

Review
EW

of International American Studies

ONE WORLD
The Americas Everywhere

guest-edited
by Gabriela Vargas-Cetina
and Manpreet Kaur Kang

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TRANSLOCALITY/METHODOLOGY

The Americas, or Experiencing the World

Uncertainty. This is what we abhor most. Intuitively or methodically, humankind has been seeking certainty since times immemorial. Yet, whether the point of departure for such a search is determined by dogmatic ‘truths’ of religion, the (impersonal) logic of rational argumentation, the meditative experience of transcendence, or the tangibility of empirical evidence—the shadow of the doubt never leaves us. It is, paradoxically, our most faithful companion, a trivial *sine-qua-non* condition of being human. The only formidable intelligence that exists *without* doubts—is artificial. De-humanized, non-human, in-human, Artificial Intelligence already poses ethical problems concerning agency and responsibility in the decision-making processes that affect humans. But although organizations, faceless and soulless, prefer their employees to act in a machine-like, clockwork fashion, we, unique individuals, rebel against being transformed into “human resources” (Wieczorek 2021; Wojewoda 2021). Intuitively, some of us attempt to fight back. ‘Being ourselves’ is, apparently, too important to forgo.

Apparently, because many of us will not reflect upon the choices we face when corporations upgrade their software and our PCs’ computational power fails to suffice. Or when our bank introduces a new safety measure which requires that we purchase a smartphone of a new generation if we wish to continue to do our banking online. Or when our own university chooses to assess us in terms of the parameters of efficiency (the IF, the Hirsch index, the i-10 index, etc.) rather than in terms of the quality of our insight. Nominally, it is

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all for our own good. The advertised facility and ‘objective’ safety of ‘one-click’ online transactions, ‘objectivized’ data at the foundation of ‘objectivized’ remuneration or ‘objectivized’ principles of promotion—all serve to eliminate ‘subjective’ doubt. We shrink from such a mechanized world, but we still choose to stay in it, even though it is clear that every step we take towards the compliance with the rule of the algorithm takes us further away from who we are, from who we have always wanted to be. Our own ‘subjective’ intelligence, more and more markedly attuned to the ‘artificial’ procedures, makes us depart further and further away from what we used to find fascinating in scholarship when we first embarked upon the journey of discovery (Wojewoda 2021)¹. More often than ever, today we are inclined to stick to the Wittgensteinian ‘groove,’ traveling from point A to point B, safe on the rails of the unmanned train of thought, the ‘objectivized Principle.’ A love-hate relationship, which seems to give rise to a peculiar variety of the Stockholm syndrome—we are ready to fight or even die for our freedom, but we welcome, and sometimes cherish, the oppression of the algorithm.

Perhaps this is why professorships are no longer for those whose sensitivity, life-long learning, and intellectual power allow them to expose and creatively resolve aporias, revise history, or discover mechanisms of culture central to the well-being of their fellow humans. In the perspective of an organization, a professor does not necessarily have to deserve the trust earned over years of teaching students to tackle problems unresolvable by reference to binary, or even polyvalent, logic, and to question what others take for granted. If you can demonstrate your ability to successfully apply for grants, if you are able to bring in external funds and manage your research in a fashion that allows you to produce outcome that guarantees revenue at the end of the process, if you score high in your student satisfaction surveys—you stand a very good chance of becoming a tenured faculty member. Interestingly,

1. These and many other issues related to the rule of the algorithm and the ethical problems it poses, are systematically addressed by Mariusz Wojewoda (2021) and by Krzysztof Wieczorek (2021), whose articles are due to appear in the scholarly journal *Er(r)go. Theory–Literature–Culture*, in the issue titled *machine/subject/power*, in the summer of 2021.

whatever you do to comply with the algorithm seems perfectly well-grounded. After all, it is only ethical that your salary should translate into something of value to society. If your results are of “little social or economic relevance,” should the parameters so indicate, you are not just an egotistic troublemaker—you are construed (sometimes publicly) as little more than a parasite, chasing your own ideals on someone else’s payroll. Why study counterfactuals in Old Church Slavonic? Why study musty old maps in Turkish libraries? Why spend public or private money on a wild goose chase of theoretical investigations dedicated to subjectivity, agency, or ethics? Who cares about the color of an individual sea mammal, if it cannot be quantified and translated into immediate profit? How far are we ready to depart from what brought us into academia in the first place? How convincing can we be lying to ourselves that ‘parameterization’ is indeed the final, objective solution to the problem of the ‘need of academia’?

We *hate* being colonized, but our arguments in favor of rejecting the power of the algorithm are scarce. It is, after all, a convenient, benign rule; it relieves us of responsibility; it minimizes the possibility of human error; its ‘objectivite’ dimension grants us an illusion of being a step closer to the certainty we so desperately seek.

We struggle towards a compromise, but it is not easy to resist ‘colonization for our own good.’ *RIAS* management, too, has made concessions to meet the requirements of evaluating organizations in order to qualify for the indexation in Elsevier Scopus and other impactful databases. Today, *RIAS* no longer needs to solicit contributions. Understanding the algorithm, we made sure that members of the International American Studies Association (IASA) are not forced to face the hard choice whether or not to submit texts to their own journal. Now, the standing of *RIAS* warrants its contributors the influx of parametric points, irrespective of whether they *choose* to plunge head-first into Melvillean cetology, geographical fantasies of Miguel Covarrubias, Indian dance in diaspora, Mexico’s role in the contemporary space race, transformations of culinary tastes in the Yucatán peninsula, the funding of arts in the Trump-era America, the glocality of the New England Transcendentalism, the transoceanic fates of Italian Theory, or into hundreds of other problem areas.

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But it is not the *system* that makes the decision about what we publish. It is the *community of humans* behind the scenes who will *not* reject a high-quality Americanist contribution only because it has not been intended to produce any immediate monetary outcome, or is unlikely to boost the journal's citation indices.

Yes, it is about a broadly understood philosophy of decolonization that we at IASA embrace. Yes, it is about a long-term perspective that gives credit to basic, or fundamental, research, without which no applied studies may hope to develop. Yes, it is about the concern that while international Americanists choose English as their most efficient tool of the broad transmission of information, the professional sociolects of American Studies in other languages may atrophy. And yes, it is about our belief that it is in the best interest of humankind that we forgo suspicion and open up to methodologies complementing the ones that we already take for granted. We, the humans behind *RIAS*, will always accept excellent articles in hemispheric, transoceanic, locally focused, or glocally decentered American studies, in all major languages of the Americas—and we may easily produce special issues in indigenous languages of the dual continent as long as there are enthusiastic colleagues able and willing to support us in such work. We do struggle against the aggressive 'Parametric Conquest,' and as long as we do, the power of the greedy algorithm will be kept at bay. It is IASA's essential value to never deny anyone the right to be themselves. Without inverted commas, without any need to explain their academic, or human, *raison d'être*.

This statement, however, merits a closer reflection. Attractive as they might be, fiery declarations become trustworthy only when proven to rest upon substance. One may easily find such substance in our journal's strong fundament of the ethics of friendship, which resists the hegemony of economically motivated parameters. It is on this premise that we promote language learning both within IASA and outside of it; this is why we voice the richness of multilingual perspectives by producing issues in English as well as in French, Portuguese, or Spanish. Most importantly, it is upon the fundament of friendship that methodologies rooted in cultures different from the one that gave rise to *RIAS* itself are consistently legitimized. The *Review of International American*

Studies has been conceived of as a springboard for unrestricted thinking in many languages—not only *natural languages*, but also languages of theory and cultural practice that, for centuries, have developed as parallel to those born out of the European intellectual legacy, but which eventually became glocal, owing to the historical dynamics of the evolution of the multiethnicity in the Americas and beyond. It becomes especially clear in the context of the present issue, which addresses the question of translocality in connection with indigenous knowledge systems, whose simultaneous presence in the dual American continent—perhaps like nowhere else in the world—presents an enormous potential for the future.

To use a simple example—when, in the Anglonormative world, non-professionals talk of Chinese medicine, they often construe it as a fashionable ‘spiritual alternative’ to the Western therapeutic paradigms. Yet, few Westerners fully realize how reductionist, and thereby fallacious, such thinking is, even though it is only logical that five millennia of the evolution of Chinese culture should have produced a philosophy of medicine, which, albeit based on principles alien to the western world, must be considered as fully legitimate. With the Chinese minority having become a substantial component of the tissue of the American society over the past two centuries, Chinese forms of therapy, although still in the shadow of the Western (or, more precisely, Arab) philosophy of medicine, gain their proper recognition in the Americas (and, recently, also in Europe and Australia). The concurrence of the two presents a potential which may only be realized on condition that we, cultural and literary scholars, are successful in opening our audiences’ eyes. The fact that the concept of how the human body works may differ from culture to culture should not disqualify thousands of years of *practical* experience. If ailments that our Western ways cannot address could be cured should a parallel (Chinese, Ayurvedic, or other) perspective be adopted without suspicion, why would we reject millenia of learning? Only because it requires the effort of serious study to augment one’s own, Western, perspective?

Again, the Americas are peculiar in this respect. If we agree that the products of Chinese American culture—which, in the course of the last 170 years of interaction, has evolved into a unique,

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American, phenomenon—cannot be labeled as “Made in China,” then contemporary Chinese medicine in the Americas cannot legitimately be perceived solely as an ‘import.’ Beyond doubt, phenomena such as the emergence of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine at the California Institute of Integral Studies testify to the fact that the once ‘exotic’ forms of therapy are now being granted a status parallel to those developed throughout the history of Western medicine. Increasingly, as translocal, they are becoming recognized as *non-foreign* elements of the glocal culture. The change in the formerly ‘isolationist mindframe’ is also visible in the increase of the popularity of international symposia dedicated to parallel forms of therapy—such as the symposium titled “Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine: What Can We Learn From Each Other,” held at the Joseph B. Martin Conference Center of the Harvard Medical School on June 20th and 21st, 2017. Phenomena of this nature evidently legitimize the value of the multi-ethnic legacy of the Americas and are welcome harbingers of change. They allow us to expect that even though many medical training institutions of ‘recognized’ status are not yet ready to expand their curricula, their faculty members will eventually discover that making the most of available traditions might produce much greater benefits than remaining locked within just one, Western, Anglonormative, library of concepts.

Similarly, the exploration of the physical world, which, to an experienced dancer of Bharatanatyam, Odissi, or any other of the dominant forms of the classical Indian dance is an obvious function of his or her own experience of the ‘body-in-the-world,’ has, translocally, opened up an altogether new space of profound understanding of ourselves in our environment. It is not about the fashionable, politically correct, ‘openness to other cultures’; it is about the opening up to a parallel meditative experience of the “bodymind,” which neither excludes nor isolates the sphere of emotions from the reality of what-is-being-experienced (Sen-Podstawska 2019). Or, to express it in terms more easily comprehensible to a Western reader, dance may prove to be a *methodology* (not just a method) serving the purpose of a more profound understanding of the complexity and unity of the universe, and a *language* to express this understanding. The translocal experience of the dance is an experience beyond

vocabulary. Non-verbal as it is, it may nonetheless inspire the development of a new language of reflection. After all, the Buddhist insights of the Beatniks, who would not hesitate to combine them with their own, Western, Transcendentalist legacy, did produce astounding effects in terms of the unfairly dubbed “countercultural” vision of the world, and, in particular, their unique, holistic, ecological ethics. It is obvious in this context to reference the famous dialogues between Albert Einstein and Rabindranath Tagore (Gosling 2007) or between David Bohm and Jiddu Krishnamurti (Krishnamurti and Bohm 2014), as well as the philosophy of Tsawalk (Atleo 2005) or the First Nations tradition of dance-as-philosophical-practice (Norton-Smith 2010). This, consequently, leads us to the very idea of the indigenous methodologies.

While indigeneity in itself is a fascinating issue—theorized by many and failed to be theorized by many more—it becomes a much more complex phenomenon when it is not addressed from the perspective of local, geographically rooted, cultures. Although historically anchored elsewhere, in diasporic contexts, transplanted indigeneity complements the local. Once it is rooted in the new soil, it becomes a component of a system of communicating vessels. First—imperceptibly, because it is exotic, incomprehensible, and potentially dangerous. Then—more and more substantially. Indigeneity in the Americas, and, more recently, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, although popularly associated with the legacy of Aboriginal Nations, may be argued to be as significantly translocal as it is local, its impact depending on politics and economy at a given time and place. Although their limits (and sometimes locations) may change, the ‘islands’ of indigeneity—be it First Nations, migrant diasporas, or (post/neo)colonial local majorities—may seem to lend themselves to being more or less adequately mapped. And yet, in the age of digital communications, the charting of the *impact* of their methodologies proves to be a near-impossible task. Indigeneity, in terms of its range of methodological propositions, is now glocal.

The above notwithstanding, one needs to consider how much of that glocality is actually acknowledged. While few people of the West would reject the attractions of Chinese, Indian, or Mexican cuisine, many more would experience a dilemma as to whether

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to trust a practitioner of Chinese or Indian medicine. While, translocally, few people would probably be able to resist the allure of Indian dance, many more would consider it too abstract to dedicate their time and energy to learn the philosophy upon which it is founded.

And yet, not all hope is lost. If Eugene Richard Atleo (better known by his Nuu-chah-nulth name—Umeek), the Hereditary Chief of Ahousaht, could become a Board Member of the Centre for Environmental Resources, Champion to the Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association of British Columbia, member of the Equity Committee of the Canadian Association of University Teachers and, importantly, Co-Chair of the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices in Clayoquot Sound, and a member of the board of Ecotrust Canada, then the “communicating vessels” of local, translocal, and glocal methodologies are, technically, unobstructed. As long as we, as scholars and teachers, are strong enough to resist the ‘algorithm,’ we will be able to slowly, but surely, demonstrate to everyone willing to listen that Indian dance, First Nations’ philosophy, or Chinese medicine are important to everyone, locally and translocally alike.

As we all know, the American literature that became foundational to the Western canon came into existence only after the American intellectuals let go of their program to produce American literature understood as markedly divorced from the literature of Europe. The American Renaissance exploded when the writers and thinkers of America embraced *both*, seemingly exclusive, politically inconsistent, legacies. The new Glocal Renaissance is still ahead of us. When it arrives, it will embrace the translocal indigenous methodologies, exploding with the best that humanity has ever had to offer. We can still make it happen.

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

9th IASA World Congress

Alcalá de Henares, July 8–10 2019

Dear Colleagues,

As president of the International American Studies Association, it is my great honor to extend the warmest of welcomes to all the participants who have traveled from near and afar to join us in what promises to be an exceptional conference at a unique venue. I want to begin by thanking Jose Antonio Gurpegui and the outstanding team at the Benjamin Franklin Institute (Julio Cañero, Cristina Crespo, Laura Rey, Ana Lariño, Francisco Sáez, Esperanza Cerdá) for the time and the care they have so generously invested to ensure that our conference is a complete success. I extend our heartfelt gratitude to the University of Alcalá for opening its venerable gates to the IASA community so magnanimously. The massive walls of these ancient university buildings will keep at bay the merciless heat of the Manchegan summer and the hustle and bustle of the world outside, so that we may pursue our scholarly endeavors in the quietude of its halls and the coolness of its secluded patios. The hall where we now stand, the Paraninfo (Paranymph), the University of Alcalá reserves for the most solemn acts and ceremonies, and it is in this room where, on the 23rd of April of every year, the Cervantes Award, the so-called Nobel prize of Hispanic letters, is presented by the king of Spain to the recipient nominated by the Society of Royal Academies of the Spanish Language.

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In his acceptance speech for the 1977 Cervantes award, Cuban musicologist and writer Alejo Carpentier conjured up quite festively the birth and subsequent baptism of Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. The news of such a momentous event summoned a motley crowd to the very honorable and noble city of Alcalá de Henares, the Strafford-Upon-Avon of Spain, and on an autumnal Sunday of the Year of the Lord of 1547, these unlikely and colorful guests gathered together to welcome the newborn:

The true celebration, the big party, must have taken place on a Sunday in October of that same year, on occasion of the baptismal ceremony of Cervantes, inasmuch as, seen through the eyes of the contemporary writer, it was a feast that brought together innumerable literary characters [...] so many and so renowned, in fact, that even Cide Hamete Benengelli the historian, had he been present, would have struggled to keep count of the revelers. For me and for all the novelists writing in Spanish, there is little doubt that among those in attendance were Flaubert's Emma, Proust's Albertine, Pirandello's Ersilia, and Joyce's Molly and Leopold Bloom, along with their friend Stephen Dedalus, traveling from Dublin exclusively for the occasion, Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin, Galdos' Nazarín, that kindhearted thaumaturgist, and even one Gregory Samsa, of the Kafka family, the same Samsa who had woken up one morning metamorphosed into a beetle, all of them rightful members of that future Brotherhood of the Imaginary Dimension, founded by the newborn Cervantes upon his arrival in this world. (Carpentier 57)¹

Such a merry revelry as Alejo Carpentier envisioned took place in this hallowed hall that today hosts our inaugural ceremony and is reenacted every April on occasion of the Cervantes award. We IASA fellows, I have no doubt, have been summoned to Alcalá and its university to partake in the endless Cervantinian revelry, for IASA is indeed gallantly Quixotic in its scope and purpose. Our mission, as inscribed in our charter, is "to further the international exchange of ideas and information among scholars from all nations and various disciplines who study and teach America regionally, hemispherically, nationally, and transnationally." After the fight with the lion is brought to an unusually happy resolution, Don Quixote reflects on the mandate the knight-errant must fulfill in order to prove his real mettle, as he had just done with the ferocious (but tame) lion:

1. Translated by Manuel Broncano Rodríguez.

Let the knight errant search all the corners of the world; let him enter into the most intricate labyrinths; attempt the impossible at each step he takes; resist in empty wastelands the burning rays of the sun in summer, and in winter the harsh rigors of freezing winds; let him not be dismayed by lions, or frightened by monsters, or terrified by dragons; searching for these and attacking those and vanquishing them all are his principal and true endeavors. (Cervantes 566)²

While we at IASA do not usually have to put up with the inclemency of the weather (beyond the scorching heat of Laredo or Alcalá), nor do we find monsters or dragons in our path, like the knights-errant of old, our association is committed to exploring the corners of the earth, and to penetrate the most intricate labyrinths (usually of a bureaucratic and financial nature) in order to pursue and achieve what others have deemed an impossible dream.

In ancient Greece, to inaugurate originally meant to invite the augurs or soothsayers to vaticinate whether the time would be propitious for the opening of a new temple, and later, to seek the auspices of the gods for the activities or professions that a new building would house inside. Paranymp, on the other hand, is a Greek term formed by the prefix *para* (beside, next to), and the noun *nymphē* (a newly-wed wife), and referred to the bridegroom's best man (or the bride's maid), and eventually it acquired the meaning of spokesman. In some medieval universities, the paranymp would advertise the new courses outside the classrooms as a recruiting tool. In time, the paranymp became the speaker who, at the beginning of the academic year, admonished students to develop and practice the habit of study, the antecedent of our inaugural lectures. Dutch universities preserve to this day the figure of the academic paranymp, who escorts a PhD candidate during the "viva" or public defense of his/her dissertation. While the role of the paranymp is now purely ceremonial, for centuries they served as the candidate's protectors, intervening on his behalf if the committee was being unfair or physically abusive. Whether a best man or bridesmaid, a spokesman for courses and their instructors, an advocate for doctoral candidates, or a keynote speaker opening the new

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2. Translated by Edith Grossman.

academic year, a paranymp plays a capital role as the mentor who guides the student through his/her university years. That is why the university hall came to be known as the Paranymp. And thus, acting as paranymp, and in this most gorgeous Paranymp of Alcalá, I hereby declare officially open the 9th World Congress of the International American Studies Association, and invoke the gods, most especially Athena and Apollo, to be most auspicious to our conference.

Two years ago we convened for our 8th World Congress in Laredo, Texas, a city on the riverbanks of the Río Grande, the (un)natural border that separates Laredo and Nuevo Laredo, its twin city on the Mexican side. The 8th congress was a momentous occasion for our association. On the one hand, because 2017 marked the 18th anniversary of the foundation of IASA, and the association became officially of age, which we celebrated with all the fanfare that such birthday demanded. We held our farewell banquet at restaurant overlooking the Río Grande, with Mexico just a few yards across the river, so narrow at that point that a few strokes would have sufficed to swim to the Mexican side. The restaurant provided a most symbolic location for IASA, and an ideal venue for the birthday party. The repast concluded, everyone joined the dancing and the singing, “happy birthday dear IASA” included, in what has by now become a tradition for IASA conferences. In this respect, I am pretty sure our local hosts will honor tradition and deliver well beyond expectations, so that the Alcalá congress raises the standard even higher for these celebratory farewells.

It is not casual that Laredo was the first IASA world congress in the United States. At 18, our association had already reached a solid status as a truly international and independent association that was both global and hemispheric in its approach to the study of the Americas. The time was ripe to travel to US soil, a trip that the IASA governance had postponed sine die, lest the young association be coopted by the large and powerful organizations that dominated the field of American Studies. In Laredo I dedicated part of my presidential address to the history of our association. In a somewhat metaphorical language, I traced the long pilgrimage of the IASA, our surrogate Mayflower, from the time our

vessel was launched into the waters of the Leiden harbor for its maiden voyage to its layover in the waters of the Río Grande, before crossing the Atlantic once more bound to Alcalá and this 9th congress. The IASA vessel had been designed in Bellagio, Italy, by a select group of scholars of different nationalities, invited by Prof. Djelal Kadir, who would eventually become the founding president of the International American Studies Association. The resulting blueprint, that is, the IASA charter, was delivered to the University of Leiden, which built and put the craft to the test of the first IASA World Congress. The vessel proved sound, despite some cracks and maladjustments, and has been ploughing the oceans of the world ever since. In his voyage, the IASA has so far visited three American, three European, and two Asian ports, and Asia will be IASA's next destination for the 2021 World Congress. Hopefully, Africa and Australasia will soon join in the rotation. No other association in the broad field of American Studies has ever accomplished such a feat, and I doubt any other will ever come this far.

This 9th world congress will occupy a very special place in the annals of our association, for it closes a historical phase and inaugurates a new and equally promising one. IASA came officially into existence when the foundational charter was registered under Dutch Law in the Chamber of Commerce of the city of Leiden. And I want to recognize at this time those twenty two scholars who gathered around a table and, after a long and at times heated debate, on the 1st of June of the year 2000 undersigned the foundational document that, some twenty years later, has made this reunion in Alcalá possible. I quote from minutes for that meeting:

Convened by Professor Djelal Kadir (Penn State University, USA) at the Rockefeller Foundation's Conference and Study Center, in Bellagio, Italy, were participants from twelve countries and members of eleven national and multinational American Studies Associations. Those present were: Greg C. Cuthbertson (South Africa), Philip Davies (United Kingdom), Theo D'Haen (Netherlands), Emory Elliott (USA), Winfried Fluck (Germany), Michael Frisch (USA), Cristina Giorcelli (Italy), Ramón Gutiérrez (USA), Heinz Ickstadt (Germany), Josef Jarab (Czech Republic), Mary Kelley (USA), Rob Kroes (Netherlands), Maureen Montgomery (New Zealand), Carla Mulford (USA), Gönül Pultar (Turkey), Hiroko Sato (Japan), Neusa da Silva Matte (Brazil), Werner Sollors (Germany), Tao Jie (China), Sonia Torres (Brazil), and Lois Parkinson Zamora (USA).

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These are our Founding Mothers and Fathers, and to all of them I convey our gratitude and our recognition today, when I am about to become myself part of IASA history, for this is my last institutional act as president. Even though the information about all this is readily available on our webpage, I would not want to leave office without paying due homage to those individuals who had the foresight and courage to address the overwhelming demand coming from all corners of the world to open up the geographical and intellectual boundaries of our field, and thus overcome the atavistic localism or, if you allow me to so say, the “provincialism” that had plagued American Studies since its inception. This, along with its subaltern role to various agendas, national and international, political and otherwise, had been deterrents that the new times could not tolerate anymore. Needless to say, and yet important to say once again, Dejal Kadir deserves a place of honor in our past as much as in our present, for Djelal was, and is, the animus and the anima of IASA. And to Djelal and Juanita Kadir I want to dedicate words of affection and encouragement at this time of tribulation: Juanita, Djelal, each and every one of us in the IASA family feels your presence with us today and want you to know that we are all with you, despite the physical distance between Alcalá and Seattle. Coraggio, partigianos!

The fact that IASA is registered in the Chamber of Commerce of Leiden is indeed symbolic, for it endows our association with some of the archetypal dimension of the Pilgrim Fathers and their departure to the New World to fulfill their utopic dream. However, this registration has been the cause of a chronic headache for the IASA governance. On the one hand, the Leiden Chamber charges a yearly fee to keep the inscription active, and while the amount was not significant, processing the payments on a timely basis became an almost impossible task. On the other hand, our foundational charter is registered in the Dutch language, and only in Dutch, as the law of the land requires in Holland. Despite our best efforts, past and present IASA officers have been unable to locate a single copy of the original document as it was registered in Leiden. Comical and irrelevant as the whole affair may sound, its implications are however quite serious, for they may endanger the legal status of IASA as an officially recogni-

zed nonprofit academic organization. All these circumstances led the IASA Executive Council some years ago to explore what the best course of action to solve this quandary could be, and subsequently agreed to take the necessary steps to inscribe ex novo IASA in the Registry of Associations of the kingdom of Spain, as was announced in our last general assembly in Laredo. In light of all this, I am quite sure you will understand the great relief I feel by announcing that, barely a week ago, it came to our knowledge the confirmation, even if still unofficial pending a last signature, that our application has been approved and IASA will find its way into the Registry, thus recovering its full legal status. Please join me in a round of applause to recognize the invaluable assistance of our local hosts at the Franklin Institute to make this possible, despite the many bureaucratic hurdles they had to overcome along the way.

And so, here we are, two years later, picking up once again the scholarly conversation that began almost two decades ago in Leiden, and has not come to a halt ever since, both through our conferences and our journal, the *Review of International American Studies*, which is by now a well-established publication that meets the demanding criteria of the most important scholarly indexes, enjoying the recognition and visibility it certainly deserves. *RIAS* is on its way to be the journal of reference in the field of International American Studies, thanks to the efforts of a number of our colleagues who never gave up on the project, despite the many, and at times, seemingly unsurmountable obstacles. *RIAS* current editor-in-chief and past IASA president, our dear friend and colleague Giorgio Mariani, will offer an update on the state of affairs of the journal. I will just state, loud and clear, my sincere gratitude as an IASA member who sees an old dream come true, and as the president of our association, I will add the institutional recognition of our indebtedness to each and every individual who at one time or another have dedicated their time and their work to *RIAS*. To all of them, *gracias, gracias, gracias!*

The International American Studies Association is in a perpetual state of crisis. And yet, far from being a negative factor, I am convinced that it is *precisely* because of it that our association is well and thriving today. IASA was conceived at a time of crisis

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in the field of American Studies, a crisis that in fact had been brewing for a long time. And IASA was literally born through a crisis, after a tense standstill in the negotiations among those founding parents who had gathered in Bellagio to give shape to the future association. Those negotiations reflected the broader climate in our field at the turn of the 21st century. I cannot bear first-hand testimony of the Bellagio meeting, since I was not present, and therefore my understanding of things is necessarily partial, for the only evidence I have are the bits and pieces of information I could collect from several of those who were present. I think it is accurate to say that the discussion in Bellagio was between the “traditionalists” and the “dissenters”, the “institutionalists” and the “freelancers”, if you allow me to use such picturesque epithets to refer to the two main sides involved in the talks. The crux of the dispute was whether American Studies as an academic discipline was, had been, and should be, limited to the study of the United States, as the “traditionalists” defended, or whether the discipline should, or could, be inclusive of all matters American in a hemispheric sense, as the “dissenters” vindicated. The debate over the discipline involved another, more subtle debate as to whether the new association was legitimated to include the term “American Studies” in its name, or should rather seek an appellative that clearly distinguished it from the various American Studies associations already in place. Most especially, the American Studies Association (ASA) and its counterpart, the European Association of American Studies (EAAS), both professional organizations with a long history behind and a large constituency. Both associations were quite sensitive to the idea of establishing a new organization of worldwide reach that would encompass all extant organizations in the field of American Studies. On the one hand, ASA had already assumed, quite explicitly, the critical importance of opening up the field to international scholars and perspectives, and had taken its first, even if timid, steps in that direction. EAAS, on the other hand, was already an international (or continental) organization, for it integrated, and still does, all national associations in Europe under its umbrella. However, novelty always brings some concern, and more so in a field like ours, in which academic and political interests have

always been intertwined. Both ASA and EAAS were ready to open up the field to international scholars and scholarship, but they were not so willing to reconsider the field itself, and much less to engage in candid and constructive dialogue with what by then was a growing trend among scholars who sought to restore the original meaning of the terms America and American, beyond their restrictive usage as a synonym for the United States.

We should not forget that American Studies as a discipline and a field of research was to a great extent the result of geopolitical strategies in the aftermath of WWII and the ensuing Cold War, when the United States implemented programs to promote American Studies, first in Europe, and eventually across the world, that resulted in the creation of several centers in Germany, such as the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies in Berlin in 1963, and others across the country, which were followed in time by other centers and university departments in various European and non-European nations. The Fulbright program, on the other hand, proposed by Senator J. William Fulbright in 1945 and signed by President Truman in 1946, was meant to promote peace and mutual understanding through international exchange between the US and other nations, and soon became an impressive exchange program that is still in existence. In the mid-1980s I was one of the beneficiaries of the program, in what has been by far the most decisive event in my career, through a Fulbright fellowship that made my dream come true, for it gave me the opportunity to join the American Studies Department at Rutgers University and concentrate solely on my dissertation for a whole year, while serving as a teaching assistant for several courses taught by the department. Like Robert Frost in “The Road Not Taken,” I can also say that made all the difference. And I want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Fulbright Commission in Spain, and to the Fulbright program at large, for their generous and life-changing support.

While the Fulbright program is, and was, open to all disciplines and fields of knowledge, the role it played in the promotion and consolidation of American Studies was capital. The Fulbright ultimately depends on the United States Department of State, commonly known as the State Department, equivalent to the Minis-

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try of Foreign Affairs in most countries. The State Department oversees the US embassies and diplomatic missions, including the different services that embassies typically house, from intelligence to cultural affairs. I do not intend to offer here a crash course on US diplomacy, but simply to point out the convergence of academic and cultural pursuits with the geopolitical strategies and interests of the United States that resulted in the worldwide promotion of American Studies as a distinct discipline, while simultaneously the new academic field proved a very effective instrument to disseminate American values and policies in a world still bleeding through the open wounds of the Second World War, especially in those nations who had suffered defeat, like Germany or Japan.

In retrospect, I cannot but wonder at the fact that IASA did actually come into existence, considering how much was at stake in Bellagio. I leave for later historians the task of finding out the precise circumstances that led to the crisis of that impasse in the foundational meeting, resulting in the redaction and signature of the foundational charter of the association. And so, IASA was born. From a crisis, through a crisis, and, I am afraid, in crisis, as it became evident, at least to me, at the time of the first world congress in Leiden. The conference was the debut of the new association and had attracted a large number of Americanists of various nationalities, with many of the leading scholars from both sides of the Atlantic in attendance. The occasion was the address that the founding president pronounced before an expectant audience, eager to learn what the masterplan for the new association would be. The presidential address was titled “Defending America of its Devotees,” and it was responded by Amy Kaplan, the then president of the American Studies Association, with the paper titled “The tenacious grasp of American Exceptionalism.” The talks are published in essay form and readily available, and I invite you to read both, since they lie at the beginning of our history as an academic organization.³ I simply want to recall here, in case that future IASA historian finds it of use one day, the reaction to the presidential address that I could perceive among some colleagues, as they

3. See: Kadir 135–152 and Kaplan 153–159.

were expressed in the more distended atmosphere of a pub where many of us sought to quench our thirst after the session. I will spare the names of those present in the conversation, for in truth what is relevant is the what, rather than the who. While some colleagues were quite positive in their reception of the president's speech, some others were rather skeptical of what they took as the president's hidden agenda to coop the field of American Studies and redesign its parameters and its priorities. Those sharing this view saw in the presidential address the uncontested proof of what they had suspected ever since they first heard the news of the IASA project, namely, that the field of American Studies was under attack by a group of outsiders from less relevant and reputable fields like comparative and world literature, and even Latin-American studies, who sought to delineate a whole new academic order by transgressing the well-established boundaries among neighboring disciplines.

While I recall these events now, almost two decades later, I realize their true import as they clearly reveal that IASA was generally received with suspicion, if not open hostility, by existing American Studies organizations, an attitude that I am afraid largely continues today. I think back in those days we Americanists lost, all of us, a unique opportunity to overcome barriers and create new synergies among complementary, rather than competing, academic perspectives and geographies. And I will always regret our collective failure at articulating shared goals and cultivating fruitful understanding through conversation among the different sensibilities and approaches. As a result of the Leiden congress, a conference which was truly successful in terms of attendance and academic quality, IASA was declared, even if unofficially, *persona non grata*, or if you want, heretical in its unorthodoxy. The end result was institutional invisibility in the United States and Europe, while at the same IASA was becoming quite visible and was warmly welcome in regions of the world traditionally relegated to a marginal position in the field. And now, in my last institutional act as your president, I want to verbalize my hope to see one day in the not distant future this lost opportunity reversed as the field of American Studies becomes an open house offering common shelter to all scholars and academics who

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pursue the understanding of America in every sense of the term, and there are many senses to it, and all equally valid and valuable. I have been honored by the privilege of serving IASA under various capacities for almost two decades, from the time I was appointed as its treasurer at the Leiden conference until today. In closing my address, I will just add that these years as an officer have been most rewarding in every sense, and today I renew my commitment to IASA and its mission, as necessary now as it was at the time of its birth. This is a very especial day for me, a reminder of my increasing age, tinged with nostalgia and filled with warm memories, but above all, a day of gratitude and a day of hope. My best wishes to our new board of officers for the road ahead, and to you all, dear colleagues. Enjoy the conference, enjoy the city of Alcalá, and if possible, renew once again your commitment to this wonderful enterprise that binds us together.

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COSMOPOLITANISM, TRANSLOCALITY, ASTRONOETICS

A Multi-Local Vantage Viewpoint
(Introduction)

The world in which we live is crisscrossed by multiple flows of people, information, non-human life, travel circuits and goods. At least since the 16th century, the Americas have received and generated new social, cultural and product trends. As we see through the case studies presented here, modern literature and dance, the industrialization of food and the space race cannot be historicized without considering the role the Americas, and particularly the United States, have played in all of them. We also see, at the same time, how these flows of thought, art, science and products emerged from sources outside the Americas to then take root in and beyond the United States. The authors in this volume of *RIAS* devise conceptual tools to analyze this multiplicity across continents and also at the level of particular nations and localities. Concepts such as cosmopolitanism, translocality and astronoetics shed light on these complex intersections, giving us new ways to look at the intricacy of these distance-crossing flows. India, perhaps surprisingly, emerges as an important cultural interlocutor, beginning with the idealized, imagined versions of Indian spirituality that fueled the romanticism of the New England Transcendentalists, to the importance of Indian dance pioneers in the world stage during the first part of the twentieth century and the current importance of India as a player in the race to space.

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This issue of *RIAS* is based on the notion that, as people say in Spanish, “el mundo es un pañuelo” (“the world is a handkerchief”). This saying alludes to the fact that the world is crisscrossed by relations between people and between ideas, and everyone is connected to everyone else around the world through a few people in between. Thinking this way, it would be very difficult to isolate what is precisely ‘American,’ what is ‘European’ or ‘Asian’ in our world today. What we see here in all the essays is that ideas underpinning the same type of cultural development have been similar around the world through the decades because of the constant movement of people, things and ideas. From the articles collected here we see that it was as early as in the 1800s that many cultural movements were already based on general tenets that trespassed local, regional and national borders—and that they developed at an increasingly rapid pace. During the 1800s and the 1900s what we have come to take for granted as dance, literature, sciences, and even ‘outer space’ were in the process of being consolidated as recognizable fields of human endeavor. This happened, as the papers here show, out of a cross-fertilization among different re balms of human life, and across continents. The Americas are now integral part of everywhere and, just as much, literally *everywhere*, in the form of people, animals, viruses, cultures, and even soils and sands coming in, has found its way and made its home in the Americas.

The order of the feature articles in the issue follows the internal chronology of their narratives, starting with the times of the New England Transcendentalist movement and ending with current events related to the race for space in Mexico. In reading the papers sequentially we see how each of these broad cultural movements related, sometimes in surprising ways, to later cultural movements at apparently remote locations. What the stories told here have in common is that their protagonists took the entire world (the planet and even “the cosmos”) as their unit of thought and action. They all felt and some of them still feel connected to other people in many nations, and perhaps to beings outside our planet. The New England Transcendentalists’ cosmopolitanism and ideas of “planetary conviviality,” associated with romantic modernity already presented us with scenarios of conceptual

*One World
The Americas
Everywhere*

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fluidity and transnational breadth. While cosmopolitanism is here one of the categories of analysis, related to the Transcendentalist movement, this issue of *RIAS* also offers articles inquiring into translocality and cosmopolitics, concepts which could have resonated easily with the Transcendentalist movement led by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau (Brodrick).

As a philosophy, American transcendentalism, discussed in Albená Bakratheva's article, emerged in New England during the first half of the 1800s. It coalesced into a group of people that held periodic meetings and between 1840 and 1848 published their own journal, *The Dial*. This philosophical movement was based on the ideas that people, including men and women of all colors and places in society, should be seen as individuals, who were able and should strive toward changing their own destiny, nature was unitary, and humans were part of it. Also, the human ways of knowing went beyond the senses, and in this sense transcended the things we could perceive directly. The New England Transcendentalists proposed that nature, including humans, were sources of power and authority; humans could and should build their own world. All humans had it in themselves to strive for a better life and a better world. Because of this, the Transcendentalists were part of the anti-slavery and women's equality movements, and founders of an early commune. Their ideas were as much influenced by European as by Asian philosophies, and by American Unitarianism. The latter was a religious philosophy that considered the divine as unitary, and not a trinity as in Catholicism. The Transcendentalists extended this idea to conceive of all nature, including human beings, as unitary. Their philosophy, the Transcendentalists thought, could help usher "planetary conviviality" (Goodman 2019; Walls 2012).

Gabriela Vargas-Cetina and Manpreet Kaur Kang, the authors of the articles on the modern dance scene and on Bharatanatyam, dwell on the modern and neotraditional dance movement of the end of the first half of the twentieth century. This movement, which started to coalesce at the end of the 1880s, was driven by a search for beauty, harmony and romanticism. Transcendentalist ideas were part of its conceptual toolbox. Important figures who helped consolidate dance as a worthy spectacle fit

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for world stages, in Europe and the Americas, included Isadora Duncan, Rabindranath Tagore, Ruth St. Denis, Uday Shankar and Leila Roy. Isadora Duncan believed that she was a “spiritual daughter” of Walt Whitman, one of the poets most influenced by the New England Transcendentalists. Ruth St. Denis, in turn, often found in Ralph Waldo Emerson inspiration for her thoughts and choreographies (Shelton 1981: 97). Important figures of ballet, such as Mikhail Fokine, Anna Pavlova and Vaslav Nijinsky also contributed to the consolidation of modern dance, as we can glean from the autobiographies and biographies of the early modern dancers (Duncan 2013; Krasovskaya 2017; menaka-archive; Shelton 1981). The new styles of dance generated new ideas and dance techniques by delving into the local art styles around the world, drawing from philosophical concepts and views, and developing systematized steps, step combinations and performance formats modelled after classical ballet.

It is easy to see the attraction that Transcendentalism, among other philosophical traditions, held for the modern dancers around the world: many of the new figures of modern and neotraditional dance were women, at a time when world affairs were almost completely dominated by men, and they all were out to make their own destiny. Also, they all looked for inspiration and emotional sustenance to forms of spirituality, which they believed infused dance in general and their own dance in particular.

A different aspect of translocality is analyzed by Steffan Igor Ayora-Díaz, who demonstrates that the industrialization of food that accelerated around the world in earnest during the twentieth century went along the industrialization of the most productive processes in culture. Sea travel first and then air travel helped greatly to make industrially-processed edibles available far and wide. Ideas of modernity, convenience, portability, longer shelf life and urban sophistication, all ably advanced by commercial advertisement, helped convince consumers to accept them. They have now entered household pantries everywhere, generating new ways of thinking surrounding cooking, availability and economic affordability. In cans, jars and plastic containers, packaged food has generated new dishes, but it has also allowed local specialties to reach new consumers in places very far from those where

the products originated. Also, the animals and plants are now grown in industrially organized and run establishments, so that today's diet resembles little the fare of pre-industrial times (Oddy and Drouard 2013).

The race to space, which Anne Warren Johnson approaches here through its national repercussions in Mexico, originally took place between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, it soon enticed many other nations within the then 'Eastern' and 'Western'-aligned countries to join in the exploration and possible commercial exploitation of space. There is no question that both 'East' and 'West' were looking at each other, trying to either steal or buy secrets related to their space programs and in general conducting space-related research. The groups of scientists on both sides of the world had full knowledge and awareness of each other, and for a long time there were only two nations monopolizing the production of technical knowledge directly related to outer space. It is obvious, however, that the bases of knowledge underlying the mathematics, physics and engineering that made space travel possible were shared by scientists around the world, but they had to be put together in particular ways for the launching of spaceships to be possible.

Recently, the fact of a widely shared basis of knowledge on which space-related technology had to be built was mockingly explored by film director Ziga Virč. His 'docufictional' movie *Houston, We Have a Problem* (2016) proposed the existence of a Yugoslav space program that at the end of the 1950s would have predated the North American Space Agency's efforts to send astronauts to outer space. Today we have international treaties regarding outer space exploration and possible exploitation, other nations besides the United States and Russia are sending human-operated vehicles into space and working in space stations, and our lives would be very different without the many satellites providing us with digital communications.

The New England Transcendentalist movement, the modern dance movement, the Indian classical dance movement, the industrialization of food, and the race to outer space all resulted from the process of what David Harvey has called "time-space compression" (1989). When the Spaniards began their colonization

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of the New World, it took months to cross the Atlantic Ocean. During the 1800s, however, the world saw an increased frequency of transatlantic ocean travel and, in the first half of the twentieth century, the proliferation of trains, automobiles, ferries, yachts, and other small watercraft made it possible for people, books, and ideas to travel around the world with relative ease and increased speed compared with previous times. More recently, we have seen the COVID-19 pandemic spread in a matter of weeks from China to all countries of the world. Viruses and diseases also became highly mobile, accompanying people, animals, plants and even the moving vehicles themselves.

The new ease of travel has resulted in novel ways of thinking and finding oneself in the world. Gender, religion, society, science and art were refigured as realms of thought and human praxis. Romantic nationalism, a philosophy that tried to find the national roots was, at the same time, nationalistic and cosmopolitan: it sought to find the “true essence” of the nation in local folk knowledge and art, while using the tools of international academia and art. Also, it sought to find the nations’ borders in the knowledge of each nation being one among many such others.

INDIAN CONNECTIONS

As Said remarked, “The Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture” (1978: 9), and India has been one of the main sources of the imaginaries of The Orient in the Americas and Europe. Transcendentalism, which is described by David Boersema as “the first of several major traditions to characterize philosophical thought in [the United States of] America’s first full century as a nation” drew on European and Asian thought. Indian sources were highly present in their work, including the Vedas and the Bhagavad Gita. Writing about Emerson and the Transcendentalists, Riepe says that the Transcendentalists of New England were the first group in the United States that paid close attention to Indian thought, which Riepe thinks was attractive to them because it was deep but not gloomy (1967: 116).

Also, there is no question that the contribution of Indian dance stars and perhaps especially of the writer, philosopher and dancer Rabindranath Tagore was important for the emergence and con-

solidation of modern and neoclassical dance. Tagore's prestige was firmly established by his being awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. Artists in the Americas and Europe looked up to him because of his ideas of spirituality, which dovetailed with and was perhaps infused with Transcendentalist ideas and with the belief that art was as important as science in helping humans develop fully. Tagore met with many internationally famous figures during his life, including world leaders, scientists, academics and artists. He made a point of meeting and learning from artists wherever he went, and of sending his collaborators to investigate the arts throughout India and in faraway places in order to improve and widen the curricula at his education institutions in Bengal (Banerjee 2011; Haq 2010; O'Connell 2010).

India has been an important region for the emergence and consolidation of processed foods of commercial value at least since the invention of sugar balls, possibly in what today is the region of Bengal, sometime before 500 A.D. (Mintz 1985: 23). Furthermore, as Keay shows, spices, many of which had to be obtained either from within India or through India, were a major justification for the transatlantic voyages that resulted in the European colonization of the Americas (2008). The road from the constitution of modern diets, which probably started in the Renaissance, has been long and difficult. Ayora-Díaz points out in his contribution to this collection that food items of different types may appear side by side on our tables, but they all rest on unequal power relations. In the case of sugar, this has been extreme, since up to the second half of the 1800s much of its cultivation relied on slaves, most of whom were of African ancestry. As Andrea Stuart put it in her review of Abbott's book on the history of sugar, this sweetener was the first super-commodity, and "It was one of the building blocks of the British Empire, silting up vast colonial wealth [...]" (2010). Dalby, in turn, reminds us that the taste for spices has always been dangerous, for those who develop a craving, but perhaps even more so for those who then become the often forced providers of each spice. The 'conquest' of the Americas shows how dangerous the taste for Asian, and particularly Indian, spices became, in the end, for people who, before the year 1400, had no contact with such European cravings.

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The industrialization of food has changed forever our ways of eating and tasting, but it also has had important repercussions regarding work, labor and capital accumulation. Interestingly, sugar and many of those spices that Europeans were seeking to obtain through the Indian Spice Trade Circuits when they came upon the Americas, continue to be featured prominently in processed food around the world. This includes the food industrialized in Yucatán by Yucatecans. These themes are beyond the scope of Ayora-Díaz' paper or this issue of *RIAS*, but they should be kept in mind when thinking about food everywhere.

Regarding the ongoing space race, India has been a full competitor since the 1960s. The Indian National Committee for Space Research, founded in 1962, which became the Indian Space Research Organization in 1969, is one of the six most important participants in the exploration of space. As Anne Johnson points out in her article, India is one of the few nations which have launching capabilities. The ISRO website lists 101 spacecraft missions, of which 72 have been launch missions. Space-related research today has India as one of its main referents.

Through concepts ranging from cosmopolitanism to translocality and astronoetics, the articles in this collection reflect on the criss-crossing relations between realms of human life, as industry, commerce, culture and imagination came and continue to come together in philosophy, literature, dance, gastronomy and dreams of space travel. They also show how, during the 1800s and 1900s, personal and commercial relations contributed to make the world in which we now live one of intricate, multiple connections. From this observation angle of shifting multiplicities, the Americas were as much a place where things were and are being created, as a place that resonates with ideas, culture and things coming from elsewhere, especially Europe and, in these particular examples, India. We hope that through the articles included in the "Features" section of this issue, we are contributing to American Studies through a multi-angled and multilayered perspective.

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INDIA AND THE TRANSLOCAL MODERN DANCE SCENE

1890s–1950s

TRANSLOCALITY

Arjun Appadurai conceptualized *translocality* as a condition tied to the production of locality, allowing us to focus on the *local*; that is on the place in which people are or go to, and where they do things. Furthermore, his insistence on locality being *produced* reminds us that there is no locality without people coming, going, staying and connecting with other people, thinking and doing things (Appadurai 1996: 178–199). Here I look at translocality as a process constantly flowing between international and local ‘neighborhoods’—a term Appadurai uses to describe places where locality is produced—and at how this process made it possible for Indian classical and modern dance to emerge in the first half of the twentieth century. The international dance scene of the end of the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s was in this sense a translocal scene. It took place simultaneously in different regions of the world at specific localities, some of which were in India. Indian local scenes were part of the larger translocal dance scene, and each cluster shared many elements, across national boundaries, with the others. Dance scenes, including Indian dance schools and groups of dancers, continue to be translocal today (perhaps even more so), and here I am tracing only the beginning of that particular process.¹

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1. Neighborhoods for Appadurai are “life-worlds constituted by relatively stable associations, by relatively known and shared histories, and by collectively traversed and legible spaces and places” (1996: 191). They are not tied

The lives of the modern dancers of the late 1800s and the first half of the 1900s, such as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Rabindranath Tagore, Anna Pavlova, Ted Shawn, Uday Shankar, Madame Menaka, Rukmini Devi and others have been well documented, partly by autobiographical texts and other media they produced themselves.² Admirers and dance historians have also written extensively on them. A wealth of books and articles on Indian classical and modern dancers exists, written by anthropologists, sociologists, historians and dance scholars who often are dancers themselves. Pallabi Chakravorty (2008; 2013), Uttara A. Coorlawala (1992), Janet O’ Shea (2009), Priya Srinivasan (2012), Margaret E. Walker (2014) and Katherine Zubko (2014) are only a few of the many academic dancers who have published works on particular dance styles of India. Several of them have made points related to the one I am making here, even using Appadurai’s concepts of translocality and of the production of locality, probably because the material fits the concepts so well. For example, O’Shea (2009) specifically develops the theme of the production of locality through Bharatanatyam dance.

Here, I do not focus on classical Indian dance itself but rather on the more general context within which it emerged: Along with Anna Pavlova and the writer, choreographer and dancer Rabindranath Tagore, the modern dancers whose careers peaked during the first half of the twentieth century greatly influenced the development of modern dance around the world. India is presented here as only one among many possible cases. To some extent, each of the localized dance scenes replicated the others, and the strategies that the leaders of the dance companies used to validate their art were all similar. This can be explained, at least

to specific geographical places but rather purposely constructed by people, so that specific geographical places become part of them because of locals’ purposeful actions and because of their relation to other neighborhoods.

2. While in the literature on Indian dances “classical” and “modern” are considered two very different types of dance, here I am taking both to be part of the larger context in which contemporary modern dance styles emerged around the world. Tagore was a writer, choreographer and educator, as well as a dancer. Meduri (2005) also treats Indian classical dance styles as modern, and so does Purkayastha (2014), who also writes about Tagore as a modern dancer.

in part, by their shared ideas, aspirations, and networks. They borrowed dance ideas and techniques from one another even as they were in competition for many of the same admirers, supporters, impresarios, venues and public response. The strategies used by Indian artists to validate dance as art were not very different from the ones used by dancers elsewhere, including in Europe and the Americas. Indian dance artists and schools of the first half of the 1900s cannot be seen then (or now) as a mere subset of the modern dance world, but rather as participants in a larger, translocal dance scene, encompassing localities in many nations.

THE TRANSLOCAL MODERN DANCE SCENE, 1890S-1950S

In *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal and Virtual* Richard E. Peterson and Andy Bennet define a music scene as “the contexts in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans, collectively share their musical tastes and collectively distinguish themselves from others” (2004: 1). Here, I will apply their definition to the modern dance scene that emerged at the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries, which included impresarios, producers, dancers and their public. Peterson and Bennet, along with Timothy J. Dowd, et al. (2004), Tim Gosling (2004), Paul Hodgkinson (2004), and Kristen Schilt (2004), all consider translocal music scenes to be those that practically replicate each other across different locations. In all of Bennet and Peterson’s examples, the newsmedia, travel, and the personal exchanges between persons and groups, made possible the reproduction of the same songs and performances in different locations. All these elements, including the new means and facilities for long-distance travel, were already present at the end of the nineteenth century, and they made it possible for the transnational dance scene to consolidate in the 1900s. Dance companies could tour, lead dancers could learn about and from one another, and they borrowed rather freely from each other’s styles, visions and choreography. Classical ballet became, for a few decades, part of the modern dance scene, as Anna Pavlova, Vaslav Nijinsky and other famous ballet dancers formed their own companies and went on commercial tours, entering the circuits and networks of the modern dancers. These dancers and their

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companies systematically sought to disassociate themselves from other earlier or less *artistic* forms of dance.

While the older translocal modern dance scene has become fragmented into a myriad of specialty dance scenes, many of them also translocal, at the beginning of the twentieth century both classical and modern dance forms were part of the same artistic context and were undergoing similar processes of cultural validation. Both ballet and Bharatanatyam, for example, were being adapted to commercial stages and dance tours. While Bharatanatyam borrowed conceptually from ballet, resulting in a form of dance detached from the association of dance with *devadasi* and *nautch* women by the Indian middle classes, ballet borrowed from folk dances and vaudeville in order to become a commercial spectacle for the masses while distancing itself from them. Here I will focus on a few of the dancers who were part of this translocal dance scene, some of whom were Indian: Rabindranath Tagore, Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis, Ted Shawn, Anna Pavlova, Uday Shankar, Leila Roy Sokhey and Rukmini Devi Arundale. All of them spent much of their lives travelling between cities and between countries, and they all have left an important mark on today's dance world.

At the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, many nations were looking at art as one of the main places where the 'soul' of the nation could reside. Composers such as Richard Wagner, Frédéric Chopin, Franz Listz and Giuseppe Verdi had shown that art, especially music and opera, could be tied to nationalist sentiment, and their work paved the way for nationalist projects looking for 'the art of the people' as a pillar of their larger agenda (Randel 1986). Like other artists, dancers sought to speak to issues of the day, including politics, through their art. The mixing of art with philosophical ideas, and in particular with romantic notions of nationalism was an aspiration shared by intellectuals and artists in different nations, including India, Mexico, Japan, Hungary, Poland, and Russia (later the Soviet Union). In them modern dance, particularly that which related to older folk dances, could be promoted to the stages associated with 'high culture' with the approval of the middle- and upper-classes and, if not always explicitly, then at least with the implicit support of the state.

A shared framework of thought to which many of these translocal dancers made reference during their speeches and memoirs included the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche, the music of Wagner, the physical and acting exercises of the François Desaltre method, the writings of American Transcendentalist writers, and the application of kinetics to music developed by Émile Jaques-Dalcroze, which he called *Eurythmics* (Banerje 2011; Duncan 2013; LaMothe 2006; Shelton 1981). After 1912, this framework also included the poetry and the works of Rabindranath Tagore translated into European languages. Because they followed similar international paths, either personally or through mutual friends and acquaintances, the dancers knew each other and each other's work. So too were they compared to one another and to other renowned dancers whose careers will not be reviewed here but with whom they shared the same or similar circuits. They lived in a translocal neighborhood that was not fully localized in any one place during their lifetimes and that would only become recognizable over time as the modern dance movement of the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

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THE DANCERS

Isadora Duncan (1878–1927) was one of the first modern dancers. She was born in San Francisco, California, as Angela Duncan, and decided at an early age to become a dancer. Although in her autobiography, first published in 1927, she says she only took three ballet lessons (Duncan 2013), Mary Simonson has found that she studied ballet and gymnastics before launching her solo career (2012:13). Between 1895 and 1897 she was part of the Company of Augustine Daly in New York, but she quit because she felt constrained by its environment and she had to play parts assigned to her by the stars of the company. These included acting, singing and reciting, and only seldom dancing (Duncan 2013, Simonson 2012: 514). Duncan thought that Greek art showed a more natural way to relate to nature and felt inspired by it. She made the Greek tunic her dance costume—and her regular clothing—of choice (Aco-cella 2013; Duncan 2013). According to Joan Acocella, and by her own account, she travelled with her family to London, where she and her brother Raymond spent several weeks studying Greek

art pieces at the British Museum (Acocella 2013; Duncan 2013). She then used this knowledge to develop her own dance steps and dance pieces.

Duncan created *locality* through her art and her life by dancing at the houses of the rich, befriending socialites, artists, and other dancers, as well as by joining dance companies for periods of time, relying on the press to amplify the public impact of her performances. At the start of her solo career she sought dance engagements in private homes of the rich, first in New York, and then in London. After her first public performances in London, in 1902 she was hired by Loie Fuller as a dancer in Fuller's Company, but left shortly thereafter on a solo tour through Hungary and Germany, sponsored by show impresario Alexander Gross (Duncan 2013). From there, her fame grew. She eventually toured through Europe, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Russia and the United States (Duncan 2013; Loewenthal 1979–1980; Souritz 1995). She always tried to have family members accompany her, especially her mother and her brother Raymond. At one point, according to her autobiography, she also took a group of Greek boys to Germany to accompany her dance performances. She opened a school in Germany in 1904, and then one in France in 1914, which she later moved to New York (Acocella 2013; Duncan 2013). She lived for a few months in Nordwyck, Switzerland, while waiting to give birth to her first child, in the company of her niece Temple and a couple of friends (Duncan 2013; Loewenthal 1979–1980). She met and mixed in wealthy social circles with famous personalities from the worlds of literature, theater and dance, including Anna Pavlova, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Cosima Wagner (Duncan 2013). In 1921, she opened a school in Moscow, which at the time was part of the Soviet Union (Simonson 2012: 527). Her dance had great impact on the performance and appreciation of dance in general, including ballet (Souritz 1995).

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) was a philosopher, novelist, poet and playwright (Fraser 2019). He was also a writer of dance drama, a choreographer, and a dancer who invented his own dance style, Rabindranritya (Banerjee 2001; Chakravorty 2013). He set up an elementary school in Santiniketan, in Bengal, in 1901, where he made dance an important element in his pedagogy (Banerjee 2011: 71; Chakravorty 2013). His thoughts on and style of dance

were influenced by Isadora Duncan who, in turn, was influenced by his dance style to the extent that some of her dancers eventually came to study with him at Santiniketan (Nussbaum 2009: 438). He was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913, gaining him international fame (Fraser 2019: 7). In 1920 and 1921 Tagore toured Europe and the United States seeking funds for Visva-Bharati, his Indian International University, which he thought could create a connection between the rich cultural heritage of India and the best in knowledge and art from around the world (Fraser 2019: 144–146). He finally opened his university in 1921 (Fraser 2019: 155). In 1922 Leonard Elmhirst (1893–1974), whom Tagore had met in the United States, came to India and became Tagore's close friend and secretary. Together, they founded the agricultural college of Sriniketan in 1922 in the village of Surul (Banerjee 2011: 19).

Tagore's daughter-in-law Pratima Devi and the choreographer and dancer Santidev Ghosh were the two main artists who helped bring to Santiniketan and to Visva-Bharati dance styles and techniques from other parts of India and from around the world, making it possible for Tagore to translate his ideas into dance and drama performances (Banerjee 2011). Pratima Devi began creating dance dramas with Tagore's work in 1923. In 1926, Tagore brought Manipuri dancers to Santiniketan, and in 1936 the first dance drama, *Chitrangada*, produced by Tagore's program, was staged at the New Empire Theatre in Calcutta (Mukherjee 2017; Ohtani 1991: 302). Also in 1936, Santiniketan implemented a four-year dance curriculum based on the Manipuri Dance style (Banerjee 2011: 97; Chakravorty 2013: 247).

Tagore lived, worked and travelled with his relatives and relied on his friends to help him and his family fund and run his education initiatives. Tagore's father had originally established Santiniketan as a place of prayer, and then his siblings, children, children's spouses and then grandchildren continued to help Tagore further his vision for a new education (Banerjee 2011; Fraser 2019). During his travels, Tagore met with famous personalities, artists, scientists, and world leaders and socialites (Banerjee 2011: 21). He made a point of inviting to his school first and later to his university the scholars, and especially the artists and dancers who visited India (Banerjee 2011: 37–40; Das Gupta 2014; O'Connell 2010: 72–73). Scholars

and artists from around the world, including engineers, scientists and social scientists, humanists, writers, musicians and dancers came to teach courses and open institutes at Visva-Bharati (Fraser 2019: 155–156). Tagore’s involvement in the vindication of dance as an art worthy of enjoyment and admiration by the middle and upper classes of India helped, through his prestige and stature, the efforts of all modern dancers and dance teachers in India. Furthermore, his ideas on art and creativity as a necessary component of education had impact well beyond India (Moraga Valle 2016).

Anna Pavlova (1881–1931) was a prima ballerina of the Tsar’s Russian Ballet Company when the company went abroad on tour in 1908. She had seen Isadora Duncan perform in 1905 and then met her personally—a meeting that would make a great impression on both of them (Duncan 2013; Krasovskaya 2017: chs. 15 and 16). At the time, Russian Ballet choreographers and dancers were already doing ‘white-tunic’ rehearsals and choreographies, but Duncan’s movements and ideas were new to them (Casey 2012: 14–18). In 1909 the Russian Ballet performed in Paris, and in New York and London in 1910 (Allen 1997: 93). In 1911, Pavlova left the Russian Ballet to found her own company, and began to tour ceaselessly the worlds’ stages, often performing under very difficult circumstances (Allen 1997: 93).

From 1912 on, Pavlova kept a house in London, where she rarely stayed due to her touring schedule. Between 1922 and 1923 she toured Japan, China, the Philippines, Malaysia, India and Egypt with her company, returning again to Asia during her 1928–1929 world tour (Balme 2020: 249; Krasovskaya 2017). Her company’s performances often took the form not of ballet recitals, but of short dance acts in larger variety shows (Casey 2012: 11). Everywhere she went she tried to find dances she could learn and then incorporated elements from them into her own choreography. She also learned from the work of dancers she admired, including Isadora Duncan and Ruth St. Denis, creating her own dances in those styles (Coorlawala 1992: 144; Krasokaya 2017). Pavlova trained several English dancers in London, but her influence on ballet schools everywhere extends well beyond her direct teachings, since she encouraged young people around the world to become dancers and to search for the dance legacy in their countries of origin. Indian artists Uday

Shankar, Rukmini Devi and Leila Roy acknowledge Pavlova having stimulated them to research Indian dance traditions and create their own dance styles from them (Joshi 2011).

Ruth St. Denis (1879–1968), born Ruth Denis, was a dancer first in August Daly’s company and later in David Belasco’s Company; Belasco added “Saint” to her name on his shows’ advertisement (Shelton 2008). She quit Belasco’s Company and started her solo career in 1905, specifically trying to develop dance pieces based on what she imagined was ‘Oriental art.’ She knew of the ‘Oriental’ dances performed by Isadora Duncan, based mainly on Greek art and mythology, but her own ideas of “the Orient” included India, which she saw as a repository of ancient dance traditions and mysticism (Srinivasan 2012). In 1906 St. Denis created *Radha*, a dance piece inspired by Hindu texts (Allen 1997: 86). Writing for the Indian periodical *Hinduism Today*, social historian Kusum Pant Joshi says that upon discovering her attraction to India and its dances during a visit to Coney Island in 1904, St. Denis began to explore Indian themes (2010). She was invited to perform at the home of Jal Bhumgara, whose father was an Indian import merchant. According to Joshi, Ruth St. Denis’ Indian-inspired dances were enjoyed and encouraged that night by the Maharaja of Baroda, a guest of the Bhumgaras. In 1914 Tagore’s book *Chitra, A Play in One Act*, was published (Hay 1962: 439). A picture dated 1914 at the Jerome Robins Dance Division collections of the New York Public Library shows St. Denis as Chitra, performing her solo dance piece based on Tagore’s character of an Indian female warrior. In her biography of St. Denis, Suzanne Shelton describes how St. Denis based her dances on concepts borrowed from the Desaltre system, from other societies (in particular from ‘the Orient’), and on the work of other dancers, including Duncan, Pavlova and Nijinsky. Also, Priya Srinivasan (2012: 83–102) has demonstrated how St. Denis employed male Indian dancers in precarious working conditions, learning from them as much as she could in order to present more ‘authentic’ renditions of the Indian dances she portrayed.

In 1914 St. Denis married her student Ted Shawn (Allen 1997: 87; Shelton 2008). In 1915 St. Denis and Shawn opened the Denishawn Academy in Los Angeles, California, where they taught ballet fundamentals, dance, meditation and “music visualization” (Shel-

ton 2008). In 1926 St. Denis and Shawn toured India with their dance company as part of a larger tour, which included Japan, China, British Malaya, Burma, India, Ceylon, Indonesia, Indochina, and the Philippines (Shelton 2008). According to Uttara Asha Coorlawala, in India they visited many cities and did over one hundred shows, rekindling the interest of Indians in their own dance forms by putting them in a new, positive light (1992: 123). Rabindranath Tagore was so taken by the Denishawn Company's performances, which he attended in Calcutta, that he invited St. Denis to come to Bengal and teach at his Visva-Bharati University (Allen 1997: 88; Chakravorty 2008: 49). Apparently, this possibility did not materialize, but Tagore and St. Denis stayed in touch. There is evidence that in 1929 she created and danced "A Tagore Poem" as part of her regular repertoire, and in 1930 Tagore appeared on a show that St. Denis staged at Carnegie Hall, in New York (Allen 1997: 88, Coorlawala 1992: 142).

Uday Shankar (1900–1977) was a promising student at the Royal College of Art in London, and he helped his family stage private entertainment shows. In 1923, Anna Pavlova was returning from her first tour through Asia and she wanted to create dances about India. She was impressed by Shankar, and begged his art professor, William Rothenstein, to let him go with her on tour. She told Rothenstein that "what Rabindranath Tagore, India's greatest poet is doing for poetry, what Abanindranath Tagore, India's greatest painter is doing for India's painting, I want Uday Shankar to do for the dance of India" (Abrahams 2007: 377). According to Abrahams, Shankar choreographed *A Hindu Wedding* and *Radha-Krishna* and went on tour with Pavlova, dancing these pieces with her. Shankar wanted to be included in other dances, but Pavlova refused and told him that he should go to India to study the local dance traditions in order to create dances for his own company. Shankar left Pavlova's Company in 1924 to live in Paris, and in 1926 he and two female dancers toured France, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland to great acclaim (Abrahams 2007: 383–388). After this, he went on an extensive tour of India with his friend, the sculptor Alice Boner, who became his publicist and manager. Rabindranath Tagore suggested to him to stay in India and open a dance academy there. He learned from local

dance styles and incorporated Indian musicians into his company, and he toured Europe in 1931 and the US in 1932 and 1933. After that, he returned to India, again touring extensively and learning about music and dance. He went to Europe once more and then decided to open a dance academy in India. Purkayastha writes that Shankar and his company had spent some time in England with the Elmhirst family. Leonard Elmhirst was a long-time friend of Tagore's, he had lived and worked with the poet helping him create and run an agronomy college in Bengal. With his wife, Dorothy Straight (a wealthy philanthropist and social activist), he had opened an institute in Devon based on the lessons learned in Bengal. Beatrice Straight, Dorothy's daughter, befriended Shankar. With financial help from the Elmhirsts and others, Shankar created the Uday Shankar Indian Culture Center in the Almora forest of the Himalayas (Abrahams 2007; Purkayastha 2014). The school lasted four years, and then he embarked in the production of a film, *Kalpana*, about a dancer who dreams of having his own dance company. He finally settled in Calcutta, from where he went on tours of England and the United States. According to Hall, Shankar's last important work, *Prakriti and Ananda*, was a Buddhist ballet inspired by one of Tagore's stories (1984–1985: 341).

Leila Roy Sokhey, who became known as Madame Menaka (1899–1947) was the daughter of a lawyer from Bengal. Her mother was English, and Roy grew up between England and Calcutta. She was an accomplished musician before she became a dancer. She met Anna Pavlova in London, and the ballerina encouraged her to study the dances of India (“Leila Roy Sokhey”; Fisher 2012: 62). She was inspired by Ruth St. Denis and Pavlova to dance, and she chose to master Kathak, a type of dance that had been associated with the Mughal courts of India, where it was performed by dancers known as *tawa'if*, courtesans who by the end of the 1800s had come to be called *nautch* and considered prostitutes, and whose dance had fallen in disrepute. According to Chakravorty, in 1892 an anti-*nautch* movement began in Madras and soon extended to Calcutta, although the dance continued to be practiced and taught, but by male specialists (2008).

At the end of the 1920s, after her marriage to Captain Sahib Sing Sokhey, Roy Sokhey started studying Kathak with Guru

Pandit Sitaram Prasad, bringing him to her house in Bombay. Both Suman Bhagchandany and Chakravorty note that this was an inversion of the teacher-student relationship in Indian dance, as traditionally the student was expected to live in the house of the teacher (Bhagchandany 2018: 46; Chakravorty 2008: 51). Roy Sokhey also studied with several other renowned dance gurus. Between 1935 and 1938, she toured Western and Eastern Europe and South Asia (Dalmia 2019: 377–378). She is now considered part of the modern dance avant-garde movement in Europe. Amsterdam-based Impresario Ernst Krauss, who had also organized European tours for Anna Pavlova and Uday Shankar, backed her solo tours, as well as her 1936–1938 tour with the Menaka Indian Ballet Company. Krauss staged approximately 500 performances of the Menaka Ballet through Western and Eastern Europe at over 100 locations (“Leila Roy Sokhey”). Home from her European tours, Menaka opened her dance academy, Nrityalayam, in 1941 in Khandala, a town nearby Bombay. Like Rukmini Devi, Menaka drew inspiration from Sanskrit texts and especially from the *Natyashastra*, an ancient book of dramatic arts. Also, like Rukmini Devi, she created a curriculum through which Kathak could be taught through systematic advance from simpler to more complex movements, and the dances and dance dramas could be replicated by their students and taught again by their former students to their own students in the future (Chakravorty 2008: 52–54). In 1942, she became ill and died in 1947. Chakravorty and Walker both point to the nationalist character of the revival of Kathak dances, and of *nautch* dances in general, by Menaka and other elite women (Chakravorty 2008: 20, 52–55; 2013: 251–252; Walker 2010). Chakravorty also tells us that after Menaka’s death Kathak became once more a dance style dominated by male dance gurus. It would take several decades for women to reclaim their place at the center of this type of dance (2008: 55).

Rukmini Devi Arundale (1904–1986) was born in a South Indian Brahmin family (Allen 1997: 70). Her father, upon his retirement, took the family to Madras and they all became involved in the activities and undertakings of the Theosophical Society, which was then becoming active in the Indian Nationalist Movement. At the age of sixteen, Rukmini Devi married George Arundale, a prominent

member of the Theosophical Society of Madras. Rukmini became a prominent member of the Theosophical Society herself. In 1924 Devi and her husband attended a performance by Pavlova at London's Covent Garden. In 1928, Arundale was doing a lecture tour of Australia and the East Indies, and they happened to be traveling with Pavlova's company. They became friends with the dancers and Rukmini Devi began studying ballet with Cleo Nordi, one of the dancers of Pavlova's company. Arundale, Devi and Pavlova finally met one another on a boat sailing from Surabaya, in Indonesia, to Australia. Devi told Pavlova that she would like to dance ballet, but she knew she would never do so perfectly. Pavlova told Devi that she could become a ballerina too, but it would be better if she tried to learn the dances of her own country. Around 1931, Rukmini Devi attended dance recitals at the Music Academy, where choreographer, dancer and show impresario E. Krishna Iyer presented on stage dancers who were students of Minakshisundaram Pillai. Devi asked Pillai to take her on as his student. Devi also studied with the *devadasi* dancer Mylapore Gowri Ammal, who was renowned as a performer of *abhinaya*, a performative language involving gestures of the body, words and music, costumes and stage props, and psychophysical expressions (Allen 1997; Srinivasan 2012: 109–113; Vatsyayan 1967, 2005).

Devi decided to have her debut dance sometime between December of 1935 or March of 1936, as part of the Theosophical Society's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations (Allen 1997: 73). In 1936 Devi and Arundale established an International Institute for the Arts, which they later named Kalakshetra (Allen 1997: 73). Rukmini Devi transformed the regional dance, using the *sadir* dance as the basis of the new style, into Bharatanatya, which is now known as Bharatanatyam. Srinivasan (2012: 110) writes, "Far from mimicking *sadir*, Rukmini completely transformed it into a modern form." This was possible because of the existing political and cultural climate then prevalent in India and particularly in Bengal, which Srinivasan believes included "nationalist movements, women's reform movements, and orientalist consolidation in the form of the Theosophical Society" (2012: 110). Following the system of ballet, Devi developed a codification of movements and dances that the teacher would demonstrate for the students to replicate. She brought Sanskrit

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texts to be the foundation of the dance and the dance dramas she choreographed. In this way, Bharatanatyam could claim a history beyond recent Indian history, and that could be incorporated into the regular curriculum at a dance academy (O'Shea 2009: 40–47).

COMMON THREADS

There are several common threads in the lives of all the important modern dance personalities presented here. Each performer became an impresario who could format dance pieces into full, program-length 'concerts' and portable spectacles that could be staged in different theaters. They could also fit their shows to the format of the variety theater. Jennifer Fisher tells us that even Anna Pavlova had to fight for respectability because even if "dancers were prized in elite circles of Russian society, they were never full-fledged members of it," and outside Russia people were suspicious of the skill and seriousness of performers. She believes that Pavlova's constant remarks about the hard work ballet requires were her way of defending the validity and respectability of her art (2012: 56).

From this point of view, what are now known as the 'classical' dance schools and styles in India were an integral part of the modern international dance scene during the first part of the twentieth century. Translocality, in the form of both a system of 'neighborhoods,' but also of traveling troupes composed of heterogeneous people, characterized the lives and sociocultural surroundings of these modern dancers. This translocality was both an aspiration for these dancers and a result of their own personal charisma and their purposeful work and efforts. The dancers themselves lived in and created their own social environments, through their families and friends, and sought to reframe dance as 'high art' by mobilizing their social and cultural capital, courting the favor of the wealthy and famous. Pierre Bourdieu writes that this strategy characterizes the lives of people who seek upward mobility, as well as those born into the upper classes who educate their children to discern between traditionally 'high' and 'low' culture. These renowned dancers, including those in India, tried to validate themselves and their art using similar resources: they sought to surround themselves with people unaligned with local points of view regarding

dance and dancers, in order to 'elevate' dance to what was then the contemporary understanding of 'art.' Ballet, then the only type of dance considered 'art,' and the romantic idea of an exotic 'Orient' of a past extending beyond the known, immediate past, were tools used by both non-Indian and Indian dancers at the time. They were certainly used within India for the creation of 'classical' dance styles as well as a cultural heritage of which Indians could be proud (Chakravorty 1990, 2000–2001).

The dancers whose lives and careers I have sketched here were only a few of those who struggled at the time to give dance the status of 'high art.' Other dancers, like Helen Tamiris and Albertina Rasch in the United States, were trying to make dance the rightful property of the poor and working classes, as much as of the middle- and upper-classes (Casey 2012; Cooper 1997; Ries 1983), sometimes taking positions in seeming opposition to those dancers discussed here. However, the fact that they were all taking dance to new places had an impact on their respective careers—a subject that has been explored by scholars writing on Bharatanatyam and Kathak (Chakravorty 2008; O'Shea 2009; Srinivasan 2012; Zubko 2014). Vaudeville, modern art dance and ballet do not only exist side by side, but also continue to feed each other in many ways. All dancers had to navigate the different stages with as much grace as possible. In 1916, for example, Anna Pavlova danced at the Chicago Hippodrome at a show featuring trained elephants, acrobats and jugglers (Casey 2012). Meanwhile, in India the emergent schools of classical dance still had to contend with the established lineages and schools of dancers and dance gurus, but also these two strands, as O'Shea and Srinivasan have shown, had more in common from the start than it is usually assumed.

Advertising, long-distance travel and the development of the film industry were all additional factors that would further contribute to the ways in which these dancers and their companies left their mark on our world. They all helped develop the traveling dance concert, which could be modified according to the reaction of the public. They all relied on the same networks of impresarios and theater venues around the world. They all tried to court the favors of the rich and famous, identifying 'art' with

the taste of the upper social classes. They all sought to reframe dance into something worthy of consideration as high art. In order to do this, they all, including those in India, relied on their families and their friends for emotional support, often going as far as to ask them to become members of their dance companies as dancers, musicians, technicians, or managers. They all called on the art and the spirituality of the ancient past to validate their own dance as belonging in the category of an art that transcended human history. Because of this, Indian classical and modern dance as it came of age at the beginning of the twentieth century must be seen as belonging to the international translocal dance scene. It was from this translocal scene that the phenomenon which came to be known as 'modern' dance in the Americas and in Europe eventually emerged. At the same time, in India it branched out further to become—on the one hand—the 'classical dance' scene and, on the other, to evolve into 'modern dance' schools and styles. In the end, both these phenomena arise from the modern dance translocal scene of the late 1880s and the first half of the 1900s.

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BHARATANATYAM AS A TRANSNATIONAL AND TRANSLOCAL CONNECTION

A Study of Selected Indian and American Texts

INTRODUCTION

In India, Bharatanatyam is the most popular classical dance form and has a great impact not only in the field of dance but also on other art forms like sculpture and painting, which all influence one another. According to Kapila Vatsyayan, “The theory of Indian dancing cannot be understood in isolation and has to be comprehended as a complex synthesis of the arts of literature, sculpture and music (1967: 229). Members of the Indian-American diaspora practice Bharatanatyam in an attempt to preserve their culture and also as an assertion of their cultural identity. Dance is an art form that relates to sequences of body movements that are both aesthetic and symbolic and rooted in particular cultures. It often tells a story and different cultures maintain different norms and standards by which dances should be performed as well as by whom and on what occasions. Dance influences and is influenced by interaction with different cultures. Priya Srinivasan’s *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* is a particularly valuable resource within the extensive body of research on Bharatanatyam that critically examines Indian dance forms, tracing the history of dance as well as the lived experience of dancers across time, class, gender and culture. Taking dance as a metaphor of personal and cultural expression, these texts and personal interviews of Bharatanatyam dancers in India and the US will be discussed in this paper. The interviews

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of Indian dancers Anita Ratnam and Priyadarshini Govind, who perform in India as well as the US and other countries, have been used as texts for analysis. The dancers in the US whose interviews will be studied are Kamala Lakshman and Tara Catherine Pandeya. With the help of these texts and interviews, I intend to explore larger issues of gender, identity, culture, race, region, nation and power dynamics inherent in the practice of Bharatanatyam and how these practices influence and are, in turn, influenced by transnational and translocal connections.

The focus here will be on how cultural movements and political processes have influenced Bharatanatyam as it is practiced in India and the US. My aim is to show how the connections with these processes and cultural elements in or from America have helped in creating local, regional and national cultural traditions in its home country.

BHARATANATYAM

Bharatanatyam is an ancient dance form said to be based on the *Natya Shastra*, the ancient Indian text of performing arts, compiled around 200 BCE by the sage Bharata. According to the *Natya Shastra*, dance and the performing arts are an expression of spiritual ideas, the message in the scriptures, and human virtues. The *Shastra* also lays down the theories of how to express these messages through *rasa* (aesthetics that evoke emotion), *bhava* (emotion or mood conveyed), expression, gestures, acting techniques, basic steps, and standing postures, all of which are part of Indian classical dances. As explained by Kapila Vatsyayan, the different components of the theory and practice of dramatic composition (*natya*) are modes of presentation (*dharmis*), styles (*vrttis*) and types of enacting (*abhinaya*). Further, *abhinaya* consists of *angika* (body gestures), *vacika* (the verbal--recitation and music), *aharya* (costumes and make up) and *sattvika* (of the temperaments and involuntary states) (1967: 230–31). Based on the *Natya Shastra*, The Sangeet Natak Academy—the national level academy for performing arts set up by the Government of India—recognises eight Indian classical dance forms, namely, Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Odissi, Kathakali, Sattriya, Manipuri and Mohiniyattam. These different dance forms belong to different regions and have

music and oral compositions either in the local language or in Sanskrit. Despite the diversity of styles in the costumes, expressions and movements, these dance forms are representative of a commonality of basic ideas. Bharatanatyam is one of the earliest major classical dance forms of India. Originating in Southern India, it is a dance traditionally performed by a woman with the accompaniment of a team of singers and musicians. One can find historical and cultural references to dancers and dance elements related to Bharatanatyam over the centuries in scriptures, temple carvings and sculptures.

Indian classical dance forms have undergone dramatic socio-cultural shifts. Kathak, for example, “has been reinvented many times as it travelled from the courts to the kothas, then to the national academies and, finally, to the global market” (Chakaravorty 2008: 171). Today’s Bharatanatyam, once a form of temple dance, originated in the temples of Tamil Nadu (Tamil epics mention the dance form as early as the second century CE) and became popular in South India reflecting Hindu religious themes and spiritual ideas. The most accepted view is that it evolved under royal patronage and was performed by *devadasis*, temple dancers whose name literally means “servants of the Gods.” Throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, British colonizers considered it to be a dance of prostitutes and it was finally banned in temples in 1910 under the pretext of social reform. It slowly started to lose its place in the Indian dance arena due to a lack of economic support and the social stigma attached to it.

Similarly, in *Bells of Change: Kathak Dance, Women and Modernity in India*, anthropologist and dancer Pallabi Chakravorty explains that Kathak originated with dancers called “tawaifs, baijis and the nautch” “in the Mughal and Hindu courts of Lucknow and Benares in Uttar Pradesh, Jaipur in Rajasthan, and Raigarh in Madhya Pradesh,” and that these locations now exemplify the *gharana* tradition of Kathak (2008: 26). These dancers were mostly female and were courtesans. Chakravorty explains that tracing this history “is a significant departure from the standard top-down approach in Kathak scholarship which has tended to focus on famous men and their lineages” (2008: 15). While courtesans have often been considered prostitutes, Chakravorty

explains that they were considered artists and experts in protocol and were part of the great art scene that flourished in the region of Bengal during the nineteenth century, particularly in the city of Calcutta. She explains that as a result of British occupation, many British families and locals who worked with them became rich and created a new class structure in the region. Citing author Sutarna Banerjee, Chakravorty writes:

In the evolving cultural milieu of nineteenth-century Calcutta, the new Bengali elite and their British rulers formed alliances, collaborating in their accumulation of wealth, power and prestige. The newly rich Bengali Hindus imitated the cultural norms of the Mughal aristocracy in their displays of status and wealth. (2008: 28)

The courtesans of the Mughal courts, then, became known as *nautch* girls, who were entertainers that enlivened the celebrations, religious and otherwise, for the emerging richer sectors of the region. One important element in the transformation of these courtesan artists into entertainers was that in the past they owned lands inherited through their maternal ancestry, and during British occupation they were stripped of their access to their former lands. The courtesans became destitute and many of them did resort to prostitution as one of the few avenues left available to them in supporting themselves and their families. The other possible avenue, which brought some to the national stage and to Bollywood, was dancing; some became famous through their art, but were not considered 'good women' for a very long time (Chakravorty 2008). This is one of the themes of the highly acclaimed novel, *The Guide*, by R.K. Narayan, which depicts dance as a disreputable pursuit and the husband of the protagonist, Rosie, remarks that it is practiced by prostitutes.

There was a movement for the revival of ancient dance forms in the twentieth century anti-colonial and freedom movements that helped to re-establish dance as a mainstream, traditional dance form. Viewed as a representation of Indian culture which was banned by the British, Bharatanatyam rapidly expanded after India gained freedom from British rule in 1947. A lot of credit for reinventing and bringing back Bharatnatyam to the mainstream

goes to Rukmini Devi Arundale, who gave it new life. Citing Avanthi Meduri and S. Sarada, Srinivasan explains:

By the early 1930s, dance in India underwent a transformation, particularly with the work of a Brahmin woman, Rukmini Devi. Married to theosophist George Arundale, she was very much a part of the Theosophical Society in India.

Sadir had been practiced in South India by *devadasis*, or women married to a temple deity. The practice had come into ill repute, and it was Rukmini who was credited with rescuing the art by restaging it from the temple to the theater [...]. Far from simply mimicking *sadir*, Rukmini completely transformed it into a modern form. (2012: 109–10)

Bala Saraswati, known as the queen of Bharatnatyam, was also instrumental in popularizing Bharatnatyam, particularly in the US in the period from the 1950s to the 1970s before the advent of the large influx of Indian migrants to the US in the 1980s which altered the dance scene in the US considerably (Srinivasan 2012: 113). It is now the most popular classical Indian dance style in India and also enjoys a high degree of support among diasporic Indian communities. In recent times Bharatanatyam has undergone various innovations and is performed on themes which may not be religious and the movements too may be a fusion of the traditional and the modern.

Over time, advances in technology and communication led to the advent of a globalized world with transnational exchanges in the fields of culture, politics and the economy. Transnational migration and transnational influences became areas of study and interest in all subject areas. The more recent concept of translocality is related to transnationalism. In migration studies, the concept of translocality is a complicated matter, a concept not easy to define. As the name suggests, it is a concept born of transnational and local interactions. Unfortunately, 'translocal' seems to be one of many words that has entered our lexicon without a precise working definition. There are a number of ways that it could be defined. For example, it could mean relationships between distinct cultural areas within a larger society or culture, or it could mean connective or comparative micro studies. For Simon Peth, translocality constitutes a wide range of enduring, open and non-linear processes whose product is the close relationship among different places

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and people, particularly the “interconnectedness and processes that happen in and between different localities” (2014). Explaining the implications of translocality, Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak state that, “translocality is used to describe socio-spatial dynamics and processes of simultaneity and identity formation that transcend boundaries—including, but also extending beyond, those of nation states” (2013: 373). In this paper, I use the term to understand the unique product born of the transnational and very specific local interaction with specific reference to Bharatanatyam and the Indian influence on American Bharatanatyam exponents and their dance and vice versa.

The transnational and translocal impact on the very emergence of Bharatanatyam from the dance form *sadir* through the efforts of two women discussed earlier, namely Rukmini Devi Arundale and Bala Saraswati, needs to be highlighted. They were both widely traveled and were spectators at dances in various countries. Avanthi Meduri writes that, in this context, “the complex imbrication of the global in the local remains an unfulfilled promise in South Asian dance scholarship.” Speaking specifically of Rukmini Devi’s art and scholarship, she writes that it was born of global and local influences “which could not be recuperated within the territorializing intellectual framework of Indian nationalism” (2004: 11). She reiterates that working within her five institutions, Rukmini Devi “developed a pioneering, art and education movement that was both ‘local’ and transnational simultaneously.” According to her, Rukmini Devi often invited international and local artists to her institution as teachers, leading to the development of a unique style of dance and music. Thus “she collaborated with both and developed a multicultural and cosmopolitan world for Bharatanatyam that exceeded standard anthropological definitions of the local and ‘national’ as early as the 1940s” (2004: 14). Kalakshetra, her institution, cannot be defined and understood in narrow geographical terms “because of its historical association with the syncretic, transnational vision of the Theosophical Society.” Meduri proposes that we view Kalakshetra as “a translocal, contemporary arts institution in which Rukmini Devi articulated a transnational history for Bharatanatyam connected to Europe, England, the United States, Canada, Australia, Sri Lanka, Tibet,

Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia simultaneously” (2004: 15–16). These multicultural influences need to be acknowledged as influential in shaping what we now know as Bharatanatyam.

Art and cultural practice are highly complex and dependent upon the individuals who practice them. Individuals traversing the arena of the cultural space leave their mark on it as much as they are impacted by it. With the engagement of different practitioners, the art form and its meanings and perceptions are altered, thus changing the social, gender, economic, and power positions they occupy. In the transnational world, cultural configurations have changed shape faster and more often due to the increased movements of people, technologies and artistic tastes. Here, I explore some of these changes in Bharatanatyam resulting from translocal and transnational exchanges.

BHARATANATYAM ACROSS THE CONTINENTS

To trace the history, growth and spread of Bharatanatyam in India and America, an anthropological study by Priya Srinivasan, who is herself a practitioner of Indian classical dance proved to be very informative. Though a diasporic Indian, she reflects upon dance not only through a diasporic lens but also traces the history and growth of dance in India, incorporating a commentary within the comparison on the differences, similarities and influences in both the native country and in America. Her book, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor*, treats dance, and particularly Indian dance, as a form of hidden labor during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in the United States. According to Josephine Lee, author of *Performing Asian America* and *The Japan of Pure Invention*, “*Sweating Saris* takes us through the fascinating interconnections of labor, dance, and immigration” (Srinivasan 2012: Cover copy). As Esther Kim Lee writes, “*Sweating Saris* provides a thorough examination of the history of Indian dance in the US with a particular focus on the dancing body and its presence in various locations [...]. [It] exemplifies a new direction in Asian American studies with its dancer-focused interpretation of immigration laws, citizenship, cultural nationalism, orientalism, and contemporary identities” (Srinivasan 2012: Cover copy).

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Through her book, Srinivasan engages with the “larger questions of race, gender, class, and politics and show[s] how the laboring young female body is simultaneously empowered, disciplined, and punished through the training process” (2012: 19). She also explains in great detail the emergence and suspect character of Bharatanatyam during the twentieth century. She explains that when the government banned the custom of offering children as *devadasis* to Indian temples, the husbands and sons of well-known *devadasi* dancers became dance gurus, because many women, and especially middle and upper-class women, wanted to learn the famed dances that today comprise the genre of Bharatanatyam. She says:

Bharata Natyam had gained popularity in India among middle-and [sic] upper-class families by the 1960s and 1970s, and therefore, young women who were often upper-caste Brahmins were trained extensively in the dance form. It must be remembered that the *sadir* form practiced by temple dancers, or *devadasis*, was removed from the *val-lavar* community (of which the *devadasis* were members) in part because of the anti-nautch campaign that was part of the larger reforms for women under the nationalist agenda. Since the *sadir* practice became ideologically linked to prostitution by the late nineteenth century, it became impossible for *devadasis* to continue their practice legally. By the 1960s and particularly by the 1970s and 1980s, hundreds of thousands of young women were carrying out the agenda of the postcolonial nation-state, both in the nation space and in the diaspora. But the gurus for Brahmin women were the men of the *vallavar* caste. (2009: 121)

This not only throws light on the class and caste configurations of the teachers and learners of this dance form but also clearly shows how the gender dynamics were completely reversed in the process. In the practice of *sadir*, the women were teachers, learners and performers but in the case of Bharatanatyam, the men became the gurus (teachers) and the learners and performers were mostly women. This had a major impact on the complex guru-shishya relationship and the Bharatanatyam dance arena came under patriarchal control.

In the early twentieth century, international figures of modern dance, including Ruth St. Denis and Anna Pavlova, took Indian dance into new artistic territory in the United States and elsewhere, making it possible for Indian women to become art dancers in the United States and for Indian dance to be seen as an art form

back in India. Early modern dance in the United States appropriated aspects and techniques from the dance of Indian performers called *nautch* at the beginning of the twentieth century in Britain and the United States, but without the proper acknowledgment of their origins. With the American Immigration Act of 1965 coming into effect, a large number of Asian professionals began to migrate to the US, the migrations peaking in the 1980s. Indian women migrated to the United States as wives and daughters of Indian men and, ineligible for work visas, were unable to take up work in formal sectors of the economy. A suitable option became taking up Indian dance classes in their homes or garages, which became very popular, some eventually leading to the opening of dance academies. With time these women would become established dance gurus, who came to be acknowledged as such in India as well (Srinivasan 2012). Today, many women are recognized as dance gurus, but this is something that was possible only through the circuits of migration, and especially migration of Indian women to the United States.

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It is an obvious fact that cultural practices are altered when people migrate—the migrants are influenced by the host culture and, in turn, exert an influence on the host culture. Therefore, it is not uncommon to find the dance practices of different diasporic groups influencing one another. An interesting example is that of the dance form known as *Shinmuyong*, which in Korean means “new dance.” It is born out of the influence of a German expressionist dance on modern Japanese dance. This dance form was further performed in Korea where dancers picked it up and performed it after adding their own innovations based on traditional Korean dance; “Furthermore, after a world tour in the late 1930s, the *Shinmuyong* dancers actively turned to creating a hybrid Asian dance form in the 1940s, so that *Shinmuyong* became a composite form” (Son 2016). Another meaningful comparison would be that of translocal, transnational exchanges of different Asian migrant groups in the United States. It would also be useful to look at other dance forms worldwide that have been influenced by translocal and transnational forces, but this paper focuses primarily on Bharatanatyam and its trajectories across time and place.

To understand the contemporary attitudes and politics related to traditional Indian dance forms, particularly Bharatanatyam, and the transnational and translocal impacts on it in India and the US, I have taken up interviews of well-known Bharatanatyam dancers and teachers in India and those settled in the US for discussion. The Indian dancers often perform internationally and are familiar with the dance scenes there too.

INTERVIEWS OF INDIAN DANCERS

Below, I have included extracts taken from available interviews of two well-known dance advocates relevant to this study.

Anita Ratnam is an Indian classical and contemporary dancer and choreographer. Classically trained in Bharatanatyam, she has also received formal training in Kathakali, Mohiniattam, and T'ai chi and Kalaripayattu, creating a dance style which she calls "Neo Bharat Natyam." She holds a postgraduate diploma in dance from Kalakshetra and has worked in cross-disciplinary theatre productions. Her varied interests are reflected in her associations with television and cinema. Asked about the interesting dance sequences in films that resemble the contemporary shows on stage, she says:

Film dance has become very interesting and more contemporary. I feel that the best modern dancers in India are those that emerge from the filmi genre since they are very flexible and have learned from a cross cultural approach rather than only one style. The choreography has become more international and more vigorous. I really enjoy some of the sequences and wish those dancers were available to me for creation. (Ratnam 2008)

Ratnam founded the Arangham Trust in 1992 which is a cultural foundation that explores, enriches and promotes the performing and visual arts of India and seeks to contemporize the rich tapestry of Indian creativity for modern audiences. "Through collaborations, workshops, seminars and cultural outreach activities, numerous talented but lesser-known artistes have found a voice and a platform" (Ratnam 2008) under the aegis of the Trust which is doing pioneering work in reviving a tenth century performance art unique to the temples in Southern Tamil Nadu. As a past con-

vener of the Natya Kala Conference, when she was asked about the importance of such conferences, she replied:

Dance writing seminars and dance videos and films should be included in the future for international visitors to enjoy and appreciate such conferences. We can clearly see how international interests/understanding has a direct impact on the cultural practices of a different nation, here on a dance form seen as traditional, classical and a symbol of nationalism [...]. Traditional communities of dancers and musicians and their invaluable repertoire and literature of ritual performances like 'Kaisiki Natakam' (now in its 10th year) are being sustained and revived so that their art can breathe again. www.narthaki.com is a path-breaking directory of Indian dance that has become an essential guide and networking tool for the international dance community. (Ratnam 2008)

Priyadarsini Govind is a graduate in commerce from the University of Madras, Chennai, and holds a diploma in Mass Communication, but Bharatanatyam has been her first love ever since she was six. She is one of the best-known Bharatanatyam dancers among the current generation. Trained by two greats, Kalaimamani S.K. Rajarathnam Pillai and Padma Bhushan Smt. Kalanidhi Naryanan, and combined with her natural talents and dedication, her reputation as a dancer is exemplary. "With her natural aptitude for abhinaya coupled with her passion and dedication to her art, Priyadarsini has become a flag bearer for Smt. Kalanidhi's padam repertoire. Priyadarsini's nritta or pure dance is intense and vigorous" ("Priyadarsini Govind"). Her contribution to dance through her stint at the Kalakshetra is immense. She has performed and travelled widely in India and abroad and is the recipient of the prestigious "Nriya Choodamani Award" in addition to many others. On the web portal *Sabhash*, she is described as "A dancer known for her adherence to tradition, Priyadarsini manages to seamlessly blend new choreography with the traditional, thereby gently redefining the boundaries of Bharatanatyam repertoire." Govind spoke of the changing tastes of audiences and was asked if she did not prefer to be a connoisseur's dancer, and if it was easy to be in the mainstream. She responded: "It's not really easy. Sometimes I may want to include items which I love very much, but if they are too heavy and do not go well with the audience and then I avoid performing them and choose simpler songs, where the melody

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or raga is already familiar and the sentiment expressed is more popular” (Govind). She gives examples of this:

Sometimes, when I perform abroad, I do take up very heavy Kshetravaya padams, where the tempo is very slow, the idea expressed is very subtle, there are wonderful audiences for it. But at other places, if an audience is uninitiated, and the interest is less, then if I were to doze them with a heavy padam which they cannot understand, then they would be put off by the Bharatanatyam programme, because I'm not stimulating their interest to come again. Here I would probably take up a Bhajan, where the music is simple and captivitating and the idea is simple—the love of a mother for her child and of how she thinks he is the best—this is something they would easily understand. When communication is complete where the person communicating is successful and when the audience gets what the dancer wants to say, then you make them want to come back. The interest is generated. You have added one more person to your audience. (Govind)

Evident in the above conversations is the influence of film, multicultural approaches and international trends on Bharatanatyam. The international influence on the practice, performance and innovation of the dance form in current times in India and abroad is quite evident in the ideas expressed by these well-established Bharatanatyam exponents. The dancers perform and innovate for foreign learners and audiences both in India and internationally. They are open to responding to audience tastes in India and abroad and willing to simplify the performance to hold the interest of different audiences. Younger teachers are open to innovations and are incorporating strategies of modern Indian and Western dance forms into their dance sequences. “Tyaag (the Yoga and Art Group) is a collective of Delhi-based dancers and musicians who strive to achieve a holistic artistic education. Tyaag member and Kathak Kendra graduate Sushmita Ghosh spent twelve years teaching and performing in Britain before relocating to New Delhi in 2002” (Prickett 2007: 32). Not only in the dance forms, these influences are seen in the methods of teaching also. “Ghosh (2003) speaks of the need to incorporate more details into the dance training: In the guru-shishya tradition it is ‘I play, I dance, you watch and you learn’. If you are not with him 24 hours a day, it is very difficult to just watch and learn.” She goes on to say that she has learnt a lot from contemporary dance, such as the use of language, and has realized that it can

be a very effective tool in teaching (2007: 32). So we can conclude by saying that the traditional dances are impacted by translocal influences and create their own 'space' which is not geographical. Also, as Shanti Pillai explains, "Just as cultural forms travel and are translated and transformed, they then travel back to their sites of origin, where they have consequences for the ways in which local populations practice and consume them" (2002: 15).

BHARATANATYAM IN THE USA

Srinivasan's book, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* tells us that many Indian dancers travelled to and lived in the United States in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Working from archival sources, she names some of the more important individuals, including: Oomdah, Bhooribai, Sahebjan, and Ala Bundi. Of their performances, one of the most memorable appears to have been at a show called "Durbar of Delhi" performed at Coney Island, then viewed by Ruth St. Denis who was greatly influenced by it. St. Denis is known as one of the 'mothers' of modern American dance. Influenced by the Coney Island performance, she established her dance career as a solo dancer and as a choreographer of Asian dances. Many Indian dancers, men and women, performed with her for several years as she toured. Slowly these dancers faded away and by the late 1920s there were few Indians left in the United States (2012: 9). This was a result of the anti-immigration policies of the US government at the time. During the Roosevelt administration, the Immigration Act of 1907 sought to discourage immigration by doubling the initial immigration tax from two dollars to four, banning most Asian immigrants as part of highly restrictive measures. The 1924 Act also fully excluded both Asian and black immigrants, while severely limiting Jewish immigrants. At this time, 164,000 immigrants were admitted each year; however, the quota was reduced again to 150,000 immigrants in 1929 under President Hoover ("United States Immigration Policy"). It was only in 1965 that large numbers of Indians began to enter the United States again. Unlike the earlier dancers/immigrants, the new wave of dancers/immigrants mostly stayed on in the US and were eventually granted citizenship. It is from these dancers/immigrants that dance schools

and dance companies were established in the US. Katrak states that “Bharatanatyam is the dominant Indian classical dance form performed and taught in the USA since post 1965 when sets of Bharatanatyam dance practitioners such as Viji Prakash, Medha Yodh, Ramaa Bharadvaj and Ramya Harishankar from South and Southeast Asia migrated to the Southern California” (Banerjee 2013: 21–22). The phenomenon of independent Indian women as wage-earning dance gurus is a diasporic manifestation of transcultural migration (Srinivasan 2012: 13). As mentioned earlier, this was a practice unlikely in India where male dance gurus dominated the dance arena while the female teachers were never accorded the revered status a guru commanded. In addition to creating a patriarchal structure, this also opened up the possibility of sexual exploitation by the guru especially because the guru-*shishya* (teacher-student) relationship demanded a complete surrender by the student “necessitating an unquestioning deference towards the guru” (Prickett 2007: 27). A recent newspaper article titled, “The Problem of Groping Gurus and Silent Shishyas” in *The Sunday Times*, as a follow-up to the MeToo allegation against two famous musician brothers, speaks of the helpless position some women artistes, dancers and musicians were often reduced to. According to the writer of the article, Malini Nair, “One of the worst-kept secrets of the tight-knit Indian classical arts circles is the predatory behaviour a lot of women artistes have to deal with—and it comes not just from all-powerful gurus but also from other men who wield influence, such as the accompanists and organisers.” She writes further: “If you are close enough to these circles, you will hear horrific stories of normalised misogyny.” Women who dedicate their lives to their art, have no choice but to suffer the unwanted attention as the guru could destroy their career if they spurned his advances. Neela Bhagat, a Hindustani vocalist says, “So, the guru was great, the man was not. I saw the difference but many women students found it hard to reconcile the contradiction” (Nair 2020). The reason why the guru is so revered and this relationship is different from any other student-teacher relationship is because the “Indian classical arts traditions place the guru on a near mythical pedestal, beyond question and reproof” (Nair 2020). While the guru-*shishya* relation-

ship does place the woman in a vulnerable position if the guru is male, it does not mean that all gurus abuse the power they wield. *Shishyas* often speak very highly of their gurus:

Bharatanatyam exponent Leela Samson explained that the bond between guru and shishya surpassed that of parental love: 'It carried over into the realm of that which kept one centred through life, that which gave joy beyond one's occupation, beyond family ties, disappointments, tragedies, change. The guru gave, especially in the arts, a sight of worlds beyond the now—almost like a philosophical guide or religious leader, but without the dogma.' (Prickett 2007: 26–27)

But Prickett goes on to say that "Changes to teaching, the increased institutionalisation of dance, and shifts in patronage have resulted in artistic compromises undertaken for financial and professional survival, all of which can undermine the foundations of the guru-shishya relationship (Prickett 2007: 27). Thus, keeping in view the tradition and complexities of the guru-shishya relationship, the emergence of female gurus in the US was an extremely significant change.

Against all odds, legal and socioeconomic, the Indian dancers in the US have attained the model minority status through their teaching of dance to young Indian girls, staging performances at cultural events and working with communities during Indian festivals. They live their negotiations of "cultural citizenship" through performance as minority subjects (Srinivasan 2012: 16). Faced with a foreign culture, most Indian American parents want their daughters to be familiar with their native Indian culture and traditional Indian dances, Bharatanatyam being the most popular becomes the means to do so. According to Srinivasan, "The guru position allows the first-generation female gurus to negotiate male dominance in the immigrant Indian community and mainstream patriarchy" (2012: 124). These female gurus are also given the authority to shape the community's cultural identity and through performing it on stage and disciplining young girls (Srinivasan 2012: 124).

INTERVIEWS OF AMERICAN DANCERS

Kamala Lakshman is a dancer awarded both in India and the US, Kamala Lakshman has had a successful career in dance for more

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than fifty years. She started dancing at the age of four and gave her first performance when she was only five years old. She trained under different teachers, the most well-known being Vazhuvoor Ramiah Pillai, who helped her to refine her dance form. She performed not only on the stage but also in films and became extremely popular; “Between the 1940s and the 1970s, [she] represented India at cultural festivals and events all over the world and performed before many world dignitaries, including Queen Elizabeth on the occasion of her coronation in 1953 and former US President Eisenhower during his state visit to India in 1959” (“Kamala Lakshmi”). In 1980, she migrated to the US and established her dance school, the Sri Bharatha Kamalalaya School of Dance and has been teaching dance for the last 35 years. She is eighty-five years old and has trained hundreds of students in the US where she lives. Asked if she finds any difference in approach to dance by foreign students as compared to Indian students, she says:

Foreign students don't get the feeling of devotion. They are sincere in practice, take their work seriously, don't think 'this is enough.' They are a little stiff sometimes. Ballet means flexibility, a modern dancer is acrobatic. They are trained to speak with their bodies, without moving the muscles in their faces. So facial expressions are a little difficult for them. Footwork is also not their strong point. But when foreign students start learning Indian dance from their teens, these problems are minimal. (Lakshman 2000)

One also learns that, among the thirty one students she had at the time of the interview, though many males were interested, there was only one male student, Vivek Ramakrishnan, “and he's good” (Lakshman 2000). Asked about the craze Indian dancers in the US have for performing in the December season in Chennai at their own cost, she explains, “They need good reviews, which they have to submit back in the US in order to get grants which they use to produce their dance dramas. If you make a good name in your hometown, you can make it good anywhere” (Lakshman 2000).

Tara Catherine Pandeya is an Indian American dancer from California born to an Indian American father and a German American mother who is also a trained Bharatanatyam dancer. She left the Cirque du Soleil where she was a principal dancer because

of her passion to promote Central Asian dance. She is known for her dancing, choreography and teaching as much as she is known for her scholarship and cultural activism. She has been promoting dance forms and styles of the Central Asian Silk Road region and “wants to use dance as an instrument to build dialogue, interest, tolerance and cross-cultural understanding between the Eastern and Western cultures” (Rathore 2017). Pandeya is a trained dancer in many dance forms, including Bharatanatyam, traditional Middle Eastern dance, modern dance, tap and ethno-contemporary dance, and dances from Central Asia. Being familiar with varied cross-cultural dance forms, she sees great similarity between the dances and cultures of India and Central Asia. The fusion of different forms is a perfect example of translocality in her dance performances. In an interview with *India-West*, she speaks of her life’s mission to expose larger audiences to these art forms so that they can value them. She further says:

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The stories that are being told are being filtered through one lens. Although I’m an outsider to the region, sometimes it’s also a double-sided education: educating western audiences that there are classical forms, and audiences of the diaspora from Central Asia that these dance forms and art traditions are worth saving [...]It’s like a beautiful visual textbook for cultural heritage and collective world heritage that is vital and crucial. (Rathore 2017)

Speaking about these overlapping and cross-cultural roots, she remarks:

Not only because I’m obsessed with the styles, and artistically they are interesting, but also because I feel finding a part of our collective history and finding these shared intersecting points also builds cultural bridges, and tolerance, that when people get too pundit about classical forms or they are unaware of other countries and regions which have very sophisticated, highly technical classical forms. (Rathore 2017)

From the interviews excerpted above, it is clear that, undoubtedly, the changes, trends and innovations of the dance form in India have a direct bearing on the dance as it is practiced in the US. Furthermore, the local influences in the US also exert an influence on the performance of Bharatanatyam, especially among the second-generation dancers in the US. They experiment

with the story to be conveyed through the dance, the dress, the facial expressions and the dance movements. They innovate so as to make the dance more understandable and interesting for the current generation. Local tastes in aesthetics, dance and music are bound to exert an influence on the dance form. Other dance forms like ballet, jazz, hip-hop, and other international dance forms are synthesized to create innovative dance dramas. Commenting on the second-generation Bharata Natyam dance practitioners in California, Ketu H. Katrak says, they “create new choreography using contemporary, even feminist themes, basing their work on their training in the most popularly studied traditional classical dance style from India, namely Bharata Natyam along with other movement vocabularies such as modern dance, jazz, and yoga” (2004; 79). He also speaks of their involvement with “popular cultural practices such as dance in the Southern California diasporic South Asian American community, and innovations to ‘tradition’ within a local/global context of cultural politics” (2004:79).

Dance teachers have also pointed out the differences in body language among female learners of the Indian diaspora. In India the girls are taught to be more gentle, subservient and docile, which is reflected in their body language and expressions. The bodies of the girls in the US are relatively stiff and their facial expressions not so emotive. This becomes particularly relevant in cultures where gender behaviors are rigid and stereotypical, which include how you express yourself through the body movements. The Indian woman is supposed to carry herself with a docility, coyness, subservience, femininity and grace, which is then reflected in the dance movements and similarly the male is expected to reflect through the body, a stance of boldness, aggression and masculinity reflected in the dance form too. The dance form then, when practiced in a different culture, will reflect that same local culture. While the Indian learners accept the instructions with blind faith, the Indian American learners are more questioning, especially about gender and moral issues inherent in the learning and practice of Bharatanatyam:

Second-generation dancers bring new illuminations on tradition especially in representations of femininity and female sexuality that is

depicted from a feminist stance rather than a more conservative, patriarchal delineation of the female body. They demonstrate the paradox that there is much in the tradition to value and celebrate and much that needs to be challenged. Their playing with tradition translates as choreographing new work that uses Bharata Natyam and other dance movement and gesture vocabularies for autobiographical pieces, exploring personal identity, family and gender dynamics, and moving outward into social issues connected to contemporary life in the US. (Katrak 2004: 87–88)

In keeping with the social realities of their lives, “Racial and gender inequalities are evoked and given feminist and progressive interpretations. Feminist re-interpretations of popular songs use the gesture vocabulary of traditional *padams* (lyric poems)” (Katrak 2004: 87–88). Bharatanatyam is still primarily a dance practiced by women, very few males taking it up as a hobby or profession either in India or in the US. In “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” Judith Butler states that “One is not simply a body, but in some very key sense, one does one’s body and, indeed, one does one’s body differently from one’s contemporaries and from one’s embodied predecessors and successors as well” (1988: 521). But doing the body differently is often met with resistance and we see that unfold in Mahesh Dattani’s *Dance Like a Man*, a play set in the 1950s that highlights the gender stereotypes prevalent in India where a male dancing body is viewed as effeminate in the strictly patriarchal society.

The way one holds one’s body is determined by individual variation, along with different body types and movements. This is reflected in Kamala Lakshman’s statement that foreign students have a relatively stiff body. In all dance forms, the body type plays a great role in determining the moves of the particular dance form. This is equally if not more applicable to Bharatanatyam. It is also pertinent to note Kamala Lakshman’s comment above that the dancers from the US need good reviews in India as that will help them in getting grants in the US. Thus we can see that the factors impacting the practice of Bharatanatyam and its transnational and translocal implications are indeed varied—they are related to economics, gender, identity, culture, region and nation.

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CONCLUSIONS

From its very inception to the contemporary times, Bharatanatyam has been influenced by transnational and translocal connections. The innovations in the dance form as a result of local and international influences as expressed in all of the above interviews, reflect this translocal and transnational impact quite clearly. The innovations are based on the audience responses and expectations. Performances both in India and abroad are planned by keeping international audiences in mind. Influences that include local cultures, dance forms, and individual aesthetics also play a substantial role in determining the changes the dance form has incorporated.

For the diasporic Indian, a traditional Indian dance like Bharatanatyam becomes a token of Indianism, more often taken up as a way to express one's Indian cultural heritage and identity and less as a passionate engagement with the form that one finds among Indian dancers. For the diasporic Indians, this tokenism becomes a way of expressing their identity, leading to the commercialization of the dance form and molding it into a more audience friendly, but less rigorous form.

Bharatanatyam has also become a form of labor for the large number of women who cannot legally work in a foreign country. This becomes an important factor among the other transnational factors that impact the dance form. Laws and immigration policies decide what categories of Indians migrate to the host country. In America, the major categories include the contract labor, F1 student visas, H1 work visas, green card holders and citizens. The people who fall under these categories then constitute the Indian American population and that too impacts the attitudes to the learning and practice of the dance form. Depending on the changes in laws, various time periods have seen the migration of different kinds of classes of migrants. If in the 1920s, a large number of contract labor visas were issued, after the 1960s, a large number of visas were issued to the middle-class educated professional Indians. All these factors play a significant role in the cultural tastes and practices of the migrants.

In the patriarchal Indian society, where women are seen as the carriers of culture, this becomes another reason for women,

particularly diasporic Indian women to propagate their cultural practices, classical dance being one of them. As a result, women are primarily the teachers and learners of Bharatanatyam in the US, male dancers being negligible and male teachers of Bharatanatyam in the US practically nonexistent.

After Bharatanatyam attained its current respectable status after Independence in India, the gurus could only be male. A guru in the dance tradition was the head of a particular school or style of the dance form known as the *gharana*. To be accepted as an authentic classical dancer, one had to belong to a *gharana* or perform in a particular style, with little scope for individual experimentation. Interestingly, though the dancers were mostly female, including early teachers, usually belonging to the *devadasi* families, the head or guru of a *gharana* was male as the society would not allow a place of authority or domination to a woman. The guru-shishya relationship was unique in the dance traditions where a guru controlled the student's dance career to a large extent. Without the guru's patronage, the shishya could not progress and had to be subservient to the guru. This often led to complete surrender by the student to the teacher often resulting in sexual exploitation and favoritism. With women dominating the dance arena in the US, for the first time women gurus established themselves and had a major influence on the Bharatanatyam scene in India. This can be seen as an extremely significant transnational influence on Bharatanatyam in India. It loosened the hold of male gurus and led to the increasing acceptability of female gurus.

The impact of translocal and transnational influences on Bharatanatyam has led to innovations and creativity which may be seen as progressive and leading to the enrichment of the dance form, but orthodox and elder proponents of Bharatanatyam see it as a meddling with the classical purity and a dilution of its classical tradition. The regional and national politics also play an important role in determining local and international attitudes towards the dance form. In her article, "Rethinking Global Indian Dance through Local Eyes: The Contemporary Bharatanatyam Scene in Chennai," Pillai highlights that "globalization of local traditions does not necessarily translate into a newly invigorated life for those practices." Taking the example of young NRI Bharatanatyam dancers

who come to Chennai for their debut performance, Pillai explains how there is resentment among the local learners as they feel that these NRI performers give substandard performances but are able to do so as they have money and connections which some local dancers cannot afford. A dance performance can be an expensive affair considering that a venue needs to be booked, accompanists are required, the expensive costuming, and the accompanying refreshments typically provided during intermission or after the performance. Reminiscing about such an incident in Chennai, Pillai says, "The fact that the concept of 'globalization' is often used to cloak a process that generates inequalities derived from differential access to markets and international cultural brokers" weighed on her mind. But, on the other hand, there are experts in the field who believe that the NRIs bring "enthusiasm," "energy" and innovations to the dance form (2002: 15). In this context Pillai further elaborates:

Discussions about globalization tend to fall somewhere between two poles. One invokes the paranoia of what Appadurai (1996) refers to as a McDonaldization of the world, in which local practices, identities, and economies give way to the homogenizing mandates of capitalism. The other rejoices over the emergence of so-called hybrid cultural forms, interpreted as signs of the resilience of non-Western societies, as harbingers of the dawn of some new age of multicultural understanding [...] . (2002: 14)

To conclude, I would say that, despite power dynamics, labour exploitation and the role of economic factors sometimes seen in transnational exchanges, the transnational and translocal innovations and the impact on the role reversals in the gender politics of the dance form, have undoubtedly enriched Bharatanatyam in India as well as its practice in the US. The local status of Bharatanatyam is symbolically and economically stronger because of its global connections.

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‘HIGHER LAWS’ AND ‘DIVINE MADNESS’

Transnational and Translocal Configurations of Quixotic In/Sanity in the American Renaissance

INTRODUCTION

“To every brain a several vein/ Of madness from the gods!” Ralph Waldo Emerson wishfully exclaimed in a poem tellingly titled “The Skeptic” (1996: 1296). Yet he knew that the madness he was referring to was not for “every brain” and in his essay “Heroism” made it clear that “The heroic cannot be the common, nor the common the heroic” (379). And the heroic consisted for Emerson of a rare, or uncommon, god-blessed madness. His younger fellow Concordian Henry David Thoreau echoed: “Nothing remarkable was ever accomplished in a prosaic mood [...] Referred to the world’s standard, the heroes and the discoverers are always insane” (1985: 933). Emerson encouraged Bronson Alcott, William Ellery Channing, Henry Thoreau, Jones Very, and Margaret Fuller to be uncompromisingly high-minded in accordance with his view of the literary vocation—which, in fact, remained quite nebulous and extravagant and so kept them all from literary success, at least as the common reader would measure it. In what follows, I will focus on the severe incompatibility between the Emersonian ‘godly madness’ and the lack of any institutionalized outlet for it during the age of the American Renaissance. Dealing with the Romantic understanding of Miguel de Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* as a book about the uplifting potential of literature and need for uncompromising high-mindedness in everyday life, I will outline the anomalous position of the Transcendentalist literati

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in terms of a New England 'in/sane' Quixotic quest for perfection—both of the individual and the world. Moreover, the unique sense of place that Emerson's Transcendentalists possessed will be approached as offering a specifically New-England-tinted, yet, at the same time, transnationally/translocally relevant, perspective toward different/similar literary traditions as well as their own cultural contexts.

TRANSCENDENTALIST NONCONFORMISM

"We are the club of the like-minded," James Freeman Clarke, one of the New England Transcendentalists, once claimed, explaining, "because no two of us think alike" (Le Beau 1985: 23). The pun was good enough and, moreover, truthful in its apparent paradox. What lay behind it was Emerson's demand for nonconformism, or inveterate self-trust. "Whoso would be a man, must be a nonconformist," Emerson insisted, "Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have the suffrage of the world" (1990: 151). Emerson's appeal—Quixotic as it was in its idealism and inapplicability to real life—turned out to be extremely attractive to most of Concord's intellectuals of the time. It provoked all kinds of different and even contradictory responses, but always demonstrated the utmost respect for the uniqueness of individual thinking and behavior. However, it also reflected all the complexities of Emerson's steadfastness and bore the practical or, rather, all the impractical consequences regarding actual life experience.

The Transcendental Club regarded itself as "informal," and took pleasure in it, as this seemed closest to being noninstitutional and self-reliant. Yet, though institutionally independent, it was nonconformist and self-reliant in the sense of sticking to Emerson's idea, which could not but cast Emerson's shadow over its members or, in other words, make them 'Emerson-reliant.' Emerson realized this and warned against it: "The wise man must be wary of attaching followers" (*Journals* 6: 279). This was one of Emerson's typical abstractions which could not possibly be put into practice. But Emerson persisted: "Act singly! Your conformity explains nothing [...] what you have already done singly will justify you now" (1990: 156).

Lawrence Buell called this "Emerson's *blindness* about the dissonance between the message and the practice of his teaching"

(2003: 308). However, the poem quoted above seems to answer whether or not Emerson was *actually* blind about this dissonance: “Many for the dawn have hoped,/ And some more brave, or else more *blind*,/ The freedom all desire, pretend to find” (1996: 1297). Such freedom-seeking blindness was, for him, equal to divine madness, with which only “some more brave” are blessed. Originating in fundamental devotion to the ideal of noncompromising high-mindedness, Emerson’s preference for the message over the practice of his teaching was, in fact, a pleasingly deliberate Quixotic choice. Hence, as he writes in his essay “The Poet,” the greatest reward the poet should expect is that “the ideal shall be real to thee” (1990: 224). The consequences of such a choice amid the sanity of the real world were predictable (hence the poem’s title, “The Skeptic”). Thus, within “the Reason-Madness nexus,” which, as Michel Foucault argues in the Preface to *Madness and Civilization*, “constitutes for Western culture one of the dimensions of its originality” (XI), Emerson’s Romantic vision displayed a New England interpretation of the godly, extra-worldly, in/sane powers of the creative imagination.

Whatever sense of subjection Emerson’s authoritative personality may have caused, it always retained an irresistible attraction of free, dignified thinking and spiritual elevation. Moreover, the Transcendental Club was an entirely New England phenomenon, the product of a settler’s culture which had always been conversational, a culture of sharing: it could therefore easily combine the Emersonian “new importance given to the single person” (1990: 99) with the traditional Puritan communal attitude and need for a spiritual leader. Emerson was there to play the role and he played it perfectly. In a time when it was becoming more and more clear that America’s culture had to finally define its own physiognomy, Emerson was the one to have, in the genuine Winthropian sense, “the eyes of all people” upon him, the one capable of reinventing the spiritual tradition of New England, transforming it into a major driving force of the American Renaissance through this broadly transnational Romantic context.

“THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR”

In August 1837, when Emerson delivered this speech at Harvard and announced the emergence of a new figure in America’s cultural

life, he stood for the first time in public as the Master, the new Teacher, the self-reliant individual—the American Scholar himself, who could proudly declare that “Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close” (1990: 83). It seemed inevitable the oration should be dubbed America’s “Intellectual Declaration of Independence” and so it immediately was, by Emerson’s enthusiastic co-thinker Oliver Wendell Holmes, who provided what afterwards seems the only possible interpretation of the lecture.

Impossible as it is to imagine Emerson simply giving voice to his country’s cultural needs at the time, it cannot be denied that the 1837 Harvard oration invites itself to be read as a nationalist proclamation. It memorably reiterates the theme that “We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe” (1990: 99), so now “we will speak our own minds” (100). Moreover, it unfolds through masterful rhetoric, playing the nationalist card in a most inspiring and convincing way—the practical result being the birth of the myth of its own cultural nationalism. The lecture portrays a magnetic ideal figure whose attractiveness comes, above all, from its clear American belonging. It was exactly this sense of belonging that granted Emerson’s rhetorical construct the status of a hallmark of America’s culture. Holmes’s qualification was both so fitting and attractive that it almost became the second title of Emerson’s lecture.

However, scholars focused on Emerson’s early career and the Emersonian mythology (such as Robert Milder, Merton Sealts, Jr., and others) began to problematize the nationalistic characterization of the 1837 oration as an oversimplification. Lawrence Buell offers a significant attempt in this direction in his book *Emerson* in the duly titled chapter, “How American Was Emerson’s ‘American Scholar’?” Having pointed out that Holmes’s “time-honored summation is both too sweeping and too narrow” (44), Buell continues with a convincing argument in favor of what he calls the lecture’s “refusal to wave the flag.” The explicitly American parts are striking but brief flourishes; the address was first published simply as “An Oration, Delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard” and the title we know was added a dozen years later; Emerson made his own most fundamental

aim explicit in a journal entry a month before the occasion, namely to unfold “a theory of the Scholar’s office;” and, Buell emphasizes, “Not a word about cultural nominalism here” (45). To strengthen his argument, he writes that “nowhere does Emerson commend the recipe of nature-books-action as an ‘American’ program,” as well as that “all his exemplars of the spirit of the modern age are European” (46). Buell concludes that it was exactly the “avoidance of cultural specificity” that “made Emerson’s work more portable abroad” (46) because, to many foreign readers, Emerson “spoke, as Carlyle said, more as ‘a man’ than as an American” (49). Finally, Buell makes it clear that “The point of stressing his [Emerson’s] cross-border appeal in and beyond his own time is to underscore that his vision and standing were not reducible to his ‘Americanness’” (48).

Obviously, ‘Americanness’ is considered a category of reduction here; in order for the claim for Emerson’s cosmopolitanism to be supported, the myth of the lecture’s reception is replaced by the creation of a counter-myth—namely, that of its ‘Europeanness.’ However, all the European responses mentioned refer to Emerson’s work in general and not specifically to the early oration at Harvard. In other words, Buell’s statement that “Emerson’s own concern was with values that stand the test of time and unite the world” (58) would seem self-evident, hardly depriving “The American Scholar” of its American flavor. Moreover, most of the European examples that illustrate Emerson’s universalism can also be read the other way around. For instance, the fact that “Near the end of his life, even Charles Baudelaire found comfort in the tonic effect of Emerson’s maxims” (48), may not only suggest a certain closeness between the two minds, but also—and even more so—their difference: Emerson must have given Baudelaire the positive energy he doubtlessly needed in his last years, as well as the refreshing confidence that no *Flowers of Evil* could possibly be expected from a healthy American author. (Besides, all his life Baudelaire had admired Edgar Allan Poe, not Emerson; America’s ‘non-American’ Poe was the one close to him, not Emerson; and exactly because of that it was not Poe, but America’s very own Emerson who could have a tonic effect on the dying Baudelaire.)

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Buell pleads for the universal value of Emerson's thinking by pleading against its Americanness and, in doing so, he goes far beyond Emerson's early Harvard lecture. Bearing in mind not so much the text itself, but rather the immediate response it provoked, or the myth that was born at the time, he counterpoises that myth's 'reductive' nationalistic Americanness with Emerson's intellectual cosmopolitanism. Thus, in an excellent book which offers probably the most convincing and inspiring literary portrait of Emerson ever made, this is the only chapter that presents an Emerson who is 'trans-American' for his own good.

However, Emerson's thinking in "The American Scholar" moves smoothly and non-contradictively in its nationalist universalism, inviting no reductive 'either-or' approaches. The American Scholar Emerson describes is doubtlessly located in America *and*, at the same time, just as doubtlessly translocal and transnational; he is definitely American—*and* clearly cosmopolitan too. His message comes from a sheer sense of American belonging *and* crosses all borders in space and time because he "*is all*" (1990: 99), as Emerson's 1837 Harvard lecture insists, providing a way to read the lecture itself. So, when Carlyle said of Emerson (and not of any one of his lectures in particular) that he was speaking to him "as a man," he was most certainly expressing his admiration for Emerson's startling personality and mind rather than discrediting his Americanness.

As Daniel Malachuk convincingly argues, "the essentialism that nineteenth-century nationalist cosmopolitans emphasise is universalist in scope. This universal essence of humanity is posited as an objective *telos* for all the world's peoples to realize, rather than the starting (and ending) point of a particular nation's significance. Deep into the nineteenth-century [...], nationalism and cosmopolitanism are presented by at least some writers as ultimately allied means to the realization of our universal human essence" (142). Certainly "The American Scholar" was the oration which immediately made Emerson the leading figure among such American writers. Within the grand scope of Emerson's thinking, within the noble 'madness' of his vision attachment to *both* one's nation and the world was only natural, normal. And so it was for his younger fellow Concordian Henry Thoreau who wrote in his essay

“Walking” that “I walk out into a nature such as the old prophets and poets, Menu, Moses, Homer, Chaucer, walked in. *You may name it America, but it is not America.* Neither Americus Vesputius, nor Columbus, nor the rest were the discoverers of it” (1990: 122). Both Emerson and Thoreau were remarkably faithful saunterers in a blessed place that was to them America *and*, at the same time, the whole perennial world inviting them to establish what Emerson called “an original relation to the universe” (15).

CONCORD'S LITERARY DUO

When Emerson wrote at midlife with deep satisfaction that after “writing and speaking [...] for twenty five or thirty years,” he had “not now one disciple” (*Journals* 14: 258), he was clearly exaggerating. This was theory for theory's own sake: Emerson would never think of self-reliance in any terms of mentorship, as this would contradict his insistence upon individual action. Still, it was Emerson himself who touched upon the teacher-student relationship as early as 1837 and ever since the “American Scholar” oration this would remain an important transcendentalist issue. It seems that Emerson's scholar was both teacher and student which, in turn, suggests an approach to the most significant intellectual relationship in nineteenth-century New England—that between Emerson and Thoreau, his junior by fourteen years.

Whether Thoreau was an Emersonian or not was a question already present in their contemporary Concord, as the following story from Emerson's journal demonstrates: “One of Thoreau's mother's boarders was holding forth on how Thoreau resembled Emerson. “‘O yes,’ said his mother, ‘Mr. Emerson had been a good deal with my Henry, and it was very natural that he should catch his ways’” (15: 490). The time of “The American Scholar” was the time of young Thoreau's self-identification; it was in these youthful years that Emerson's impact was definitely productive for him, as Emerson strongly encouraged Thoreau's sense of self-responsibility. Self-reliance became the deliberate choice of a life that would never accept the realization of not having been lived, as Thoreau would put it later in *Walden*. In 1837, a twenty-year-old Thoreau joined the Transcendental Club and made two significant steps towards the deliberate creation of his autobiog-

raphy: he changed his name, from David Henry to Henry David, and started to keep a journal.

Emerson had already celebrated “man’s power to connect his thought with its proper symbol” (1990: 29) and Thoreau—as he would do repeatedly over the course of the years—transformed his senior co-thinker’s impressive abstraction by applying it to his real life and his real person: he reversed his given name David Henry in order to establish what he felt the *proper* correspondence between himself and its symbol/name in this world, and so the writer Henry David Thoreau was born. This was essentially an act of self-initiation. Young Thoreau was already concentrated on his own self to such an extent that he could not be anyone’s follower, not even Emerson’s. Moreover, his self-reference was not pseudonymous but *veritonymous*; unlike his European contemporaries with their passion for pennames, Thoreau decided on the *true* name of the writer he intended to be. His self-naming marked the beginning of his life as a writer who would always have an astute sense for what is true and what is not. The gesture was intrinsically Quixotic in both the absolute seriousness it was made with and the sheer awareness it indicated that choosing a new direction in life requires a proper self-naming. Thoreau began his remarkable Romantic ‘in/sane’ quest for ultimate truths beyond those commonly seen by selecting a properly high-minded ‘knight-errant’s’ writerly name. Also, he set about keeping a journal.

His first journal entry begins as a dialog, in which he is most certainly responding to Emerson, even if he does not mention him by name. This was emblematic of the way things would unfold over the years, as Thoreau’s entire journal offers quite a vital and immediate image of its author who would listen to nothing (nobody) but his own “different drummer,” as stated later in *Walden*. Things were much more complicated, indeed, and the Emerson-Thoreau relation surely lends itself to be considered as *reciprocal* (Buell 2003: 300), especially in Emerson’s eyes. Though their friendship was slowly cooling, Emerson preserved his utmost admiration for his younger fellow Concordian; as for Thoreau, though he never admitted it, Emerson’s figure was indispensable. As Laura Dassow Walls observes in her recent biography of Thoreau, his “lifelong dialogue with Emerson, by turns loving,

inspired, hostile, angry, and reconciled, would turn Thoreau into a great and wholly original writer. Thoreau's creativity was realized not alone but in partnership, as Emerson fanned his creativity into genius" (2017: 87).

No critical discussion of Emerson can be had without including Thoreau and the reverse is just as true. Complex as it was, the reciprocal Emerson-Thoreau relationship evokes the long line of inseparable duos throughout literary history and to perhaps the most legendary one of them all. The dynamics of the relationship between Cervantes's duo, or "the Sanctification of Don Quixote and the Quixotization of Sancho" (Madariaga 1961: 35), offers an approach to the complicated interconnection between the two Concordians from the perspective of the meandering correlations their minds made over the years between illusion and reality, the wished to be seen and the actually seen, the ideal and the real, the abstract and the concrete, the general and the specific, the Kantian noumena and phenomena. Such a perspective clearly brings into focus the inseparability of Concord's literary duo: Emerson—the sage, the inspired and inspiring spiritual leader, the public speaker, who gained transnational recognition in his lifetime already, and Thoreau—the seemingly local writer, "transcendentalist, mystic, and natural philosopher to boot" (*Journals* 5: 4), whose ecocentric thinking would open up the whole global vista of future environmentalism: each man the alter ego of the other. Emerson's vagueness and Thoreau's astute sense of place, Emerson's nationalist cosmopolitanism and Thoreau's cosmopolitan nationalism, Emerson's transnationalism and Thoreau's translocalism: the uncompromising high-mindedness, the godly 'in/sanity' of the two remarkable New Englanders, which put them together in the eyes of the world as manifest eccentrics.

QUIXOTIC IN/SANITY

All of this brings in another important issue as well: namely, the reality of the Transcendentalists' own lives in the terms of their professional un/fulfillment. Directly stemming from their Puritan New England roots, Emerson's co-thinkers saw the greatness of art only as commensurate to its spiritual and moral truth; they were aesthetes and men of spirit, wanderers among the vague, barely

distinguishable shapes of beauty and of faith, who did not merely claim that every great artist had to be by definition a good man, but went even further, stating the reverse to be true, or that a good man made a great artist. And what was provocatively unique about them, as Buell has pointed out, was the *seriousness* with which they took all this (1973: 67). They could accept the messianic character of Emerson's Poet-Priest with nothing less than seriousness and so the image was turned into a desired *model for life*. Gazing steadily into the ideal, the like-minded Emersonians began to see their own lives within the absolute aesthetic-religious formula and thus, to differing degrees, for better or for worse, tried to shape their own lives according to the precepts of an idea. The Poet-Priest was not simply a role to play, but, more than anything, the naming for the inner make-up of a character. And such deliberate self-identification inevitably required a real-life career.

Finding such a career proved difficult, however, as Massachusetts in the first half of the nineteenth century provided no real conditions for professional fulfillment. The church pulpit was no longer sufficient, but profoundly Puritan New England had no other institutional option to offer. So, in their positive desire to identify themselves fully with the ideal, the Transcendentalists had to confront the lack of any institutional opportunities for realizing their ambitions. Emerson's public resignation from serving the church acquired symbolic significance for the entire Transcendentalist movement, but it also finally rejected the only available vocational choice.

As a result, the Transcendentalists came in contact with real life, with life's material and financial needs, only in so far as they managed to push aside temporarily the ideal of the Poet-Priest and accepted more or less institutionally regulated roles—such as that of a priest (Ellery Channing, Theodor Parker), a person of independent means (Emerson), a teacher (Thoreau, Bronson Alcott), a journalist (Margaret Fuller, Elizabeth Peabody), as well as a land-surveyor and a pencil producer (Thoreau). All of these were accidental roles which received positive social sanction but had nothing to do with the Transcendentalists' poetic-religious calling. The inevitable confusion all Emerson's young men suf-

ferred resulted in what Sherman Paul called “a series of personal failures” (Buell 1973: 16).

The lack of a socially sanctioned solution to the problem provoked a quest for a metaphorical one. Thus, Thoreau eloquently—but with a certain vagueness—remarked, he “would fain be a fisherman, hunter, farmer, preacher, etc., but fish, hunt, farm, preach other things than usual” (*Journals* 6: 45), adding elsewhere: “My profession is to be always on the alert to find God in Nature” (472). Likewise, one of the “professions” he undertakes in *Walden*, is “self-appointed inspector of snowstorms and rainstorms” (337); so the conviction came consequently that “The life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?” (338). Such formula proved capable of explaining any failure by the standards of the world, literary included. Thus, when his first published book, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, failed to sell and Thoreau was forced to buy back all of the remaining copies from his publisher, he could note in his *Journal* with humorous bitterness: “I have now a library of nearly nine hundred volumes, over seven hundred of which I wrote myself” (*Journals* 5: 459).

In fact, adopting Emerson’s ‘sublime vision’ made the New England Transcendentalists into men with a calling, or vocation, as they liked to call it, but without real careers. And although Emerson tirelessly encouraged Alcott, Channing, Very, Thoreau, and Fuller in their literary work, in reality his support kept all of them from literary success—at least the literary success the world at large acknowledged. So the series of the Transcendentalists’ personal failures was the effect of a severe discrepancy between their ideals and reality. And yet this discrepancy was actively desired and searched for, as the very status of the Poet-Priest, the missionary, the prophet, the new messiah, in fact, rested on it. Thus the Emersonian Transcendentalists’ crisis of identity was to a great extent predetermined by their choice to become spiritual leaders whose poetic holy mission was to improve a dissatisfying world. And such a choice definitely implied pursuing an unconventional, non-prosaic, uncommon path. Moreover, its very impossibility in real life even provided an additional ground for the Transcen-

dentalists' pleasing self-awareness as noncompromising followers of a noble, 'insane' vocation.

All of this placed the Emersonian literati in what Buell called "a doubly anomalous position in relation to their time," as "on the one hand, they were in advance of their public in claiming more for the role of the poet than most of New England was prepared to admit. But on the other hand, they were also in a sense seeking to preserve the Puritan conception of the literary life in an era when that conception was fast becoming extinct" (1973: 53). Such an extraordinary position may certainly qualify as Quixotic since it epitomizes "the rivalry between the real world and the representation we make of it ourselves," or the "Quixotic principle," and inevitably leads to "the Quixotic confusion," or "the propensity to confuse the true with the fabulous" (Levin 1963: 49). The New England Transcendentalists deliberately chose a position which by definition did not belong to what was to them the common "prosaic mood" (to use Thoreau's phrasing) of their time: their choice was the result of representatively romantic discontent with their contemporary reality and, at the same time, in its vigorous Puritan spiritual leadership drive, it was essentially anachronistic. The sophisticated delight of identifying with such a doubly anomalous nonconformist ideal only intensified the need for counterbalancing the *prosaic sanity* of the real world with a wished-for *poetic insanity*, or Emerson's "madness from the gods." Such "madness by romantic identification," as Michel Foucault calls it, pointing out that its "features have been fixed once and for all by Cervantes" (1973: 28), naturally caused confusion between reality and imagination and the substitution of the true with the fabulous: hence all the metaphorical "professions" of the like-minded nineteenth-century New Englanders. They stuck to Emerson's admonishment that "A little integrity is better than any career" (*Complete Works* 6: 189) at the cost of severe crises of identity; but still, remaining madly and maddeningly confused between true poetic vocation and real life career was exactly what made them feel exceptional. Eric Ziolkowski observes of Don Quixote that "the problem of his madness *per se* has to do and is ultimately eclipsed by a more complex issue: his trying to sustain his faith in his illusions once he starts to be confronted by the harsh contingencies of reality"

and this problem, Ziolkowski stresses, “is inherent in the Quixotic principle” (1991: 18). And so it was in the case of Emerson’s Transcendentalists: the more impractical their ideal proved to be, the more eagerly they strove to maintain their trust in it.

Though peculiarly intensified through the ‘Puritanness’ and ‘Americanness’ in which the nineteenth-century New England intellectuals placed it, this problem was far from being merely a local New England phenomenon. In fact, it was inherent in the overall—distinctively translocal and transnational—disposition of all Romantics. Not surprisingly, they felt a closeness to Cervantes’s knight-errant, which made them transform him into a profound symbol: that of the universal conflict between the ideal and the real (F. W. J. Schelling), between poetry and prose (A. W. Schlegel), between the soul and the body (Heinrich Heine), etc. Similarly universalizing was Soren Kierkegaard’s understanding of Don Quixote as a kind of bridge character, whose poetic fate points towards the actual fate of the Christian ‘witness of truth.’ Kierkegaard adored Don Quixote’s ‘happy madness’ and was displeased with the ending of Cervantes’ novel: what troubled him most, as Ziolkowski points out, “was not that Don Quixote dies, but that he dies a rational man and so ceases to exist as a contradiction to this world” (1992: 145). Kierkegaard’s contemporaries, the American Romantics, or the New England Transcendentalists, doubtlessly shared this same profoundly symbolic approach to the hero of the great Spanish novel: because their noncompromising high-mindedness, their poetic in/sanity or Emersonian “Madness from the Gods” never ceased to exist as a contradiction to the overwhelming sanity of this world, the “pitiless/Performance-hating Nemesis” from Emerson’s same poem.

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FOOD, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRANSLOCAL TRANSFORMATIONS OF TASTE

Industrial and Processed Food in Yucatán

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I argue that food-related transformations in Mexico in general, and the Yucatán in particular, have reflected those occurring at the same time in other countries from the end of the nineteenth century to date.¹ This synchronous occurrence has to be conceptually explained by the general processes that spawn global-local ('glocal'), and translocal connections that have been instrumental in the transference both of new cooking instruments, appliances and ingredients. We need to qualify the analysis of global-local relations to destabilize the binary opposition between global processes and local effects—a dichotomy that emphasizes the analysis of vertical relations between societies, either top-down or from the bottom up. In order to do this, I believe that we need to flesh out the concept of translocality, now used by many authors in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and political sciences. In my view, its use has thus far been mostly suggestive. I find the concept 'translocality' useful for exploring horizontal relations between groups, *supplementing* the multiple vertical processes. Here, I argue that these complex articulations

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steer change in often unexpected directions and occur in different scales of social, cultural and political articulations expressed through the preference of processed, industrially produced food ingredients.

As Sue Shephard shows, food results from human intervention aimed at processing ingredients into meals, whether for immediate personal intake or for its preservation. When preserved, it can be consumed later, often by someone different from the original grower or packager, sometime in the future and at the same or some other location. The modes of intervention changed in meaningful ways during the nineteenth century when, as Yves Segers points out, large European firms, specialized in industrialized food processing and preservation, displaced earlier efforts controlled by local and regional producers, such as small factories tied to farmers and other primary producers (2009: 13). The expansion of US corporations into the UK during the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century shaped views on modernization and, importantly, as Ted Collins argues, the promise of safe industrialized food products. US Food Corporations originally developed advertising alien to those of their British counterparts (2009: 162). Today, industrialized food has come under close scrutiny and severe criticism because the industrial diet is considered responsible for the global rise of many health issues (Winson 2014). In Simon N. Williams and Marion Nestle's volume *Big Food*, the authors examine this diet's effects of pandemic obesity and related health problems. The use of chemical preservatives, color and flavor enhancers is now believed responsible for the rising numbers of allergies and intolerance to food ingredients (Arnot 2018; Blythman 2015; Ettliger 2007; Taubes 2016). However, after two centuries of the everyday presence of industrial food products in home kitchens, as well as in a vast array of eating places, most people consume them not caring about the origins or effects of the different additives, as illustrated by the following story.

In January 2019, a friend posted a meme on Facebook depicting an extravagant culinary invention, supposedly concocted under the influence of cannabis. A mutual friend responded with a picture and description of a *sandwichón*, a popular Yucatecan meal

she had encountered during her visit to Mérida in 2019. This dish looks like, and is a remnant of, nineteen fifties and sixties cooking, when ‘modern’ housewives were supposed to cook using space-age foodstuffs; that is, industrially processed and preserved edible products. Today, the *sandwichón* has become rather baroque. More than 50 years ago women prepared it with layers of lengthwise-sliced white bread on which they would spread a mixture of cream cheese, whipping cream and shredded chicken. Nowadays, it is common to stuff the layers with strawberry marmalade, baked ham, cheese, and finish it with a frosting of cream cheese and whipping cream. The final decoration may be some ground cinnamon, or stripes of ham and cheese, or whatever else the cook is inspired to add. Most ingredients are industrially processed and preserved. In decades past, a *sandwichón* was prepared for children’s birthdays, or for dinner on Christmas or New Year’s Eve. Today, people celebrating any event at an office may order it from corner and convenience stores. In downtown Mérida, when people feel the pangs of hunger at midday, they can find a slice of *sandwichón* to satisfy their cravings.

In Mérida, at the end of the 1960s, there was a local cookbook dedicated to buffets and party meals that included recipes for cocktails and meals prescribing a generous use of canned ingredients (Velázquez de Esquivel 1970). It was a time when tin and saltpeter shaped the taste of “modernity.” This is true for the United States as much as it was for Yucatán, for Mexico, and for most places around the world. House cooks readily accepted the values of efficiency, convenience, and hygiene that defined processed foods. Both Elizabeth B. Silva and Elizabeth Shove describe how this disposition became common in England at around the same time. In turn, Christina Ward shows that processed foods were pressed upon the everyday diet of families through corporate advertising.

Books such as James Lileks’ satirically titled *The Gallery of Regrettable Foods* and Ward’s *American Advertising Cookbooks* illustrate the effects of publicity campaigns encouraging modern housewives to cook with processed, canned, and other preserved foods. Large agribusiness corporations, canners and retailers pushed their recipes into cookbooks and leaflets distributed in supermarkets

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or accompanying new appliances. These recipes intimated that the inclusion of industrially processed foods into everyday meals was the housewife's badge of modernity. Recipes were displayed as free of ethnic or national cultural backgrounds even though, internationally, they represented the style of food consumption associated with white, Anglo culture in the United States. Similar pamphlets and cooking suggestions were available in Spanish in Yucatán, stressing values such as convenience, hygiene, practicality and, importantly, frugality. They highlighted the benefits, the time-saving value of meals for housewives—*women* who must cook for their families, and for their husbands' co-workers, while they also work outside the home, and keep the cost of meals low.

GLOBAL-LOCAL AND TRANSLOCAL CONNECTIONS
(AS SEEN THROUGH FOOD)

There are many discordant and complementary approaches to Globalization. Works by Marshall McLuhan and Bruce R. Powers, June Nash, Alain Touraine, Eric Wolf, and Immanuel Wallerstein, to name only a few, emphasize either global connectivity or the process of social and cultural homogenization. In food studies, some write of 'Coca-globalization' and the Macdonaldization of the world (Foster 2008; Leatherman and Goodman 2005). That is, for some authors, the term "globalization" captures the fear that all food and drinks and, by extension, all cultural practices and values in the world are becoming the same. Alternatively, others prefer to emphasize the local, heterogenizing processes whereby local appropriations and adaptations lead to the emergence of difference. Castells, Edelman and Friedman, for example, analyze local, ethnic identity and other special-interest social movements as results of this process. For my part, I have subscribed, since the 1990s, to the view advanced by Roland Robertson in his work on globalization and glocalization that we witness the simultaneous existence of homogenizing and heterogenizing forces and tendencies. Neither of them can be ever complete, because they are dynamic, fluid and in continuous interaction. Robertson first described this complex articulation in 1992, and in 1995 he adopted the term *glocalization* from Japanese business studies. Arjun Appadurai offered shortly after an anthropological, supple-

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mentary approach. Below, I will argue that we need to qualify the analysis of global-local relations to destabilize the binary opposition between global processes and local effects—a dichotomy that emphasizes the analysis of vertical relations between societies, either from the top-down or from the bottom up (Ayora-Díaz 2007, 2013, 2017; Ayora-Díaz, et al. 2016).

Contemporary societies are fluid, dynamic, and unstable. Mobility, as Appadurai, Marc Augé, Nina Glick Schiller and Noel B. Salazar, John Urry and others have suggested, is one of their defining traits: It is the mobility of people, commodities (including those that are used in cooking), technologies, money, and discursive constructions that mark global contemporary society. The latter are often instrumental in the shaping of complex social and cultural imaginaries. This dimension of global flows and frictions is important for understanding the first component of translocality: each social group is fluid, its members are constantly changing, and it is simultaneously part of other groups and processes taking place elsewhere in the world. In terms of food, many ingredients and cooking technologies have been introduced in every society following contact with other groups with culinary practices different from their own. Second, these transformations occur at different scales: translocal relations must be considered not only 'below' or in the middle of the global-local. The largest scale, the global, is one in which North Atlantic values have been universalized, and locally adopted and adapted. For example, 'modernity' is not the same in the United States, in Canada, in Mexico, or in different European countries. However, we socially imagine 'modernity' as the shared practices, values, and discourses among these societies. That is, hegemonic societies forge their own translocal connections, even if it is often the metropolis that are connected. A different scale is that of subordinate, colonized societies. They appropriate practices, values and worldviews from the various colonizing states differently and often, at least in certain regards, long accepted a cultural hierarchy that places French cuisine above all others. Subordinated societies also exchange people, ideas, practices, technologies and money, and thus are able to create new and different cultural practices that are common to all of them and, nonetheless, different. Recipes in different Caribbean societies reflect

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these shared practices and still distinguish between the taste of their own and that of other Caribbean cuisines. For example, despite some differences, *lechón horneado* in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Yucatán share techniques, technologies and flavors; as does stuffed cheese in the kitchens of Venezuela, Curaçao, Puerto Rico, Yucatán, and Nicaragua, where cooks use Dutch Edam cheese, albeit with different stuffing.

Third, the temporal dimension is also important. Here, I am not proposing we look for or imagine continuities in practice, such as when someone seeks to draw connections between contemporary and pre-Hispanic foodways; instead, we need to locate breaks, ruptures, and discontinuities. Hence, in Yucatán we need to recognize a sedimentation of culinary practices and preferences tied to different moments of colonization and global connection: today's cooking practices of peninsular inhabitants blend food practices used by the Maya with those imposed by (or copied from) the Aztec, who colonized them first, and with those later imposed or copied from Spanish conquerors. Besides, many other cooking and eating practices have merged, during the last five centuries (and especially by the end of the 1800s), the "taste" and culinary "traditions" of immigrants from Caribbean societies, Lebanon, Syria, Korea, China, Italy, France, Germany, and, more recently, the US and Canada. Through time, different social, political, and economic changes facilitated or prevented the flow of edible commodities, cooking technologies, people, money and ideas. In each period of rupture there were new additions that made culinary preferences discontinuous despite superficial appearances of continuity.

Fourth, when analyzing translocal processes we must avoid assuming that horizontality means equality or harmony. The elites of a subordinated society may seek a dominant position over other subordinated groups and sustain the conviction that one's own social organization, culture or culinary practices are better than those of the others. For example, during the 1990s, I conducted research unrelated to food in the state of Chiapas, Mexico. The dominant imagination held all Indigenous groups as equally subordinated to settler society. Yet, once, travelling with a Tzeltal-speaking cultural broker, I asked him about the food we just ate in his village. When I inquired about other foods available in the region,

he rejected the notion that he would eat the food of the Chamula, Tzotzil-speaking people. From his point of view, Chamula's food was akin to animals feed. Racism, elitism and discrimination are regularly extended to food and food-related practices at all levels of the social scale.

Fifth, and lastly, translocal connections require significant social actors, that is, individuals endowed with the authority to mediate between one group and another. In *Friction*, Anna Tsing has shown how different subjects mediate and transform practices and discourses as they move from supranational agencies, to nation-states, to agencies in charge of their dissemination, and the local appropriation by different local groups. At the turn of the twentieth century, local elites embraced the notion of "progress" to encourage the invention of new production technologies, turning Yucatán into a showcase of "progress" (today's modernity) for the whole of Mexico (Zayas Enríquez 1908).

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TRANSLOCALITY AND CULINARY-GASTRONOMIC TECHNOLOGIES

Translocal exchanges also help establish gastronomic hierarchies. This has been the case for French cuisine, which until recently was recognized as the universal paradigm of haute cuisine (Ferguson 2004; Trubek 2000). This seems to be the case even when some vernacular adaptations occur, such as during the nineteenth century imagination of a nationalist Mexican cuisine. As Sarah Bak-Geller Corona has shown, at that time Mexican newspaper writers appropriated the notion of *bon goût* from the French while at the same time they nationalized it. For example, in the Yucatán, the preface to a book on "Maya" cooking affirms the equivalence between Maya and French cuisines as, the author argues, the Maya gave as much importance to sauces as the French do (Maldonado Castro 2000). Regardless of the veracity of this affirmation, I find the author's comparison to be an implicitly acknowledgment of the superiority of French cooking.

As I have discussed elsewhere, during the nineteenth century, members of the regional elite traveled to the United States, to different Caribbean countries and to England and France. There, they engaged in trade or sought an education. Yet, from

those places they also imported new culinary preferences that allowed regional cuisine to be represented as “cosmopolitan” (Ayora-Díaz 2012). In 1889, for example, Manuela Navarrete Arce, from the city of Valladolid, in Yucatán, published a cookbook in which, among other things, she borrowed from European etiquette books to give advice regarding proper table manners. Her cookbook was published at a moment of economic prosperity based on the success of the henequen plantation economy in the Yucatán peninsula. It reflects the global-local but also translocal connections, as many Yucatecans travelled to Cuba, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Texas and Louisiana, and the region also received immigrants from those and other countries. Immigrants also imported their taste preferences and gradually plantain, banana leaves, pork, cumin, oregano, capers, olives and olive oil, Seville oranges and limes, as well as root vegetables, became part of Yucatecan cooking. Gradually, these ingredients formed Yucatecan taste.

Taste is not restricted to the aesthetic properties of food, as flavors, aromas, textures and auditory experiences all accompany a meal’s visual presentation. Importantly, taste is historically constructed, although this is often bracketed, as it is often perceived as a natural disposition (Ayora-Díaz 2012). However, this disposition changes over time, as food itself changes and consumers change their taste. Culinary ‘traditions,’ then, change while taste itself changes through the effects of regional supply origins and various technological transformations. Our contemporary diet, as it is now often argued, is one in which processed and hyper-processed foods abound. Their effects are multiple. Some authors, like Williams and Nestle, may stress their detrimental effects on the health of individuals and populations, while others, including writers of popular cookbooks in Yucatán, point at the beneficial effects on the health and way of life of contemporary women. In any case, it is important to examine the ways in which the taste of and for food changes following the increasing use of industrially processed and super-processed foodstuffs.

In everyday language, ‘preserved’ and ‘processed’ are often used interchangeably, and sometimes their meanings overlap. This allows for ambiguity regarding the things we consider edible. Technically, all food is processed; that is, it has undergone some transformation in the hands of a person: she washed, or boiled, or roasted, or fried, or salted, or smoked, or chopped, or shredded, or otherwise modified it. In this broad sense, everything we eat is processed. Preserved food, on the other hand, is food that has been transformed with the purpose of prolonging its edible life. This can be done, for example, by smoking, salting, drying, or pickling. We eat the former, and the latter we keep in jars, cans, clay or ceramic pots or other vessels to eat them at a later time. Shephard has demonstrated how we humans have preserved food by different means for several thousands of years, and the means for preserving it have changed according to the different environments in which people need to store food. That is, if a group lives in the tropics, they have to resort to different preservation techniques than those who live in very cold or hot and dry conditions, such as deserts. In her view, preserving food has at least two advantages: one is that it has historically allowed people to travel, carrying their food and ensuring their physical survival. The other is that in societies hitherto dependent on seasonal availability, different methods of preservation allow members to have food during seasons when it was previously unavailable. It is during the last two hundred years that preservation radically changed, especially when chemists and cooks joined hands in an effort to keep foods edible for a long time. Canning, a technology developed at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries, brought advantages to consumers of preserved foods, and especially soldiers in war, as tin cans could be carried safely from one part of the world to another. However, it also brought a number of disadvantages, such as botulism and heavy metal poisoning, which had to wait for later developments in microbiology and toxicology before being largely eradicated (Zeide 2018).

During the twentieth century the industrialization and mass production of preserved foods reached new heights, primarily in the United States. Industrialization and mass production have

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required the use of ingredients in forms that often remain veiled for the consumer: We don't know how they are preparing the meat for our sausages and Spam, how the ham sold at supermarkets is cured, or how they harvest and select tomatoes that go into the ragout or pesto for our home-cooked pastas. We have no idea as to the chemicals used to enhance the flavor and the color, and to preserve textures in what we eat. Joanne Blythman says that processed food "sits in supermarket shelves in boxes, cartons and bottles" and is "food that had something done to make it more convenient and ready-to-eat" (2015: 1). Of course, "something done" often means the use of synthetic additives, flavor and color enhancers, and stimulants for both our taste and other sensory organs, as well as our appetite. We have all been acquainted with exposés of the food industry. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, originally published in 1906, is an early and paradigmatic example from the early twentieth century in which he revealed the dark secrets of the meat packing industry in Chicago. Today we have at our disposal an ever-growing list of documentaries, books, and newspaper articles denouncing agribusiness corporations and the food industry in general.

Anthony Winson argues that the United States has played an important part in shaping the dietary regime he calls "industrial diet" (2014: 21). Evidently, the transition to the contemporary diet was led by North Atlantic countries. Canada, England, Germany and France all contributed, along with the US, to this transformation. Industrialization, in Winson's view, is the central characteristic of the contemporary diet, in which, at least since the mid-nineteenth century, the canning industry has played a significant part. In his view, the for-profit economic organization of the processed food industry has been important in degrading the quality of the foods we consume, and subsequent national health problems. He labels the US-led industrial diet as "degraded," and singles it out as one of the main factors leading to obesity and other related illnesses. Like Winson, Anna Zeide also recognizes and analyzes the ties between canning and the growth of the processed food industry.

The use of different synthetic additives also plays an important role in the increasingly questionable image of the food canning and processed food industries. A large taste industry has grown

in the US and elsewhere, where chemists seek new synthetic elements that can mimic different flavors. Mark Schatzker has described what he calls the “dilution” effect in our meals, which comes from growing large vegetables and animals, and in doing it quickly. During and following World War II, different agencies, including those run by the state, promoted the modification of foods. Agricultural fairs had prizes for those who grew the largest pumpkin, tomato, lettuce, or chicken. Schatzker argues that animals and plants do not have the time to incorporate minerals and other elements found in the soil or in their feed, so that meat comes to taste of “nothing” or a little like “something.” The hydroponic production of vegetables has the same effects on taste, aroma and texture. In the face of these changes a field of industrial research has grown seeking to create flavor and color enhancers, so that we can find tastier commercially processed tomato sauces than those we achieve at home when cooking with fresh, ‘natural’ tomatoes. The literature critical of the food industry is vast. Melanie Warner has demonstrated how the food industry adds different chemicals into our food, making some foods seem almost eternal. Because of the processed food industry and GMOs, what often gets served on our plates are synthetic chemicals destined to prolong shelf life, to enhance color and flavors, to preserve texture, and to provide additional flavor to our food.

In contrast, there are those who would emphasize the benefits of industrially processed and preserved food. They may underline the fact that before the growth in this industry, people were sadly restricted to eating some things during their seasonal harvest. Today our food is free of these constraints. Also, industrially processed and preserved food allows people in different parts of the world to consume fruits, vegetables or meats that would otherwise be unavailable to them. For example, canned pineapple in the northern US during the winter, or peaches in Yucatán at any time. In addition, we are told, canned and other packaged food is hygienic and thus consumers don’t need to worry about contamination or the toxicity levels of these ingredients. Finally, processed foods are convenient. A person may go into a supermarket and buy pre-cooked bacon or pizza to zap in the microwave oven; or pre-marinated meats one only needs to place on the skillet, grill or oven; or canned meats

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to add into stews. In the opinion of different authors, these benefits far outweigh the disadvantages of industrially processed and preserved foods (Laudan 2001; McClements et al. 2011; Shewfelt 2017).

PROCESSED TASTE IN YUCATÁN

A love of technology has long existed in Yucatán (Vargas-Cetina 2017). At the end of the nineteenth century it was Yucatecans who engaged in the invention of a machine to process henequen fiber. Yucatecan entrepreneurs developed one of the densest railroad networks of their time. In 1900, with German technology, Yucatecans inaugurated the first regional brewery in the peninsula, Cervecería Yucateca. In 1905, Galletería Dondé began industrial production of crackers and cookies. By 1950, the company HYSA began producing and selling processed, hydrogenated vegetable oils, including a green oil they marketed as 'olive oil' but which had no olives in it. In turn, *recados* are multiple blends of spices similar to Indian masalas and Oaxaca *moles*. They were usually handcrafted by a member of the family, and are difficult, cumbersome to make. In 1913, La Anita began the process of industrialization of *recados*. Other companies, such as El Yucateco, which emerged in 1968, now compete with La Anita and have managed to gain a share of the regional, national and international market. Today, La Anita produces *recados*, habanero pepper sauces, and other condiments that are important in the Yucatecan gastronomic canon and, because of their scale, they have contributed to homogenizing the taste of Yucatecan food in the region. Many of these *recados* and sauces list a number of synthetic and processed colorants, stabilizers, and flavor enhancers among their ingredients.

Canning has also been an important industrial activity in Mexico. *Herdez* began canning in Monterey in 1914. *Del Monte* began operations in California during the end of the nineteenth century and expanded more fully into Mexico in 1957 (Del Monte is affiliated with ConAgra). Mexican, and of course Yucatecan, supermarkets are flooded with a multitude of canned, jarred, and otherwise packaged ingredients that have been industrially processed. In contemporary society, these products are seen as convenient and important ingredients in domestic pantries.

The blandness of “natural” foods and the intense colors and flavors of industrially processed and preserved ones has had an impact in the taste of and for the food in Yucatán. Canned products have a rather intense flavor and aroma. Industrially processed foods maintain a place in most pantries. When I have interviewed Yucatecan home cooks, they claim to use them only seldom. Yet, when given permission to check their kitchen shelves, I always find many canned grains, fish, chili peppers, and sauces. In fact, a friend who on account of different food intolerances often claimed to have a ‘natural’ diet, served us refried black beans that she had reconstituted from a dry powder, and then re-fried. Older friends told me how to ‘improve’ canned beans by adding dry cubes of chicken broth, rich in monosodium glutamate (MSG).

We need to ask ourselves: What aesthetic values are being staged when one adds a green bright powder to the salad? Does the taste improve, and how? Or, are people indifferent to these effects? Sometimes they seem to be indifferent. For example, at a family meal our host served black beans and pork, a ‘traditional’ Monday meal in Yucatán. My wife and I found the taste to be ‘not quite right.’ We told those sitting next to us at the table, but they did not agree with us. After the meal was over and other guests have gone, I asked our host and she confessed that when she saw many more people than she expected she added canned beans. At home we eat canned foods as infrequently as possible, so we could taste that something was not quite right by our standards. The others eat processed foods often and did not find anything unusual.

Restaurant food in Yucatán is undergoing similar changes. *Papadzules*, a meal made with a sauce of ground pumpkin seeds and *epazote*, seldom achieves the green color consumers expect. Hence, restaurant chefs and cooks add artificial colorants, sometimes resulting in an intense green that looks radioactive. The pumpkin seeds no longer have a strong taste, either. So, they add chicken bouillon cubes or sour cream, attempting to emulate the ‘traditional’ flavors of that dish that many Yucatecans still remember. Flavors of different regional dishes like these are changing as the flavor of the natural ingredients gets diluted, and cooks introduce processed ingredients in their kitchens.

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As the taste of Yucatecan food changes, the taste for Yucatecan food changes as well.

PROGRESS, MODERNITY AND FOOD

The Yucatecan regional foodscape is part and parcel of translocal configurations and exchanges. People from different parts of Mexico and the world have moved into Yucatán and brought along their aesthetics, including their food preferences. Furthermore, television channels, social media, newspapers, and radio stations all promote different food choices; department stores and specialized businesses make new cooking technologies available and the market for edible commodities widens as ingredients from different parts of the world become available. Although there is a global-local relation whereby new aesthetic gastronomic codes are disseminated and culinary school promote them, there are also translocal connections that create a negotiated consensus about the different types of good food and good taste of and for food. Different individuals act as promoters of either 'innovation' or 'tradition' leading to their regional coexistence. Thanks to the concerted efforts of a group of local chefs and the city of Mérida administration, the city was included in 2019 in the list of "Creative" cities of UNESCO for its gastronomy. This recognition for "innovation" stands at odds with the efforts of a different set of chefs and restaurateurs who seek to uphold "traditional" Yucatecan food; yet, both groups enrich the regional foodscape.

To conclude: (1) the local understanding of 'progress' and 'modernity' shares a faith in new scientific knowledge and emerging technologies among regional elites. (2) The dissemination of industrially processed and preserved foods has been important in shaping the taste of foods everywhere. Meals cooked with Coca-Cola or Catsup are present in the domestic repertoire in Yucatán just as they continue to be cooked in different regions of the US. Even today, when in Yucatán there is access to good quality olive oils from the Mediterranean, many Yucatecans still long for the flavor added to their ceviche and seafood cocktails by simulated olive oil from HYSA. (3) The intensity of flavors and chemically induced colors in highly processed foods is now

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affecting the cooking and enjoyment of 'traditional' Yucatecan recipes. (4) As younger generations become acquainted with the food of different regions of the world, sometimes imported into Yucatán with the aid of processed and canned ingredients, the taste for Yucatecan food is also changing, as the flavors of exotic meals displace the appreciation for regional flavors. In the end, global-local and translocal relationships are instrumental in explaining the taste and changes in the taste of and for Yucatecan foods.

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A MEXICAN CONQUEST OF SPACE

Cosmopolitanism, Cosmopolitics, and Cosmopoetics in the Mexican Space Industry

INTRODUCTION: STAKES AND SCALES OF OUTER SPACE

In the wake of human space exploration, Hans Blumenberg proposed the creation of a new field of study that would strike a balance between “centrifugal curiosity” and “centripetal care.” He called this field *astro-noetics*, distinguished from *astronautics* as a way of critically imagining extraterrestrial travel and other activities, neither dismissing outer space as a destination, nor abandoning humanity’s ethical commitments to its home planet (Harries 320). In this paper, I propose a Mexican *astro-noetics*: a way of recognizing the extraterrestrial aspirations of many Mexicans, while at the same time critically reflecting on the notions of exploration and conquest that inform these aspirations, as well as the earthly limits that complicate the possibility of their achievement.

Before I look at the inter- and transnational relationships required to participate in outer space activities, I find it useful to think through some spatio-political concepts that are being debated in the era of the Blue Dot: globalization, cosmopolitanism/cosmopolitics, and the planetary, all of which demand that attention be paid to the ways in which humans (and non-humans) interact across Earth, and the ways in which these interactions are facilitated, negotiated, monitored, channeled and/or obstructed. “Globalization” refers to the processes that produce networks, particularly of capital, that connect people, places and things all over the planet. Some authors write of globalization as a positive process that connects

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social actors and facilitates communication and understanding across cultural boundaries, while others emphasize the partiality and inequality of these connections, describing the ways in which the benefits of globalization are differentially distributed around the world (Matthews, et al., 2012). Globalization requires, obviously, “globalism,” a notion of the world as a globe. According to Ingold, the modern idea of the world-as-globe is a colonial product, a “surface waiting to be occupied, to be colonized first by living things and later by human (usually meaning Western) civilization” (Ingold 2000: 214). “Once the world is conceived as a globe,” Ingold goes on to note, “it can become an object of appropriation for a collective humanity” (2000: 214). Another response to a perceived overemphasis on the notion of the globe comes from Spivak (2003: 72), who argues for the notion of the ‘planetary’ as a substitute for the global. Unlike the canny inhabitability of Ingold’s encompassing spheres, the planetary, for Spivak, is uncanny: both same and other, familiar and unfamiliar, inhabited and uninhabitable, necessary and impossible.

As Walter Mignolo has pointed out, it becomes necessary to recognize that old cosmopolitanism was the product of privileges that were only made possible within Western colonialism (2011: 44). For Mignolo, all cosmopolitanisms are necessarily local;¹ instead of the detachment that Heidegger feared would be a consequence of space exploration, they involve multiple attachments, re-attachments, or “attachments at a distance” (Robbins 1998: 3). An acknowledgement of the (non-exclusive) situatedness of the cosmopolitan represents an important corrective to the utopian view of a borderless and nationless world and is mirrored by the recent turn toward ‘decolonial cosmopolitanism,’ ‘cosmopolitanism from below,’ ‘discrepant cosmopolitanisms,’ and ‘vernacular cosmopolitanisms’—or, as defined by Gustavo Lins Ribeiro, *cosmopolitics*: “a critical and plural perspective on the possibilities of supra- and transnational articulations” which supplements the notion of cosmopolitanism with “an analysis in which power asymmetries are of fundamental importance” (2008: 34). The notion of cosmopolitics, with its tension between

1. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) also argues for the necessity of “provincializing Europe.”

the *cosmos* (open, expansive, subjunctive, beyond) and the *polis* (relations, localities, memberships, borders) allows for a rethinking of cosmopolitization as a process that inevitably questions the notion of the shared, the commons, the “us,” while leaving a kind of “speculative” (Stengers 2011: 356) space for the possible. As Bruno Latour puts it, “*Cosmos* protects against the premature closure of *politics*, and *politics* against the premature closure of *cosmos*” (2004: 454).

Mexico is illustrative of the spatial and temporal heterogeneity of modernity. On the one hand, the borders of the nation-state are extremely visible, physically and discursively, and national identity, constructed on a particular history of indigenous culture, conquest, colonialism and autonomy, continues to be a powerful force. On the other, Mexico has always been a country of flows: the movement of people, objects and ideas has been fundamental in its social, economic and political development. “So far from God, so close to the United States,” as the saying goes, Mexico troubles the traditional distinctions between first and third worlds, east and west, north and south, centers and peripheries.

THE SPACE RACE: BEYOND THE BINARY

One of the most important moments for the history of space exploration, but also for global collaboration and international relations, was the International Geophysical Year (IGY), 1957–1958. Sixty-seven countries, including Mexico, and nearly 80,000 scientists participated in this international project to study the Earth as part of a much larger cosmic system. Along with important scientific advances in geo- and astrophysics like the discovery of the Van Allen radiation belt, one of the most important achievements during this year was the launching of the first artificial satellites: Sputnik 1 and 2 by the Soviet Union, and Explorer 1 by the United States, marking the beginning of the “space race.” Spurred in part by the Soviet Union’s technological advances, NASA (the National Aeronautics and Space Administration) was created by the US government in 1958. The space race notwithstanding, at the inauguration of the IGY, US President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared that “[...] the most important result of the International Geophysical Year is the demonstration of the ability of peoples

of all nations to work together harmoniously for the common good” (Kohut 2008: 30), and NASA included an Office of International Cooperation from its inception.

National committees formed the basis for the planning and organization of the activities of the IGY. In Mexico, scientists under the leadership of the director of the recently created Institute of Geophysics of the National Autonomous University (UNAM) participated in the establishment of new oceanographic and meteorological research stations, gravimetric expeditions to Central and South America, the observation of solar activity (due to a peak in the eleven-year solar cycle, the aurora borealis was visible even in Mexico during the IGY), atmospheric and seismological studies, among other projects (Urrutia 1999: 129). Mexico was also designated the seat of the Pan-American Committee for the IGY by the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History of the Organization of American States.

The launching of Sputnik-1 was reported on Mexican television on the same day as the launch and marked the start of the space race for most Mexicans. Celeste González de Bustamante points out that while many Latin American news outlets praised Soviet technological capacity, they also unfavorably compared the openness of U.S. space efforts with the secrecy of the Soviet Union (2012: 112–115). Mexican journalists would soon begin to speculate about the possible military uses of satellite technology in the context of the Cold War, which they described as “a balance of terror” (121). Regardless of those fears, four years after Sputnik, Mexicans would marvel at Soviet advances in space technology when Yuri Gagarin became the first person to orbit the Earth in April of 1961. Gagarin and Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman in space, visited Mexico in 1963 as part of a hugely successful world tour. Tereshkova called for world peace, declaring that seeing the Earth from orbit provides a different, cosmic perspective, and Gagarin argued that “cosmic dominion for the benefit of humanity” would be achieved much more quickly if all countries worked together, “in peaceful collaboration” and without “bellicose objectives.”²

2. Gagarin and Tereshkova were not the only Soviet heroes honored in Mexico. Writer Carlos Olvera, inspired like many other Mexicans by the space

However, Cold War competition for getting to the Moon was fierce. Six years after the cosmonauts' visit to Mexico, Mexican journalists would travel to Houston to witness the first Moon landing, an event which also saw the first images of space transmitted live, simultaneously to countries around the world (González de Bustamante 2012: 135–139). On Mexican television, transmitting to most of the 4.5 million television sets throughout the country (half of them in Mexico City) newscasters emphasized the uses of space technology for peace. It is important to recognize the international efforts that surrounded the Apollo Mission, including activities that were undertaken in Mexico before the mission, like the use of the volcanic fields of the Pinnacle Biosphere Reserve in Sonora as a Moon analog for training Apollo astronauts (Arreola Santander 2017), and the distribution of hundreds of samples of moon rock after the mission for public viewing and scientific research all over the world (Krige 2013: 4). International relations aside, the fact that the flag Armstrong planted on the Moon was from the United States, not the United Nations, did not go unnoticed.

INTERNATIONAL LAW

The discourse of universal peace and human progress was tempered by the fear and unease inspired by what appeared to be an escalating arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union: the first international treaty regulating the uses of outer space was signed in 1967, after being approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations.³ Ratified by 109 countries, including the United States and the Soviet Union (as well as Mexico), the Outer Space Treaty dealt fundamentally with arms-control

flight and death of the dog Laika, dedicated his 1968 science fiction novel, *Mejicanos en el espacio*, to “Laika, the Pioneer.”

3. That same year, Mexican President Gustavo Díaz Ordaz proposed an international treaty for the disarmament of Latin America and the Caribbean in response to the Cuban Missile Crisis. The “Treaty for the Proscription of Nuclear Arms in Latin America and the Caribbean”, better known as the Treaty of Tlatelolco, was signed by twenty-one Latin American countries and entered into force in 1969. As was the case for the Non-aligned movement, the countries who prepare the most for the consequences of global wars may be those least responsible for waging them.

in the context of the Cold War and did not provide any legal orientations for more recent commercial activities in space (UNOOSA 2017). A second treaty was developed decades later by the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS) to deal with more specific cases and procedures. The agreement bans weapon testing, nuclear weapons in orbit and military bases on celestial bodies; provides for the equitable sharing of natural lunar resources among all countries; establishes freedom of scientific research on the Moon and suggests that scientific samples be made available to all countries for research purposes; prohibits ownership of property in space; ensures that non-governmental organizations can only engage in activities on celestial bodies with the authority of “the appropriate state party,” and demands that any activities on the Moon be reported to the United Nations (UNOOSA 2017: 36–37). The five signatures required were obtained in 1984, and it entered into force that year for the signatories. Mexico ratified the treaty in 1981. However, the only country with independent spaceflight capabilities to sign the treaty was India, which has yet to ratify it, while the United States, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China have, so far, refused to sign (Listner 2011).

Although it might seem that developing nations have the most to gain from declaring outer space to be “the common heritage of humankind,” one resource has been claimed by a group of developing countries. Geostationary orbit (GEO), a band of space 36,000 kilometers above Earth’s equator, is valuable real estate. A satellite in GEO orbits at the same speed as the Earth’s rotation, and therefore stays over a fixed point on the Earth’s surface. Telecommunication satellites, for example, use GEO to transmit to specific regions. Orbital slots, however, are limited. In 1976, eight states located at the equator asserted that the orbital slots located at their coordinates formed part of their national resources; their national borders should extend upwards beyond the Kármán line, which marks the border between Earth’s atmosphere and outer space at 100 kilometers above sea level. In this sense, the Outer Space Treaty, which declared that outer space could not be appropriated by particular states, did not protect their interests. Through the Bogotá Declaration, Colombia, Ecuador, Congo, Indonesia, Kenya,

Uganda and Zaire, with Brazil observing, attempted to categorize the GEO as a natural resource, part of Earth rather than a region of space, which would allow its signatories time to achieve the technological and economic means to occupy those slots before they were occupied by states of the global north.⁴ Today, however, out of 562 satellites in GEO, only a handful belong to equatorial states. Mexico is not an equatorial state, but it does have access to four geostationary orbits. Mexican satellites, both corporate and governmental, were designed and built outside the country.

MEXICO ENTERS THE SPACE RACE

In December of 1957, two months after Sputnik reached orbit, a team of physicists from the University of San Luis Potosí launched the first Mexican rocket, powered by solid combustible fuel, into the atmosphere from a desert region inhabited primarily by nopal plants that would later be baptized ‘Cabo Tuna,’ or ‘Cape Prickly Pear,’ in a tongue-in-cheek reference to Florida’s Cape Kennedy. The Secretary of Communications and Transportation (SCT) followed two years later with the construction of rockets using liquid fuel, following the example of World War II German rockets (Montaño Barbosa 2015). One of these rockets, named “Arrow-2” (*Mitl-2* in Nahuatl), reached an altitude higher than the Kármán line.

The Mexican government also participated in the space race by signing an agreement with NASA, allowing for the construction of a tracking station in Guaymas, Sonora, which was used from 1958–1963 in support of the United States’ Project Mercury orbital space flights. Mexican television, dependent on satellite technology, proudly reported on these efforts as a way of showing that Mexico was modernizing. On June 26, 1961, the day of the station’s inauguration, *Noticiero aerovanes* reported that Mexico was cooperating with the United States in a project that had no warlike

4. Even today, the Columbian constitution states that “Also part of Colombia is the subsoil, the territorial sea, the contiguous zone, the continental shelf, the exclusive economic zone, the airspace, the segment of the geostationary orbit, the electromagnetic spectrum and the space in which it operates, in accordance with international law or the laws of Colombia in the absence of international regulations.” Tellingly, Colombia has signed, but not ratified, the Outer Space Treaty (Durrani 2018).

intentions (González de Bustamante 2012: 127).⁵ This statement in particular was included to appease those opponents of the project who felt that it went against Mexico's vow to "remain neutral in the face of international conflict," and others who feared it could have military purposes (González de Bustamante 2012: 25). President Kennedy enjoyed great support in Mexico, but many Mexicans decried Kennedy's policies in Cuba, particularly the Bay of Pigs invasion that had occurred two months earlier (González de Bustamante 2012: 129). In 1962, President Adolfo López Mateos created the National Commission for Outer Space, or CONEE, Mexico's first governmental space organization, to support research on rockets, telecommunications and atmospheric studies. That same year saw the creation of the Department of Outer Space (now the Department of Space Science) at UNAM's Institute of Geophysics, oriented toward the study of astrophysics. In 1977, however, after the economic crisis of 1976, President José López Portillo dissolved the CONEE.

In 1985, through an agreement with NASA, the Mexican government put the Morelos I and II telecommunications satellites in orbit and sent the first Mexican citizen into space. In 1994, UNAM scientists designed and built the scientific research satellites UNAMSAT-1 and UNAMSAT-B, both launched from the Russian Federation, designed to study the trajectories of meteor impact on Earth. UNAMSAT-1 was destroyed during a launch mishap. UNAMSAT-B successfully reached orbit but broke down after two years of transmissions. Finally, the Mexican Space Agency was formally constituted in 2013. For decades, only the United States and the Soviet Union had governmental space programs, but by 2018 that list had grown to more than 70 national space agencies. In addition to the "big six" (the United States, the Russian Federation, Europe, China, India and Japan), eight Latin American, eight Asian, five Middle Eastern and six African countries now have space agencies. As with Mexico, most of these do not have launch capabilities but depend on international cooperation with

5. It is also telling that this report aired on the same day as a report on tensions between Mexican migrant workers and US unions (González de Bustamante 2012: 127-128).

the larger agencies to access, develop, build and launch space instruments.

SO FAR FROM GOD, SO CLOSE TO NASA

Located on Avenida Insurgentes, one of Mexico City's main thoroughfares, the Mexican Space Agency (AEM) looks impressive from the outside, covered in glass and steel and sparkling in the sun. From below, the group of antennas that crown the edifice give it a spatial aura. A plaque at street level informs passers-by that the building was designed by architect Juan José Díaz Infante Núñez (1936–2012), who was a consultant for NASA ("Kalikosmia"). However impressive from the outside, AEM employs about sixty people and occupies only two floors of the building. Its official functions are divided into five general areas: the formation of human capital in the field of outer space; scientific research and the development of space technology; industrial and commercial development and competitiveness in the space sector; international affairs and security in space matters;⁶ and financing and information management of space matters. Arguably, the agency has been most successful with its outreach and educational programs, as the budget assigned to the agency has been too small to permit substantial advances in research and development. I interviewed Mario Arreola, the Director of Outreach at the AEM, in 2018. Mario showed me a painting that had won in the 2014 space-themed competition in the children's category. In front of a black, glittery background, the artist painted Earth and its Moon, as well as three artificial satellites in orbit. In the foreground, a young girl with large black eyes dressed in a spacesuit carries a Mexican flag. She climbs a long ladder from Earth towards a space ship which is designed as a Spanish caravel like the one Colon used in his fifteenth-century voyages of "discovery." Mario told me this image represents the Mexican space project that the AEM would like to promote: Mexico advancing toward the future

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6. The Director of this area, Rosa María de Arellano y Haro, served as the Chair of the Commission on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS), part of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA), until June of 2019.

of space technology, but without abandoning the knowledge and achievements of its past.⁷

One of the AEM's most important activities has been the creation of a network of collectives and individuals, particularly young Mexicans, interested in the possibilities of outer space. Many of these were inspired when they were children by astronomy, science fiction, or the narrative of Rodolfo Neri Vela, the only Mexican to have been to outer space. Neri Vela, originally from the state of Guerrero, travelled as a payload specialist on board the space shuttle *Atlantis* to the International Space Station in 1985. He spent 9.6 days in space and is said to have introduced Mexican tortillas to the astronauts' diet, which do not create crumbs which could damage equipment in low-gravity environments (Kardoudi). The only other person with a claim to have been a Mexican in space is retired NASA astronaut José Hernández Moreno, born in California as the son of migrant workers from Michoacán, Mexico. Hernández, a flight engineer, flew to the International Space Station in 2009 onboard the space shuttle *Endeavor*.⁸ He spent 13.9 days in space, and was the first person to send tweets in Spanish back to Earth (Hernández Moreno 2011: 178). Hernández went to space as a NASA employee and U.S. citizen; Neri Vela was able to travel to space thanks to an agreement between the Mexican government and NASA, whose main objective was the launching of the telecommunications satellite Morelos. But access to space is limited. Outside of special agreements, being an astronaut requires carrying a passport from a nation with a crewed spaceflight program, an exclusion justified by "reasons of national security" ("Guía").

CITIZEN ASTRONAUTS AND ANALOGOUS MISSIONS

Carmen Félix, a 35-year-old engineer and entrepreneur, is hopeful. Born in Culiacán, Sinaloa, she now lives and works in Amsterdam. She would like to be a 'real' astronaut, but for now is working to be a 'citizen astronaut,' the only option currently available to her, as NASA

7. Other entries in the space art contest make reference to the past through pre-Hispanic rather than colonial imagery.

8. *Endeavour* was named the ship of eighteenth-century explorer Captain James Cook. It was built to replace the shuttle *Challenger* which tragically exploded in 1985.

requires all astronauts who go to space to be American citizens.⁹ After her parents dissuaded her from studying astronomy because, they said, she “would die of hunger, because in Mexico there is no support for science,” Carmen began studying international commerce; however, she decided to visit NASA, and her trip coincided with the congress of the International Astronautical Federation. Carmen spoke with a few US astronauts who advised her to study science and engineering if she still wanted to “do something in outer space.” Upon returning to Culiacán, Carmen decided to pursue an undergraduate degree in electronic engineering and telecommunications, given its relevance to satellites. After graduation, she received a scholarship and continued her education with a master’s degree in space sciences in France, which would eventually lead her to become one of Mexico’s first interns at NASA’s Ames Research Center, where she worked on projects involving small satellites. The AEM came into being while she was at Ames, and she participated in its consolidation. After her contract with NASA expired, it could not be renewed due to her Mexican citizenship. As the AEM was still in its infancy, however, she was unable to find many work opportunities in her area of expertise in Mexico. Therefore, when given the opportunity to work in the field of space security in the Netherlands, she packed her bags and returned to Europe.

One of her goals is to involve more young Mexicans in the space industry, and she is an active member of the Space Generation Advisory Council (SGAC), a global network that seeks to encourage interest in space exploration and its related industries among young people. The SGAC has a voice in the COPUOS of the United Nations, and agreements with “leading space agencies, corporations and organizations from around the world” (SGAC 2020). Carmen is often asked to represent the youth of Mexico and Latin America to governmental and non-governmental institutions, although she laments that, despite the opportunities they have to study in other countries, young Mexicans often return to precarious or non-existent employment prospects, and therefore cannot apply the knowledge they have acquired.¹⁰ Although she has not had trouble finding

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9. Personal interview with Carmen Félix, Nov. 2018.

10. Another issue is what has been called the “maquilización” of industry: highly qualified recent graduates in Mexico are subcontracted by transnational

work in the space industry (outside Mexico), Carmen has not lost interest in space travel. Because of this, she “continues to fulfill the requirements,” participating in training programs designed to prepare ‘citizen astronauts,’ an appellation derived from ‘citizen scientist,’ which refers to a non-professional with a vocation in areas such as astronomy, biology or ecology, and who contributes to the advancement of science by gathering data for research projects in these fields. Citizen science recognizes the contributions of ‘lay’ or ‘amateur’ researchers in the construction of knowledge for a more democratically distributed, ‘public’ science (Gura 2013: 259).

Analogic play—philosophical and pragmatic—is one of the principal motors of the imagination, an approach to new experience and, therefore, of scientific experimentation (Vosniadou and Ortony 1989). It may be used to make comprehensible those things that are difficult to apprehend because they are too far away or because they do not yet exist. Or, it may be used to rehearse experiences that are still impossible or impractical in ‘real’ life (like calling a desert region of San Luís Potosí ‘Cabo Tuna’ or being a citizen instead of a ‘real’ astronaut). In fact, one of the most important activities, both for ‘real’ and citizen astronauts is the participation in analogous training missions designed to simulate extreme outer space conditions, like those found on a spaceflight or life on the Moon or Mars (Olson 2018). Apollo astronauts did train in a Mexican analogue environment, but Carmen Félix was the first Mexican to participate in a space analogue: a parabolic flight in Russia; as well as projects testing space suits in Spain, Austria and Morocco; a Mars simulation in the Utah desert; and training in a subaquatic module that reproduces the experience of movement in low gravity.

In December of 2018, with Carmen’s support the all-Mexican team, MEX-1, was accepted for a mission at the Mars Desert Research Station (MDRS) in Utah. The MDRS is an installation funded by the Mars Society whose stated function is the promotion of the planet Mars as an object of study and eventual destination (Mars Society). In many of the photographs they published of their

companies with very good salaries and benefits, but their work is limited to technical, repetitive activities on a small link in the chain of production. They are rarely allowed to see “the big picture” or contribute significantly in a way commensurate with their skills and knowledge (Nieto 2016).

mission, team members carry the Mexican flag, as if to plant it on the surface of Mars.¹¹ I spoke to the team on Skype a week before their trip, and the first thing they did was complain about the slow speed of our connection. “It’s not a satellite link, guys,” they joked. All were members of the SGAC, and they met during the congress of the International Astronautic Federation held in Guadalajara in 2016. Originally scheduled to go to the MDRS in November of 2017, their mission was postponed for a year due to budgetary problems and the larger crisis in Mexico resulting from the earthquake of September 2017. Like Carmen, the members of MEX-1 spoke of limited opportunities in the fields of science and technology in Mexico. They emphasized the importance of investing in those fields “for the good of the country’s future,” as well as the political limitations in doing so. These young engineers, who had not been born when Neil Armstrong landed on the Moon or when Neri Vela went into space, echoed Carmen’s dream: “It’s really hard right now, but why not pave the way so that Mexican astronauts can once again be included in [space] missions?”¹² They argue that the Mexican government, through the AEM, should provide more support so that highly qualified young people are not forced to become ‘citizen scientists,’ or to individually seek professional opportunities outside their home country.

In the context of citizen science, citizenship is a civic, rather than a political category, as it involves the participation in a kind of universal civil society. But it also points to the existence and negotiation of borders, even in the cosmopolitan outer space industry. As Étienne Balibar points out, one is never simply a citizen, but always a citizen of somewhere (2017: 275). For Carmen and the members of MEX-1, being citizen scientists implies a paradox: even as their education includes them in a global community of space professions from which others are excluded, the political limits of citizenship are what prohibit them from being “real” astronauts. They travel on legal visas, study at accredited universities, obtain international grants and scholarships, and speak English. They are “cosmopolitan.”

11. See Messeri (2016) for an ethnographic description of the experience of participating in a MDRS mission.

12. Personal interview with members of MEX-1, Nov. 2018.

But their experience is also necessarily *cosmopolitical*, transected by borders, identities and representational aspirations.

TECHNOPHILIA AND ASTROCAPITALISM

In the twenty-first century, beyond individual dreams of traveling to space, or cosmic dreams of a border-free universe, Mexico and Mexicans have largely been drawn to outer space because of the possibility of achieving economic development through technological innovation. Carmen Félix argues that “for each dollar invested in space, there is a gain of eight dollars.” Mexico must find an economic niche in the development of satellites or robotics, but “we must be the owners of our own technology” and “think of the future.”¹³ By sending objects rather than humans, Mexico might be capable of “conquering outer space.”

Faith in technology as a means of insuring social and economic progress has a long history in Mexico, as illustrated on the exterior and interior walls of the Polyforum in Mexico City. Home to one of the largest murals in the world, *The March of Humanity on Earth and Toward the Cosmos*, painted by David Alfaro Siqueiros, is composed of a series of allegorical panels that illustrate humanity’s social, political and technological evolution. In the culminating panels of the interior vaulted ceiling, the cosmos itself is represented by a pair of astronauts who oversee human progress from above, between the warring symbols of the red star of communism and the eagle of capitalism. These images, included in 1969, were inspired by the Moon landing, an event which, according to the Siqueiros, had the potential to usher in a new era in the history of humanity (Ramos 2016).

Today, faith in technology is stronger than ever, although few refer to the Marxist dialectic upon which Siqueiros based his vision. In Mexico, as in other parts of the world, the aerospace sector has become a key actor in the development of communication and other technologies. Mexican technophilic dreams can be

13. Personal interview with Carmen Félix, November 2018. I do not know the source of Carmen’s calculations about the profits of outer space investments, but one of the members of MEX-1 provided similar statistical data: “Only 11% of the technology [is] developed for outer space: 89% stays on Earth” (Personal interview with members of MEX-1, Nov. 2018).

framed within the context of a new tendency which David Valentine (2012) terms “astrocapitalism.” For astrocapitalists, outer space represents a potential niche for “impactful” technological innovation. Space activities in Mexico have required a series of negotiations between the government, private enterprise and universities, generally in collaboration with international institutions and companies. Promoters of the space industry see in technology hope for the country’s future: increased employment, a means of monitoring climate change and natural disasters and a way of improving communication and information networks (ProMexico 2017). In the context of technological advances, particularly in light of the increasing miniaturization of technology, the AEM is betting on small satellites as a way of participating in the space industry. In this endeavor, Mexico joins a large group of small space agencies around the world investing in “CanSats,” which give students practice in developing satellites, and “CubeSats,” fully functioning satellites that weigh little more than 1 kilogram. Although most satellite development programs require economic and technological support from the larger space agencies, the idea is to eventually become technologically autonomous, and not dependent on information provided by US, European, Russian or Chinese satellites (Matthews 2016). In Mexico, one recent project was AztechSat-1, a CubeSat developed by students and researchers from the Popular Autonomous University of Puebla, with the support of NASA and Chicano astronaut José Hernández. Designed to test communications with the commercial satellite network GlobalStar and launched to the International Space Station in December of 2019, AztechSat-1 was touted as the first nanosatellite produced in Mexico to reach outer space.

“Satellites are noble,” Genaro, a young engineer with his own start-up company, told me; “they are agnostic.” He went on to explain that satellites are useful in all parts of Mexico, even the most isolated regions, for example, by reducing response time to natural disasters. He laments that many people think that spending money on space technology as wasteful, given the many problems Mexico has on the ground. What they do not realize, he argues, is that space technology has any number of earthly applications and can be used to deal with social and environmental

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problems (personal communication, November 2018). His colleague César agrees. Like Neri Vela, César is originally from Guerrero, one of the regions that has been greatly affected by violence and crime during the last decade. He believes that “We should stop being a country of ‘made in Mexico’ and start being ‘designed in Mexico’ [...] We should stop doing things ‘the Mexican way’ and start to be a country that generates value for the world.”¹⁴

For César, Genaro and many of their generation, companies like Boeing and Lockheed Martin are models to be followed. If Mexico developed the space industry, the future could see a ‘Mexican conquest of space’—neither he nor any of the other young entrepreneurs with whom I spoke found the term “conquest” problematic, despite Mexico’s colonial past.

MATTERS OF GRAVITY AND ASTROPOETICS

Despite the growing dominance of Mexican astrocapitalism, the AEM has also developed alliances with other actors that Spivak might deem “planetary,” Stengers “cosmopolitical,” and Blumenberg, “astronoetic.” Kosmica, for example, is an international institute that often collaborates with the AEM in outreach events. It was founded in 2011 by the Mexican-born artist-magician-hypnotist-theremin-player-astronaut-trainee-spokesperson for ITACCUS (Technical Activities Committee for the Cultural Uses of Space of the International Astronautical Federation) (de la Puente, et al. 2020). Its work revolves around five key themes: creativity, earth, future imaginaries, diversity and celebration. Although its members use technology in their work and collaborate with global and national space agencies and organizations, their perspective on space could be characterized as astropoetic.

One of their most suggestive works was *Matters of Gravity*, a two-year arts and science project reflecting on gravity by its absence, directed by Nahum and Ale de la Puente. The nine Mexican artists (and once scientist) that participated in the project experienced a zero-gravity flight mission at the Yuri Gagarin Cosmonaut Training Centre in Russia. The brief moments of weightlessness “were enough to experiment with eternity, to realise a story,

14. Personal interview with members of MEX-1, Nov. 2018.

to break a paradigm, to liberate a molecule, to have an illusion, to experience movement without references, to create poetry out of two bodies, to make the useless become useful and to search for an impossible embrace” (de la Puente 2015). There was also a piñata. The project resulted in a collective exhibition that toured at museums in Mexico City, Jalisco, Moscow, Slovenia, and Texas, and included video, performance, sculpture, drawing and installation.

Although ‘Mexican things’ like the the piñata were undeniably present, the project became a way for most of the artists and their publics to think beyond borders, using gravity and its absence as a metaphor for untethered relationships that have more to do with a planetary, cosmopolitical, astronoetic experience of space than a way of trying to see outer space “from Mexico.” That said, it is impossible to completely break one’s territorial, earthly bonds, to become completely untethered.

CONCLUSIONS

Outer space demands both a wide and a narrow view of the cosmos from particular places, or, in the case of satellites, of particular places from the cosmos. Earthly imaginaries, discourses and practices that revolve around outer space do nothing to resolve the tensions between *cosmos* and *polis*, the detached and the engaged, the uninhabitable and the rooted, the planet and the globe; indeed, outer space proves to be just as plagued and fragmented by borders as the Earth, marked by practices of inclusion and exclusion. The possibilities of shared extraterrestrial utopias (philosophical, political, scientific or economic) are tempered by the realities of terrestrial conflicts and commitments. The *universal* produces unease, Balibar tells us, and does not make differences disappear (2017: 276). Citizens belong to communities, not the universe, although political modernity declares that they also inherit common rights “from which no human can be excluded” (2017: 276). Mexican space professionals—government officials, students, entrepreneurs, scientists, artists—inhabit contact zones in which international relations and cosmopolitan and/or cosmopolitical actions are everyday experiences. But they are also daily faced with the differential “possibilities of human actualization” produced by earthly situatedness. In this sense,

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Mexico is particularly complex: a periphery, but also a center, not non-Western, but also not-not non-Western. The actors I have included in this text do not deny their difference, but they do seek recognition as peers, a position which international 'collaborations' may promise, but rarely deliver. Here, I have tried to think astroethically by looking at borders and contact zones on Earth and in space. Like Bruno Latour I ask, "Whose cosmos?" And like Gayatri Spivak I answer that still, despite everything, there is hope in the planetary, uncanny as it may be.

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COLLABORATIVE FUTURES

Arts Funding and Speculative Fictions

In the United States of America, public funding for the arts is under threat. In March of 2019, the Trump administration released its proposed 2020 federal budget calling for an end to arts funding through the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA): “The Budget proposes to begin shutting down NEA in 2020 and it would provide sufficient funding for orderly termination of all operations over two years. The Administration does not consider NEA activities to be core Federal responsibilities” (*A Budget* 98). The proposal went on to encourage privatization by pointing out that the transition to funding the arts through the market was already well underway:

Giving to the arts by individuals, foundations, and corporations grew 7.0 percent to \$17.07 billion in 2015—representing 4.6 percent of all charitable giving and the fourth consecutive year of growth. Additionally, technology has broadened the reach of support for the arts. For example, one internet platform, Kickstarter, reported that it connected donors and artists to fund over \$300 million arts-related projects. The Administration believes audiences and aficionados are better than the Government at deciding what art is good or important. (*A Budget* 98).

Framed as a tech-savvy arts institution by the Trump Administration, Kickstarter’s mention in the budget invites us to consider how its corporate model of privatized arts patronage has penetrated contemporary art forms. To think through how the public benefit

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corporation founded in 2009 functions as an artistic institution, we might begin with the following questions: How has Kickstarter's crowdfunding model shaped certain forms of artistic production and foreclosed others? How have the arts imagined and even incorporated the aesthetics engendered through crowdfunding? To address these questions, I turn to a case that highlights Kickstarter's unlikely role in the transmedial and international collaboration between US science fiction writer, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Serbian performance artist, Marina Abramović. To procure funding for the first phase of a proposed institution for the performing arts in Hudson, New York, Abramović posted her plans for the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI) on Kickstarter in 2013. Pledges received via Kickstarter in this initial phase of fundraising went toward the institute's design: specifically, "to early MAI programming, office operations, and schematic designs of architectural elements, including building structure, lighting, acoustics, and AV" ("Marina Abramović Institute"). Four years later, Robinson set a scene of his 2017 speculative fiction, *New York 2140*, at the Marina Abramović Institute. We will turn to the actual fate of the Institute momentarily but to begin, let us consider its fate in Robinson's novel.

In *New York 2140*, climate change has remade the planet's ecosystems: animal habitats and ice sheets have dissipated, New York City has suffered not one but two "pulses"—rapid rises in sea level that plunge everything once at ground-level well underwater. The persistence of global finance under these conditions means that some citizens profit off of environmental devastation while those without resources die or struggle to survive. In this context of climate disaster, Robinson unfolds a minor subplot that follows the novel's resident animal conservationist and nature show host, Amelia Black. As a massive hurricane barrels toward New York City, Amelia finds the storm's wind gusts too strong to return to her home in Manhattan's MetLife building. Instead of battling her way through the storm she decides to outrun it in her trusty airship, the *Assisted Migration*. Buttressed by a strong tailwind, Amelia and her ship make their way north, alighting on the town of Hudson, New York, where she takes refuge on the grounds of the "Marina Abramović Institute" (Robinson 521). Anchored

to the ground, her airship's "intense flailing became a natural piece of performance art, and at first Amelia had resolved to stay in the gondola through the hurricane—tie herself into a chair and get tossed around like a bull rider, like Marina herself doing one of her variously dangerous and awesome performances [...]" (Robinson 521). Despite her initial desire to make performance art out of the disaster, the Institute's kindly curators convince Amelia to relent and shelter from the hurricane indoors.

Compared to an earlier journey to Antarctica to relocate a pack of polar bears, Amelia's excursion up the Hudson River Valley seems like an altogether forgettable affair. And yet, the brevity of Amelia's sojourn to the Marina Abramović Institute belies the significance of its appearance in the text. The actual fate of the Marina Abramović Institute for the Preservation of Performance Art—or the MAI as it was affectionately referred to by Abramović—is that it never came to be. While Abramović's plan to construct a brick-and-mortar institution ultimately went unrealized, the speculation fostered by Kickstarter's crowdfunding platform summoned a host of artists to imagine details and narratives about the Institute that would later appear in Robinson's novel. By attending to the MAI's fictional presence in text, we can see how Robinson's novel engages with corporate crowdfunding for the arts as both a conceptual resource and a catalyst of speculative storytelling. But perhaps more significantly, this detail also suggests that the crowdfunding model of arts patronage requires us to reexamine the aesthetic terms that artists and critics alike have come to rely on in order to differentiate science fiction from other kinds of writing. For example, Robinson has argued that:

The way you distinguish science fiction from fantasy is that it's a historical literature. A science fiction novel will be placed in a future of ours, and you can run a track from this moment to that moment that's a history. It's either explicit in the text or it's implicit, and you have to play a game of figuring out what happened to get from here to there. So science fiction properly conceived—which is really just my own way of conceiving it, of course—is a historical literature. (Heise 24–25)

In her account of *New York 2140's* evocation of capitalist realism, literary scholar Anna Kornbluh also draws attention to what she sees as the novel's temporal continuity from our

moment to a plausible future. Kornbluh bases her reading in part on the novel's insistence on the endurance of Manhattan's Met Life Tower—"a regular, actually existing skyscraper of an actually existing insurance company" (Kornbluh 2019–2020: 108). She argues that featuring the building in the story's setting testifies to "how little has changed from the time of [the novel's] publication in 2017 to the time of setting in 2140" (109). Indeed, according to Kornbluh, "[i]n dwelling on the infrastructure of old buildings and ordinary construction, *New York 2140* anchors its floating future in the current present of practicable maintenance" which gives the effect of an "immersive continuity between future and present [...]" (109). Moreover, she suggests that "architectural details hewing to the space-time continuum differentiate realism from science fiction and effectuate realism's trademark infrastructural, institutional concerns" (109). But if a reader were to attend to the Maria Abramović Institute instead of the Met Life Tower she would find that the novel's buildings do not consistently confirm a continuity between present and future. In fact, the very presence of the brick-and-mortar MAI in the world of *2140* challenges interpretations that seek to identify the work as a realist or a historical fiction without accounting for the broken continuity betrayed by this imaginary structure.

The artistic collaboration between Abramović and Robinson began under the auspices of a speculative arts institution with a more conventional system of financial patronage. In the winter of 2015, the two were named artists-in-residence at the Arthur C. Clarke Center for Human Imagination at the University of California, San Diego. The Clarke Center's stated objective is to "understand, enhance, and enact the gift of human imagination by bringing together the inventive power of science and technology, with the critical analysis of the humanities, and the expressive insights of the arts" (*Imagination*). Although Robinson made reference to Abramović in his 2012 Nebula award-winning novel, *2312*, the 2015 Clarke residency marked the first time the novelist and the performance artist worked in unison. Together, the two artists produced a series of multimedia works that brought Robinson's interest in the vast distances and durations of space travel together with

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Abramović's desire to retool the public perception of everyday space and time. Their collaboration yielded "an installation with multiple audio tracks" that appeared first in the University's Art Gallery and later as an exhibit at the Venice Biennale, a theatrical podcast called, "The Hard Problem: An Audio Voyage,"¹ and a short film entitled, *3015*. Robinson wrote *New York 2140* from roughly 2014 to early 2017 and thus his residency at the Arthur C. Clarke Center alongside Abramović coincides with his writing of the sprawling speculative tome.

The Clarke Center is named after Arthur C. Clarke, a popular midcentury intellectual and a self-described, "engineer, futurist, and humanist" whose eponymous foundation furnishes a portion of the Center's funding ("Arthur C. Clarke. Biography"). In the 1940s, Clarke speculated that a system of global telecommunication might be achieved by launching satellites into geostationary orbits. Later, as a writer of science fiction, Clarke would produce dozens of stories and co-write the screenplay for 1968's *2001: A Space Odyssey* with filmmaker Stanley Kubrick ("Arthur C. Clarke. Biography"). As a US literary institution, the Arthur C. Clarke Center's significance cannot be overstated: indeed, UC San Diego touts itself as a "Leading Public University with the most alumni to go on to be professional writers of speculative fiction" ("About Clarion"). According to the Center's director, Sheldon Brown, "we have produced more of today's notable science fiction writers than any other university in the world" (*Imagination*). Brown's claim depends on the Center's recent acquisition of the Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers' Workshop—"the oldest workshop of its kind and [...] widely recognized as a premier proving and training ground for aspiring writers of fantasy and science fiction."² Esteemed alumni include Octavia Butler, Ted Chiang, and—not surprisingly—Kim Stanley Robinson.³ Founded at Clarion State College in Pennsylvania in 1968, and relocated to Michigan State University for thirty-four years, the Clarke Center has assumed the mantle of "host and coordinator of the Clarion Workshop since 2012" ("About Clarion"). This move

1. See "Episode 3: The Hard Problem."

2. See "The Clarion Science Fiction and Fantasy Writer's Workshop."

3. See "Clarion Distinguished Alumni & Faculty."

placed the Clarion Workshop under the Clarke Center's formidable institutional wing.

The Arthur C. Clarke Center is well financed owing to a steady flow of public and private donations. In its efforts to court public gifts, the Center reminds visitors that its "growth depends on research grants, alliances, strategic partnerships and the support of an interested public. Support can take many forms: from participation in our many public programs to partnerships to contributions" (*Imagination*). Its biggest private donor is ViaSat Incorporated. Described as a "founding partner" of the Center, the multinational communications company and defense contractor spells out on its website that its broad corporate mission is to "shape how consumers, businesses, governments and militaries around the world communicate" ("About ViaSat"). Among other things, this capacity to alter military communications means "giv[ing] all combatants greater situational awareness in any battle space by collecting information and combining it into a digital view of the battlefield" ("About ViaSat"). For example, ViaSat is responsible for "supply[ing] digital video links for unmanned systems (UAS) that increase the range, security, and effectiveness of UAVs as they become a greater part of military strategy" ("About ViaSat").

The Clarke Center's funding model, with its reliance on powerful corporate donors who actively shape global geopolitics, stands in sharp contrast to the crowdfunding model that Abramović relied on to fund the MAI. On the morning of May 7, 2012, approximately two years after her monumental durational piece, "The Artist is Present" came to a close at New York's Museum of Modern Art, Abramović stood before a crowd assembled at the Marina Abramović Breakfast hosted at MoMA PS1 in Long Island City, and presented the MAI's first official architectural designs to the public. Abramović had purchased a 23000-square-foot building located on Columbia Street in Hudson, New York, at the site of a former community theatre built in 1929 and purchased in 2007 (Navarro 2012). To transform the building's physical structure, Abramović retained the services of Rem Koolhaas and Shohei Shigematsu, world-renowned architects from the design firm Office for Metropolitan

Architecture (OMA) who embarked on an ambitious redesign for the MAI (Navarro 2012). The firm's detailed visual renderings and scale model of the proposed renovations lent the weight of materiality to Abramović's institutional vision. At the PS1 breakfast, guests were even invited to put their heads through a hole in the center of the model to enter the building quite literally and explore the chambers located around its perimeter.

The extraordinary level of detail we have about this non-existent institute comes from an explosion of speculative artworks—rendered through a variety of digital and print media—determined to foresee what the institute might look and how it might function. In addition to OMA's three-dimensional architectural model and its set of artistic renderings of the MAI, other speculative art that imagined the Institute's future included a YouTube video in which Lady Gaga demonstrates the Abramović Method, a presentation at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, a TED talk, a video game, a virtual tour, a website, and even a physical address on the latest version of Google Maps. In addition, countless newspaper and magazine profiles detailed what Abramović's state-of-the-art performing arts institute of the future would offer.

However, some of the most powerful narrative accounts of the MAI were written for Kickstarter. Even before Robinson's fictionalization, Abramović's team wrote and posted stories that brought the MAI to life on the Kickstarter site in 2013 as they began seeking donations from the public in order to pay for an initial \$600,000 in planning expenses. Kickstarter describes itself as "a funding platform for creative projects" (Pereira), and soliciting narrative—specifically speculative narrative that describes imagined futures for hopeful artists—is an explicit component of its fundraising method. In fact, its site encourages users to attract pledges by mastering the art of "Telling your story." "Imagine explaining your project to a friend," the site implores new users: "What would you say? What might they ask you? And how would you show them you're serious, prepared, and capable of doing a great job? Your project page is your chance to tell people that story: who you are, what you want to make, and why" ("Telling Your Story"). The site even offers users an online "course on strategic storytelling" ("Telling Your Story"). By enrolling in the webinar,

the host promises, “[y]ou’ll figure out how to tell a story in a way that will get people excited about what it is you’re doing” (Pereira). In their explicit solicitation of stories then, online crowdfunding platforms have emerged as privatized literary institutions that catalyze what we might think of as short form speculative fiction shot through with the demand to perform neoliberal subjecthood. Narratives extolling what one could accomplish—if only one had the financial means—are a byproduct of the turn to support art making through private corporate sites. Kickstarter effectively grooms its customers to become amateur speculative fiction writers who market personal narratives brimming with entrepreneurial optimism in exchange for a shot at crowdfunded futures.

In addition to the narrative arts, Abramović’s team turned to the performing arts to procure funding from potential contributors. MAI’s Kickstarter page proposes that a contributor’s buy-in be at once financial and civic:

Why Kickstarter? We aim to create a global community of collaborators and want you to be part of it. By inviting the broader public to contribute to our early development, Kickstarter helps to affirm and build the engaged community necessary to sustain MAI into the future. We have designed rewards that encourage backers to engage with time-based and immaterial works. With your contribution, you become a founder of the institute not only financially, but also conceptually, by partaking in the very experiences we hope to create. (“Marina Abramović Institute”)

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The “experiences” offered by the MAI varied depending on the amount “collaborators” pledged. For example, for one dollar, collaborators could receive “a hug from Marina Abramović”; for twenty-five dollars, collaborators could perform an Abramović Method exercise such as slow motion walking, eye gazing, or water drinking simultaneously with Abramović and other backers online, effectively “creating a large public performance that occurs at the same time in different locations all over the world” (“Marina Abramović Institute”). As the sly slippage from contributor to collaborator implies, what is perhaps most striking about the MAI’s capital campaign is how it readily reframes financial contributions mediated through a private company as a collective gesture

patrons must perform to access Abramović's vision of a civically engaged global public.

This use of Kickstarter to reframe arts institute funding as a form of community engagement exemplifies what scholar Rodrigo Davies has called civic crowdfunding, that is "the use of crowdfunding for projects that produce community or quasipublic assets" (2015: 342). "Crowdfunding," Davies notes, "is often framed by platform owners and project sponsors as an opportunity to participate: inviting backers to take a role in the creation of a product or project, a way to join a movement of like-minded people and a way to bring into being something that might otherwise have not existed" (344). From this vantage, it is not surprising that framing crowdfunding as civic participation dovetails with performance studies' conventional notions of vanguard performance art. Such performance is viewed as an art that "engages, empowers, activates, and makes the spectator aware of individual liberties, activist potential, and spectatorial agency," according to scholar Kimberly Jannarone (2015).

The MAI's approach to crowdfunding all but ensures that potential contributors experience their financial contribution through the Kickstarter platform as the cost of admission into the sort of 'engaged community' it promises will come into being through collective, embodied performance. This is in keeping with Abramović's previous claims that performance art is uniquely positioned to transform the social forms of the future because it connects small-scale personal action to large scale social transformation. In interviews, she has articulated the link between durational performance art pieces that involve the public—such as *The Abramović Method*—and speculative world building: "Our lives are so fast," she states, "Art must slow us down. These exercises are based on repetition. Something small, a ritual, eventually becomes a universe" (Gibson 2015). In the summer before her residency at the Clarke Center, for example, Abramović led a durational public performance piece in which participants described how "facilitators worked at transforming ordinary tasks by performing them slowly" so much so that "the slowness emptied the prescribed actions of utility" (Balkin and D'Urso 2017: 96). As architectural theorist Sanford Kwinter, who moderated Abramović's "Designing

an Institute for Performance Art” presentation at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, put it: the MAI’s “principle mandate” was “giv[ing] place to disciplined forms of space-and-time-altering experience, to alter the bodies and minds of the users themselves.” (“Designing an Institute for Performance Art”). While Abramović hasn’t discussed her art explicitly in terms of political economy, slowing down human bodies, rendering them useless to programs of productivity would seem to issue a provocative challenge to the tempo of capitalism.

And yet, given that Abramović’s potential communal initiative was funded through Kickstarter, the MAI also provokes concerns raised by Davies, namely that privatizing “civic crowdfunding is shrinking government [...] by providing replacement public services, or by creating new services that did not previously exist or were outside the capability of government” (Davies 2015: 350). Indeed, the Trump Administration’s proposed outsourcing of arts funding to Kickstarter’s marketplace of ideas confirms such concerns are well founded. At Hudson’s municipal level, the Institute’s privatized funding scheme raised questions concerning what community the fundraising project ultimately seeks to serve. While Abramović has noted that OMA’s architects were interested in the local community—“they’re talking about infrastructures. They’re talking about society. They’re thinking about master plan. How this building can function in the Hudson itself”⁴—the institute’s website states that “Abramović was inspired by the general public’s desire to engage with immaterial works,” a reference not to the Hudson community in particular but rather to the cosmopolitan audience who attended “The Artist is Present” in New York City (Cascone 2017).

Despite the fact that Abramović ultimately failed to procure sufficient funding for the completion of MAI Hudson and officially abandoned the project in late 2017, the trace of the idea of an arts institute nonetheless provokes questions of formal classification for contemporary literary scholars. To be sure, there is a long history of literary criticism linking literary form to arts funding schemes.⁵ Writing of the Kiva funding model, for example, literary scholar Dan Sinykin has pointed out that in our own moment, “contemporary

4. See “Designing an Institute for Performance Art.”

5. See for example, Doherty (79–101), and Donofrio (100–128).

writing is inextricable from the vast yet barely visible financial networks that structure the present” (Sinykin 2017: 203). The linkage between textual artifact and funding scheme is made newly visible in Kim Stanley Robinson’s novel *New York 2140* since the global networks of patronage forged by Kickstarter and marshaled to fund the MAI appeared reliable enough for Robinson to place the then-prospective Institute securely in what he considered to be *2140*’s world of historical realism. And yet, the fact that the money to build MAI Hudson ultimately was not raised through these channels means that a fictional institute now occupies real estate in the novel’s historical-realist universe. Its presence not only complicates Robinson’s stated generic commitments to science fiction as historical literature, but also asks us to reassess whether the speculative futurities churned out by privatized crowdfunding platforms such as Kickstarter can be relied upon to build real futures for the arts.

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MAPPING MIGUEL COVARRUBIAS ACROSS CULTURES AND DISCIPLINES

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in Miguel Covarrubias, a Mexican artist whose wide-ranging accomplishments span disciplines and media, the products of which have found their way into several recent museum retrospectives, and he rarely goes without mention in larger exhibits displaying twentieth-century Mexican art.¹ Typically introduced as a modern renaissance man—and not without reason—Covarrubias’s career included work as an illustrator, caricaturist, painter, muralist, anthropologist, archaeologist, ethnologist, stage designer, art historian and museographer. Such a figure can be explored from specific disciplinary perspectives, but so too does he provide an opportunity to consider the perennial academic discussions of area studies and interdisciplinarity more broadly. Covarrubias can aid in better understanding these divisions and can serve as a model of how they might be more productively understood.

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A brief overview of Covarrubias's work illustrates the difficulty of assigning a single disciplinary perspective to the study of his prolific body of work and its international trajectory. Beginning as a draftsman and illustrator in Mexico City, he eventually found commercial success and recognition upon moving to New York City at the age of nineteen, where his cartoons and caricatures of public figures came to be featured in the pages of such magazines as *Vanity Fair* and *The New Yorker*. Soon after, Covarrubias would become a well-known figure within the Harlem Renaissance, illustrating works such as Langston Hughes' *Weary Blues* (1926) and W. C. Handy's *Anthology of the Blues* (1926), along with a separate publication of his collected works under the title *Negro Drawings* (1927).² He would continue to illustrate books of all types, including Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men* (1935) and Frank Tannenbaum's *Peace by Revolution: Mexico after 1910* (1933), as well as new editions of classic US novels such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (in 1938) and Herman Melville's *Typee* (in 1935). His interests shifted toward a more deliberate and formal study of anthropology and ethnology, however, as he traveled around the world to study different cultures and ethnic groups. Covarrubias would publish the first modern in-depth study of traditional Balinese culture in *Island of Bali* (1937). Similarly, Covarrubias wrote the first comprehensive study of traditional cultures in Mexico's Isthmus of Tehuantepec in *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* (1946), marking his enduring interest in the complexity and diversity of Mexican culture and its place in the Americas.

To study Covarrubias along strictly disciplinary lines would be to overlook a great deal of the meaning implicit in his work. In searching for some sort of synthesis among the many fields that take an interest in Covarrubias, the answer might be found

2. Covarrubias's illustrations in these works and others sometimes present problematic and stereotypical depictions of African American culture, as well as other peoples from elsewhere in the world. As Roberta Smith writes in a review of one recent retrospective on Covarrubias, many of his drawings "qualify as racist by today's terms. But mostly a benign if paternalistic joy at the world prevails" (Smith 2019: C23). This is a sensible observation and is a helpful perspective to adopt when studying any of Covarrubias's illustrated work.

within Covarrubias's work itself. In it, he provides an example of how one might traverse the many disciplinary boundaries drawn within the academy. There has been a desire to cross these boundaries for the past generation or so, as American Studies has shifted toward the 'transnational' and 'hemispheric' study of US culture. One need only remember Shelly Fisher Fishkin's 2004 Presidential Address to the American Studies Association where she sees the discipline being at "a transnational crossroads of cultures" (2005: 43). Tracing the ways in which different ideas merge and subsequently split suggests the ways in which various cultural artifacts can be understood as part of a complex network of cultural interaction.

The desire to shift the perspective among Americanists was articulated a full decade before Fishkin's address by Carolyn Porter, who writes of her concern over "hyphenated American literatures" and the fragmentation of US literary study into many different academic departments (1994: 471). Rather than continuing to proliferate such boundaries, Porter advocates "dissolv[ing] the disciplinary and departmental lines," seeking scholarship that "offers the promise of approaching America's literatures as the very opposite of parochial or insulated or exceptional, without thereby assuming a global or imperialist perspective" (521). The implication is that US culture can be read and understood in multiple contexts at the same time.

It is a difficult balance to strike and it has continued to preoccupy scholars in more recent years. Perhaps the most compelling approach is found in a review article by Laura Dassow Walls titled "Literature, Geography, and the Space of Interdisciplinarity" (2011). In it, Walls describes the importance of considering literary study across disciplines, writing that "the boundary separating the disciplines of literature and geography is itself a geographical question, a problem of form which is simultaneously a problem of history" (2011: 871). In calling for literary study to incorporate a geographic perspective, Walls cautions against thinking that larger scales, such as the international, are dominant over the smaller scales, such as the local and regional. She calls this idea "scale-jumping," as it requires an awareness that these different 'scales' of human association exist simultaneously and only through one another. It

is geography that serves to illustrate the ways in which these scales constantly intersect. The same ideas are relevant beyond US literary study and can be applied to American Studies more generally.

One thread connecting Porter to Fishkin to Walls is the desire to overcome the assumed hierarchy of geographic scales that privilege the international over the continental over the national over the regional over the local. What Walls makes clear in her essay is that they must always be understood as coexisting. The ‘larger’ scale of the international cannot be understood as dominating or subsuming the ‘smaller’ scales, such as the regional. Understanding and incorporating key ideas from geography to expand the scope of inquiry in the humanities adds a contextual richness, both spatial and historical.

These cultural-geographical associations are evident throughout the many maps Covarrubias would produce and which can be found as illustrations in several of the books to which he contributed. He would eventually elaborate upon these ideas more fully in his own books on comparative anthropology in the Americas later in his career. Within his larger body of work are stand-alone mural projects, the most ambitious being a sequence of mural-maps titled *Pageant of the Pacific* (1939), commissioned by the Golden Gate International Exposition, held in 1939–1940 to celebrate the then-recent completion of the San Francisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridges (in 1936 and 1937, respectively). The exposition promoted unity among the countries of the Pacific Basin, celebrating their specific cultures and unique contributions to an interconnected world economy—and Covarrubias’s mural-maps would decorate the central “Theme Building” of the exposition. His maps would provide a “graphic presentation” of the “central idea of the Exposition [of] [...] Pan Pacific cultural and commercial reciprocity” and the murals would be placed in the centrally-located “Pacific House” (Youtz 1938). Covarrubias was selected because of his previous writings and maps and the accessible style of the illustrations. In his prefatory note to a commemorative booklet published the year after the exposition, Dr. Ray Lyman Wilbur, president of the Pacific House corporation,³ wrote: “Covarrubias is an ethnolo-

3. The Pacific House Corporation was established after the closing of the Golden Gate International Exposition in order to continue the work

gist and anthropologist, subtle and sensitive to the unrecorded past of unknown peoples, with a humorous, penetrating perspicacity of contemporaneous life, and a wide knowledge of the governmental forms and trade relations, of the moving forces, that bind peoples together or sever their relations” (Wilbur 1940). Covarrubias’s reputation as an ethnologist and anthropologist had by then been established through the success of *Island of Bali*, and his sense of humor and shrewd observation of the contemporary scene could be found throughout his earlier caricatures. Both qualities are seen in operation in the six mural-maps that he would produce for Pacific House. Many scholars point to the importance of these maps as being central to understanding Covarrubias’s larger body of work and the maturation of his early ideas regarding cultural diffusion between Asia and the Americas.

Each mural-map considers a different aspect of the “cultural and commercial reciprocity” among cultures of the Pacific region and their titles, as presented in the booklet mentioned above, are: *Peoples of the Pacific*, *Flora and Fauna of the Pacific*, *Art Forms of the Pacific Area*, *Economy of the Pacific*, *Native Dwellings of the Pacific Area* and *Native Means of Transportation in the Pacific Area*. Each map was reproduced as a full-color plate in a booklet published after the exposition closed. Also titled *Pageant of the Pacific* (1940), the document looks back upon the exposition and toward the future of its pan-Pacific vision.

To help understand the ideas at play in Covarrubias’s maps for Pacific House, it is worth considering some of the key concepts being developed in the field of human geography around the same time. Geography, as a discipline with its own theories and methods, takes as its purview the relationship between

of “extend[ing] the knowledge of the countries of the Pacific Basin—to create those friendly relations which make for a wider understanding between peoples,” as Wilbur writes in the same introduction. Although at odds with current events in both Europe and Asia, an optimism in the goals of the fair is also articulated: “The possibility of the stark tragedy that is now overwhelming the world was sensed in the early days of the Fair, when the thought of making the themes of the 1939 Exposition, A Pageant of the Pacific, a living reality first took place. It was hoped then that the idea would become an entity which would live after the Exposition closed its gates” (Wilbur 1940).

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human society and the physical environment. Within the United States, the discipline underwent a major shift during the first part of the twentieth century, moving from a deterministic to a possibilistic view of culture. In geography, environmental determinism emphasizes the role of the environment in shaping those cultures inhabiting it, while environmental possibilism emphasizes the role of cultures in shaping their environment through use and habitation. As such, possibilism recognizes the agency of human cultures by focusing on how they have acted on the landscape by modifying its character and being limited by its available resources—in effect, living in it through the creative interpretation of the possibilities found there. These concepts are at the foundation of cultural geography as a discipline.

Within the United States, these ideas were first articulated by Carl O. Sauer in his foundational essay, “The Morphology of Landscape” (1925). It is here that he clearly refocuses geography’s attention on human beings, writing, “Geography is distinctly anthropocentric, in the sense of value or use of the earth to man” (1969: 325). The conclusion of his essay provides a succinct overview of why Sauer rejects environmental determinism which, he writes, is based on a “narrowly rationalistic thesis.” He continues:

[It] conceives of environment as process, and some of the qualities and activities of man as products. The agency is physical nature; man responds or adapts himself. Simple as the thesis sounds, it incurs continually grave difficulties in the matching of specific response to specific stimulus or inhibition. [...] What man does in an area because of tabu or totemism or because of his own will involves use of environment rather than the active agency of the environment. (1969: 349)

Central to “The Morphology of Landscape” is the concept of the “cultural landscape.” To fully understand the physical landscape, the geographer must first understand the culture that inhabits a given area which, in this context, denotes “the sum of all natural resources that man has at his disposal” (1969: 325–326). Such an approach offers “a strictly geographic way of thinking about culture; namely, as the impress of the works of man upon the area” (326). By extension, the idea of the “cultural landscape” would also incorporate the ways in which a given culture understands, describes and characterizes the environment it inhabits.

In the modernizing world of the early twentieth century, competing views of the same landscape would inevitably encounter one another. The interpretation of a given landscape enters the realm of abstract myth and symbol (incorporating “tabu or totemism”). Such uses are as important for a culture as the ways in which it physically changes the landscape. In the end, “the cultural landscape [...] is subject to change either by the development of a culture or by a replacement of cultures” (333). These few excerpts help in understanding Sauer’s contribution in “The Morphology of Landscape” which, in its entirety, provides a systematic articulation of cultural geography and its methods. As a document, it would be integral to the discipline for much of the twentieth century, most notably through the influence of the “Berkeley School” of geographers at the University of California, Berkeley, which was led by Sauer himself for some thirty years (Parsons 2009: 4–5).

The shift in approach to the study of culture represented by Sauer and his students was not confined to the academy, nor was it strictly confined to the discipline of geography. For example, in one recent study, *The Geopoetics of Modernism* (2015), Rebecca Walsh explores the ways “in which literary modernism and geographical knowledge co-evolved” during the interwar period (2015: 3). Focusing her analysis on modernist poetry,⁴ Walsh examines how environmental determinism pervaded the culture at large through such publications as *National Geographic Magazine* and other popular media, emphasizing the difficulty in breaking away from causal understandings of environment that suggest “landscape first, culture second” (15). The literary engagement with these issues suggests the wider context in which society was coming to terms with the complexities of human culture and cultural interaction during the first half of the twentieth century. Engagement with various aspects of cultural geography, balanced against a preoccupation with the modernizing world, allowed certain writers, artists and intellectuals to depart from conventional paradigms through the aid of the evolving socio-scientific discourse.

In the case of Covarrubias, this context is more than happenstance. In 1938, when he was commissioned to paint the sequence

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4. Walsh’s central figures are Walt Whitman, Helene Johnson, Langston Hughes, Gertrude Stein and H.D.

of mural-maps for the Golden Gate International Exposition, the template for these maps, known as the “Van der Grinten Projection,” was selected by Sauer himself. At the turn of the century, when this projection was still relatively new, E. A. Reeves, map curator and instructor of surveying for the Royal Geographical Society, provided a practical assessment of the projection, explaining its merits and defects in practical terms. Reeves writes, “[t]here can be little doubt that Mr. Van der Grinten’s projection possesses advantages over the others [the Mercator and Mollweide projections] for special purposes, such as representing the geographical distribution of natural phenomena, oceanic circulation, trade routes, etc.” (1904: 671). At the same time, these qualities have their educational disadvantages, potentially misleading the student given the exaggeration of its polar regions. To avoid this, Reeves suggests omitting the northern and southern poles from the map, thereby maintaining its advantages in “conveying a far more accurate idea of relative areas” (671). This is exactly what was done in designing the template for the Pacific House murals—and it is that template from which Covarrubias worked.

In his introductory note to the descriptive booklet published to commemorate the *Pageant of the Pacific*, Covarrubias writes, “the Van Der Grinten projection was chosen because it showed the land areas in a proportionate manner without the distortion and exaggeration of certain lands in detriment to others seen in the more familiar projections” (Covarrubias 1940). Covarrubias’s introductory notes—in which he also offers his thanks to Sauer and the Department of Geography at Berkeley—point to the ways in which the qualities of the projection function in his *Pageant of the Pacific*. Covarrubias’s primary concern is with the “geographical distribution” of the peoples, flora and fauna, art forms, economy, dwelling types and transportation of the Pacific region.⁵ What

5. Although he omits trade routes (including from the fourth map, *Economy of the Pacific*), draft materials that include such routes do exist among Covarrubias’s papers held by the Universidad de las Américas Puebla in their Archivo Miguel Covarrubias. While incomplete, they nevertheless include similar attention to details as the other maps, further demonstrating how he envisioned the Pacific area spilling into the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. Nonetheless, trade routes were included in a leaded-glass window in the Pacific House on its north wall.

is most striking in the context of Covarrubias's maps, however, is not the use of the Van der Grinten projection, but in shifting it to center on the Pacific Ocean and relegating all continental land masses to its perimeter.

Following this brief introduction, Covarrubias continues with a brief outline of "The Pacific Area" that discusses this unusual orientation. He writes:

A map centered on the Pacific Ocean is apt to be unfamiliar to us, accustomed since childhood to see world-maps with a strong emphasis upon the Atlantic, with Europe on one side, America on the other. For this reason, and because of a certain prejudice, prevalent until recently, for peoples and cultures other than those of European, 'White', origin, the Pacific Ocean has come to be regarded in the popular mind as a vast expanse of water bordered by and dotted with remote, exotic peoples, and as a barrier rather than the link that it is, between the peoples, cultures and economy of the countries of the Pacific Area. (1940)

The sentiment expressed here is perhaps no less relevant today than when Covarrubias first wrote it.⁶ In attempting to correct for these distances in the "popular mind" and its tendency to exoticize Pacific cultures, Covarrubias contributes to "an important aspect of [the] educational agenda" of the exposition, as anthropologist Nancy C. Lutkehaus argues in her essay on the murals (2014: 121). While the Golden Gate International Exposition may have emerged from the problematic tradition of world's fairs of the nineteenth century and their "racist agendas and imperialist functions" (111), the vision it represented was "transitional [...] or, at the very least, a more complex cultural artifact than other earlier fairs" (111–112). It is through Covarrubias's mural-maps that, however much the whole event "still promoted the hegemony of American economic, technological, and social superiority [...] the images of transpacific connections that Miguel Covarrubias depicted in the six murals [...] actually helped to make explicit new ideas about the interconnections between the indigenous peoples of what we now call the Pacific Rim" (128–129). Before continuing the discussion of the educational qualities of the *Pageant*

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6. Nancy C. Lutkehaus begins her own discussion of the *Pageant of the Pacific* by invoking President Barack Obama's 2012 remarks that "[...] the United States is and always will be a Pacific nation." (109).

of the Pacific, however, it is necessary to discuss the mural-maps in greater detail.

After his introductory notes and explanation of the “Pacific Area,” Covarrubias continues the booklet by providing a short but detailed descriptive essay for each map, which function as interpretive aids. For example, Covarrubias writes that *Peoples of the Pacific Area*

attempts to roughly divide the cultures of the Pacific into general geographical areas where characteristic cultures exist, whether ancient or contemporary. In many cases these cultures are superimposed or overlap and the outlines shown here should only be taken as a general guide for their situation and not as a study of their relationship. (1940)

The study of their relationship should instead come through observing the qualities and characteristics of the cultural artifacts of these diverse peoples, only some of whom are depicted across the larger *Pageant of the Pacific*. As Covarrubias notes, the geographic areas on these mural-maps are “general” and he has selected representative examples both “ancient and contemporary.” Here, Covarrubias alludes to his lifelong engagement with the study of comparative anthropology. Although not yet fully articulated, his ideas on the topic would become his life’s work, beginning to take form in *Mexico South* and eventually formulated in *The Eagle, the Jaguar, and the Serpent* (1954), which was the first of three volumes that would present a Pan-American study of the peoples of North, Central and South America from a comparative, diffusionist perspective. The second volume, *Indian Art of Mexico and Central America* (1957) would be published posthumously and the third, on South American indigenous cultures, would remain unfinished. (see fig. 1 on the facing page).

The maps found within Pacific House only hint at Covarrubias’s later ideas and, while important in understanding the larger trajectory of his career, they are interesting in their own right and in the context of the overall message and objectives of the exposition. The educational component of these maps functions both in terms of the pan-Pacific unity proposed by the Golden Gate Exposition, but also in terms of Covarrubias’s developing theories of cultural diffusion in the Americas—and the desired impact

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Fig. 1. Miguel Covarrubias, *Peoples of the Pacific* from *Pageant of the Pacific*, 1940. Courtesy of the Archivo Miguel Covarrubias. Sala de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Dirección de Bibliotecas, Universidad de las Américas Puebla.

is clearly suggested in a book for young readers, *A Trip to the San Francisco Exposition with Bobby and Betty* (1939), by San Francisco author and journalist, Joseph Henry Jackson.⁷ Upon entering Pacific House and seeing the murals, the astute young Bobby immediately notices the design and focus of the six mural-maps. He asks his father, “Dad [...] why are these so different from other maps? They don’t look the same at all. I can tell the United States, for example, and South America and the Orient too, but it all seems to be in different proportions somehow. Why is that?” (Jackson 1939: 70). The proud father explains:

Yes, these maps *are* different. And the reason is that they’re all drawn from a different starting place from the ones you’re used to. [...] Instead of working that way and considering the whole world, the artist took just the Pacific Area and found the center of it. Then he drew his map from that center—just as if the Pacific Area was all the world there was! Geographically, in relation to the rest of the world, this map wouldn’t be of any use. But it does show the relationship between the parts of the Pacific Area and far better and more truly than a map which has to consider the whole world. (70–71)

The lesson is quickly absorbed and Bobby continues observing Covarrubias’s illustrations on the maps and, once again, his father explains their unique quality:

[...] what the artist was after in this case was not merely geography. These ‘maps’ (you have to call them that, though it isn’t the right word, really) are made to show *not* just geography but history. And not just history, either, in the way most of us have always learned it—in terms of dates and time—but history in terms of the culture of the different races around the Pacific. (71–72)

While the father displays certain prejudices and a limited understanding of certain concepts, the reader can forgive him these shortcomings, as he encourages an open-minded perspective in his two children, inspiring them to approach the murals with

7. Jackson’s book was part of the series, *Seeing America with Bobby and Betty*, in which the two eponymous children also travel to the cities of Washington and New York, as well as the New York World’s Fair. They were written by well-known figures of the time, including Lowell Thomas—and the story of their trip to Washington, DC, was written by a certain “Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt.”

their imaginations—and this is exactly what Bobby and Betty do, moving “from one wall to the next, following the whole story of civilization in the Pacific, tracing the migration of peoples [...] They saw how the American Indian developed one kind of civilization and how the Aztec and the Maya and the Inca developed entirely different kinds” (72). Coaxed along by their father, once immersed among the mural-maps, “Bobby and Betty found it quite different and the most interesting thing they had ever seen or done. In fact Mother and Dad had a hard time waking them out of the half-dream into which these extraordinary maps had put them” (72). Surely Covarrubias would have been pleased by these two young students and their perceptiveness.

Part of what enthalls Bobby and Betty is what art historian and museum director Sylvia Navarrete describes as the “synchronic narrative treatment” of the murals (qtd. In López Casillas, et al. 2005: 101). The *Pageant of the Pacific* depicts a non-linear history of Pacific cultures told through the presentation of general culture areas and representative cultural artifacts. Each map individually suggests complex structures of historical-geographical exchange and, together, as a set of six mural-maps, form an iterative sequence among themselves.

Part of any interpretation of Covarrubias’s project in Pacific House should consider the original architectural context of these murals. As Lutkehaus writes, the exposition adopted a “Pacific Unity” style for the exterior of the fair’s buildings that “drew on the monumental architecture of the archaic cultures found on the Pacific Rim” (2014: 118). Alternatingly described by critics as either “fun” or as “fakery” (qtd. in Lutkehaus 2014: 120), the fairgrounds were composed of an eclectic blend of architectural styles filtered through a contemporary streamline moderne aesthetic (119).

While a fitting atmosphere in which to find Covarrubias’s murals, it is also important to consider the interior of these buildings. The basic layout of the interior of Pacific House would have contributed to the experience of these mural-maps, as all murals engage their audiences in a manner different from easel paintings or other artwork created on a smaller scale—and a mural sequence even more so. The experience of viewing

a mural involves the audience entering a spatial “envelope,” as Leonard Folgarait writes in his book, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico* (1998). He writes, “murals describe, construct, and somewhat control the human viewing subject. Upon crossing into a mural’s field of engagement, the status of the viewer changes from spectator to participant and her or his action within this spatial envelope is then seen in terms of that state of envelopment” (1998: 28). When confronted by multiple panels of a mural sequence in a large room, the viewer is able to move among the different images in any number of directions. It is fundamentally about size and scale and murals allow their audience to move “through space, to and from an image of proportions that can fully occupy the field of vision to become a ‘place’” (28).

The ‘place’ created inside Pacific House was composed of more than Covarrubias’s maps. In the center of its floor was a relief map of the Pacific Basin playfully designed to include “four whales in the middle of the fountain, spouting water to feed the Pacific Ocean of the elliptical basin with its relief surface” (James and Voland 1941: 101). The spirit of this design matched the cartoon-like aesthetic found in Covarrubias’s mural-maps and, together, they served the vision of the exposition and its educative goals. One imagines visitors entering the building through different entrances, greeted by the maps on the walls above the other doorways. They do not encounter the mural-maps in the sequence presented in the booklet discussed above, as there is no fixed sequence of viewing implied by the space itself. One can move freely around the fountain in any direction, looking at the murals above from different angles and distances while listening to the splashing of the fountain. One is enveloped by representations of the Pacific Ocean and its component parts. It is a ‘place’ dedicated to the Pacific, earning its name, “Pacific House.” In moving about within the room, the viewers must construct their own understanding of how these cultures all fit together through associative observation. There can be no linear narrative logic to the maps and their very display conveys the idea that the peoples, the flora and fauna, the art

forms, the economy, the dwelling types and the transportation of the Pacific have been and will continue to be interconnected. These images are the raw material through which open-minded observers such as Bobby and Betty, through their “half-dream” and imaginative faculties, begin to formulate patterns and connections suggested through—but in no way dictated by—Covarrubias’s compositions. As such, visitors are welcomed to a place where they create their own spontaneous study of comparative material culture to which Covarrubias had begun to devote his own professional energies. One begins to see how the map projection, the mission of the exposition, the floorplan, Covarrubias’s illustration style and his anthropological theories, all merge to create a larger vision.

By not committing his murals or his audience to a linear narrative structure, Navarrete suggests that Covarrubias “extends the informative function and the poetic interpretation: he embraces geography, tourism, production, and statistics, as well as folklore, religion, and festive exaltation. Beyond their commercial character and allegorical expression, his maps are genuine modern codices and occupy a distinguished place in Mexican muralism” (qtd. in López Casillas, et al. 2005: 101). Covarrubias’s use of color, emblematic human figures and representative material artifacts of what he calls the “more or less important cultures” includes a list of no fewer than sixty different peoples from across North, Central and South America, Asia, Indonesia, Melanesia and Polynesia (Covarrubias 1940). Arranged around the Pacific Basin, the different symbolic representations reach out to one another across what no longer appears to be such a vast expanse. So too does the different subject matter of each map and its various cultural-geographic areas resonate with those across the room, above the elliptical fountain. As visitors move about within the “spatial envelope” created by these “genuine modern codices,” they face west from San Francisco Bay, where Covarrubias asks them to contemplate the historical-geographical cycles of human migration, circling back across the Pacific and through Asia to where the human story began.

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Fig. 2. Miguel Covarrubias, detail of Asia, *Peoples of the Pacific*, from *Pag-eant of the Pacific*, 1940. Courtesy of the Archivo Miguel Covarrubias. Sala de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Dirección de Bibliotecas, Universidad de las Américas Puebla.

As Covarrubias would write in *Indian Art of Mexico and Central America*, ancient Mesoamerican codices are not all that far removed from contemporary graphic communication. He observes:

The Mixtec artists told stories of the most complex nature with stylizations of human beings, gods, animals, plants, mountains, pools, clouds, and all sorts of accessory objects and symbols, very much like our own comic strips, with standard postures and conventions [...]. These elements, though always highly stylized, are always endowed with a realistic touch that permits recognition of whatever is represented. (1957: 302)

*One World
The Americas
Everywhere*

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This quality is clearly present in all of Covarrubias's maps, but the *Pag-eant of the Pacific* provides a much larger geographic area in which to explore them, as Covarrubias extends his canvas far beyond the Pacific Rim, including cultures from the shores of the Indian and Atlantic Oceans and well inland among the mountains of Tibet and the Great Plains of the United States. Although he never provides a firm definition of the "Pacific Area," nor any elaboration for why he chose specific cultures, there is another clue to his thinking in his description of the mural, *Economy of the Pacific* (see fig. 3). It is there that he writes: "Trade routes, not shown

in this map, are great arteries that branch out toward the many ports on the area” (1940). The list tellingly includes the Atlantic ports of New York, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro alongside those important ports that open their harbors onto the waters of the Pacific, such as San Francisco, Valparaiso, Osaka, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila and Melbourne, among others.

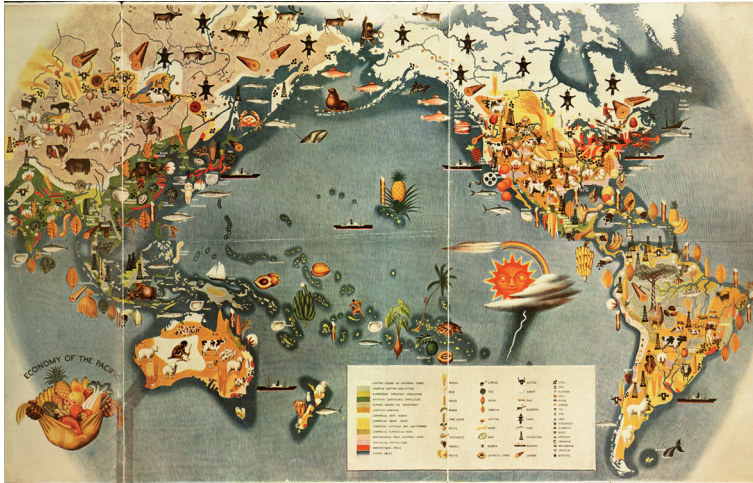


Fig. 3. Miguel Covarrubias, *Economy of the Pacific* from *Pageant of the Pacific*, 1940. Courtesy of the Archivo Miguel Covarrubias. Sala de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Dirección de Bibliotecas, Universidad de las Américas Puebla.

That these ports are connected despite the particulars of their regional geography can be readily understood by any audience then or now—especially within the context of pan-Pacific idealism. Whatever the given product may be, there is a market for it elsewhere in a globalizing world. In the maps *Art Forms of the Pacific Area* and *Native Dwellings of the Pacific Area*, Covarrubias’s primary concern seems to be with the representation of the ancient and indigenous cultures of these continents—and therefore focused on the past. Yet, in *Native Means of Transportation in the Pacific Area*, he includes the China Clipper, a modern aircraft operated by Pan American Airways as the first commercial transpacific airmail service from San Francisco to Manila via Honolulu, Midway Island, Wake Island and Guam. Covarrubias describes the China Clipper as “stand[ing] as a climax and a symbol of the aims of the Pacific

Area—bringing Asia to America and America to Asia in five days” (1940). The inclusion of modern aircraft and its capabilities serves to remind the audience that they are merely part of a much larger process of cultural exchange. The more rustic types of transportation among which it is situated, along with the native dwelling types and art forms of the other mural-maps, presents an iconography in which no viewer can possibly ignore the historic gradient of cultural variations and similarities.

The same can be said of the symbolic representations and ideas contained in *Peoples of the Pacific*.⁸ The representations Covarrubias provides in *Peoples of the Pacific* demonstrate his lifelong interests in the traditional costuming of the peoples native to Asia, the Pacific islands and the Americas. Through many other figures, however, he simultaneously illustrates the modern world. In Asia, for instance, the viewer will find a Chinese soldier in the uniform of the National Revolutionary Army (see fig. 2). Despite distance in time, the modern citizens of North America populate the same landmass as those native peoples in more traditional dress—and perhaps the most striking contrasts are found in the “Easterner,” a businessman in New York, reclining in his rolling chair with a cigar, or the “Californian” lounging on the West Coast with her bright blonde hair, sunglasses and white bikini (see fig. 4). Nevertheless, between these comic commentaries on modern materialism and the more dignified presentation of Native American peoples, one finds other ‘traditional’ peoples insofar as the contemporary folk culture of the Americas is concerned. One can cite the “Mexican” figure in his *charro* suiting and his northern counterpart, the “Westerner,” who rides a bareback bronco (see figs. 4 and 5).⁹ Indeed, upon closer inspection, the inclusion of other figures such as the “Middle-Westerner,” the “North-West Canadian” and the “Southern Negro,” suggests that the wide array

8. A commentary similar to that described here can be found in *Economy of the Pacific*, which is dominated by traditional agricultural activities (alongside those of fisheries and forestry) liberally sprinkled with oil rigs and container ships, two ubiquitous symbols of the modern world of industrial and extractive economies (see fig. 3).

9. A detail of South America (not included here) would show yet another counterpart, the “Gaucho.”



Fig. 4. Miguel Covarrubias, detail of North America, *Peoples of the Pacific*, from *Pageant of the Pacific*, 1940. Courtesy of the Archivo Miguel Covarrubias. Sala de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Dirección de Bibliotecas, Universidad de las Américas Puebla.

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Fig. 5. Miguel Covarrubias, detail of North America, *Peoples of the Pacific*, from *Pageant of the Pacific*, 1940. Courtesy of the Archivo Miguel Covarrubias. Sala de Archivos y Colecciones Especiales, Dirección de Bibliotecas, Universidad de las Américas Puebla.

of peoples and the historical progression they represent would seem to be fairly well-balanced across cultures from ancient to modern. The range of figures included reminds the viewer that, although the juxtapositions are sometimes bizarre, none can ever escape the cultural presence and implication of the others.¹⁰

Such is the underlying sensibility present in all of Covarrubias' maps, as Tomás Ybarra-Frausto writes in his essay, "Miguel Covarrubias: Cartógrafo" (1987), "[r]ather than seeing borders as points of division, he envisioned them as a space of contact and communication" (qtd. in Williams 1994: 156). It is from this perspective that Covarrubias is writing when he describes *Native Dwellings of the Pacific Area*. In the first sentence of his overview, he writes: "Climate and raw materials available are of course the principal factors determining the native types of dwellings, however one must not overlook other elements such as cultural connections, living habits, traditional forms and styles and purposes of dwellings" (1940). It is in the shift from the first to the second part of this statement where one hears Covarrubias echoing the changing intellectual climate of his era. It is the same shift from environmental determinism toward environmental possibilism that Sauer defined, emphasizing human agency in the ways people act and interact within and across different geographic areas. The fate of humankind is not determined by external forces and the responsibility shared among cultures cannot be evaded or ignored. For this reason, the geographer D. W. Meinig describes Sauer's approach as "Deeply grounded in science, yet speculative,

10. It is here that some of Covarrubias's ideas show their age. In his description of *Peoples of the Pacific*, Covarrubias writes that "The old concept of mankind as divided by color lines into four great races [...] is obsolete today among anthropologists." Nonetheless, he adopts a system of categorization equally outmoded today. He continues: "for the sake of convenience and based upon definite physical characteristics [...] anthropologists now divide the peoples of the earth into three major groups: Mongoloids, Caucasoids, and Negroids, with endless variations" (1940). Despite the racist terminology, however, the reader understands it to be the then-current language of anthropology. Later in his description, Covarrubias notes that "the white Latin American[s] [...] are not shown on this map" (1940). He does not comment further, but Covarrubias is aware of the colonialist implications of the terminology and the content of his mural-map would partly seem to mitigate that same legacy.

reflective, and critical, expressing his strong convictions about some grand themes of man and the earth [...] his view that geography at its best must carry a message for mankind, it becomes a form of moral philosophy” (1983: 319).

In his *Pageant of the Pacific*, Covarrubias paints the ocean a rich blue color, still and peaceful. In the context of Pacific House, arranged around the relief map and the fountain at its center, one can ignore the European Theater of the Second World War just beyond the fringes of the mural-maps. Although war had already broken-out in Asia and the Pacific Theater would soon extend to Pearl Harbor, Covarrubias’s vision is not naïve but, rather, presents the “grand themes” of human culture and civilization. Another possibility for the world can be seen here, but it implores its viewers to imagine it. In its own way, then, Covarrubias’s cartography offers its own message and moral philosophy.

A well-traveled man with wide-ranging interests, Covarrubias would always return to his country of birth, remaining deeply invested in understanding how Mexico’s own regions fit together and how Mexico fits into the larger world. Yet, it would be a mistake to view these as contradictory impulses. This is the topic of *Mexico South* which would expand outward into North America more generally in *The Eagle, the Jaguar, and the Serpent*—how world cultures, across the gradations of geographical scale, all fit together. It is the constant balance between the local, regional, continental and global that is consistently displayed in Covarrubias’s work and that is of utmost importance. When taken together, the diverse projects in which Covarrubias was involved contain a constellation of ideas that reveal a vision of human culture in which history and geography are fully integrated—Covarrubias’s *Pageant of the Pacific*, along with his other illustrated maps, depict both past and present expressions of culture against the diversity of ecologies, natural resources and physical environments in the places where they are to be found. In his maps the geography is more than mere background, it is instead the setting and medium for human activity.

A confluence of factors—a changing vision and understanding of human culture, a modernizing world that continues to shrink once-vast distances, the growing conflict that would eventually

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erupt into the Second World War—can be observed on the walls of Pacific House. Further south along California’s shores, the interconnectedness of it all was phrased differently by John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts in their *Log from the Sea of Cortez* (1951), first published in 1941 as the narrative component of their *Sea of Cortez: A Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research*. It chronicles an expedition of marine biologists in the Gulf of California at a moment almost exactly contemporaneous with Covarrubias’s *Pageant of the Pacific*. In the introduction to the book, the authors write:

[...] if we seem a small factor in a huge pattern, nevertheless it is of relative importance. We take a tiny colony of soft corals from a rock in a little water world. And that isn’t terribly important to the tide pool. Fifty miles away the Japanese shrimp boats are dredging with overlapping scoops, bringing up tons of shrimps, rapidly destroying the species so that it may never come back, and with the species destroying the ecological balance of the whole region. That isn’t very important in the world. And thousands of miles away the great bombs are falling and the stars are not moved thereby. None of it is important or all of it is. (1995: 3)

The same sensibility is found in Covarrubias’s *Pageant of the Pacific*—and, to a certain degree, in all his maps. Whatever the theme, subject or field of study to which a map may pertain, he constantly strikes out into the vastness of the world and its continents, moving through the regions and localized cultures that form a substrate through which human agency has shaped the world it inhabits. Throughout his work, Covarrubias demonstrates the possibilities of “scale-jumping” by simultaneously considering the international and the local in terms of the reciprocity among human cultures and between human beings and their physical environments. Its scope is broad—from architecture to art to economics to fauna and flora to people to transportation—and it is anthropocentric and geographical and interdisciplinary. Covarrubias illustrates the richness and depth found in the interconnectedness of human culture that might otherwise go unnoticed when seen through the lens of any one disciplinary perspective.

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BETWEEN SUSPICION AND LOVE

Reality, Postcritique,
and Euro-American Modernization
(An Introduction to the Debate)

He told us, *with the years you will come
To love the world.*
And we sat there with our souls in our laps
And comforted them.

Dorothea Tanning, “Graduation” (2004)

Anyone who attends academic talks has
learned to expect the inevitable question:
“But what about power?” Perhaps it is
time to start asking different questions:
“But what about love?”

Rita Felski, *The Limits of Critique* (2015)

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For some time scholars in literary studies have felt the need to ask anew about the central activity of the field: reading. More than a decade ago, the debate on “surface reading” or “just reading” inaugurated a reassessment of critical practice (Marcus 2007; Marcus and Best 2009).¹ The phrase championed neither a return to literature as a kind of *hortus conclusus* sheltered from society and history, nor the idea of criticism reduced to isolated exegesis. Rather, it called for heightened attention to the details of the text. The reassessment continues today under the name of *postcritique*. Interestingly, the term

1. The phrase “just reading” is used by Sharon Marcus in *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (Marcus 2007).

is usually associated with the search for a new critical method in the humanities.² Appreciating the significance of the search for fresh perspectives, it is however worth the while to shift the focus from the objective itself to the agency of the critic. The reflections presented in this text are meant to map out the dominant contexts, in which the prefix “post” chiefly occurs in order to open up possible vistas for a more indepth study of the role each of us may play in the epistemic transformation postulated, or awaited, by the proponents of postcritique today.

Acknowledging the diversity of critical voices in the field, it is perhaps not without reason to organize these reflections around Rita Felski’s important neutralization of the “negativity,” semantically inscribed into the term “critique.” In her view, the essence of critique does not reside in acts leveled *against* the positions adopted by the proponents of particular artistic or theoretical perspectives on reality: conversely, it is founded upon acts of *love*. In her understanding, an act of critique is tantamount to an act of emancipation from suspicion to love—which the epigraphs to this essay so eloquently emphasize. Felski’s postulate of critique-as-love provides us with an opportunity to re-consider the agency of the critic and its metamorphoses over time. Paradoxically, the poststructuralist turn, which (apparently) liberated the all-too-rigid hermeneutics of the periods preceding it from its (structuralist) limitations, unexpectedly transformed the critic into a misguided reader whose senses, dulled with ideologically tinged “critical instrumentarium,” have made him or her read the text through what is absent, and hear in it what has never been uttered.

Postcritique is a nuanced and multifaceted phenomenon. The contributors of the groundbreaking collection titled *Critique and Postcritique*, to give an impactful example, represent a complex set of legacies and methods. They advocate a turn

2. See Heather Love’s project of “meticulous flat description” or other attempts, like Franco Moretti’s “distant reading,” which rely on data mining and cognitive science to confer scientific legitimacy and universal value to the interpretation of texts (Love 2010; Love 2013). Further core readings on description include *Description Across Disciplines*, special issue of *Representations* (2016), edited by Sharon Marcus, Heather Love and Stephen Best.

that cannot be reduced to any simple, or simplistic, reaction to poststructuralism. Likewise, poststructuralism, that they move away from, cannot be reduced to a set of critical practices ancillary to ideological purposes. Rather, these scholars' aim is to revitalize criticism poised at the productive confluence of aesthetics and politics. Yet, there is a sense in which postcritique names the waning of critique understood as inseparable from the narrative of local modernization, or, for the lack of a better phrasing, the western post-Enlightenment paradigm. This understanding of critique has consisted in the selective, mutual incorporation of European schools and the American tradition, too often in a linear manner. This might be the reason why what we hear as the disaffection for deconstructive gestures might be comprehended as a way of working through the loss of a local transatlantic past.

The term *postcritique*, therefore, affords a particular version of the "narrative of critique." When looked at from the outside of the "common," allegedly "western," narrative—for instance, through the lens of the so-called Italian theory, as exemplified by Roberto Esposito (and Croce, Gentile, and Gramsci before him)—the linear narrative proves untenable. Rather than arguing for the "post-," the proponents of "Italian theory" revert back to occlusions. In this perspective, the linear assimilation of schools and national intellectual traditions proves illusory. As a consequence, the ongoing critique represented by the "third-wave" of theory (Italian Theory), poses the problem of a latent thought, a thought that has not been contained within the methodologies born out of the linguistic turn. Such thought, unaccounted for, may be argued to be attuned to the dynamics of globalization: it is marked with a different sense of time, an with a *pietas* toward the past.

Although these reflections do not aspire to being conclusive, they are intended to offer a point of departure for further, perhaps more detailed, translocal studies bridging the two poles of the contemporary western thought across the Atlantic. To attain this goal, we should probably begin with exploring the question of what has brought on this change in the conception of what the critic is?

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Imagining different ways of reading, proponents of post-critique, such as Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best, champion a critical practice that will not construe “presence as absence and affirmation as negation” (Marcus 2007 qtd. in Marcus and Best 2009: 12). They question a critical practice that, at least in part, is the outcome of the excesses of poststructuralism, especially when it places the critic in competition with the text and endows the former with a greater freedom vis-à-vis the latter (Marcus and Best 2009: 18). It would of course be wrong to reduce poststructuralism to these excesses. In the Anglophone world, the term “poststructuralism,” often refers to the displacement and relocation of French philosophy and criticism (from Roland Barthes’s semiology to French feminisms to deconstruction) to the US. It names less a movement and more a cluster of authors who “were read and classified or compartmentalized” (Dillet 2017: 517) and, together, have facilitated the dialogue between different branches of knowledge, including psychoanalysis and Marxism. Like all labels, poststructuralism seems a rather inadequate name for a multiplicity of developments. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the principal effect of the departure from the former methodological perspectives on literary studies has been the recognition of the autonomy of the critic. Admittedly, to some scholars, this autonomy now appears as an emblem of the theoretical and political excesses that have encouraged “opportunistic uses of texts from the past, primarily fueled by ideological or deconstructive purposes” (Collini 2015). Postcritique, however, is neither tantamount to the rejection of poststructuralism nor to its reduction to an opportunistic manipulation of texts. While it does take issue with symptomatic reading, that is to say, with reading that is motivated by the aim of unveiling the repressed meaning(s) of the text, it, as this analysis further demonstrates, also retains the propinquity to Marxism and psychoanalysis in its practice of interpretation (Marcus and Best 2009: 19). Postcritique wishes for the liberation of the literary critic from the burden of repressed meaning, but it nonetheless points out that the strategies imputed to poststructuralism (debunking and deconstructing binaries)

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reach further back into the past and thereby amount to the larger question of reality.

In the light of “Italian Theory,” after Marx, it is strange to think of reality in empirical terms. Change comes to inhere to the concept of reality: the task of thinking about reality is “restituting living substance to the real” (Esposito 2020: 94).³ Psychoanalysis has joined Marxism and played an important role in the restitution process, since its central interest lies in “the coming to being of the new that was not there and that becomes real” (Lacan 2013: 136).⁴ But the question arises: how can reality contain the exigency of its own transformation? Those who perceive the exigency do not necessarily want a revolt against reality. Once reality is understood as praxis, the thought related to it is “objectively inclined to change it” (Esposito 2020: 194). The metamorphosis of the critic that brought about the exigency of postcritique may be understood as the legacy of the question of reality.

Marxism and psychoanalysis join forces to show that change is not an addition to knowledge, but that knowledge is synonymous with change. Language takes on a preeminent role in the task, to the extent that the entire arch of post-Saussurean modernity is dominated by the idea that experience is mediated by language. Poststructuralism, in this sense, is an iteration of the former vision of the world, yet, warped by the experience of the two World Wars, and mistrustful of the idea of “progress.” In literary studies, it translates into a marked attention to resistance, struggle, difference, to the limits of knowledge and to the undoing of oppositions and binaries,⁵ with criticism attempting to renegotiate the “proper” distance between the critic and the text.

The idea that “experience has a transcendently linguistic character” (Esposito 2016: 161) is central to the 20th century philosophical reflection (one thinks of Martin Heidegger’s idea that language is the dwelling of man as combined with his concept of *Sorge*), coin-

3. For Esposito, this interrogation of reality reaches back to include Machiavelli (Esposito 2020: 193–207).

4. I am drawing on the Italian text of Lacan’s “Discorso di Roma” (Lacan 2013: 133–164), the stenographic transcript of the speech delivered by Lacan in Rome, 26 September 1953, that introduced “The Function and Field of Language in Psychoanalysis” (Lacan 1977: 30–113). My translation.

5. See Williams (2005); Bertens (2007).

cluding with the belief that no “truth” exists that is not mediated by human conceptual systems, extends to literary studies as well (Fleissner 2017: 103). The theme of language and its inadequacy bridges the distance between (broadly understood) philosophy and literature. Especially with the rise of Theory, it brings into the foreground the question of the zone of contact between two neighboring fields: philosophical and literary criticism (in all senses of the terms involved).⁶

CRAVING FOR OBJECTIVITY

In this context, Jennifer Fleissner lists three major departures from the pre-poststructuralist past. First, the tendency now is to start from the assumption that there is a cluster of objective facts that the critic should discern; second, the task of the critic is seen as that of grasping these objective facts in as accurate a manner as possible; third, the critic’s subjectivity should be advantageously enlisted in the process of discerning objective facts (2017: 102). These positions betray a craving for objectivity in literary studies. Scholars, as Fleissner observes, increasingly turn to the cognitive sciences in an attempt to correct the interference of the critic’s subjectivity with what is postulated to be “accurate” knowledge of texts. The search for method becomes a way to develop a distance from the excesses of the past decades, and thereby to disarm the “insistence on criticism as a forthrightly political act” (2017: 102). Mary Thomas Crane, for example, advocates a “methodological tool kit” that might supplant the consolidated, but problematic, “practice of reading for symptoms of hidden contradictions within cultural systems” (Crane 2009: 77).

The waning of the primacy of language is intimately linked to the rejection of critique understood as symptomatic reading, but it also parallels a larger problem that bears on the status of literary criticism as a field. Toril Moi illuminates the problem. From her point of view, it would be misleading to speak, as Mary Thomas Crane does, of a “methodological tool kit,” as it would be misleading to speak of a method that will cure the political

6. I capitalize the word ‘Theory’ to indicate not only a new genre of literary criticism but also a historical moment localized in the US and in the Anglophone world thereto connected.

and theoretical excesses of the past decades. As Moi reminds us, literary criticism is about reading, and reading is not a method. While granting that literary critics “mistake political and existential investments for methods, specific practices of reading” (2017: 179), Moi argues that the search for method distracts us from the more radical problem of our field, and that is the fact that reading is a *practice*. The “weak” sense of method might be the reason why some scholars lament contemporary literary critics’ reliance on other disciplines—linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and so on—for theoretical grounding (Crane 2009: 67). Should this dependence on others be seen as some fundamental lack? Should the critic’s dependence on the neighbor be a source of anxiety?⁷

If, as Moi contends, literary criticism means the practice of reading, and if the field therefore cannot be said to “have anything that we can call competing methods” (2017: 178),⁸ then close proximity with other disciplines may itself be constitutive of the field. Perhaps, it is precisely in this proximity that criticism can perceive itself as “living philosophy”: a *thought* understood not so much as a philosophy (or a systematic set of rules), but in the sense of a reflection, a thought-in-the-making.

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SUBJECTIVITY AND THE PHYSICAL WORLD

The craving for objectivity in literary criticism, manifest in the formerly unlikely marriages with other, distant, disciplines, goes hand in hand with a renewed interest in the physical world. Philosophers such as Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman pair “realism” with “materialism” to indicate that the reality neglected in the former twentieth century epistemological paradigms that needs to be attended to today is the reality of the *physical* world.

7. In her 2006 Presidential Address, MLA President Marjorie Perloff concludes that “instead of lusting after those other disciplines that seem so exotic primarily because we don’t really practice them, what we need is more theoretical, historical, and critical training in our own discipline” (qtd. in Lesjak 2013: 234).

8. Thus, when we talk of poststructuralism, feminist theory, or simply theory, we do not talk of methods *per se* unless, of course, we encourage our students to apply a certain theory to a text, but in so doing we would encourage them to repeat procedures leading to mechanical, standardized, production of interpretations. See Toril Moi (2017: 179).

In their introduction to the volume *The Speculative Turn* (2011), they hail the birth of “a new breed of thinker” who, regardless of the discipline he or she comes from, once again asks “questions about the nature of reality independently from human thought and from humanity more generally” (3). Contributors to the volume include Bruno Latour and Isabelle Stengers, two philosophers of science who have recently exerted significant influence on Anglophone literary studies with their view that the physical world is not about the empiricism of facts but, as Stengers puts it, about “the adventure of interpretation” (2011: 372). The definition appeals to one of the affects at the basis of reading, that is to say, wonder. For Stengers, interpretation is observation guided by the capacity for accepting what we see beyond the dogmas of reason. Her view would be embraced by many literary scholars, who, in the past decades, have hoped for the potential of interpretation to subvert dominant beliefs and established schools of thought (2011: 372).⁹

The other influential thinker included in *The Speculative Turn* is Bruno Latour. He shares Stengers’s views but prefers to talk about the “real world.” Latour argues for the exigency of our time “to raise the question of what the real world is really like” (2005: 117). His stress on the physical world modifies inherited accounts of modernity. In his own alternative account, modernity departs from its identification with rationalism and industrialism, as it is commonly construed in literary studies. He proposes a new ontology of relations by updating the old debate about the “two cultures.” This debate, in the late 1950s and the early 1960s, was led by figures like C. P. Snow and Aldous Huxley. Snow argued that the physical world, as an edifice erected by science, has an “intellectual depth” and a complex articulation that deserves aesthetic and critical investigation.¹⁰ Huxley exhorted to “a not too hostile symbiosis” between the scientific and literary communities,

9. To illustrate the subversive potential of observation, Stengers quotes the example of Diderot who once said to D’Alembert: “Do you see this egg? With it you can overthrow every school” (2011: 373).

10. See C. P. Snow’s *The Two Cultures* (2012). Its central concept was originally presented as a lecture, “The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution” in Senate House, Cambridge, in 1959.

wondering whether language could do justice to the physical world; he weighed the “crudeness of thought against matter, which is dynamic beyond any imaginable limit” (1963: 118). Both Snow and Huxley pointed to the problem of the literary critic who defined himself/herself against the horror of industrial modernity and the paralyzing power of science and technology. Following up on his predecessors, Latour further highlights the problematic figure of the critic. He denounces the scholars in the humanities who perceive themselves as guardians of a variety of immaterial objects: “souls, minds, interpersonal relations, the symbolic dimension, human warmth, local specificities, hermeneutics” (Latour 1993: 123; qtd. in Fleissner 2017: 103).¹¹ He overcomes the divide between the two cultures by integrating human and non-human actors (artefacts, objects, organizations, etc.) in the same conceptual framework, where all actors indistinctly are given the same potential for agency (actor-network theory).¹²

Literary studies have been especially receptive to this relational ontology because it seems to open up a space of thought away from hierarchies, from sovereignty and vertical structures.¹³ But the success of Latour’s pervasive relationality lies in the fact that the emphasis rescues the critic from what is perceived as the poststructuralist imperative of “a panoramic vision of the social order” (Felski 2015: 157), and restores to him/her the freedom of wonder. The restitution is palpable in certain metaphors put into play by the proponents of postcritique. Felski, for example, opposes the “impassive, scrupulously judgmental”

11. In her essay “Mapping, Bridging, Quilting: Tracing the Relations between Literature and Science,” which introduces the volume *The Art of Discovery* (2010), Margareth Hagen discusses “the cultural and historical turns, the continuities and discontinuities” that have shaped the dialogue between the literary and scientific communities over time and in different geographical areas.

12. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social. An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory* (2005).

13. In Wai Chee Dimock’s words, “Latour urges us to think instead about tangential processes, wayward lines of association, oblique to an existing system, pulling away from it and stretching it in unexpected ways. There is no reason why we should not work with these centrifugal forces, these “long networks” that head out—“mediators” that reopen closed cases and undo any naturalized hierarchies” (2013: 736).

observer cultivated by thinkers like Michel Foucault (who have been insistently labeled as poststructuralist) with another kind of observer, ready “to trudge along [...], marvelling at the intricate ecologies and diverse microorganisms that lie hidden among the thick blades of grass” (157–8).

The realist attitude may offer a relief from the clutches of previously dominant logocentric paradigms of thought, with their shared belief that experience is mediated by language and that culture, conscience, power constitute and found reality. From the realist and materialist philosophers’ point of view, the new type of thinker no longer relies on concepts like “text” and “discourse” (Bryant, et al. 2011: 3), but this fact may pose a problem for the literary critic. Postcritique wishes to effect a welcome transition toward more reparative ways of reading, but how might a literary critic pursue this protective task without the notion of the text? How might one think of the text in different ways? Moreover, if one considers texts as “wounded and vulnerable artifacts of history” (Felski 2016: 217), what might their wounded status and their vulnerability consist in?

THE ACTUAL MODERNISM

Even when literary studies draws on neighboring disciplines, there is no complete assimilation. Difference persists. When Felski draws on the philosophical trends that attempt to emancipate the world from human perception, the difference separating the realists from poststructuralists becomes manifest as “modernism.” In literary studies, “modernism” has traditionally been construed as an aesthetic reaction to industrialized “modernity,”¹⁴ which projection has fostered “adversarial schemes that counterpose” dominant interests to “the ruptures and innovations of a marginal avant-garde” (Felski 2016: 217). Modernism, therefore, is synonymous with rupture and, undoubtedly, that has been part of its attractiveness as a field of study. Felski argues that the critical tool of rupture “has lost its last shreds of analytical purchase” (217).¹⁵ Tellingly, in the philosophical camp sympathetic

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14. See Rainey and von Hallberg (2010: 471–499; 498).

15. In the same introduction to the special Latour issue *New Literary History*, Felski worries that the scholar should be able to speak to wider audiences

to postcritique, there seems to be no drive toward the rejection of modernism but an interest in the re-circulation of its neglected strains. Theorists of new ontologies, like Latour and Graham Harman, re-energize the legacy of modernist thinkers like William James and Alfred North Whitehead, who have shifted into the margins of the academic attention during the heyday of poststructuralism. James and Whitehead, far from assuming that reality appears “only as the correlate of human thought” (Bryant, et al. 2011: 3), think of it exclusively in terms of relations and becoming (Shaviro 2011: 286). As a result, while literary scholars seek an alternative to modernism’s worn discourse on the new (tradition vs. the avant-garde), the philosophers seem to return to the question of the new.

Steven Shaviro’s essay, “The Actual Volcano: Whitehead, Harman, and the Problem of Relations,” seems to be an illustrative example of the re-circulation of modernism in the philosophical debate on realism. In his text, Shaviro presents James and Whitehead not as thinkers of *being* but as thinkers of *becoming*. For James and Whitehead, being thrown in(to) the world means being immersed in a bustling democracy of neighboring creatures (Shaviro 2011: 287). In the light of Shaviro’s reflection, the two modernists embody an alternative line of thought that attributes value to the “hidden life of things” and stresses the importance of “conjunctive relations” among entities (Shaviro 2011: 287). With regard to Whitehead—the author, among others, of *Process and Reality* (1929)—Shaviro explains that the British philosopher spoke of the “really real” things that simultaneously constitute the uni-

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and to “multiple constituencies” (2016: 219). This preoccupation perhaps says more about the critic brooding on his or her own performance than about critique. At some level, it does feel as a return to the kind of impasse that led intellectuals like Sontag in the 1970s to reject the then dominant narrative linking modernism to the question of the public intellectual, that is to say, to the necessity of an élite that explicates a difficult sensibility to the masses. From this perspective, the rejection of critique, because of the kind of impasse to which it leads, can already be heard in Sontag’s work: “I am an adversary writer, a polemical writer. I write to support what is attacked, to attack what is acclaimed. But thereby I put myself in an emotionally uncomfortable position. I don’t, secretly, hope to convince, and can’t help being dismayed when my minority taste (ideas) becomes majority taste (ideas): then I want to attack again. I can’t help but be in an adversary relation to my own work.” (Sontag 2012: 397).

verse and are both entities and opportunities (Shaviro 2011: 284). Because Whitehead thinks of entities in terms of “constructive functioning” (convergences, alliances) associated with “an infinite wealth” of possibilities that we can choose from (Shaviro 2011: 286), Shaviro can thrust into relief the aesthetic component of his predecessor’s thought. As an example of this aesthetic component, he singles out Whitehead’s notion of “patterned contrasts,” a phrase that indicates differences that are reconciled and adapt to each other. Shaviro argues that Whitehead’s aesthetic component proves his affinity to the twenty-first century—the present.¹⁶ The scholar argues that the modernist philosopher helps to detect the pervasive relationality of our time, which manifests itself, first and foremost, in a predominant aesthetic practice that involves “sampling, synthesizing, remixing, and cutting-and-pasting” (290). Thus, entering into a dialog with Whitehead, Shaviro can go on to raise the following questions: “How can recycling issue in creativity, and familiarity be transformed into novelty? Through what process of selection and decision is it possible to make something new out of the massive accumulation of already-existing materials?” (290). These are familiar questions; it is possible to hear in them the problem of *the new* in the same terms, in which Walter Benjamin posed it, that is to say, in the terms of the copy: can the copy (departing from the original) produce the new and the unexpected?¹⁷

Through Whitehead, then, Shaviro translates the problem of the new into the question of relationality in the contemporary world, where “all manners of cultural expression are digitally trans-coded and electronically disseminated, where genetic material is freely recombined and where matter is becoming open to direct manipulation on the atomic and subatomic scales” (2011: 289). The translation returns to us the world-as-surface: there are no “hidden depths”; “nothing is hidden” (2011: 289). If we consider

16. Shaviro argues that the modernist Whitehead is closer to the twenty-first century than his own contemporary colleagues like Graham Harman, who, following up on Whitehead, develops the concept of “allure,” a generative principle of new relations among objects that exists *in nuce* in reality, including the inanimate sphere (Harman 2005: 244).

17. See Boris Groys (2012: 104).

Shaviro in conjunction with the current rejection of depth (symptomatic reading) in literary studies, then both the philosophers and the literary critics would seem to agree on celebrating surfaces. In fact, Whitehead's "patterned contrasts" enable Shaviro to shift a little closer to an aesthetic view of reality that is rather familiar to the literary critic. But from the latter's point of view, this common ground in the celebration of surfaces might eclipse some difficult questions.

THE VOLCANO AND THE CROISSANT: HERMENEUTIC DISTANCE

When Shaviro discusses Whitehead's concept of real entities *as* real forces to be reckoned with, he offers his readers the precursor's example of the volcano. Whitehead talks of the real entity—the "volcano," and not of the different perceptions of the thing; he affirms "the actuality of the volcano" not by "isolating *it* from the world" or by "reducing its dynamism to a sort of sterile display," but by showing its "direct effects upon other entities" (Shaviro 2011: 288). Shaviro's point is to emphasize that things are not "just available to us," but they are "unavoidable": we "cannot expect to escape [the volcano's] eruption" (290). The above notwithstanding, the volcano, remains a strange example because it can (con)fuse the pervasive relationality of the "universe of things" (290) with the human condition haunted by subjection to necessity and fatality. The "volcano" has a way of reminding us of our human insignificance; this is why it works well as a warning against the tedious "human-centered mandate of contemporary thought" (Harman 2005: 104).

Yet, what if we try and replace the volcano with some other thing present in the universe of things? For example, a jam croissant? Say, it is an early morning, bathed in the glorious light of spring. You are sitting at a cafe, when someone, probably a woman (you hear the rustle of a long skirt), walks up to your table, wishes you a sunny "Good morning!" and asks if you could spare some change. You consent to a compromise, offering her to get something at the coffee place. She goes in, comes out, waves a small paper bag. She has bought a croissant, "a croissant with jam," she specifies, and in reply you catch yourself saying: "So, next time I will know," and meaning it. Does

the relationality illustrated by this anecdote confirm that nothing is hidden? Does it comfortably illustrate that everything is trans-coded, translatable, without hidden depths? Perhaps the example is far-fetched; after all, the volcano and the croissant have little in common, but the volcano and the woman do: they are both facts of life. Unless one chooses the life of a hermit, encountering people and their problems and making choices while entering into relations is as unavoidable as making choices in the face of the explosion of the volcano. While the example of the volcano showcases the impact of an agent on another agent, reducing language and human thought to insignificance, this is harder to do in the case of the example of the woman in need. What happens in this setting is not as clear as it is in the case of the volcano. The mediating role taken on by the croissant only serves you to somehow “withstand the unavoidability” of the woman. Naturally, questions must arise. What drives you to pay for the croissant? A never incurred debt toward the woman who is a complete stranger? If so, could the debt ever be paid? If, for some reason, you cannot have jam croissants and experience an emotion when the stranger whom you have helped, *eats them for you*, what kind of a dynamics do you experience? The croissant points to a relationality of entities connected, but also withdrawn from one another, a relationality of monads-in-relation. This, of course, is nothing unique; the example illustrates an experience shared by most people, one that Toril Moi calls “human separation”: most of us have found ourselves in “situations in which we feel powerless to know the thoughts and feelings of another human being” (2017: 206). The croissant anecdote is one of the infinite number of examples of human separation, and yet, “the unavoidability of the woman-in-distress” does not prove that human separation is a tragic condition. On the contrary: it is a promising pre-condition for knowledge.

In the activity of *reading*, this fundamental human separation translates into a *productive* gap. We might call it hermeneutic distance: engaging in the act of reading means agreeing to bridge the distance between the text and the reader. As long as we read, we are called (we decide to accept the call) to bridge a distance through language and thought. Even the realists and the new

materialists have a notion of the task, which becomes clear when Ilya Prigogine and Isabelle Stengers, speaking in the name of science, consider the notion of sensitivity: “What is a being sensitive to? What can a being be modified by? What do its reactions to the world make a being capable of? Similar questions already make sense for simple ‘beings’ like physical-chemical systems. But how could they not be an even more pressing concern for anyone who studies living beings endowed with memory and capable of understanding and interpreting?” (Prigogine and Stengers 2014: 64). Elaine Scarry had the problem of hermeneutic distance in mind when she called for the labor of imagining others (1998: 40–62; 45). Today, Scarry’s imaginative labor has been extended. Latour extends hermeneutic distance with respect to everything when he writes: “Hermeneutics is not a privilege of humans but, so to speak, a property of the world itself” (2005: 245). The scholar suggests that the problem is not to get rid of language and thought but to experiment with new ways of reading. Felski’s emphasis on the affects of critique reflects the critic’s deeply felt need for a shift from suspicion to reparation, or, in other words, from “interrogating, demystifying, de-familiarizing,” as Anker and Felski observe in their introduction to *Critique and Postcritique*, to preserving and protecting. What the critic wants is exactly what Dorothea Tanning’s poet wants: a “graduation” from hating the world to loving the world. The graduation is a necessary transitional stage of a larger epistemological shift, but there are also other factors instrumental to the demise of the set of gestures that have been commonly associated with critique, and that have long been considered indispensable to any serious criticism.

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“AGAINSTNESS” AND EURO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

It comes as no surprise that critique is entangled with political and social factors that seem hard to ignore as they determine the limits of any critical activity. Politics and social dynamics impact both the directions of research and the production of knowledge within literary studies. One of the outcomes of this is the change of the value of literature in the space of the University, which institution has become increasingly dependent on the quantification of research. Another consequence of such an interdependency

is the fall of the critic from his/her role as a public intellectual. Perhaps unlike in the countries in which poststructuralist thought was an expression of intellectual resistance to totalitarianism, in America today being a public intellectual requires a reorientation of philosophical positions. Should a critic adopt a deconstructive mode of reading, or act on suspicion (as the motivating affect of his or her pursuit of meaning), he or she would be seen as a destructive agent, unable to defend the value of literature and art outside the academic circles. In this climate, what formerly had been the virtue of critique, and that is, “the suspension of ordinary beliefs and commitments” (Felski 2015: 25), is now perceived as an obstacle in the adventure of interpretation.

Moreover, the rejection of what Felski dubs as “againstness” is brought about by the transformation of the fields of study that are immediately related to critique. For example, as has already been hinted, there is an intimate link between critique and modernism. Conjoined in their reliance on rupture, on adversarial temporalities that oppose any dominant culture, both modernism and critique share a common perspective. The above notwithstanding, as modernism becomes more geographically decentered, more lateral and paratactic (Friedman 2015), the objects of attachment that it had produced for the uses of criticism fade in the horizon. Among these objects of attachment are the opposition between center and margins, an adversarial, often anti-institutional, stance against power, and iconoclastic negativity. The effect of their disappearance is registered by Wai Chee Dimock in the phrase “weak theory”: it may be taken to refer to the weakening of the critic’s object of attachment (first and foremost, the center-margin oppositions), and the ensuing feeling of being stranded in a zone of “noncommunicability” (Dimock 2013: 751). What wanes with the modernist-theoretical objects is also the idea of *the new* conceived as a discontinuous sequel, with the logic of the avant-gardes also functioning as a template for the classification of critical schools. These appear, only to be superseded by the next: German Critical Theory, French Theory, Weak Theory, Italian Theory—in a continuum that entwines “aesthetic and social worth,” but makes both intelligible only “in terms of a rhetoric of *againstness*” (Felski 2015: 17).

Combined with all of the above, the decisive factor in the debate on postcritique is the fact that the very prefix “post,” paradoxically, projects the end of the process of modernization within individual (national) cultures. In contemporary narratives about its limits, critique appears as a phase of American modernization, as a localized instance of acculturation that is made visible at its crepuscular moment. As an example, Eric Hayot’s account of this evolution may be provided:

It is in the nature of idealisms to disappoint. You start out planning to change the world; you end up teaching in a university, changing one small thing or another in yourself, your students, or the curriculum, while the world goes on without you. Or you end up changing quite a lot—perhaps as one small soldier in the giant army of that used to be called lesbian and gay studies, and is now queer studies, and army that helped make possible the stunning national and international transformations in the political status of homosexual, transexual, and transgendered men and women, and in the civic recognition and legitimation of their sex and love. Or perhaps as a teacher of teachers who have rewritten high school and university curricula in the United States to include engagement with the bleak, inspiring history of ethnic struggle, or with the fight for women’s rights, and with the art and the literature of those battles, a change that seems radical and huge to someone who in his American high school English classes never read a single book written by a woman, or a person of color. (2017: 282)

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Only by recounting the decline of critique can one fully realize its local achievements. In the narrative above, the waning of critique (the necessity of debunking the inherited approaches to reading) generates a productive distance from the past, or, in fact, *creates* the narrative of a critical past. The relocation of foreign thinkers to the United States in a procession of critical schools—“the way that Foucault succeeded Derrida, Bourdieu Foucault, Badiou, Bordieu, Rancière Badiou, and so on”—effects “the Theoretical revolution in the American academy” (Hayot 2017: 287). At the same time, such a narrative makes clear that critique is an episode in Euro-American relations, a phase of the transatlantic modernization. And while dwelling on the prefix “post” might seem to be tantamount to “stating the obvious,” one might argue that one of the reasons for the fortune of the term “postcritique” lies in its promise of a departure from that process of modernization. The new beginning that it announces affords a sense of relief. It is

as if a space were finally cleared to ask about literary criticism and wonder what sort of pursuit it might be. Hayot writes: “What we know is that something has been lost, that literary criticism, today, floats adrift on an open, darkling sea, while the sailors search desperately for new compasses. Something has changed” (279). Againstness is the critic’s desire (rather than a critical tenet); it traverses fields of studies and shapes them according to an intercultural (transatlantic) imperative, only to evaporate once the realization of a vaster world of “global patterns” sets in. Its “sheer scale” neutralizes “the possibilities of individual and social resistance to capitalism and violence” (283). The prefix marks the end of a phase of Euro-American two-way modernization and the exposure of the US to what Jean-Luc Nancy would call “the game of the world” (qtd. in Esposito 2016: 218).

Felski, too, observes that the demystifying posture of critique is “transmitted across the Atlantic” (Felski 2015: 76).¹⁸ Reflecting on this view, philosopher Roberto Esposito offers a different account of critique: an account afforded from the vantage point of the recent phenomenon of “Italian Theory,” the narrative of whose emergence Esposito has offered to his reading public on more than one occasion. In *Pensiero Vivente* [Living Thought] (2010) he traces its beginnings to the success that living Italian authors attained within American academia and the popularity they enjoyed among American scholars. This phenomenon closely resembles the rise of French Theory and of German theory before (earlier critical theory of the Frankfurt School and the success of its champions—Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse) (Esposito 2010: 3). In the context of “German Philosophy, French Theory, Italian Thought,” Esposito sees “Italian Theory”—a label circulated in English—as part of the movement of deterritorialization which has propelled European philosophy outside its boundaries, in a sequence of attempts “to reinvent itself along other trajectories” (Esposito 2015: 105). He focuses on a series of geographical and intellectual displacements, beginning with the great critical

18. This would be a “reworking of critique” in which “the task of the critic is not to unmask falsehoods in order to replace them with truths but to squelch the desire for such substitutes by stressing the radically contingent and contestable nature of belief” (Felski 2015: 76).

theorists of the Frankfurt School, and pointing to the transatlantic shift of French Theory as one of the waves in an ongoing process. Clearly, there is a difference between the two waves, and Esposito points it out: the first ensues from traumatic historical events, the second is devoid of any tragic resonance. Both waves, however, offer examples of the inventiveness and the productiveness linked to geographical displacement, which “resulted in a contamination and in a circulation of ideas that took on the traits of a veritable hegemony in a number of disciplines, from literary criticism to gender studies and postcolonial studies” (Esposito 2015: 106).

Esposito reminds us that once it crossed the Atlantic, the philosophy of Derrida, Deleuze, or Foucault “became quite other as decontextualized fragments of their thought amalgamated in a new discourse called ‘theory’” (Esposito 2015: 106). In the series of geographical-intellectual displacements, within the context of the Euro-American exchange, “Italian Theory” would constitute the third wave of theory. As such, Italian Theory continues—but also modifies—the movement, shifting the critical emphasis onto an object marginalized by the previous two. While German critical theory emphasized the social dimension and French theory the textual dimension, Italian theory emphasizes the “constitutively conflicting space of political practice” (Esposito 2015: 107). Esposito talks of “living thought,” outlining critique as a larger, dynamic movement, with the result that the new discourse of theory, rather than marking the melancholia for the loss of a local transatlantic past, signals the emergence of a latent body of thought that is particularly attuned to the “dynamics of globalization and immaterial production of the postmodern” (Esposito 2010: 5). He favors the term “thought” to “theory” because it can deterritorialize what is labelled “Italian Theory” into a space of reflection that is far from national, comprising Dante and Machiavelli—but also Spinoza, Nietzsche and Foucault. In Esposito’s narrative, the adjectives of nationality performatively call the audiences’ attention to the Anglo-American incorporation of European philosophies in linear chunks of continental traditions: post-WW II German Critical Theory first, poststructuralist French Theory later, and now—Italian Theory. The philosopher, however, seems to invite his readers to conceive of critique in terms wider

than those emerging solely as a result of the increased visibility of “national” differences in the transatlantic context. His discussion departs from the “national labels”: the philosopher proposes a line of reflection that offers an alternative to the hermeneutics of suspicion, and that evolves at an eccentric pace, simultaneously preceding and exceeding “analytic, hermeneutic and deconstructive philosophies” (Esposito 2016: 161). Re-introducing theory into the now reoriented academic discourse, Esposito helps to revise the familiar account of critique in the context of geographical-intellectual displacements that admit of a different “affirmative tonality” (Esposito 2015: 110). He emphasizes the inclusiveness of critique, which no longer emerges in an antagonistic relation to global patterns and their overwhelming scales, but as coterminous with these changes.

IN LIEU OF CONCLUSIONS: THE PLANE OF COEVALNESS

Of course, one should not forget that Esposito is, first and foremost, a political philosopher, a critic of political theology (Esposito 2015: 104–110). Transferring his terms from philosophy to the literary realm implies the risk of conceptual deracination and estrangement. At the same time, his description of theory reminds us that the contact between philosophy and literature (understood both in terms of the texts they produce and in terms of the critical discourse they generate) is fundamental to critique, especially when seen from the vantage point of the experience of US theory. As mentioned above, Esposito speaks of the decontextualization of non-American thinkers, whose work is then assimilated in multiple disciplines, including literary studies, owing to the dissemination that only US English may afford today.

Esposito’s account shares postcritique’s disaffection for the “vast saga of radical rupture” that the conceptualization of the new has required (Harman 2009: 60). Like Felski, he departs from the model of rupture. Analyzing this model within European thought, he finds that the production of the new has been made possible by “the construction of a threshold—whether anthropological, epistemological, or institutional—which shelters from something primordial and constitutive, that cannot be governed by reason but instead threatens reason” (Esposito 2010: 24). He calls this “something

primordial and constitutive,” which is deferred, but always returns aggressively, a “pre-reflexive magmatic substance” [*sostanza magmatica pre-riflessiva*]. It is sometimes identified with an “anthropic margin that is still too contiguous with the animal dimension” and at other times, with the language of magic and myth (24). The magmatic pre-reflexive substance is constituted as “the origin” that subjects thinkers to its spectral returns. Only if one succeeds in fending off these returns, can he or she seek new beginnings. As an alternative to the “magmatic” account, Esposito proposes another environment of thought calling forth the image of a *plane of coevalness*. This is a benevolent (and beneficial) plane where “the origin is made available as a resource rather than something to be subjected to as if to a spectral return” (25).

Looking at the contextual map of *loci* in which the prefix “post” occurs in the contemporary “post-critical” debate, which this article aspired to sketch out, it seems clear that the epistemic transformation postulated, or wished for, by the proponents of the “post,” requires that the critical debate move to the plane which may only emerge from the realization of the possibility of “‘another’ modernity” (Esposito 2010: 23), a modernity that departs from accounts based on the linear temporality of progress. In such accounts, a presupposed unevenness of cultures (or gaps between cultures) overshadows the multiple locations of ideas and the effects of their circulation. The plane of coevalness differs from the surfaces of new materialism and the radical relationality of new realism, and extends beyond Latour’s bustling network of actors. Like them, it moves beyond rupture, but, unlike them, it looks back, especially through feminism and psychoanalysis, to the experience of speech and to the notion of life understood as always incomplete, always in tension with its context, and always at odds with history.

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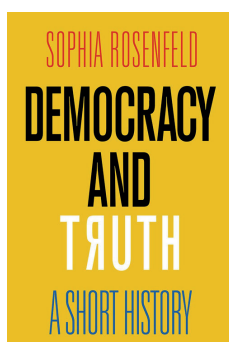
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DEMOCRACY AND TRUTH A SHORT HISTORY

by Sophia Rosenfeld
(A Book Review)



As lines between fact and fiction—and between actuality and opinion—seem to become increasingly obscure, questions concerning the breakdown of truth and its implications for democratic society have become increasingly pressing. Taking a historical approach to this very issue, Sophia Rosenfeld’s *Truth and Democracy: A Short History* is an account of notions of truth in modern

democratic society. The book, as the title and as Rosenfeld state at the outset, “is intended as a short history” (1) of the relationship between democracy and truth. Rosenfeld openly contextualizes this short history in the contemporary climate of ‘post-truth’ and ‘alternative facts’. She also makes evident that her regional grounding is the United States and, throughout the book, references the state of truth in the United States in the context of its most recent presidential administrations. Against this backdrop, Rosenfeld situates contemporary truth politics in a historical framework starting with the eighteenth century, which she marks as an important point of departure for modern manifestations of political democratic life. Rosenfeld, a historian at the University of Pennsylvania, has special research interests in the legacy of the eighteenth century for modern

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democracy according to her website (“About”), so this focus is unsurprising. But it is also completely relevant, and convincing. Rosenfeld draws from key intellectual figures of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—such as Immanuel Kant, John Dewey, and Thomas Jefferson—to demonstrate that truth, from an epistemological perspective, has been a malleable concept since the rise of the modern democratic state. It is the work Hannah Arendt, however, that Rosenfeld relies on throughout the book to reiterate the idea that truth as a political concept has never been a political virtue, and deception and falsehood have long been legitimized as weapons to achieve political goals.¹

The book’s cover, in its simplicity, relays its intent to the reader. The title is printed in big block letters with the word truth containing an “Я”: ТЯUTH. Whether this is meant to be Cyrillic, in which case the “Я” would be pronounced /ja/, or faux Cyrillic, a common Western trope alluding to the Soviet Union or Russia, the reader reads the English ‘truth’. The significance of this is threefold. First, it is clear that we take in what we have been trained to—the English ‘truth’ despite the presence of the Cyrillic “Я.” We also absorb what we are wanted to by others: most of us have gotten the book with the knowledge of the title beforehand; Rosenfeld (and her editorial team) know this, and know that we will understand the title of book if the word looks similar enough to it. These are two running themes throughout the book: truth is as interpretative as it is malleable. And finally, whether Cyrillic or faux Cyrillic, the reference to Russia is unmistakable, and this further contextualizes Rosenfeld’s interest in the topic. Chapter One, “The Problem of Democratic Truth,” begins with truth in contemporary United States with explicit reference to allegations of democratic erosion (4). In doing so, Rosenfeld refers to the dissemination of propagandist internet advertising by Russian intelligence in the lead-up to the US presidential election of 2016 from the outset (5), setting the book in the foggy climate of truth since the establishment of Donald

1. Rosenfeld relies heavily on Arendt’s essay “Lying in Politics: Reflections on the Pentagon Papers” (*The New York Review*, 1971) and “Truth and Politics” (*The New Yorker*, 1967); she also refers to and cites *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958) and *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Schocken Books, 1951) multiple times.

Trump as a leading political player. The first chapter is also a clear expression of her opinion on the administration's tactics when it comes to the politics of information—she is severely critical and clearly repulsed. However, as the chapter (and book) develop, it becomes evident that Rosenfeld has prodigious skill in revealing the fallacies existing in accusations against the Trump administration's truth politics. "Truth and politics," Rosenfeld argues, "never been on very good terms, and there has always been lying in politics" (12).

This overarching argument is supported by a diverse pool of sources. Rosenfeld uses newspapers and empirical studies along with prominent letters and correspondence² to support her arguments for the long-term perceived subjectivity of truth. In Chapter 2, "Experts at the Helm," she delves into the actors involved in truth-making and in Chapter 3, "The Populist Reaction," she explores the counter to experts—the general population. These chapters are the most effective at impressing Rosenfeld's argument on the reader. In these chapters, Rosenfeld effectively establishes how ambiguous the construct of "the people" is (156) and connects it to a longer pattern of populism, which she identifies as a narrative framework rather than an ideology (156–158). That populism has become a buzzword is palpable, but Rosenfeld aptly demonstrates that the standard narrative of populism has become a betrayal of 'the people' by the leaders they have long trusted. In deconstructing this buzzword, Rosenfeld depicts populism as way of thinking about and narrating truth and power and demanding soluble action —she points to Trump's exclamations of 'dishonest media' and the need to 'drain the swamp' as examples of this (161). Again, while Rosenfeld shifts between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England, France, and the revolutionary United States in her analysis of populist narratives, it is the United States that is at the fore. She draws attention to the US Constitution as an example where anti-federalist critics launched accusations against what we today would call populist logics (171), as well as Andrew Jackson's framing of himself as a "self-described common man" (182). The concluding Chapter 4, "Democracy

2. Such as those between Thomas Jefferson and George Wythe; cited on page 185.

in an Age of Lies,” examines what Rosenfeld alludes to throughout the book: our contemporary information age where media and propaganda often masquerade as one and digital spaces such as social media further muddle fact, fiction, falsehood, and speculation. Rosenfeld again harkens to the free speech amendments of the US Constitution as indicative of an out-of-touch free speech doctrine zealously wielded in US truth politics, which she argues, has become “a new form of censorship, or speech control, cleverly using free speech doctrine against itself” (246). Returning again to Arendt, she emphasizes the dangers of extremes—of fighting for total transparency or abolishing any standards for truth.

Truth does seem to be the topic *du jour*, and there has been a spate of books published on this theme in recent years. Some examples include Kevin Young’s 2017 *Bunk: The Rise of Hoaxes, Humbug, Plagiarists, Phonies, Post-Facts and Fake News* (2017), a US history of hoaxes that also takes inspiration from our contemporary ‘fake news’ era, and Ralph Keyes’s *The Post-Truth Era: Dishonesty and Deception in Contemporary Life* (2004), a blatantly contemporary discussion about the fluidity of truth. Johan Farkas and Jannick Schou’s *Post-Truth, Fake News and Democracy: Mapping the Politics of Falsehood* (2020) is a study of post-truth discourses and narratives of democratic crisis, and Bernard Williams’s *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (2002) is an interdisciplinary philosophical look at the tensions in truth-telling. A final example is Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison’s *Objectivity* (2007), which explores the emergence and development of objectivity as a scientific concept from the eighteenth to the early twenty-first century. Rosenfeld demonstrates that she is well-read in these topics, including in such recent publications, with her extensive bibliography. Moreover, she has a hand for historicizing concepts. Her last book, *Common Sense: A Political History* (2014) traces concept of common sense as a political ideal throughout Western history, starting with the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution in England.

There are some weaknesses. In attempting to express optimism, the book ends somewhat disappointingly on prescriptive note as Rosenfeld concludes with her recommendations for regulating truth in democratic society. Not that these recommendations are

not valid—Rosenfeld points to the establishment of an independent judiciary and the fostering of nuanced perspectives throughout various levels of education. These recommendations have value, but read as generally evangelical. The reliance on Western sources and the regional foci on England, France, and, of course, the core focus on the United States leave me wondering whether the nuances are enough to apply to democratic societies worldwide; despite her US focus, this seems to be what Rosenfeld is hinting at through her references to other democracies, such as India (92, 124, 155). After all, the book is titled *Democracy and Truth: A Short History* and not *Democracy and Truth: A Short Western History*.

Still, the book's strengths transcend. Rosenfeld is a skilled and persuasive writer, and she weaves her sources nimbly into her arguments. Her wealth of knowledge as a historian shines as she deftly converges historical intellectual heavyweights and contemporary dilemmas. While there is certainly a reliance on Western sources and it is an examination most fitting to the political West, it is certainly thoroughly researched in this regard. Yet, and arguably most appealingly, it is short and it is accessible—arguably the most substantial of strengths when it is a topic so blatantly relevant to our time. Rosenfeld has produced a convincing and comprehensive short history, and it is a compulsively readable one.

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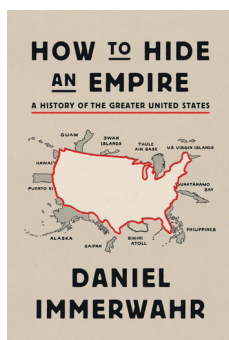
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HOW TO HIDE AN EMPIRE A SHORT HISTORY OF THE GREATER UNITED STATES

by Daniel Immerwahr
(A Book Review)



“Is the United States an empire?” is a persistent question, but it’s not the only one Daniel Immerwahr’s book *How to Hide an Empire: A Short History of the Greater United States* (2019) concerns itself with. Its driving force is the titular question: How did the US *hide* their empire? “This book’s main contribution is not archival, bringing to light some never-before-seen document,” Immerwahr

cautions his reader, “it’s perspectival, seeing a familiar history differently” (16). The book is a history of American imperialism and the Greater United States from a strongly overseas perspective: Immerwahr’s archival eye is fixed on the American “territories,” mainly, but not exclusively, Guam, the Philippines, the Guano Islands, and Puerto Rico—an American absence summarized in the title to chapter fifteen: “Nobody Knows in America, Puerto Rico’s in America.” Immerwahr centers his analysis around the act of *hiding*, but he devotes as much attention to *vanishing* as a closely related idea. In order to hide things, they must vanish. Hiding things too well means forgetting where they are and, eventually, forgetting we own them. This, Immerwahr argues, is the case with the US overseas territories. As the idea of a nation grew in prominence, “the colonies

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seemed more distant and nebulous, literally vanishing from maps and atlases” (112).

So how does one hide an empire? You hide the books, for example, making research on the overseas territory hard and frustrating. “The libraries contain literally thousands of books about US overseas territory,” Immerwahr writes, but they have been “sidelined—filed, so to speak, on the wrong shelves” (15). Or you do not write about empire at all. In *The New York Times* archives, coverage on Poland, Albania, and Brazil is more extensive than on the Philippines. With its 639 articles, India elicited more interest than Alaska, Hawai’i, and Guam combined (cumulatively 13 articles, of which 0 on Guam). In Margaret Mead’s trailblazing book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), not once are Samoans acknowledged as US nationals. In order to hide imperial history, one hides the names of colonial politicians, activists, and revolutionaries from textbooks and histories of the US, where they are ignored and, as a consequence, forgotten. This is a habit Immerwahr corrects by speaking at length about key political figures in the American territories, their political struggles as well as their personal trajectories. Pedro Albizu Campos, Emilio Aguinaldo, and Manuel Quezon are names that the reader encounters with steady recurrence. Cultural indifference ran parallel to political indifference, as colonial policy was enveloped in a “blurry haze” (156). Territories were left without political representation, even for several months, as in the case of Alaska. The first governor of Puerto Rico spoke no Spanish, and interviews he released suggest he did not know where the island was. Upon his appointment, Ernest Gruening—the head of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions, an office in charge of Puerto Rico, Alaska, Hawai’i, the US Virgin Islands, the Philippines, and the major guano islands—had spent only one day in Puerto Rico.

Hidden empires do not appear on maps either. Such is the case with Indian Country, America’s *colony within*, and its shrinking borders. From a designated Native settlement area supposed to cover 46% of US territory in the 1830s, to be governed by a Native confederacy, granted a delegate in Congress, and aspiring to statehood, Indian Country shrank to present day Oklahoma by 1879, and then disappeared, eroded by relentless white incursions and land

grabbing. Even in its early days, “Indian Country rarely appeared on maps” and it always had “something indistinct about it” (40), a tenuous and ambiguous legal status that lay the foundations for its undoing.

You hide an empire by giving it different names, calling it “peacekeeping,” “globalization,” “dollar diplomacy,” or you meddle the language of empire beyond recognition, merging vocabularies of belonging and foreignness. A Supreme Court Justice stated that Puerto Rico was “foreign to the United States in a domestic sense”: The island, he explains, was “merely [...] a possession” (qtd. in Immerwahr 85). The idea of a country being “foreign [...] in a domestic sense” not only shows that there are “different ‘senses’ of ‘the United States’” (85) but also that these different senses can be strikingly contradictory. In most cases, vocabularies of belonging or exclusion were bestowed according to race. While states filled with white settlers were eligible for “incorporation” and could aspire to statehood, the others, the “unincorporated” territories, the territories inhabited by large non-white majorities like Mexico, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Alaska, Puerto Rico, or the Philippines, lingered as “disembodied shade[s], in an intermediate state of ambiguous existence” (87), being in the country but also not truly part of it. After voting in favor of a new constitution and a new government, Puerto Rico’s relation to the US was even more confusing. Puerto Rico became an “Estado Libre Asociado,” but it was neither free nor a state. It was a “somewhat shapeless” entity (Irene Vilar qtd. in Immerwahr 257) where empire has been brushed under the rug.

How else do you hide an empire? By incorporating lands and not people. It was unclear whether the fourteenth amendment, granting citizenship on the ground of one’s birth in the United States, applied to territories which belonged to the US but were not part of it. Were these people Americans? Were they subjects or citizens? Could they become presidents of the United States? Although former Spanish colonies were more densely populated than the US mainland, their populations were largely unacknowledged. When not invisible, their status fell within legal cracks that Immerwahr is very skilled at identifying. The book contains numerous examples of resolved and unresolved manifestations

of the same questions: “Is this an American?”, involving presidential nominees John McCain, born in the Panama Canal area, or Barack Obama, alongside the Navassa rioters who revolted against their overseers or the Filipinos trapped on the *USS Indiana*, sailing to San Francisco.

How to Hide and Empire sees a familiar history differently in more ways than one. Alternative cartographies are crucial to Immerwahr’s argument and give the book its characteristic visual quality and a further layer of memorability. For Immerwahr, it is imperative to see beyond the logo map and visualize the US differently, replacing the logo map’s “contiguous blob” (21) with a shockingly fragmented, scattered shape many mainland Americans may not recognize. First of all, Immerwahr insists that, until recently, the country has been in constant metamorphosis—not a monolith but a “pointillist empire,” which gives the second half of the book its title. The revisualization of the US map expands the borders of the country’s history to include overseas territory, but also unveils the unsurprising but silenced truth that “it was in the territories that the government’s willingness to violate the civil liberties of its own subjects was on the fullest display” (179). Not only maps but also flags are subjected to Immerwahr’s re-visualizations. After the Second World War, for example, citizens bombarded the government with unsolicited flag designs and unlikely stars and stripes rearrangements. Many of them included empty space to allow for the addition of more stars. This hopeful oversharing signalled that American citizens did perceive the empire as fluid, in constant evolution, a mutable organism breathing in and out, expanding and contracting.

The image of the pointillist empire dominates part two, where Immerwahr goes beyond geopolitical expansion to reflect on other imperial forms. In a chapter called “Synthetica,” for example, he reconstructs the history of today’s disproportionate plastic consumption and its roots in American imperialism. “Synthetica” is a prophetic map published by *Fortune* magazine in 1940: it imagined “a new continent of plastics” (271) and eerily foreshadowed today’s Garbage Patches or “plastic islands,” accumulations of plastic debris growing in the oceans. Immerwahr touches upon the spread of English as a form of American imperialism

that created, as he provocatively puts it, “a world of Squantos,” the English-speaking Native who assisted the Pilgrim fathers with survival in the new world: “A world full of people ready and able to assist English speakers, wherever they may roam. A world almost designed for the convenience of the United States” (318). Then, Immerwahr moves the empire into more unusual realms: chemistry, standardization (why do measuring systems vary from country to country?), and the imperial fantasy of world domination from a tropical island – from Napoleon’s Elba to James Bond. In the end, one cannot begin to understand “the birth control pill, chemotherapy, plastic, Godzilla, the Beatles, *Little House on the Prairie*, Iran-Contra, the transistor radio, the name America itself” (400) without an understanding of US imperial history.

Immerwahr shows how empire has been a shadow discourse hidden in the folds of not only history but also of language. His prose is immensely enjoyable, intelligently metaphorical, gracefully irreverent. His depiction of Washington on a “landlord’s vengeance mission” is a pure delight (28). In an exhilarating rendition of Roosevelt’s life, the man is “a Harvard student, cowboy, policeman, war hero, and president, as well as an African explorer—virtually the entire list of boyhood fantasies, minus astronaut” (68). *How to Hide an Empire* is not only a work of rigor and density but also a labor of love wherein people—their everyday lives, their hesitations—and other things often lost to history, find representation. The story of the author’s distant relation, the German chemist Clara Immerwahr, reminds the reader that history can be written with empathy, and that the people that signed treaties, started wars, shot presidents and got shot, were someone’s children, parents, ancestors. Immerwahr writes irony and compassion into history, in a troubling read that is also a joyous one, which gifted this reader a few sonorous laughs in public.

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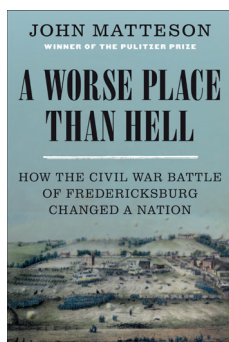
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A WORSE PLACE THAN HELL HOW THE CIVIL WAR BATTLE OF FREDERICKSBURG CHANGED A NATION

by John Matteson

(A Pre-Publication Book Review)



An academic love song of America. America's scholarly *Bildungsroman*. A pure-hearted gesture denuding America's vices, yet a soaring act of her utmost redemption. John Matteson's personal pledge of allegiance. To properly classify the text herein discussed, the list of academic genres would have to be expanded beyond the limits of what 'traditional' scholarship, so heavily dependent

on strict disciplinary divides, would be ready to accept. *A Worse Place Than Hell* resists any attempts at unambivalent categorization—its academic rigor and historical trustworthiness notwithstanding, the book reads like an excellent novel. Being a scholarly, psychohistorically inclined, monograph, it is also a multifaceted and multilayered masterpiece of 'life-writing,' in which biographies of its main protagonists are inextricably intertwined with the biography of the country, or perhaps—more precisely—of the faith-based initiative that has made America what it is at its best and at its worst. In the author's own words,

This book is part of the much larger story of a country that, diseased by slavery and sectional anger, broke apart and was then refigured and reborn. However, it is more concerned with the personal than the political. It tells the stories of five Americans and the paths they fol-

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lowed during the latter months of 1862. This book follows each of the five from the Battle of Antietam in September of that year until—and in most cases well beyond—President Lincoln’s signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. It speaks of the different ways in which each of them came face to face with the pain and slaughter of war and how each was transformed by the ordeal. The destinies of all five were brought together by the Battle of Fredericksburg in the second week of December 1862. The first of the five [—a young Captain of the US Army, a Harvard graduate and a son of an eminent poet and academic, was to emerge from the war with a vision of life whose keenness would far surpass that of his eminent father] [...]. For the second, a slender, graceful young artillery officer from Alabama with a preternatural eye for terrain, the fall of 1862 would be a season of exhilaration, culminating in a day of audacity and glory that would durably link his name with the adjective “gallant.” During these months, a third man, a poet whom the early months of war had depressed into sullen silence, would spend many evenings in a Manhattan cellar, gazing at the follies of beer-soaked bohemians. Then he would read in the newspaper accounts of Fredericksburg that his brother had been wounded. Seeking him there, the poet would also recover his own voice and would use the sights and sounds of war to rephrase the meaning of America. Still another figure, a man of God from an illustrious family, would wrestle with mortality, as his passions for abolition and personal vindication pushed his frail body toward its limit. The transformation that Fredericksburg and its aftermath would work upon the final member of the five, a self-described literary spinster from Concord, Massachusetts, was to be perhaps the most powerful of all. Rejecting the life of passivity to which her sex and social station might normally have consigned her, she would fling herself into the fight to save the Union and, in so doing, would nearly die. But, in coming close to losing everything, she would find a courage and a creative gift that would change the face of American literature and its perceptions of womanhood. (Matteson 2021: 15)

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Even to non-experts, such descriptions (perhaps with one exception) make it relatively easy to recognize those whose lives provide the canvas for an all-encompassing reflection upon America coming of age:

Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., John Pelham, Walt Whitman, Arthur B. Fuller, Louisa May Alcott: some of the names still resonate; others have fallen partly or wholly into obscurity. But if these five had not lived, or if the calamity of Fredericksburg had never touched their lives, we would now inhabit a different nation. Beyond argument, other battles bore more heavily on the outcome of the Civil War. Viewed militarily, Fredericksburg was merely one in a series of Union blunders that tested the will of the Northern states before the tide eventually turned and the nation was preserved. As a matter of cultural significance, however, no battle of the war surpasses Fredericksburg. Through

its impact on the thinking of Holmes, it modified the theory of American jurisprudence. Had Alcott never tended the wounded of Fredericksburg, it is unlikely that *Little Women* would ever have been written. Whitman, America's most indispensable poet, later claimed the war was the fact of his life that shaped him more than any other, and it was Fredericksburg that drew him into the war. Though less well known, the gallant Pelham became a unique icon in the Confederate mythos. More than any other figure in the war, he came to epitomize the hyacinthine Southern hero, blooming early and dying young. More obscure than any of the others, Arthur Fuller offers not so much a cultural legacy as an enduring parable: a story of a man whose skills suited him best for peace and piety but whose destiny instead awaited him in war, and whose response to that destiny effaced the line between sublime courage and pitiable folly. (Matteson 2021: 15)

While the excerpts above offer an apt, albeit succinct, summary of John Matteson's perspective on the(hi)story formative to America's present, perhaps the most striking and, at the same time most alluring, aspect of the book is its affective power. This is so, because—thoroughly researched as it is, and offering a plethora of new information—*A Worse Place Than Hell* is Romantic in its provenance. Thus, uncharacteristically of the academic genre, it does more than to confront its audience with the facts of American history. (It is, one might add, part of Matteson's alchemy that the facts he offers can be simultaneously deeply gratifying and hauntingly disconcerting and uncomfortable.) Rather, by granting this history a human face, the book places any perceptive reader face to face with his or her own traumas, projections, and hopes. Therefore, not unlike the major texts of the Romantic canon, the book cannot be reduced solely to its descriptive dimension; the outcomes of the reading process extend far beyond the mere expansion of one's academic knowledge.

Matteson's narrative's strength lies chiefly in its author's sensitivity to the worldmaking potential of language—and to the impotence of language in the face of the ineffable immediacy of experience. Always loyal to historical evidence, the writer masterfully attunes his reader into resonance with a plethora of subtle undertones of emotion emanating from letters, diaries, or reported conversations of his *dramatis personae*. Without compromising his methodological rigor or meticulous adherence to detail, Matteson uses his pen to awaken empathy. He transforms the reader

into an emotionally engaged sharer of the dilemmas faced by the actual actors of the events that transitioned America into adulthood. Sometimes baffled, frequently incensed, often moved, occasionally disgusted, but, beyond doubt, never neutral—the book’s audience gains an opportunity to enter the ranks of the community of the “kingly commons,” as Herman Melville would perhaps describe them¹. Attuned to emotions that transcend time and space, the “kingly commons” find common ground with the book’s heroes both in their shared human condition and in their concern about self-definition, their nation’s future, or the ethics transcending partisan interests.

Thus the novelesque composition of the book turns Matteson’s historical account into a gripping tale, involving its audience in a complex, winding journey, retracing the paths of the five individuals, whose lives would find their nexus at Fredericksburg’s battlefields, but also a journey of a nation at a historic crossroad. The volume is divided into five sections identified as “books.” The first two explore the backgrounds and motivations of the protagonists “on their way” to Fredericksburg. Their dilemmas and the universal ideals of youth—still untarnished by the reality of war—mirror the unrest and struggle of a nation not yet a century old, marching toward the decisive moments that would define its future. It is the tale of adolescence, setting the scene for the clash that will inevitably and irrevocably transform everyone and everything.

*One World
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Everywhere*

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1. “If, then, to meanest mariners, and renegades and castaways, I shall hereafter ascribe high qualities, though dark; weave round them tragic graces; if even the most mournful, perchance the most abased, among them all, shall at times lift himself to the exalted mounts; if I shall touch that workman’s arm with some ethereal light; if I shall spread a rainbow over his disastrous set of sun; then against all mortal critics bear me out in it, thou just Spirit of Equality, which hast spread one royal mantle of humanity over all my kind! Bear me out in it, thou great Democratic God! who didst not refuse to the swart convict Bunyan, the pale poetic pearl; Thou who didst clothe with doubly hammered leaves of finest gold, the stumped and paupered arm of old Cervantes; Thou who didst pick up Andrew Jackson from the pebbles; who didst hurl him upon a war horse; who didst thunder him higher than a throne! Thou who, in all thy mighty, earthly marchings, ever cullest Thy selectest champions from the kingly commons; bear me out in it, O God!” (Melville 2017).

Book Three presents a visceral experience, bringing into focus the brutality of war through the eyes of all five of its central characters. Gradually unveiling the dramatic events of the Battle of Fredericksburg as Holmes and Pelham face their struggles on the opposite side of the conflict, it highlights the horrors of the aftermath through the haunting imagery of Alcott's and Whitman's entries into hospital service. Through Chaplain Fuller's heartrending decision to lay down his Bible and pick up a gun, the narrative also raises implicit questions about the ethics of crafting one's own destiny. The mounting suspense of the masterfully woven narrative transports the reader, body-and-soul, into the minds of the protagonists, making it only natural to share in their fears and joys, triumphs and anguish. The story reaches its climax in the resolution of the battle of Fredericksburg followed by the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation: two transformative moments that have already—or would soon—claim blood sacrifice.

The *dénouement* in Books Four and Five brings the protagonists' wartime experience to a close, plunging each of them into a reality undeniably different from the world that they left behind when they departed home to report for service. Book Four sublimates Alcott and Whitman as literal and metaphorical "nurses" of America, who, sacrificing their health and personal well-being, acquire tangible and figurative scars—a particular badge of courage that would mark their post-war literary endeavors. Book Five breaks off the parallels between Holmes and Pelham, setting the former on the path of a blossoming career while the latter's brightly burning flame is prematurely extinguished.

Holmes observed that soldiers in the American Civil War were "touched with fire." Matteson's epilogue reveals that "touch" as a deeply searing brand, highlighting the profundity of the war's impact on each of the three surviving protagonists as they attempt to settle into their post-bellum lives. And as the three survivors must face the necessity of finding their role in a battle-transformed country, America herself must redefine its identity and purpose, both internally and in its relation to the whole of humanity.

A Worse Place Than Hell comes into view in a peculiar moment of American history. At the very instant that Matteson has

articulated his vision of a good and durable republic, thugs and miscreants have tried literally to dismantle the bastions of American liberty and justice. It, therefore, seems important to observe that Matteson's title is simultaneously a powerful metaphor of the mind-boggling dilemma faced by Abraham Lincoln—responsible for the future of millions in the middle of the war that changed the world—and a literal reference to all battlefields and a military hospitals in human history, the first-hand experience of which irreversibly transforms individuals. In the wake of the experience of combat, children become “parents” to their own mothers and fathers, idealists turn into existentialists, cowards into heroes, and heroes into dust. The timelessness of *conditio humana*, once profoundly understood, may form a fundament for ethics embracing the natural human need of kindness and solidarity. A universal “squeeze of the hand,” as Melville would put it, is the only remedy against the universal “thump” we all experience (Jędrzejko 2009)². Such knowledge changes one's optics: it motivates individual heroism, but also, transforming foes into brothers, becomes the motor of change.

In recent years, the United States has been striving to once again become *e pluribus unum*. Fractured by unresolved problems, divided by partisan interests, misguided by the egotism of irresponsible individuals in the positions of power, and perhaps above all undereducated—the United States has become for many of its own citizens a bitter disappointment. And yet, like John Matteson, many of them also understand America's unique regenerative powers, and they realize that the nation's future

2. The concept of the “universal thump” is introduced in the first chapter of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*: “[...] however the old sea-captains may order me about—however they may thump and punch me about, I have the satisfaction of knowing that it is all right; that everybody else is one way or other served in much the same way—either in a physical or metaphysical point of view, that is; and so the universal thump is passed round, and all hands should rub each other's shoulder-blades, and be content” (Melville 2017). The idea of the “squeeze of the hand” is the overarching metaphor and the title of chapter 94 of the novel. Both these concepts provide Paweł Jędrzejko with a framework of reference upon which the scholar reconstructs the essentials of Melville's existentialist ethics (Jędrzejko 2008; 2009).

depends on the essential moral fiber of the “kingly commons.” It depends individual Americans, at once both compassionate and self-reliant, of the kind who took personal responsibility to rebuilt their country from the ashes of the Civil War, and who strive to rebuild her today.

No doubt, America has been redeemed before. In “The Custom House,” his famous quasi-biographical introductory to his *Scarlet Letter*, Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote:

[...]I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back, would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed. (Hawthorne 1850)

Written 170 years later, *A Worse Place Than Hell* redeems America again—for the sake of those who would unwittingly seek to destroy it, and above all, for the sake of the generations to come.

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ABSTRACTS AND NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Food, Technology and Translocal Transformations of Taste Industrial and Processed Food in Yucatán

Translocality as originally used by Arjun Appadurai was an evocative concept that appealed immediately to anthropologists and others who study global-local connections. Its use has been widely adopted in religious studies, music studies, migration studies and food studies, but it has continued to be rather undefined, which makes it difficult to apply to local data. Here, from the study of local food and gastronomy in the Mexican state of Yucatán, I investigate how translocality can help us look at the global in the local and the local in the global. I propose that when it comes to studying food and gastronomy in the Yucatán, translocality can help us understand the ways in which industrialization, which became both a production model and a way of life in the United States and Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, rapidly extended to food everywhere, and Yucatecans fondly took to the consumption of industrially produced and processed foods, incorporating them into the local gastronomy. The results, in terms of taste, have been extensive but are not particular to the Yucatán, since food and gastronomy everywhere have been impacted in similar ways. However, when we analyze the changes in local dishes and preparations, we can see how ubiquitous industrialized food has become and how it has affected the particular configurations of ingredients in Yucatecan cuisine.

Keywords: food, technology, translocality, taste, processed food

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at the Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. He has conducted research in Sardinia, Italy, and in Chiapas, Mexico. Since 2000, he has been conducting research on food, identity, regionalism, and taste in Yucatán, and, since 2016, in Seville, Spain. His current project focuses on innovation among restaurateurs and chefs in Yucatán and Seville. He is a member of the National System of Researchers in Mexico, Level II, and was a Fellow of the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University 2006–2007. Among other texts, Ayora-Díaz authored two monographs. The first one, dedicated to healers in Chiapas, came out in 2002; the second one, *Foodscapes, Foodfields and Identities in Yucatán* was published by Berghahn in 2012. He has edited seven collections, the most recent of which are *Cooking Technology: Transformations in Culinary Practice in Mexico and Latin America* (2016), and *Taste, Politics and Identities in Mexican Food* (2019), both published by Bloomsbury Academic. Currently, he is editing a new volume, *The Cultural Politics of Food, Taste, and Identity: A Global Perspective*, also for Bloomsbury Academic. Ayora-Díaz is also a co-author of the Spanish language volume, *Cuisine, Music and Communication: Aesthetics and Technology in Contemporary Yucatán* (UADY 2016).

ALBENA BAKRATCHEVA

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**‘Higher Laws’ and ‘Divine Madness’
Transnational and Translocal Configurations of Quixotic In/Sanity
in the American Renaissance**

The New England Transcendentalists deliberately chose a position which by definition did not belong to what was to them the common “prosaic mood” (Thoreau) of their time. Their choice was the result of representatively romantic discontent with their contemporary reality and, at the same time, through the vigorous drive of the Puritan spiritual leadership, it was essentially anachronistic. The sophisticated delight of identifying with such a doubly anomalous nonconformist ideal only intensified the need for counterbalancing the prosaic sanity of the real world with a wished-for poetic insanity, or “madness from the gods” (Emerson). Such “madness by romantic identification” whose “features have been fixed once and for all by Cervantes” (Foucault), naturally caused “Quixotic confusion” between reality and imagination and the substitution of the true with the fabulous. Though peculiarly intensified in the former Puritan context and in the context of ‘Americanness’ in which the nineteenth century New England intellectuals placed it, the problem was far from being merely a local, New England-centered, phenomenon. This paper argues that in their ‘in/sane’ Quixotic quest for perfection, which caused a series of personal failures, the New England Transcendentalists were remarkably faithful saunters in a blessed place that, to them, was both America and, at the same time, the all-encompassing perennial–translocal and transnational–

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world, inviting them to establish what Emerson called “an original relation to the universe.”

Keywords: transnationalism, Transcendentalism, Quixotism

Albena Bakratcheva is a Professor of American Literature and American Studies at New Bulgarian University, Sofia, Bulgaria, and Chair of the Master’s Program of American and British Studies. In 2007 she obtained the degree of the Doctor of Letters (habilitation). Among other publications, Bakratcheva is the author of *Similarities in Divergences* (1995—in Bulgarian), *Potentialities of Discourse* (1997—in Bulgarian), *Visibility Beyond the Visible* (2007—in Bulgarian), *The Call of the Green: Thoreau and Place-Sense in American Writing* (2009–2017—in English), and *The Poetic Discourse of American Transcendentalism* (Rodopi Publishing House, Amsterdam and New York, NY 2013—in English). She is the editor and translator of *Henry David Thoreau. Life Without Principle. Selected Works* (2001 and 2011); editor of *The Sun Is but a Morning Star. Anthology of American Literature* (2005); editor and translator of *Ralph Waldo Emerson. The Over-Soul. Selected Works* (2014); *Henry David Thoreau. Wild Apples. Selected Works* (2019); *American Literary Theory and Criticism* (2020). Albena Bakratcheva is a member of the Thoreau Society, and the International American Studies Association (IASA). Her international experience includes: Fellowship of the John F. Kennedy Institute for North American Studies at the Freie Universität, Berlin, Germany (1992), Fulbright Grant–SUNY, (1993–94), USIA Fellowship–Summer Institute on Contemporary American Literature at the University of Louisville (1999). Since 2008, she is an Erasmus Lecturer of American Literature at the Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature Moderne, Università degli Studi di Macerata, Italia. Albena Bakratcheva is the honorary recipient of The Walter Harding Distinguished Service Award for excellent literary scholarship (Concord, Massachusetts, 2014).

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MANPREET KAUR KANG

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**Bharatanatyam as a Transnational and Translocal Connection
A Study of Selected Indian and American Texts**

Bharatanatyam is a classical dance form derived from ancient dance styles, which is now seen as representative of Indian culture. In India, it is the most popular classical dance form exerting a great impact not only on the field of dance itself, but also on other art forms, like sculpture or painting. The Indian-American diaspora practices it both in an attempt to preserve its culture and as an assertion of its cultural identity. Dance is an art form that relates to sequences of body movements that are simultaneously aesthetic and symbolic, and rooted in specific cultures. It often tells a story. Different cultures observe different norms and standards by which dances should be performed (as well as by whom

they should be performed and on what occasions). At the same time, dance and dancers influence (and are influenced by) different cultures as a result of transcultural interactions. Priya Srinivasan's *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* is a particularly valuable source wherein its author critically examines a variety of Indian dance forms, especially Bharatanatyam, tracing the history of dance as well as the lived experience of dancers across time, class, gender, and culture. With the help of this text, selected journal articles, and interviews with Bharatanatyam dancers in India and the US, I explore larger issues of gender, identity, culture, race, region, nation, and power dynamics inherent in the practice of Bharatanatyam, focusing on how these practices influence and, in turn, are influenced by transnational and translocal connections.

Keywords: Bharatanatyam, transnationalism, dance, Indian American studies,

Professor Manpreet Kaur Kang holds a PhD in English from Panjab University. She has been teaching at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University since 2005. She has four books and fourteen research papers to her credit; she also serves as the Editor of *MEJO: The Melow Journal of World Literature*. She has presented papers at national and international conferences and is mentoring PhD and MPhil candidates. She is the current President of IASA (International American Studies Association) and the Secretary of MELOW (Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the World Association).

MENA MITRANO

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**Between Suspicion and Love
Reality, Postcritique, and Euro-American Modernization
(An Introduction to the Debate)**

The essay introduces major tenets in the current debate on postcritique, focusing especially on the widespread rejection of symptomatic reading in literary studies and on the rejection of rupture as both a modernist and theoretical model for the conception of the *new*. Further, it presents theory as a phase of Euro-American modernization. Finally, it outlines a wider, more dynamic concept of critique, understood as a movement of intellectual—and geographical—displacements.

Keywords: critique and postcritique, Italian Theory, modernism, modernity, European-American relations

Mena Mitrano conducts research in the field of Anglo-American Languages and Literatures [Lingue e Letterature Anglo-Americane] at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She is the author of *In the Archive of Longing: Susan Sontag's Critical Modernism* (Edinburgh University

Press 2016; paperback 2017), *Gertrude Stein: Woman Without Qualities* (Ashgate 2005), *Language and Public Culture* (Edizioni Q 2009), and the co-editor of *The Hand of the Interpreter: Essays on Meaning After Theory* (Peter Lang 2009). Her core interest is the intimate link between modernism and theory. She has written on modernism, American literature, literary theory/critical theory, psychoanalysis, visuality, and great women intellectuals. Currently, she is completing her new book on critique.

NATHANIEL R. RACINE

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Mapping Miguel Covarrubias across Cultures and Disciplines

In this paper, I explore the *Pageant of the Pacific*, a sequence of mural-maps painted by the Mexican artist and illustrator, Miguel Covarrubias, for the San Francisco International Exposition of 1939–1940. By placing these mural-maps within the larger context of cultural geography and Covarrubias's own theories of comparative anthropology, they offer an artistic and poetic explanation of the relationships found among the cultures of the Pacific Rim, drawing connections across historical epoch and geographical region. Within Covarrubias's own historical context, these maps provide an important visual link that crosses disciplinary boundaries, providing insight into the intellectual conversation of his era and, perhaps, providing a model for interdisciplinarity in the present age as well.

Keywords: Miguel Covarrubias, Mexican muralism, San Francisco International Exposition, cultural geography

Nathaniel R. Racine is an assistant professor of English in the Department of Humanities at Texas A&M International University in Laredo, Texas. He holds a PhD in English from Temple University in Philadelphia and a professionally-accredited Master's degree in Urban Planning from McGill University in Montréal, Canada. In 2018–2019 he was a Fulbright Postdoctoral Scholar to Mexico. His recent work draws from the fields of geography and urbanism to understand the cultural exchange between the US and Mexico from the interwar period through midcentury.

J.D. SCHNEPF

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Collaborative Futures: Arts Funding and Speculative Fictions

According to scholars of literary sociology, US arts institutions—from the federal government to the writers' colony to the creative writing program—have been central to the shaping of US literature for the better part of a century. This paper offers a preliminary investigation

of the global crowdfunding platform Kickstarter as an emerging arts institution. Drawing on Kim Stanley Robinson and Marina Abramović's artistic collaboration as a case study, the paper argues that the appearance of the Marina Abramović Institute (MAI) in Robinson's novel *New York 2140* troubles the author's stated generic commitments to "realist speculative fiction"—fiction that bases its vision of the future on the state of things in our present. In addition to furnishing uncertain conditions of production for the novel, Kickstarter's funding model solicits short-form speculative fiction organized around neoliberal selfhood from its artists. With the assistance of Kickstarter's networked platform, the MAI's capital campaign reimagined private funding as public performance art, as dutiful civic engagement, and as reward for artists willing to narrate entrepreneurial optimism.

Keywords: arts funding, arts institutions, Kickstarter, privatization, speculative fiction

J.D. Schnepf is Assistant Professor of American Studies in Political Culture and Theory the University of Groningen. Her research focuses on the literatures and cultures of the US security state, surveillance technologies, extractive infrastructures, labor, and domesticity. Her writing has appeared in *Feminist Media Studies*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *Media + Environment*, *Modern Fiction Studies*, *Museum Anthropology*, *Public Books*, *Surveillance & Society*, and other venues. In 2019 she was awarded the Emory Elliott Prize by the International American Studies Association (IASA), the Amy J. Elias Founder's Award by the Association for the Study of Arts of the Present (ASAP), and the Fellowship for Distinguished Non-Geographers by the American Association of Geographers (AAG). For 2019–2020, she was named Postdoctoral Associate for the Project on Gender in the Global Community (GGC) on the topic of "Gender and Security" at Princeton University. She is at work on a book that traces the circuit between military technologies that maintain US imperialism overseas and cultural representations of surveillance technologies at home. She holds a PhD in English from Brown University.

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A Mexican Conquest of Space Cosmopolitanism, Cosmopolitics, and Cosmopoetics in the Mexican Space Industry

Mexico cannot be considered a "spacefaring nation," as it does not have the capability to build or launch space crafts into orbit. However, for many engineers, scientists, students, and entrepreneurs, outer space represents an important opportunity for economic development and job creation, as well as the resolution of earthly social problems, and a means to globally position the Mexican technology sector. Although they rely on international agreements for scientific, technical, and logistical collaboration, many of these space enthusiasts allude

to a “Mexican Conquest of Space,” a discursively potent term given Mexico’s colonial history. In this paper, I examine how Mexican imaginaries of outer space, tied to perceptions of past knowledge, present social issues and future projections, are limited by geopolitical realities, even as they are informed by cosmic imaginaries at various scales. I focus on the recently created Mexican Space Agency, its programs, practices, discourses and alliances, as a starting point for a Mexican astroaesthetics, a term coined by the philosopher Hans Blumenberg during the Space Race in an attempt to balance the centripetal and centrifugal forces exerted by outer space. From this perspective, I reflect on the ways in which being tethered to Mexico influences the possibility of being untethered to Earth.

Keywords: Mexico, outer space, cosmopolitics, cosmopolitanism, social imaginary, astroaesthetics

Anne W. Johnson (PhD University of Texas at Austin 2009) is a Full Professor and Researcher at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City. Her research interests include the anthropology of outer space, social studies of science and technology, performance studies and collective memory. She has published on Mexican outer space culture, historical commemoration in the state of Guerrero, and the relations between performance and representation. Her latest book is *Diablos, insurgentes e indios: Política y Poética de la historia en el Norte de Guerrero* (Secretary of Culture/National Institute of Anthropology and History, Mexico, 2016). Her current research revolves around scientific, political and artistic imaginaries of outer space in Mexico.

GABRIELA VARGAS-CETINA

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India and the Translocal Modern Dance Scene, 1890s–1950s

At the end of the nineteenth century and during the first half of the twentieth, lead dancers from different countries became famous and toured internationally. These dancers—and the companies they created—transformed various dance forms into performances fit for the larger world of art music, ballet, and opera circuits. They adapted ballet to the variety-show formats and its audiences. Drawing on shared philosophical ideas—such as those manifest in the works of the Transcendentalists or in the writings of Nietzsche and Wagner—and from movement techniques, such as ballet codes, the Delsarte method, and, later on, Eurythmics (in fashion at the time), these lead dancers created new dance formats, choreographies, and styles, from which many of today’s classical, folk, and ballet schools emerged. In this essay, I look at how Rabindranath Tagore, Isadora Duncan, Anna Pavlova, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn, Uday Shankar, Leila Roy Sokhey and Rumini Devi Arundale contributed to this translocal dance scene. Indian dance and spirituality, as well as famous Indian dancers, were an integral part of what at the time

was known as the international modern dance scene. This transnational scene eventually coalesced into several separate schools, including what today is known as classical and modern Indian dance styles.

Keywords: dance, modern dance, India, America, translocality

Gabriela Vargas-Cetina (PhD McGill University 1994) is Full Professor and Researcher of Anthropology at the Autonomous University of Yucatán. She has done ethnographic research in Alberta, Canada; Sardinia, Italy; Chiapas and Yucatán, Mexico; and her current ethnographic fieldwork takes place in Yucatan and in Andalusia, Spain. Her general field of interest encompasses organizations and organized action, representation in anthropology, anthropology and performance, and the relations between anthropology and fiction. She has published on shepherds' co-operatives in Sardinia, the pow-wow ceremonial in Alberta, rural teachers and weaver organizations in Chiapas, and music and musicians in Yucatan. Her recent books include an edited volume *Anthropology and the Politics of Representation* (U of Alabama, 2013), the monograph *Beautiful Politics of Music: Trova in Yucatán, Mexico* (U of Alabama 2017), and the book co-authored with two other anthropologists (in Spanish) *Cooking, Music and Communications: Technology and Aesthetics in Contemporary Yucatán* (UADY, 2016). She is currently looking at struggles around noise in the city of Merida, in Yucatán, and working with musicians who play during the Holy Week festivities in Seville, Spain.



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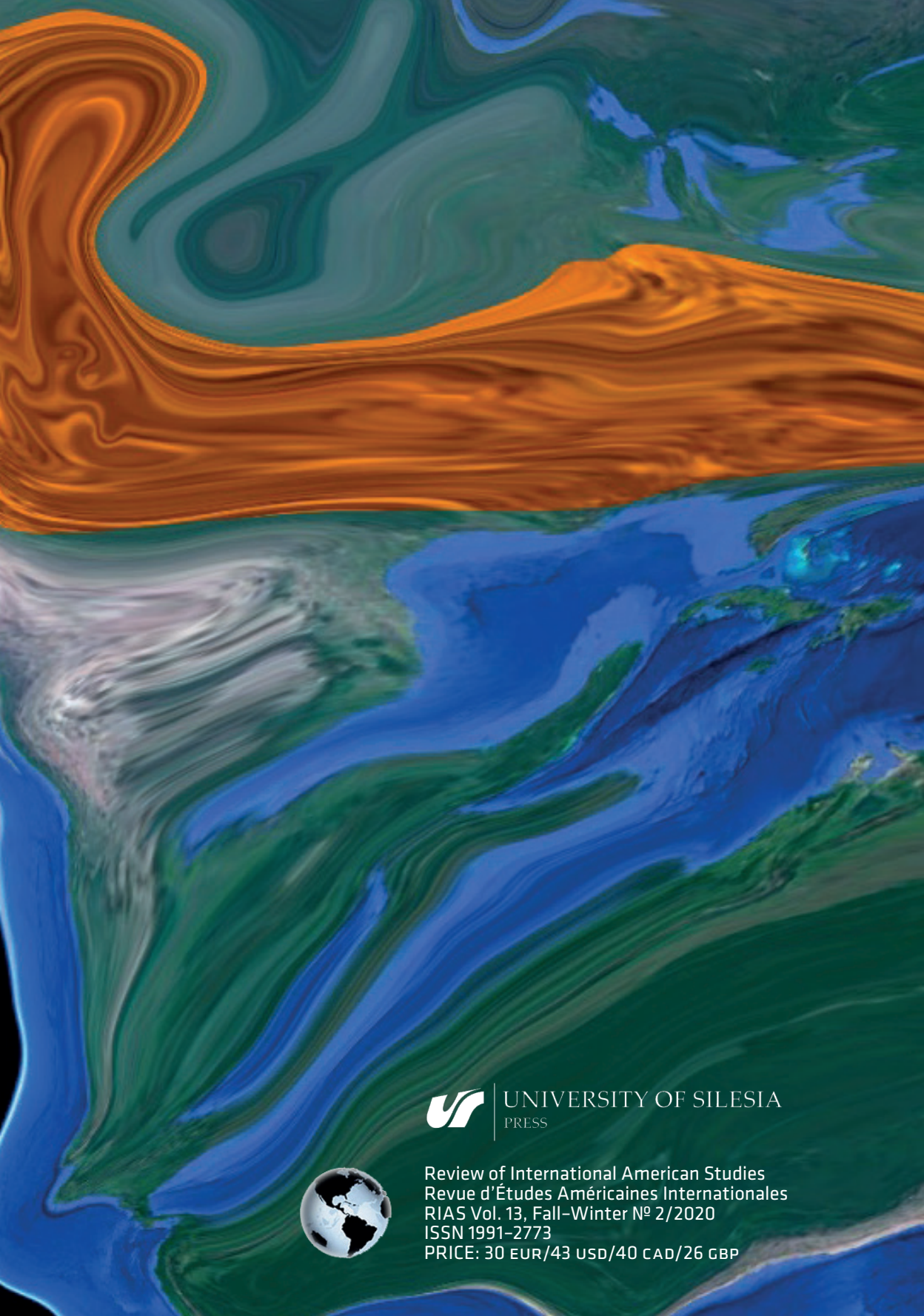
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