

# Reprise Editor's Note

---

NINA MORGAN

The four selections offered in this issue's Reprise foreground the impact of changing places, in the transnational fullness of that idea. Questions with regard to how a transnational change of place may or may not create a different sense of self; whether one's role in creating change in a foreign place is also measured by one's representation of that other place, effectively transforming one's own community and identity; and where transnational factors (economy, migration, labor) place bodies, move them, and exploit them are addressed in these essays, which represent an impressive range of studies appropriate to the discourses of transnational American Studies.

Jeffrey Gray's 1994 article "Essence and the Mulatto Traveler: Europe as Embodiment in Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*" originally appeared in the journal *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* (Duke University Press). An early foray into transnational American Studies, Gray's analysis of the role "Europe" plays both in the narrative and in the life of the author herself begins with a discussion of the object of art—the self as exoticized, distanced other—imagined and displayed against the carceral black body in the American imaginary, an imaginary that holds the protagonist, Helga, hostage to an indeterminacy represented by her mulatto status. Gray argues that the "quicksand" of the search for essence, whether located in the body or in the eyes of others, eventually dissolves the protagonist's sense that a change of place can change the truth that essence does not exist. Gray references the shared observation among African American international celebs (Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Josephine Baker—whose 1973 interview with Henry Louis Gates, Jr., is cited) that "being different is different" in Europe, yet that otherness is finally also not an experience of self, which the narrative (and perhaps the author's life as well) proves to be endlessly deferred.

In their beautifully researched study and critical edition, *Nellie Arnott's Writings on Angola, 1905–1913: Missionary Narratives Linking Africa and America* (Parlor Press), authors Sarah Robbins and Ann Ellis Pullen examine in fine detail the historical record of the transnational network of literary work produced by Arnott. Tracing her legacy in the study's third chapter, "Writing on Multiple Journeys," the authors argue

on behalf of Arnott's capacity to create authority and celebrity as well as a sense of community among her distant readers, underscoring the powerful and influential role that missionary women's writing (mimicking to some extent the popular genre of travel writing) played in shaping attitudes at home, not only with regard to race, but also in relation to women's roles, place, and purpose. Robbins and Pullen display a conscientious resolve not to obscure the inherent contradictions in Arnott's changing perspectives as they offer a historical narrative based on Arnott's public and private texts, which also reveal the "consistent inconsistency" in her attitudes and beliefs. Details of and insights into educational practices in missionary schools, including the observation that mothers in the US appreciated the fact that their middle-class Christian children were sharing curriculum with Umbundu children in Angola, invite interesting conclusions about the transnational, transgenerational, and gendered effects of women's work in the missionary world.

The Global Classroom Project, a joint experiment in long-distance, cross-cultural, transnational learning ("not," the authors point out, "the one-sided 'missionary' instruction typical of distance learning courses"), is outlined in "Intercultural Communication in the Global Classroom" by TyAnna K. Herrington and Yuri P. Tretyakov, originally published in 2004 in *Russian-American Links: 300 Years of Cooperation* (Russian Academy of Sciences). Here, the authors review the history of their experiment in communication studies, which revealed a number of challenges in intercultural communication styles among Russian, Swedish, and American students. This valuable study lends insight into early attempts to bring "collaborative" practice to transnational and cross-cultural constituencies meeting each other for the first time. The "chaos" that the authors report is read as a space for unstructured and unimagined discoveries for students and professors alike, testifying perhaps to broad, non-ideologically informed but technologically enhanced creative and transnational networks yet to come.

Marxist-Feminist Lillian S. Robinson's essay, "Sex in the City: Prostitution in the Age of Global Migrations" (originally published in French in 2002, in English in 2007), begins with a discussion of the cotton mills of Lowell, Massachusetts. Robinson suggests that young women workers—both migrant and immigrant—have been offered, historically, two types of labor as a means of survival. Arguing that to deny legitimacy to girls who are left little other choice than sex work is to also deny them the opportunity for rights advocacy and protection, Robinson takes a controversial position in defending women sex workers' rights to work in the face of the restrictive and exploitative alternative offered by society and industry. Linking the transnational flows of female, migrant sex workers and (mostly) male tourists in the sex-leisure travel industry, the first-world/third-world gendered dynamic of exchange, Robinson highlights the effects on local communities and patterns of migration (the case of Montreal, for example), and state economies' reliance on a tourism trade that itself is supported on the backs of "illegal" sex workers. Robinson does not bow to moralizing tendencies; instead she offers a critical reading of the

history of transnational capital as it relates to the exploitation of women's bodies both inside and out of factories.

The editors of *JTAS* would like to acknowledge and thank the publishers of these works for permission to republish in *Reprise*, especially Diane Grossé of Duke University Press for the selection from *NOVEL*, David Blakesley from Parlor Press, and the estate of Lillian S. Robinson.