

Editor's Note

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Each issue of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* is a composite exercise in defining and redefining the field of American Studies scholarship. This particular issue intervenes in the field on different levels, engaging different disciplines and subject areas. It consists of the usual four parts: a Special Forum, submitted articles, and the Forward and Reprise sections. The contributions address the intersecting areas of the continental United States, the North American continent, the Americas, and the planetary reach of transnational American Studies.

The Special Forum on “American Studies: Caribbean Edition,” edited by Belinda Edmondson and Donette Francis, originates from a session at the annual convention of the American Studies Association in 2012, which took place in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The location of this convention in the Caribbean, outside the continental United States, serves the participants in this discussion as a fertile ground to resituate the field of American Studies between an emphasis on first-world, US-led forms of exceptionalism on the one hand and an African Americanist approach to an area of the African diaspora on the other. The editors of the Special Forum argue that both of these approaches fail to consider the cultural primacy of the Caribbean islands and their pre-Columbian traditions. It is the impetus of their transnational American Studies concept to restore the original position of the Caribbean as the center of “plantation America” in the study of the Americas and to counteract the existing academic segregation between the North Atlantic academy and the third-world Latin American community, a color line that they see based on the geographical divide of the American hemisphere. Their redefining of transnational American Studies attempts to “incorporate the US within the larger postcolony history of the Americas,” rather than placing the United States in the center. Thus Mimi Sheller applies her critical mobilities research to an analysis of the economic, political, and cultural forces involved in the production, traffic, and usage of “aluminum across the Americas.” Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Stephens base their concept of “archipelagic American Studies” on the insular character of the Caribbean and connect the islands of the seas to a planetary proliferation of transnational American Studies. Taking issue with the position of post-exceptionalist

critics and their anti-insular stand, Roberts and Stephens privilege a meta-archipelagic relationality, as first developed in Antonio Benítez-Rojo's postmodern perspective on the Caribbean, rather than focusing on continental space. Deborah Thomas takes up the culture of violence that continues to exist in the Caribbean and Latin American societies after the end of colonialism and is also present in urban areas of the United States. For Thomas, violence is foundational both to the colonization of the New World and to the formation of US national sovereignty. The fight for human rights and democratic principles by Haitians exiled in the United States is the topic of Millery Polyné's contribution. She focuses on the political activities of Raymond Joseph, later Haitian ambassador to the US, between 1965 and 1969 to show the difficulties exiled Haitians encountered in confronting the despotic regime of Duvalier supported by the American government. A different kind of exilic experience underlies the work of Harvard sociologist Orlando Patterson, who in an interview with Donette Francis recognizes the creative possibilities of exile and constructs the idea of a "transcendental cosmopolitanism" specific to people of African ancestry in Caribbean modernity. Rather than reexamining Patterson's widely received work on slavery and social death, Francis reads his little-known three novels published in the 1960s as signature texts of Jamaica's independence. The Special Forum concludes with Faith Smith's article on the role of Booker T. Washington's Tuskegee Institute in the cultural exchanges between African American and Jamaican intellectuals.

These original contributions convincingly establish the special role of the Caribbean islands for new definitions of transnational American Studies. The multiethnic traditions and the formation of interdependent, insular societies within the creolized space of plantation America represent a premodern state of affairs that fascinated the first European ethnographers and "Americanists" of the Enlightenment period, such as Alexander von Humboldt. The plunge of Caribbean people into modernity—in Orlando Patterson's words—occurs without the experience of the nation-state, creating space for different political formations that have been abused but could also be used in a meta-archipelagic, planetary spirit. Such a concern for planetary interdependence transcends national boundaries without giving up a form of social or institutional affiliation within a given state.

Most of the contributions in the articles section are concerned with locating the "American" aspect in their transnational research. Elizabeth Abele's "Green-Card American Fiction: Naturalizing Novels by Visiting Authors" takes up the in-between position of green-card holders residing in the United States to redefine the status of American literature. With reference to Henry James's status as an American writer in England, Abele looks at transnational US fiction written within the last ten years by acclaimed Anglophone writers temporarily living in the United States (Salman Rushdie, DBC Pierre, Margaret Atwood, Zadie Smith) to explore their Americanness. Jeehyun Lim's article, "Black and Korean: Racialized Development and the Korean American Subject in Korean/American Fiction," discusses another addition to the field

of American literature arising from the presence of American soldiers in Korean camps and their interactions with Korean women. In her analysis of three Korean American texts published between the 1960s and the 1990s, Lim recognizes a transracial alliance between black Americans and Koreans and finds the representation of the Korean American subject racialized. Nihad M. Farooq's "National Myths, Resistant Persons: Ethnographic Fictions of Haiti" connects with both the Special Forum and Reprise sections. Her article represents a comparative reading of three ethnographic accounts of visits to Haiti undertaken in the 1930s by Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham, and Langston Hughes. For her reading of these accounts, Farooq uses Antonio Benítez-Rojo's concept of the meta-archipelago, as well as Joseph Roach's concept of performance, as developed in Roach's *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance*. In the reactions of the two writers and the dancer/choreographer Dunham to the Haitian people and the presence of American soldiers, Farooq locates the transnational move beyond the Haitian borders of "a broader diasporic nationalism," which is "tied more accurately to action and flux than to space or situatedness." Ricardo D. Salvatore's "Imperial Revisionism" examines the representations of the Spanish colonial empire by US historians of Latin America published between 1915 and 1945. As proponents of US Pan-Americanism, the American historians trace the transition from Dollar Diplomacy to Good Neighbor policy, a hemispheric perspective that also accounts for the implicit comparisons in these historiographies of the past Spanish empire and the present American empire. Sarah Jaquette Ray's article moves from the transnational to the national and local frames of American Studies, which successively inform her reading of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*. From her perspective as a scholar at the campus of the University of Alaska in Juneau, Ray weighs the pros and cons of a transnational ecocriticism and revises the almost unanimous classification of Silko's novel as the prime example of transnational environmental justice. The activities of Alaska Native politics and the concomitant emphasis on local conditions lead Ray to an alternate reading for which she finds ample evidence in the text and in Silko's own pronouncements. This section concludes with an article by Daniela Sheinin who analyzes the conception and implementation of the United States Pavilion at Expo 67 in Montreal and compares the focus in the exhibit on American pop art of the sixties to earlier, more functional designs. Sheinin's discussion also includes the political context of the civil rights movement and the American engagement in Vietnam and argues that the planners of Bucky's Bubble successfully deflected criticism of American politics.

In the Forward section, editor Greg Robinson has assembled eight excerpts from original manuscripts by widely acclaimed experts in Native American, Asian American, and African American culture, history, and politics. These texts provide new perspectives on the subjects of Latin America and the international reaches of transnational American Studies, the politics of the New Deal in relation to fascism

and communism, the positions of African American ambassadors abroad, and the achievements of transnational history on a global scale.

The contributions to the Reprise section, selected by editor Nina Morgan, provide new essays by Zora Neale Hurston along with a substantial introduction by Ernest Julius Mitchell II, which further extend Hurston's prominent position in this issue and in transnational American Studies. Two essays, by Birgit Bauridl and Alex Lubin respectively, focus on Arab American and African American experiences in terms of how performance and activism inform the complexity of identity construction and the construction of transnational communities. Additionally, Reprise offers the republication of a short interview with James Baldwin by Rosa Bobia.

The range of contributions to this issue demonstrates the vitality and reach of transnational American Studies in local, national, and international contexts. The editors of the Special Forum argue for greater international attention to Caribbean Studies from first-world through exceptionalist and archipelago perspectives on American Studies. The scholars and critics they refer to belong to the Latin American, North American, and North Atlantic academy. This research platform invites the critical integration of earlier approaches in and outside of the Americas. Thus Mimi Sheller's analogy of the commodity of aluminum in transit to the role of sugar in colonialism evokes Fernando Ortiz's classic 1947 study *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* and his analysis of their traffic to Europe. In Europe, the German Americanist Wolfgang Binder of the University of Erlangen-Nürnberg has worked extensively on English, French, and Spanish Caribbean literatures and cultures in the original languages. In 1993, he published the proceedings of an international conference on *Slavery in the Americas* (Königshausen and Neumann) with English- and French-language contributions. Nicole Waller's *Contradictory Violence: Revolution and Subversion in the Caribbean* (Universitätsverlag Winter, 2005) links up with Deborah Thomas's research interests. To facilitate such cross-references, transnational American Studies needs an international platform for the communication of publications in the United States with publications abroad. Several efforts for such communications have been undertaken. The European Association for American Studies, the American Studies Association, and the Canadian Association for American Studies joined forces in the organization of the EAAS biennial conference in Seville in April 1992 to mark the quincentennial of the New World. At this conference Michael Dorris gave a presentation on *The Crown of Columbus* (1991), jointly written with Louise Erdrich, which, as with Silko's *Almanac of the Dead*, represented a Native American response to the conquest. Shelley Fisher Fishkin organized the workshop "From the Columbian Quattrocentennial to the Columbian Quincentennial: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the United States at the Ends of the 19th and 20th Centuries, 1892–1992." A selection of the papers given at the joint conference were published as *The American Columbiad: "Discovering" America, Inventing the United States*, edited by Mario Materassi and Maria Irene

Ramalho de Sousa Santos (VU University Press, 1996). A second attempt to combine American Studies scholarship transnationally took place in Montreal in 1999 at a joint convention of the American Studies Associations of the United States and of Canada, where Bernard Mergen organized a session of international editors of American Studies journals, a meeting that eventually resulted in the ASA-sponsored International Journals Directory. A solution for a deeper awareness of transnational American Studies scholarship worldwide might be Shelley Fisher Fishkin's idea of "DEEP MAPS," as developed in *JTAS* 3.2. The recognition of American Studies on a transnational scale would provide a further critical perspective on the evaluation of the United States of America at home and abroad, but it would also draw attention to the multidimensionality of American culture and politics in the world. This is also part of the continuous redefinition of transnational American Studies.