones.

American literatures originating from the friction between two or more cultures constitute new cultural facts that no longer belong to the cultural horizon of the country of origin or to the cultural horizon of the host country, engendering original and challenging cultural landscapes. The cultural mobilities of late modernity challenge us to take our reflections beyond transnationalisms and to propose new terminologies able to span the variables of a globalized world. Pierre Ouellet, Quebec writer and theoretician, and Kenneth White, a Scottish poet and essayist who lives between Brittany (*La Bretagne*) and Montreal, have recently published respectively *The Migrant Spirit* (*L´esprit migrateur*, 2005) and *The Nomad Spirit* (*L`esprit nomade,* 1987), in which they claim for non-migrant and non-transnational writers—that is, for those who have been born and are writing inside the same territory—the condition of intellectual migrants or spiritual nomads for having the freedom to choose their intellectual ancestry and to dialogue—without leaving their offices—with cultures farther away and more diverse.

I wish to stress that if we are all migrants in this globalized and "googlelized" world, the concepts of "migrant" and or "transnational literatures" rest emptied and lose their meaning. Thus, the proposal of this conference of thinking *beyond transnationalism* is timely and provocative in a meeting of Americanists. To think in terms of constellations may be enriching in the sense of moving

away, in a more definite way, from the concept of nation, for even when we talk about transnationalism, we are still stuck to the idea of nation, although we are apparently breaking with it. To speak of constellations and or connected intelligence or knowledge communities may correspond to a more radical change, since it allows us to imagine a projection of "families" or "communities" of authors and/or works that share a common memorial stock, that is, communities of authors inside which works constitute similar forms of organizing and of ordering the American collective imaginary.

As I move to my conclusion, I would like to introduce Pierre Ouellet´s concept of "memory communities" (*communautés de mémoire*) proposed by the author in his 2012 work, *Testaments: Le témoignage et le sacré (Testimony and the Sacred)*.

The author believes that in the current context of constant cultural mobilities, more important than to speak of national, or even transnational identities, is to speak of "communities of memory." This concept takes into account–in addition to the memory of the founding peoples–the newly-arrived cultures in a certain country, and the exchanges with them that compose a multiple memory, which he calls a "community of memory":

> It is not about a common (or collective) memory–because it belongs to several traditions with different histories, developed in different places–but about the fact that all this people [immigrants from different origins] participate in Québécois or French Canadian society now, and that makes us live in a community of memories (Ouellet, 2015: 229–240).[7]

7. Interview with Pierre Ouellet by Ana M. Lisboa de Mello, Zilá Bernd and Marie Hélène Parret Passos. Revista *Letras de Hoje*, PUCRS, 50.2, abril-junho, 2015: 229–240. The Portuguese version of the quotation translated above reads: "Não se trata de uma memória comum (ou coletiva) porque ela pertence a várias tradições, com diferentes histórias, desenvolvidas em diversos lugares, mas o fato de que pessoas de diferentes origens participem agora da sociedade quebequense, faz com que vivamos em uma comunidade de memórias." (Fr. "Ce n´est pas une mémoire commune (ou collective) parce qu'elle appartient à plusieurs traditions, plusieurs histoires différentes, plusieurs lieux où elle s'est développée, mais le fait que tous ces gens (immigrants de différentes origines), maintenant, participent de la société québécoise, ou canadienne française, fait en sorte que l'on vit dans la communauté de mémoires.").

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Today, to speak of literatures from the Americas would be to speak not of a common narrative/discourse, *d´un grand récit des Amériques*, not even about an American collective memory, in the sense of Maurice Halbwachs, but of different communities of memory (Ouellet) or communities of knowledge (Lévy) that adopt and share different memories/ in a true anthropophagic feast.

## WRITING BEYOND NATIONAL FRONTIERS

I want to mention Dany Laferrière,[8] who is one of the main authors of the so- called migrant literature in Quebec, and the winner of many literary prizes, even in France. He is one the most read francophone authors of our day, who published, in 2008, a book entitled *I Am a Japanese Writer* (*Je suis um écrivain japonais).* The novel begins with the narrator, who lives in Montreal and is a frequent reader of Mishima and Basho, telling Japanese journalists that he will write a book following the style of the Japanese masters. With his ironic and humorous style, Laferrière once more discusses the labels critics and literary historians stick to writers. He refuses to be considered a Québécois, Haitian or even migrant writer. He prefers to say he is an American writer (in the large sense of designating the three Americas) who writes in French.

In answer to the question posed by journalists about whether he considers himself a Haitian, Caribbean or francophone writer, he answers that he assumes the nationality of his reader: "[...] it depends on the nationality of my reader. That is to say that when a Japanese reads me, I immediately become a Japanese writer." (Laferrière, 2008: 30).[9]

It is time to think beyond transnationalisms, to think about exchanges and sharing. It is not exactly that the Americas that are in suspension (West, 2009) or unfinished (Bouchard, 2000); it is the processes of Americanness that needs to be reinvented in terms of interactivity and complementarities, producing the synergies

8. Born in Haiti on April 13th, 1953; he is a writer and a journalist and lives in Montreal (Canada).

9. "Êtes vous un écrivain haïtien, caribéen ou francophone? Je répondis que je prenais la nationalité de mon lecteur. Ce qui veut dire que quand un Japonais me lit, je deviens immédiatement un écrivain japonais." (Laferrière, 2008: 30).

of which Pierre Lévy speaks. To share knowledges and experiences in the space of the Americas corresponds to resignifying Americanness in a transversal and relational perspective. This is our challenge for the years to come.

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Review of International American Studies
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall–Winter № 2/2016
ISSN 1991–2773



# JOYFUL TANKS MEET GAY POET

## Commemorating Liberation by 'America' in the Age of Global War on Terror

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*When you "pay" attention to something, you buy that experience. [...] Be selective in your focus because your attention feeds the energy of it and keeps it alive. Not just within you, but in the collective consciousness as well.*

*Emily Maroutian*

*He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.*

*George Orwell*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the role of memory in the US-Czech relations as it analyzes two very different events of May 2015 commemorating the liberating presence of the United States in the Czech history. It demonstrates that 'America' to this day serves as a powerful source of inspiration, feeding imagination shaping the Czech concepts of liberty. More specifically, the purpose of the paper is to bring to the reader's attention the fact that in the context of commemorative events associated with the US held in the Czech Republic, the notion of liberation has two very different meanings. The first one is connected with the physical liberation by the US Army, the second one relates to cultural liberation through exposure to subversive American culture. The two contrasting versions of liberation by 'America' celebrated in the Czech Republic serve to indicate the concurrence of two competing ways to approach bilateral Czech-US relations in the age of the global war on terror. The findings hereby presented may

prove relevant in the context of wider debates about the role of memory in international relations, as well as in discussions about the perceptions of the liberating capability of 'America,' both in the Czech Republic and world-wide. The conclusion offers some fresh ideas concerning the potential of working with memory in the context of Czech-American ties.

When compared with the early years after its victory in the Cold War, the once idealized image of the United States in the world has become much more contested. Back then, the US neoliberal approach to the economy as well as to politics was seen as a model for solving internal problems, especially for countries transitioning to democracy after decades of discredited communist rule. However, after the botched occupation of Iraq starting in 2003, reports of torture at Guantánamo, the financial crisis of 2008 and the Snowden revelations of the extent of espionage practised by US government agencies, the concept of the United States being a role model around the world became questionable (Ash, 2005: 13). This creates a serious problem for the US foreign policy, which, to a great extent, continues to rely on its soft power to accomplish its goals (Nye, 1990: 3–5). Negative perceptions of the United States do not only complicate the country's policy objectives, but may also pose a national security threat: such an atmosphere may prove conducive to easy and cheap recruitment of anti-American individuals and organizations by the enemies and antagonists of the USA.

For this reason, it is relevant to question and analyze the various foundations of the strong ties that still bind the US with its allies around the world. One important type of such a bond depends on memory shared and consciously reproduced by a given community (Assman, 1995: 126). The relevance of the connection between memory and international politics has been persuasively argued elsewhere and encompasses both actions of politicians as well as responses of the general public to them (Langenbacher and Shain, 2010: 11). Such focus on memory comes from constructivist approaches in international relations, which link subjective interpretations of reality with agency on the international level (Wendt, 1992: 405). The perception of one's role in the world, as well as the perception of the roles and motives of others, help shape

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social reality of the subject to the point of supporting or opposing policies proposed by those who are able to set the dominant agenda. On the individual level, memory plays a key role in the processes of filtering and interpreting social reality, which is true also for relevant policymakers who are not immune to its pervasive, though at times latent or even subconscious, influence (Finney, 2014: 445). Complex game-theoretical models of international relations based on rational choices fail to take sufficiently into account this crucial aspect of memory in the context of socially constructed reality (Lebow, 2006: 6).

Cultural memory is a fascinating field of study, as we can observe and even participate in constant efforts to reassert a certain version of the past by various actors over time. Knowingly or even unknowingly, the present with its dilemmas and debates is never far away, as it serves as the symbolic benchmark for the evoked past events. Even though it is important to search for the objective historical truth supported by available evidence, for the purposes of cultural memory the only important 'history' is contained in the minds of the relevant group of people in any given moment (Novick, 1988: 523). From this perspective, cultural memory becomes essential in preserving historical consciousness over time. As the process of the formation of cultural memory is a social phenomenon, a temptation always exists to control and shape it according to the prevalent needs of the present. George Orwell's formulation in his *1984* of an absolute position that links complete control of the past with complete control of the future was prescient indeed. What is more, his claim is relevant not only for totalitarian regimes, but also for democracies, as ruling regimes strive to highlight events from the past which support or increase their legitimacy. These controlling efforts are helped by the fact that it is impossible for individuals to grasp an infinitely rich and complex historical reality with its various conflicting interpretations. At the same time, there is a natural need to embed one's life within a meaningful historical perspective, however limited it might be. This requires a process of mediation of complex historical reality through various versions of cultural memory which are then shared by most members of the given commu-

nity. This process brings ample opportunities for subtle (as well as not so subtle)manipulation.

It is for this reason that commemorative events deserve special attention. They can be defined as deliberately staged acts, designed to reinforce cultural memory of selected events from the past (Tóth, 2015: 38). The arbitrariness of these celebrations is crucial if we want to understand their social as well as political aspects. Why is it that we do not hold a huge global event every December 10th to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? Or a global day of mourning for those who died in Hiroshima on every August 6th? Cultural memory is not innocent, as it is a product of specific social and political decisions. An analysis of commemorative events helps us understand the underlying values as well as interests of the participating actors (Confino, 1997).

## 2. COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN CZECH-US RELATIONS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In order to appreciate the nuances of commemorative activities related to US-Czech relations, a basic introduction to the context of the Czech collective memory with respect to the United States is necessary. The main turning point relevant for the situation today was the fall of the communist regime in 1989. Before that, the US role in the Czech (or more precisely Czechoslovak) history had been downplayed by the official communist media, and the US was portrayed as a decaying imperialist power—in line with the predominant Soviet Cold War narrative at that time. The communist regime would take great care to ensure the erasure of any positive feelings related to the liberation of Pilsen and the western part of Bohemia by the US Army in 1945—strategic efforts were made to downplay, or even deny, the role of the United States in the liberation of Czechoslovakia (Bartošek and Pichlík, 1953). A picture from the book by Bartošek and Pichlík showing the map of Western Bohemia under a bloody club with the American flag with swastikas replacing stars suggests the malicious and destructive role of the US presence. The graphic imagery testifies to the viciousness of the efforts to eliminate any sentiments of gratitude to American soldiers as liberators (see Figure 1).

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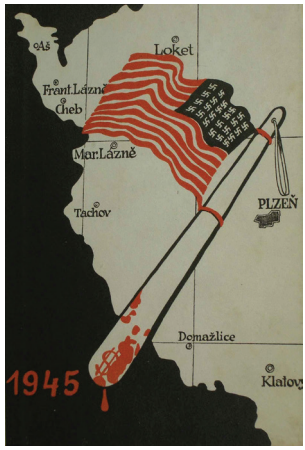


Fig. 1. Picture from the book *Američané v Západních Čechách* by Karel Bartošek and Karel Pichlík, published in 1953 by Mladá Fronta in Prague, Available at:<http://www.moderni-dejiny.cz/clanek/americane-v-zapadnich-cechach-v-roce-1945>.

Official commemorative events celebrating the end of World War II and culminating with massive military parades in Prague would focus solely on the role of the Soviet Red Army, while the American contribution would deliberately be omitted from the news by the ruling of the Czechoslovak communist party. The blatant disregard for the role of the US Army in the liberation of western Bohemia was duly noted by the US Embassy in Prague, which frequently complained about the absence of any recognition of the American input in the official news coverage, but to no avail.[1] The efforts of the Embassy of the United States are nonetheless important, as they indicate that American diplomats were well aware of the potential power of memory, which the communist regime tried to manipulate to its own advantage.

After the regime change in Czechoslovakia in 1989, the US, almost overnight, became both an inspiration to, and an ally of, the newly constituted government. This was immediately reflected in the organization of massive events commemorating the American liberation of Pilsen. The celebration, organized for the first time in 1990, gradually became the key official event

1. A 1973 telegram message from the US Embassy in Prague, available in the collections of the National Security Archive, College Park, Maryland, confirms the diplomatic efforts of the part of the State Department.

in the World War II anniversaries from the perspective of prominent Czech politicians. Even though organized locally by the city of Pilsen to make up for the years of forced neglect, the event quickly gained national recognition for its symbolic significance, as the country strived to become a part of the West by joining the NATO and the EU.

Together with the focus on atrocities of the communist regime in post-1989 historical research, the newly emergent representation of Czech-US relations emphasized the shared traditions of liberal individualism and political democracy, which, in the Czech case, had been tragically interrupted by 40 years of communist totalitarianism. Special recognition was granted to the role of Woodrow Wilson in the creation of independent Czechoslovakia, as well as to the connections of the first president of Czechoslovakia Tomas Garrigue Masaryk to the US. The era of the First Republic (1918–1938) would be portrayed by politicians and mainstream media alike as the golden age of economic progress: an era built on values congruent with those symbolized by the United States and, at the same time, promoted by the new post-1989 Czech administrations. Tomas Bata, the founder of Bata Shoes, is the main protagonist of this narrative—the fact that he learned Fordist principles in the US and applied them in his modern factory complex in Zlin in eastern Moravia highlights the symbolic importance of the transatlantic connection at that time (Szczygieł, 2008: 53–55).

To add to this, the end of the Cold War was interpreted in Czechoslovakia as a vindication of Ronald Reagan's hard-line anti-communist policies. By emphasizing the importance of Reagan's militancy towards communism, this interpretation of history allowed the neoliberal Czech government of Vaclav Klaus to legitimize its other, Reagan-inspired, social and economic policies. It is for the same reason that to this day the figure of Ronald Reagan remains a frequent object of a variety of commemorative acts, ranging from street renaming ceremonies to high-profile events on important dates related to him.[2]

2. Daniel Anýž, "Praha má ulici Ronalda Reagana. Pokřtila ji i Condoleezza Riceová," 30.11.2011 <http://zahranicni.ihned.cz/c1-52207170-praha-ma-ulici-ronalda-reagana-pokrtila-ji-i-condoleezza-riceova>.

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Apart from the fascination with Reagan's policies, people who were critical of the communist regime were heavily influenced by US cultural products that made their way to Czechoslovakia before 1989. American culture was often seen as more dynamic and liberating than the somewhat sterile, officially sanctioned cultural production that censored voices critical of the regime at home. Even if portrayed as decadent by official media, the popularity of the culture of the USA (including the much sought-after jeans) effectively contributed to the formation of a positive image of the United States as a whole, especially among the youth. After the fall of communism, this became apparent in terms of huge turnouts at massive concerts of American (as well as British) music stars. Anti-authoritarian aspects of much of the lyrics by performers such as Bob Dylan were not lost on Czech audience at that time.[3]

Even before the concept of soft power was coined by Joseph Nye, the US had been exerting significant symbolic, as well as real, impact upon Czech politics and society in the 1990s. Both the anti-communist credentials of the US government as well as the liberating influence of American culture were deeply ingrained in living cultural memory of the people who witnessed the transition from communism to liberal democracy.

The historical backdrop sketched thus far provides the context, in which my analyses of two US-oriented commemorative events held in 2015, offered in subsequent sections of this article, become particularly relevant. Each of the events symbolizes one conceptual approach to the cultivation of the continuity of cultural memory related to the Czech-American ties.

### 3. THE US AS A PHYSICALLY LIBERATING FORCE: THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF PILSEN'S LIBERATION BY THE US ARMY

After 1989, cultural memory in Czechoslovakia focused on images of the US as a strong, physically liberating force safeguarding liberal democracy. Already in World War I, the US helped to defeat the Triple Alliance, which opened the way for Czechs and Slovaks to form democratic Czechoslovakia in 1918 with important diplomatic

3. Vladimír Vlasák, "Připomeňte si česká zastavení Boba Dylana," 08.06.2008, <http://kultura.zpravy.idnes.cz/pripomente-si-ceska-zastaveni-boba-dylana-fg3-/hudba.aspx?c=A080608_155348_hudba_jaz>.

support from Woodrow Wilson. The fact that Czechoslovakia itself was a direct product of Wilsonian approach to foreign affairs[4] had profound influence on post-1989 Czech foreign policy, which supported US efforts to promote freedom and democracy around the world (Pojar, 2015: 81). Today, the main train station in Prague bears the president's name, and his statue is situated in front of the main entrance. It was remodeled in 2012 after the original 1928 statue by Albín Polášek, which had been torn down by German soldiers in 1941.[5] Notably, during the communist period, the train station was officially called only "main train station": Wilson's name was formally reinstated only after the Velvet Revolution.

During World War II, the US helped to liberate Czechoslovakia from the Nazi occupation; at the end of the Cold War—America helped to liberate the country from the communist rule by outspending the Soviets in military expenditure. This (historical) narrative is coherent with that underlying Czech Republic's membership in NATO—a memory-based narrative oriented toward the future. Since Czech Republic joined NATO in 1999, the common membership in the Organization warrants Czechs American assistance in time of need: should the country face any threat in the future, the United States will come again, deploying their powerful military to help eliminate any potential danger.

The main *place of memory* (as theorized by Pierre Nora [1989]), and central to these narratives, is the city of Pilsen, the largest of the Czech cities liberated by the US Army in May 1945. As such, it is home to several monuments that serve as permanent reminders of these events and are the focus of annual commemorative activities.

The rather impressive *Thank you, America* granite monument was erected in 1995 by the city of Pilsen, ostensibly to make up for their deliberate neglect of the US role in the liberation of Czechoslovakia during the communist times. The tender for the monument

4. See the argument proposed by Walter Russel Mead in "Carter Syndrome," *Foreign Policy*, January 2010 <http://www.cfr.org/history-and-theory-of-international-relations/carter-syndrome/p21106>.

5. Michal Kalina, "Před hlavním nádražím opět stojí pomník W. Wilsona" 05.10.2011 <http://zpravy.aktualne.cz/regiony/praha/pred-hlavnim-nadrazim-opet-stoji-pomnik-w-wilsona/r~i:article:716530>.

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attracted widespread attention, with renowned sculptor Vladimír Preclík eventually winning the competition. His original concept featured an abstract representation of a shattered Czechoslovak flag. Albeit winning, the design was poorly received by the inhabitants and the politicians of Pilsen, as it seemed to reflect the lost opportunities and bleak decades that *followed* the liberation of 1945 rather than the celebration of joy and gratitude. After an emergency meeting in the city hall held to find a more acceptable solution, a more conservative classical design was selected, in many features similar to the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. (see Figure 2).[6]

Fig. 2. *Thank You, America* memorial on May 6th, 2015. (Photograph by Kryštof Kozák).

A major memorial to US General George Patton was unveiled as part of the Liberation Festival in 2015 on a busy thoroughfare near the center of the city. Previous efforts to erect the monument ended in failure, as the realization of the winning design of a larger-than-life, realistic portrayal of the famous American commander by Jaroslav Bocker was blocked by the votes of the city assembly on account of the artist's alleged past collaboration with the communist secret police.[7] Years later and after a new tender, an abstract

6. For basic information about the monument, see Marcel Fišer, *Díky Ameriko* <http://www.socharstvi.info/realizace/diky-ameriko>.
7. Czech Press Agency ČTK, "Plzeň konečně odhalila památník generála Pattona" ["Pilsen finally revealed General Patton's memorial"], 01.05.2015

design featuring seven meters tall steel plates shaped to allude to George Patton's profile, was unveiled during the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the city (see Figure 3). According to a poll carried out by the regional newspaper *Plzenske listy*, the abstract design—in whose curves it is fairly difficult to actually recognize the General's facial features—is not very popular with local residents, who have also criticized its cost (100,000 USD).[8] Nonetheless, the erection of the monument in 2015 testifies to conscious efforts on the part of the city administration to shape cultural memory in US-Czech relations.

Fig. 3. General Patton memorial by Václav Zůna, Lubomír Čermák and Tomáš Beneš on May 6th, 2015. (Photograph by Kryštof Kozák).

<http://www.lidovky.cz/plzen-70-let-od-valky-odhalila-pomnik-generala-pattona-p0d-/zpravy-domov.aspx?c=A150501_212438_ln_domov_sho>.

8. Veselá, Dana, "Pattonův pomník budí vášně. Jak se líbí vám? Hlasujte!" ["Patton's memorial stirs emotions. How do you like it? Vote!"], *Plzeňský deník*, 05.05.2015 <http://plzensky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/pattonuv-pomnik-budi-vasne-20150504.html>.

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The Pilsen cultural center Peklo (meaning "Hell" in Czech) houses the Patton Memorial Museum. Established in 2005 on the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, it offers a sizeable permanent exhibition on the liberation of the city, recently supplemented with material collected specifically for the 2015 Liberation Festival. Apart from the predictable collection of military paraphrenalia and historical artefacts, a large part of the museum is devoted to communist efforts to distort the history of the US presence in Pilsen, including access to newspaper articles from the communist era, outright denying the role American troops played in the liberation of the city. Somewhat paradoxically, the existence of the museum, which itself is a product of a pro-active approach toward cultural memory, is thus legitimized by the actions of the gone-by regime, whose attempts to manipulate facts have now been documented.

The above notwithstanding, the main objective of the Patton Memorial Museum is to commemorate General Patton himself and the liberation of Pilsen by the US troops with a simple dominant narrative glorifying the American commander. He is presented as a hard-headed, aggressive and strict leader, draped in the aura of military successes. These personal attributes ideally fit the narrative of protection, by the logic of which the strong and unwavering ally will always come to the succor of friends-in-need. A narrative, which arguably provides the fundament to the various commemorative acts.

While the permanent exhibit at the museum vilifies the communist distortions of the 1945 liberation, it does not try to raise any questions or debates about the events themselves. At the same time, the exhibit also unwittingly reveals that there are other layers of memory politics that could be explored. For example, a 20-minute film collage from the original 1945 footage conveys both the joyful atmosphere of liberty among the victors and the grim prospects for those defeated. Scenes featuring young girls dressed up in traditional costumes designed for special occasions intertwine a few frames later with footage of the harsh treatment that German prisoners, both military and civilian, had to face; no explanation or commentary is provided to account for the contrast. Like the propaganda posters discussed earlier in this text, to a careful observer the exhibition opens space for uncomfortable

questions that have not been formally addressed by its creators, perhaps for the sake of the clarity and simplicity of the message intended for the visitors.

Extensive commemorative celebrations take place in Pilsen each year, but the year 2015 was special, as it marked the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the city. The commemoration consisted of a series of events and exhibitions that lasted for over a week. It is instructive to analyze these activities in greater detail, since they reveal those of the shared representations of the past that are meant to be institutionalized and preserved. The analysis demonstrates that the commemoration festivities serves primarily to reinvigorate the feelings of joy related to freedom regained owing to the contribution of the American troops, and thus to cement the NATO ties both on the Czech, and on the American side.

During the events of 2015, symbolically, the US as well as the Czech military played prominent roles in the course of the celebrations. One of the traditional highlights was the Convoy of Liberty, a long parade of over 300 historical US Army vehicles maintained mostly by local enthusiasts. The program included also reenactments of daily camp life in the US military of World War II, and a live presentation of Czech units fighting on the Western front performed by re-enactors. In order to make a clear connection to the present, the program also included the presentation of a current US Army checkpoint. The Czech Army had a special presentation within the program, offering coordinated fly-overs by jet fighters at key times.[9]

Represenatives of the world of politics attended the official ceremony held at the *Thank you, America* memorial as well. Present dignitaries included the Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, Chairman of the Czech Chamber of Deputies Pavel Hamáček, Chairman of the Czech Senate Přemysl Sobotka and the US Ambassador, His Excellency Andrew Schapiro. In their speeches, they emphasized historic ties between the Czech Republic and the United States of America, and thus reinforced the cultural memory in this respect. The theme of the necessity to fight for freedom and democracy today as well as back then

9. The offical program of the Liberation Festival is available online: <http://www.slavnostisvobody.cz/slavnosti-svobody/program>

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was prominent, with implicit references to the conflict in Ukraine.[10] The explicit link between memory and the present was provided by the US Ambassador:

> We are once again reminded that liberty is not without cost and that every generation who wants to enjoy freedom, must make sacrifices of its own. So once again, Americans and Czechs must work together to defend our common values, as partners committed to transatlantic security—only this time, as NATO Allies. We look forward to working together in the future to ensure that both our countries—and in fact all of Europe—is protected against future threats.[11]

This quote serves as a clear example of how a commemorative event may be used to attain present-day political objectives. As was well known to His Excellency, the Czech President Miloš Zeman was one of the few European leaders who had traveled to Moscow for the Russian Federation's anniversary celebrations commemorating the end of World War II, and he was not present in Pilsen. Highlighting the traditional US-Czech ties thus had an underlying political message: it simultaneously affirmed the place of the Czech Republic in the structures of NATO and rebutted President Zeman's overtures towards Moscow.

After the speeches, each dignitary laid a wreath at the *Thank you, America* monument in the center of the city to the sound of traditional Czech music performed by the military brass band. Altogether, around 20 wreaths from various institutions were laid at the monument, including one presented by a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. By laying the wreath, official participants subscribed to the dominant narrative of the event. The public was separated from the monument by a cordon, and the overall atmosphere resembled that of a funeral rather than that of an experience of liberation, given the somber tone of the speeches, the traditional military brass music and the wreaths. This, however, is understandable, as the ceremony was commemorating US soldiers who fell liberating Czechoslovakia. This format

10. Přemysl Sobotka, "Snažme se poučit co nejvíce z historie" [Přemysl Sobotka, "Let us try to learn as much from history as possible"], <http://www.ods.cz/clanek/9548-snazme-se-poucit-co-nejvice-z-historie>.

11. The transcript of the speech was provided to the author by the US Embassy.

allowed the speakers to use the opportunity to focus the discourse on current threats and the ensuing necessity to sacrifice personal comforts for higher goals and principles also today. In this aspect, the commemoration bore traits of a rally, in which the speakers would clearly mobilize their listeners against all enemies of freedom and democracy, who, throughout the event, would be symbolically linked to the Nazis.

The presence of a dozen US veterans who actually were in Pilsen 70 years before brought an important element of living memory to the event. Organizers invited the veterans to actively participate in a series of discussions in the Pilsen area, thereby providing audiences with an opportunity of a face-to-face interaction with actual witnesses of historical events. Even though personal memories must inevitably be selective and incomplete, such personal meetings are seminal for the formation of cultural memory, as real-life presence adds the element of authenticity that might otherwise be missing in commemorative activities.[12] On the symbolic level, one of the dominant narratives behind the commemoration activities is the narrative of gratitude: the veterans' interaction with Pilsen residents opened space for the reification of this discouse, since it is easier to express gratitude to flesh-and-blood individuals than to abstract ideas. In this sense, the content of actual memories of the veterans may not be as important as their mere physical presence, which serves as the vital link to the events of May 1945. Expressions of gratitude added an emotional layer to the event, as the veterans were deeply touched by the reverence with which their Czech hosts would receive them. As one the main organizers put it, the liberation festival will not be the same without them.[13]

The main conceptual theme of the festival, expressed also in internal documents of the organizers,[14] was to take the participants back in time to relive the experience as well as the atmosphere of May 1945. Going back to the time of intense emotional experience

12. Veselá, Dana, "Veteráni, vítejte v Plzni," *Plzeňský deník*, 24.04.2015, <http://plzensky.denik.cz/zpravy_region/veterani-vitejte-v-plzni-po-70-letech-20150423.html>

13. Interview with Denisa Krylová, 25.05.2015.

14. "Concept of the Liberation Festival," internal document of the organizing committee provided to the author by Denisa Krylová, 25.05.2015.

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connecting individual soldiers of the US Army and Czech people reinvigorates current bilateral relations, as the commemorated past becomes present for the duration of the festival. During the evening festivities, people were asked to come dressed in historical clothing, and they danced to music from 1945. This is consistent with the so-called "period rush," where participants strive to achieve total immersion in the other time period (Thompson, 2004).

Army camps complete with historical gear and reenactors in historical uniforms offered explanatory tours to visitors, including schoolchildren on field trips. Going back in time may also involve an element of fright: the author personally witnessed how one of the reenactors slightly terrified the unsuspecting schoolchildren with an explanation of how to use the bayonet to get to the coronary vein of the enemy, describing the technique in gory detail. Still, the atmosphere of festivity notwithstanding, the high-profile presence of current army units mixed with historical reenactors opened many eyes to the existence of a threat that needs to be jointly fought today.

In their efforts to transport the audiences back in time, the organizers created an unusual display: a fence covered with wartime posters, both political and commercial. While this form of a presentation served to debar and critique the propaganda tools employed at the time, it also unwittingly gestured towards the rather uncomfortable fact of widespread Czech collaboration with the Nazis during the war. Pilsen was a major industrial town with modern weapons factories supplying the Wehrmacht during the Nazi occupation, for which reason the city was heavily bombed by the Allies at the end of the war. The Czech communist propaganda used these bombings against the West, arguing that the Allies only wanted to eliminate any potential future competition by communist economies (Bartoš and Pichlík, 1953). This line of reasoning persists in fringe internet publications associated with the communist party, providing a counterpoint to the dominant narrative to this day.[15] Other present-day efforts

15. J. Groušl, "O čem se v Plzni nehovořilo" ["What was not mentioned in Pilsen"] <http://www.novysmer.cz/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1058:o-em-se-v-plzni-nehovoilo&catid=39:historie&Itemid=50>.

at diminishing the role of the US Army focus on the contribution of the Czech resistance, which took control of much of the city even before the arrival of US troops.[16]

One of the most intriguing as well as ambitious efforts to link the past to the present and solidify the memory of the role of the Americans in the struggle for the liberation of the city was a large-scale photographic exhibition in the main park in the city center. The authors collected photos from Pilsen taken in May 1945, took pictures from the same exact locations in 2015, and then superimposed the corresponding images on one another.


Fig. 4. Example from the open air photo exhibition meshing historical and contemporary photos. Collage by Pavel Kolouch; photograph by the author.

Thus, a Sherman tank in black and white shared the same picture with people walking home with full shopping bags 70 years later. Expert historical commentary was provided for each of the 50 collaged photos. The distance traveled in time in the same exact space was thus made evident in an easily accessible visualization. Bringing the images of war so close to home in this way served

16. Josef Vít, "Pár slov k osvobození Plzně" ["A Few Words on Pilsen Liberation"], 04. 05. 2009 <http://blisty.cz/art/46674.html>. See also Vojtěch Laštovka, "Plzeň v boji proti fašismu: stručné dějiny odboje Plzeňanů proti fašistickým okupantům" ["Pilsen in its Fight Against Fascism: A Brief History of Resistance of the People of Pilsen Against the Fascist Occupiers"], 1938–1945, Západočeské nakladatelství, 1975.

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as an effective reminder of the current peace and security symbolically guaranteed by the alliance with the USA.

Two most prominent cultural events connected with the Liberation Festival was a concert of southern classic rock music by Lynyrd Skynyrd, and a closing concert titled "Light of Understanding" featuring various artists performing *5774—Kindertransport to Theresienstadt* composed by Peter Gyori. The Lynyrd Skynyrd concert was meant to symbolize the free spirit of the US (as in the band's iconic "Free Bird" song), without necessarily raising more serious questions (like the lyrics for "Simple Man"). Even though one might be tempted to look for more profound symbolism in the selection of the band, the reality is simpler—it is a favorite band of the owner of the Viktoria Plzeň soccer club, who sponsored the show. On their part, Lynyrd Skynyrd were at first reluctant to come all the way to Pilsen, but the fact that they would be part of a major Liberation Festival, an important commemorative event and a joyful, pro-American festivity where people show gratitude and other positive sentiments with respect to the US—eventually persuaded them.[17]

This corresponds with the excitement of the veterans and parallels the sentiments of the US Ambassador. Both the veterans and the American diplomats would univocally suggest that on the personal level they found it deeply gratifying to see people representing a distant culture actually appreciating the United States. This becomes especially relevant today, when many Americans are dismayed by the intensity of negative feelings towards their country in many parts of the world. In this sense, the Liberation Festival strengthens the bilateral US-Czech ties at the level of personal affects: participants from the US were moved by the demonstrations of gratitude based on the memory of the past, but clearly resonating in the present.

The "Light of Understanding" was an event connecting the experience of the celebration of freedom with the memory of the horrors of the war reified in the suffering of Jewish children. Since admittance was limited and the tickets, by Central European

17. An interview with main organizer of the festival, Daniela Krylová, September 18, 2015.

standards, were relatively expensive,[18] the performance was obviously designed to cater to a more refined and educated audience compared with the open-air festivities, even though both main vocalists, Bára Basiková and Michal Pavlíček, are famous names in Czech popular music.[19] The uneasy connection with suffering added a deeper, reflexive, dimension and a new moral message to the otherwise more joyful liberation narrative of the Festival. At the same time highlighted the heroic nature of the struggle of good vs. evil, in which the American soldiers were on the righteous side.

Overall, the 2015 Liberation Festival was a major commemorative event with high budget and attendance, as well as ample media coverage. While trying by various means to relive the liberation experience of 70 years before, its goal was not to present complex historical realities or pose pointed questions about the past and its relevance to the present. Its main aim was to bring into spotlight a specific historical moment, the interpretation of which was clear—the joyful citizens of Pilsen (and by extension also all Czechs) gathered to symbolically thank the US military for its contribution to the liberation of the country from tyrannical oppression. The main poster advertising the event conveys this narrative (Figure 5). The implicit message was also clear—as NATO members, the Czechs are hoping that in case of dire need, the US soldiers will arrive again to aid the liberal democratic ally under threat. Even though it was not expressed explicitly, the event had high significance as a political and rhetorical gesture, especially in the context of Russia's policies in Crimea and eastern Ukraine.

The fact that the Liberation Festival happened one month after the military operation "Dragoon Ride," in which US Army vehicles drove through Czech Republic on their way from Baltic States to Germany, added clear political salience to the commemorative event. The military exercise (which in fact resembled the Festival Convoy of Liberty, only with modern weaponry), aimed at reassur-

18. 14 USD, considering that most other events at the Liberation Festival were freee of charge.

19. For basic information about the show and links to excerpts from the performance visit the following website: <http://www.plzenskavstupenka.cz/cz/ostatni/title/8819-svetlo-porozumeni>.

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ing Central European countries of continued US support, but was at the same time a litmus test for the attitudes towards the US. Overall, it generated widespread support, with 20,000 people visiting the convoy at its overnight post in Prague-Ruzyně. At the same time, there were isolated instances of protests of the far-right and pro-Russian groups that were taken up by pro-Kremlin media.[20]


Fig. 5. Poster advertising the Liberation Festival in the street of Pilsen.
Photograph by the author.

Tu sum up, one might argue that from the standpoint of US-Czech relations, the festive, high-profile commemoration of the 1945 liberation serves as a constant, or recurring, reminder of an unquestionable bond rooted in the past, yet supposed to shape the future as well, very much in line with what both Czech dignitaries and the US Ambassador proclaimed in their speeches. However, the Festival, in its multidimensionality and diversity, could not be reduced to the overall message alone. As mentioned, on several occasions, however, the organizers' efforts of to travel back in time brought forth painful memories and uncomfortable questions, including those concerning Czech collaboration with Nazi Germany and the fate of Czechoslovakia's ethnic Germans after the war. The focus on the moment of liberation practically precluded

20. Dan Lamothe, "In show of force, the Army's Operation Dragoon Ride rolls through Europe," Washington Post, 24 March 2015. Retrieved 4 April 2015.

any discussion of the complex aftermath of that event that lead to the communist takeover. These problems were not addressed, as they would complicate the desired primary narrative of the united Czechs joyfully thanking their American liberators, which became part of Czech national cultural memory after 1989.

Liberation in this instance comes primarily in physical form, with tanks playing the main role—in an odd visual coincidence with official military parades of the communist past, celebrating the Red Army. The change of emphasis in commemorating the end of World War II for Pilsen is understandable after 1989, but only underscores the fluid, as well as politically charged, nature of cultural memory. With respect to the US-Czech ties, the Liberation Festival reinforced the narrative of asymmetrical relationship based primarily on the military prowess of the US and its willingness to defend its weaker allies who share the same values. Yet, political rhetoric notwithstanding, it is the authentic gratitude of those who were liberated, demonstrated in thankful commemorative activities, that is the prize that feeds back into the American resolve to liberate again, if it ever becomes necessary.

### 4. THE US AS A CULTURALLY LIBERATING FORCE—NO GUNS, ALL BUTTER

> *I have seen the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical, naked, dragging themselves through the Negro streets at dawn, looking for an angry fix …*
>
> *Allen Ginsberg, "Howl"*

In the context of the Czech cultural memory, the United States function as an important liberating force in yet another sense. Despite the communist rule starting in 1948, elements of the American counterculture were able to seep in through the Iron Curtain and served as an important source of inspiration for Czechs and Slovaks who felt constrained or outright repressed by the totalitarian political system.[21] At times, even the communist regime tolerated publishing works by US artists, which

21. A basic overview of Czech subcultures under communism and their foreign inspirations is available in Vladimír 518, Ivan Adamovič et al., *Kmeny 0*, Prague: Big Boss, 2013.

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were deemed either apolitical or critical of the US government.[22] In the hands of a receptive audience, such officially sanctioned works could quickly acquire subversive if not outright liberating potential. Transatlantic linkages between the US and Czech Republic thus have a major other foundation: cultural liberation. Commemorative activities could further reinforce the cultural memory of this important aspect of the Czech-American ties.

No event symbolizes the cultural liberation linkage better than the crowning of the American beat poet Allen Ginsberg as the King of May in 1965 during Majales, a traditional student festival held in Prague, with tens of thousands in attendance. Fascinating original film footage from the Majales of 1965 is fortunately available online, and it captures the extraordinary atmosphere of the time.[23] The filmmakers guide the viewer from the preparation phase through the parade to the final event, emphasizing the fresh energy and joyful spirit of the festival. On the surface, the images of the parade look similar to official marches encouraged by the communist regime. Closer inspection, however, reveals the playful, ironic and at times subversive aspects of the event, which is mostly evident on the signs that the marching students hold and in the hyperbolic tone of the moderators of the event.

Allen Ginsberg arrived in Prague first in 1964 after he was deported from Cuba for supporting the rights of homosexuals—and, allegedly, also for criticizing Che Guevara's body (Blažek, 2011: 30). Already a known figure in Prague's intellectual circles, he was well received even by the official Writer's Guild of Czechoslovakia. Ginsberg's criticism of US society had made him a potentially valuable propaganda asset from the standpoint of the ruling communist regime. He spent most of his time in Prague at Viola café, drinking alcohol and pursuing numerous sexual encounters with his young male Czech admirers.[24] Respectable translators

22. Zuzana Semínová, "Počátky časopisu Světová literatura a angloameričtí autoři" ["Beginnings of the World Literature journal and its Angloamerican authors"], *Souvislosti*, 1, 2003.

23. The short film is available on Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrB1Wb91LBM>.

24. According to Czechoslovak secret police file—16 conquests in total. This, comprehensibly, did not go unnoticed during the Festival. When Carlton Rounds, one of the two invited speakers, learned of Ginberg's

of his work—Jan Zabrana and Josef Skvorecky—were unimpressed with his demeanor as well as his shabby appearance. Nonetheless, the presence of a celebrated icon of the American counterculture in Prague electrified the city's students, and when he was designated as a candidate for the King of May, he won the election won the election by a landslide: he was crowned King of May by popular acclamation of the audience even though his candidacy 'speech' consisted solely in ringing some Tibetan bells.

Yet, after he became King of May, the Czechoslovak secret police grown suspicious of Ginsberg's activities. When the police operatives stole his notebook, their suspicions were confirmed. In his notes, Ginsberg was very critical of the regime, even as it was gradually becoming more liberal and open at the time. Eventually, Ginsberg was deported out of the country and became a target of a sophisticated smear campaign by the official media, which would accuse him of corrupting the nation's youth.[25]

Nevertheless, the symbolic crowning of an American poet in a communist country during a major public celebration presents a fine moment in the history of the Czech-American relations: a moment that deserves proper commemoration, as it symbolizes the liberating effect of the US counterculture, which continued to played an important role in the intellectual life of Czechoslovakia until the end of the Cold War. Fully aware of the implications of commemorative activities, at the behest of György Tóth, the Department of American Studies of the Charles University in Prague decided to create a major event in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Ginsberg's crowning. According to official festival documentation, the main intent was "to transmit the memory and values involved in Allen Ginsberg's 1965 visit to Prague to a new generation of Czech and European students,

rather promiscuous behavior in Prague, he quipped: "It looks like Allen was liberating Prague with his penis [...]." In his own talk, Justin Quinn, another speaker, jocularly responded that Ginsberg would perform his acts of subversion by both "what he did and *did not do* with his penis," thus connecting two dimensions of liberation in one witty adage.

25. The main indictment was published in official Communist Party newspaper *Rudé právo* on May 17th under the title "Kocovina s Ginsbergem" ["Hangover with Ginsberg"]. FBI was interested in the allegations and had it translated into English for its own Ginsberg files.

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and to the general public," as well as "showcase the Transatlantic (US-Czech) connections in struggles for social justice, minority rights, and democracy, and to show how US social, political and cultural movements enriched the Czech society since 1965."[26] In the context of the events commemorating the American military liberation of West Bohemia, the festival aimed at celebrating other types of liberation that bond Americans and Czechs together.[27]

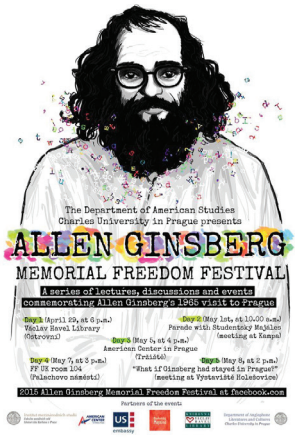


Fig. 6. Poster for Allen Ginsberg Memorial Freedom Festival.
Source: author's collections.

The main aim of the week-long festival was to refresh and reinvigorate the memory of Allen Ginsberg's visit to Prague and to convey a more abstract message about personal liberation across-the-Atlantic. The funds for the program were provided by Charles University as well as by the US Embassy Small Grants Program, where the responsible officials understood the idea of the cultivation of the shared cultural experience between the US and Czech Republic–especially if, by celebrating those elements of it which would appeal to the younger generation, the project should foster

26. Grant application for the festival held in the private archive of the author.
27. The fact that the author was personally involved in organizing the event creates methodological problems, as the analysis cannot be entirely impartial. At the same time, close proximity to the event makes it possible to clarify what we, as academics, tried to accomplish together with the students and why we thought it was important. In this respect, direct involvement may prove to be an asset.

the continuity of the cultural connection. It helped that the connection with LGBT struggles of today was consistent with the priorities of US Embassy—one of the first supporters of Prague Pride.[28] The irony of the fact that the US Embassy supported events commemorating a person who had been deeply critical of the US government was not lost on the participating students, who prepared a sign reading "We are paid for by the US Embassy" for the final parade.

The Allen Ginsberg Memorial Freedom Festival featured two distinguished guests from the US to help us convey our central message. The first guest speaker was Ralph Young from Temple University, who had recently published a book on dissent in America, which was partly dedicated to Ginsberg (Young, 2015). The scholar delivered several talks and gave a music performance at the Festival. In his talks, Young situated Ginsberg within the broader countercultural movement, explaining the essence of its profound criticism of the official US government policies at that time, and pointed out mechanisms responsible for the canonization of the once countercultural artistic production. Among others, he reminded his audiences that many songs that are now part of the mainstream canon and are aired on commercial radio stations were, in fact, protest songs criticizing US politics and society, pointing out that even Ginsberg's "Howl," now widely accepted as one of the most significant poems of the 20th century, almost ended up as a banned book as it became a target of a major obscenity trial in 1957.

The second prominent guest from the US was Carlton Rounds, a well-known LGBT rights and anti-HIV/AIDS activist. His main contribution was to connect the countercultural liberation of the 1960s with current struggles in the US. The screening of the movie *The Normal Heart* about the shocking unwillingness of the US government to address the HIV epidemic in the gay community in the early 1980s, held at the American Center in Prague, served this purpose very well, with subsequent discussion leading to the topic of difficulties in the fight for sexual as well as personal liberation. The follow-up program at *A Studio Rubín* (a major meeting point for progressive artists both in the 1960s and today) featured Carlton Rounds in a musical performance that traced the influence

28. An interview by the author with a US Embassy official who preferred to remain anonymous.

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of gay composers on US music. Apart from his talks for students and faculty, in the course of the Festival Rounds was also able to establish connections with Czech activists fighting for LGBT rights and the rights of HIV positive people, who participated in the events.

Apart from the guest-speaker presentations, the program included other talks delivered at the Faculty of Arts of Charles University, on topics related to Allen Ginsberg by György Tóth, Andrew Giarelli and Justin Quinn.[29] The session was enriched with testimonies of Czechs who personally met Ginsberg when he was visiting Prague, such as the renowned translator Josef Rauvolf. Their living memory thus complemented other materials present at the Festival. Furthermore, in an effort to evoke the mythical *illud tempus,* a reenactment of Ginsberg's coronation was staged in the city center, accompanied by a public reading of passages from "Howl."

Another highlight of the Festival was the screening of the movie *Howl*, which traced the origins of the poem—a collage of some archival footage and the actor James Franco's impersonation of Ginsberg. The poem itself was presented in an animated form with subtitles on several occasions throughout the Festival, effectively becoming ingrained in the memory of all participants.

As a side project, participants of the festival were asked to stage scenes in black-and-white photos, as if they were taken in 1965. The results were exhibited at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. The underlying theme of the exhibition was "Are we more free than in 1965?," which generated numerous discussions among the participants.[30]

The festival's final event took place on May 8 (the official Czech holiday of the Victory Day, commemorating the end of World War II) in a busy popular park in Prague. Blank signs were prepared and each participant was given a chance write his own sign to carry. This was reminiscent of the 1965 Majales parade, when students carried signs throughout the city, many of the slogans with subversive overtones. We even had several signs with the original messages from 1965, which fit seamlessly with the ones relevant 50 years

29. See footnote 24 in this article.
30. The photo gallery is available at <http://ginsberg.rajce.idnes.cz/1965>.

later, such as "Better silly regime than the need to think," "Long live the small Czech man" or "Even God's mills need to change stones." Signs with current topics reflected primarily critical perspectives on politics and society, with US civil rights veteran Ralph Young carrying the sign made famous at the Occupy movement: "I can't believe we are still protesting this s@#t!."

The afternoon concluded with a musical performance by Ralph Young, in which he traced the evolution of protest songs in the US and commented on their unifying potential during the protest movements, which had clear parallels to protest songs against the communist regime in former Czechoslovakia. Songs by Pete Seeger such as "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?" were translated and became widely popular in Czechoslovakia. The same was true for Bob Dylan's "The Times, They Are A-Changing," which became a hit in 1965, when it was translated and performed by a Czech band with an English name, "Golden Kids."[31]

Most of the official events were followed by late night discussions in various venues connected with the Prague Spring in 1965. The participants from the faculty, students as well as the general public were thus able to exchange their views on a variety of subjects, including political dissent, forms of personal, cultural and sexual liberation, continued forms of repression, different forms of freedom, new racism, as well as the current migration crisis in Europe. The overarching theme was the connection between personal liberation and action, whether cultural or political. Given the shared experiences from the official events at the Festival, the discussions had a common denominator—the shared cultural memory and the legacy of Ginsberg's visit. Official guests were able to share their personal experiences also in informal and open settings, again trying to recreate the liberatory, as well as critical, atmosphere of 1965.

Overall, the Allen Ginsberg Memorial Freedom Festival aimed to convey the liberating spirit of 1965 both in its form and content, using various means at our disposal. The combination of poetry, music, academic lectures, talks by witnesses, movies and debates with knowledgeable as well as personally accessible guests willing

31. A clip of Golden Kids singing the Czech version of *Times, They are a Changin* is available online <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g_7pvZEBz3Y>.

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to share their experiences, created a sense of shared community out of the ordinary day-to-day experience. In personal interviews, even the younger participants confirmed that they felt the refreshing spirit of 1965 to the extent that the presented archival documents came alive again in their perceptions of the past.

From the perspective of cultural memory, the Festival was an effort to duly commemorate (to the best of our ability) a significant moment in the Czech-US relations: a moment which symbolizes another kind of important liberating influence of America that remains underrepresented in the current discourse on the US-Czech ties. Allen Ginsberg was critical both of the US government *and* of the governments of communist countries. Commemorating his presence in Prague highlighted the importance of these critical perspectives, which bind the US and Czech Republic cultural memories together at the *normative* level.

The fact that the US Embassy in Prague supported both the Pilsen Freedom Festival and the Ginsberg Memorial Freedom Festival in a single year indicates a certain contradiction at the heart of the US public diplomacy, explicable only interms of "higher goals." Since Allen Ginsberg, the quintessential critic of the US political practice, became part of the American literary canon, the US diplomats have been feeling free to use him in their programming, irrespective of subsequent administrations' political agenda. Likewise, the US public diplomacy has been relying heavily on figures like General Patton, who became part of the military history canon and an icon of the idea of America and the benevolent liberator, in their daily work. The fact that Ginsberg and Patton embody two very different narratives about the role of the United States in the world seems not to matter. Icons are icons, and in light of political rhetoric no holds are barred: both the American and the Czech diplomats conveniently forego the attempts to eliminate Ginsberg from the public space (obscenity trial in the US, deportation from Czechoslovakia), or the lack of the discussion concerning the political follow-up of the division of the influence zones after World War II or the fates of the ethnic Germans in post-liberation Czechoslovakia. The two-sided bi-polar disorder of sorts seems to raise no eyebrows, yet the cultural memory, cultivated in public commemorative events, prob-

lematizes the seemingly unproblematic issues, and thus remains the guard of intellectual liberty.

The words "freedom" and "liberation" were used frequently on both commemorative occasions, suggesting a unifying theme in the US cultural diplomacy, but the underlying meanings of the concepts were not congruent with each other. Commemorating a subversive, anti-authoritarian figure critical of the US government while simultaneously celebrating the US military and General Patton reveals that the only possible unifying message with respect to public diplomacy could be the complexity and the diversity within the United States proper. This would be an admirable goal, but it would require going beyond simplistic celebratory narratives. If the US public diplomacy is to remain relevant in 21st century, it should embrace this challenge, despite the negative reactions it might cause both at home and abroad.

## CONCLUSIONS

This paper described two specific case studies of commemoration related to the US-Czech relations. It juxtaposed very different instances of liberation originating from the US, the first one consistent with mainstream official concerns related to international politics and security, the other celebrating progressive cultural, social and political influences that had profound impact on Czech society.

The two commemorative events highlighted an important division between people who have a great respect for the US in the Czech Republic. Those whose thinking is rooted in the cultural memory of physical liberation by military means (and are to this day deeply sorry that it was not the US Army, but the Red Army that liberated Prague) tend to reflexively condone the US military actions abroad (the late president Havel included). Major commemorative events, such as the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Pilsen serve to reinforce this particular political use of the past, with important implications. For example, any critique of the US government is automatically interpreted as undermining Czech national security, which is dependent on the willingness of the US military to defend its NATO allies. In his noteworthy speech about "New Europe vs. Old Europe," the former Secretary of Defense

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Donald Rumsfeld attempted to exploit these sentiments to support his own agenda.[32]

On the other hand, another group of people with deep respect for the US draw inspiration from important cultural as well political figures, who, as Americans, were nonetheless critical of actions of the US government and fought hard domestic battles in the name of political, cultural as well as personal liberation. For Czech dissidents who became prominent politicians after 1989, subsequent political developments represented a difficult conundrum. During the Cold War, it was relatively easy to admire the culturally liberating influences from the US and at the same time admire the US government, which was working towards undermining the communist regimes in the name of individual freedoms and liberties. The paradoxical fact that inspiring figures such as Allen Ginsberg, Pete Seeger or Martin Luther King, Jr. were at odds with the contemporary US authorities seemed less relevant. Twenty five years after the Velvet Revolution, it seems that the divide between those who like the US because of its liberatory potential through military means and those who like the US because of the liberatory potential of its cultural influences, but who are at the same time critical of the US government or society, is wider than before. This is not necessarily a generational issue, as young Czechs can be found in both camps, as was evident in the demographics of participation in each of the analyzed events.

This finding has important implications for the role and image of the US in the world. The concept of soft power, as theorized by Joseph Nye, supposes that exposure to the US culture, thinking and values goes hand-in-hand with the effective promotion of interests of the US government. The ideas and attitudes coming from the US, such as a healthy distrust towards authorities or the need for critical thinking, can be applied not only against repressive regimes, but also back on the actions of the US government or the US military itself. Therefore, as US cultural diplomacy becomes successful in promoting subversive figures advocating personal liberation (such as Ginsberg), it should not count on the fact

32. Mark Baker, "U.S.: Rumsfeld's 'Old' And 'New' Europe Touches On Uneasy Divide," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, January 24, 2003 <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1102012.html>.

that this form of American cultural influence will inevitably lead to the support of the US government or the US military.

The above mentioned commemorative events bring to light the contested nature of the cultural memory of the US-Czech ties in the Czech society, with different actors attempting to reinforce the cultural memory that is consistent with what they consider most relevant to the present. On one side, there are clear efforts at renewed Atlanticism based on close military cooperation against common threats; on the other—a need to reinvigorate personal freedom and creativity as opposed to security culture and repressive political discourse of Western governments in the context of the global war on terror.

In this respect it is important to mention the concept of the social responsibility of academia. By doing research on the role of memory in transatlantic relations, we decided that by consciously highlighting Ginsberg's visit to Prague, we would bring to popular attention the important, yet sidelined aspects of the Czech-American transatlantic ties, namely the liberating cultural and social influence of the US as well as the importance of critical thinking shared through cultural memory on both sides of the Atlantic. By choosing to remember the physical liberation of Western Bohemia, a specific image of the United States is preserved, with triumphant soldiers and tanks forming the main frame of reference. By choosing to remember Ginsberg in Prague, we highlight the common memory of culturally, personally, as well as sexually liberating critical voices. These two types of liberation are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and taken together they create a more complex image of the United States in Czech cultural memory. At the same time, it is important for the dominant narrative affecting the Czech-US ties whether the US is remembered primarily as an instrument of military liberation provided by its government, or primarily as an inspiration for personal liberation irrespective of (or even against) the position of its government. Given the arbitrary nature of commemorative activities, it depends on our conscious choices in the future.

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Review of International American Studies
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall-Winter Nº 2/2016
ISSN 1991-2773



# ABSTRACTS
## AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS



**ZILÁ BERND**

**Unpredictable Americas:**
**Resignifying Americanness Under a Relational Perspective**

This article is a reflexion originating in the representation of the Americas in its first iconographies (Marten de Vos, Jan van der Straet) from which a cultural hierarchical principle installed itself in detriment of the American culture. For the last five hundred years we have been invested in deconstructing this feeling of supposed cultural dependence. The most successful strategy has been revealing itself in the search for a long memory, not in Europe any longer, but in the native cultures. This conscious awakening to recenter points to transcultural practices initiated in the first centuries after the conquest when the Guarani reproduce models from the European baroque with altered skin color, eye shape and with indigenous ornaments in sculptures which should simply reproduce European models. Brazilian modernism, as launched in Oswald de Andrade's *The Cannibal Manifesto* (1929), is pointing at the necessity of finding our cultural ancestrality among the Tupinambá´s anthropophagic practices. Édouard Glissant, as he acknowledged the "archipelago" supremacy of thinking (*pensée archipélique* or native) over the system thinking (*pensée de système* or European rationality) and proposed the creolization of cultures, is walking in the same direction of the search for our long duration memory in the heart of America itself. The notion of Americaness, far from proposing the existence of a large homogenous narrative in the Americas, tries to analyze cultural mobilities, resemantization of myths throughout the three Americas and the process of reappropriation characteristic of American cultures beyond narrow notions of nationality. Today, to think Americaness as a heterogeneous construct, implies leaving aside binaries as civilization/barbarism; center/periphery, which characterized a large part of American Studies until practically the end of the 20th, in favor of including the diversity and the excluded third. In the path

of recent works, as Patrick Imbert´s, we bet on the implosion of polarized thinking, on the transnational exchanges and in the natural disposition to the relational and transcultural encounters which will favor processes of reconstellation of the Americas.

**Keywords**: Americanness; memory; transcultural practices; re-semantization; reconstellation.

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**KRYŠTOF KOZÁK**

## Joyful Tanks Meet Gay Poet. Commemorating Liberation by 'America' in the Age of Global War on Terror

This paper explores cultural memory in US-Czech relations as one of the critical factors influencing the bilateral relationship. It argues that it is possible and indeed desirable to move beyond the dominant post-1989 memory discourse of "America" in the Czech context. After an introduction that links cultural memory to international relations, it explores two different commemorative events relevant for the US-Czech ties. The first one is the official Liberation Festival celebrating 70 years since the US Army entered West Bohemia at the end of WWII. The event is heavy on military symbolism, celebrating the US military strength as well as America's role as a savior of weaker European countries. The second event is the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Allen Ginsberg being crowned the King of May during the Majales of 1965, a major student celebration in Prague at that time. This commemorative event highlighted the aspects of the US-Czech cultural memory that are based on shared values of personal freedom as well as on the shared critical stance towards the governing regime. By comparing and analyzing the two case studies, the conclusion offers new perspectives on potential commemorative activities related to the US-Czech ties.

**Keywords**: cultural memory; US-Czech relations; commemoration; Pilsen liberation; Allen Ginsberg; King of May

Kryštof Kozák is currently serving as Head of the Department of American Studies, Institute of International Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University, Prague. His research interests cover US-Mexican relations, transatlantic relations, asymmetry, international political economy, immigration and drug policy. He successfully defended his PhD thesis "Facing Asymmetry. Understanding and Explaining US-Mexican

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*Constellating Americas*
*RIAS vol. 9,*
*Fall–Winter,*
*№ 2/2016*

**SHIRLEY GEOK-LIN LIM**

## Money, Power, and Immigrant Sons in Chang-Rae Lee's *Native Speaker*: Looking for the American Father

The article explores the convergence of four major American novelistic traditions (the mating-marriage tale, the immigrant story of assimilation and acculturation, detective fiction, and socio-political/socio-economist fiction) in Chang-rae Lee's acclaimed first novel, *Native Speaker* (1995), which dramatizes the tragic dynamics between ambition, money, power and moral loss and which offers the reader an insight into a late 20th century narrative of the formation of the new immigrants in the US, where earlier Euro-and, particularly, Anglo-norms are contested by multicultural, multilingual forces driven by globalized hyper-capitalist superstructures. In this unsettled setting, the common 20th century master plots of white-as-native tensions with non-white-immigrant-as-the-Other are interrogated, fragmented and re-assembled in a kinetic metropolis of multiple Otherness, in which money and power, two intrinsically intertwined forces, rule. In the novel's increasingly melodramatic narration of disillusionment, violence and murder, its more primal emotional trajectory arguably is not heterosexual romance, with which the novel begins and ends, but with the quest for a male identity congruent with that generally adopted as a model in the United States. In the novel, male identity is problematized by its embedded contextualization in multiple-tongued, duplicitous and abject ethnic identities, still subordinate or subaltern to white-Anglophone-centric norms. The elder Korean male figures (the father, the political mentor), present in the novel, fail to, or cannot, serve as American fathers. Without fathers able to nurture the immigrant son to a psychologically successful manhood (dramatized as a subject possessing authentic agency with the capacity to sustain intimate and social relationships), the novel's late 20th century re-inscription of the quintessentially American theme of quest for individual self takes the English language (also allegorized in the figure of the upper-class white wife, Leila) as the sentimental trope by which a national manhood is to be achieved—a post-immigrant salvation that is figuratively and literally articulated.

**Keywords**: Korean American identity; migrant narratives; acculturation; white Anglocentrism; ethnic agency; Chang-rae Lee; *Native Speaker*; money; command of English; manhood; abjection

Shirley Geok-lin Lim (Professor Emeritus UCSB, Fulbright & Wien International Scholar; PhD Brandeis University) received the Multiethnic

Literatures of the United States Lifetime Achievement and UCSB Faculty Research Lecture Awards. A published fictionist, memoirist and poet, she had edited/co-edited collections and journals such as *Transnational Asian American Literature* and *Journal of Transnational American Studies*.

**CHIEN-TING LIN**

**Re-signifying "Asia" in the Transnational Turn of Asian/American Studies**

Bringing inter-Asia cultural studies into conversation with Asian American critique, this paper aims to reframe the critical analysis of the scattered hegemonies of US imperialism in articulating the transpacific historical interconnections. Rather than privileging the US as a primary site of investigation and critique, I draw careful attention to the Cold War conditions of inter-Asian migration as an entry point for discussing how the geopolitics of Taiwanese modernity, from the Cold War up to neoliberal globalization, are inextricably linked to Japanese colonialism, US militarism and modernization, and Chinese globalization. To develop my theoretical and historical (re)conceptualization of "Asia" in Asian/American studies, I look at how migrant narrative of migrant workers in the nonfiction novel *Our Stories* speak to the power dynamics of the US Cold War involvement in Asia, neoliberal globalization, and Taiwan subimperialist relations with its neighboring countries. Whereas Asian American cultural critique offers a new analytics to enable a reconceptualization of Asian America without confining it to an identitarian category, inter-Asia studies redirect critical attention to the historical undercurrents of inter-Asia geopolitics that are largely obscured by the dominant knowledge paradigm of the US Cold War politics in the regions of Asia Pacific.

**Keywords:** Asian American Studies; reconceptualization of Asia; migrant narratives; post cold-war power dynamics; American-Taiwanese relations; Asian American cultural criticism; inter-Asia geopolitics; paradigm of the US Cold War politics

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Review of International American Studies
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall–Winter Nº 2/2016
ISSN 1991–2773



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Review of International American Studies
Revue d'Études Américaines Internationales
RIAS Vol. 9, Fall–Winter № 2/2016
ISSN 1991–2773
PRICE: 30 EUR/43 USD/40 CAD/26 GBP