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### Author

Morgan, Nina

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# Introduction: Turning a Transnational Corner

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NINA MORGAN

We are turning a corner—with the uplifting results of the US presidential election, the approval and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines, and, for *JTAS*, a significant and promising new chapter with the announcement of a second editorial home for the *Journal*: We are thrilled to officially recognize the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies at Johannes Gutenberg University, Mainz, Germany as a cosponsor of *JTAS*.

This new and important transnational collaboration opens an avenue to multiple and diverse connections among institutions, faculty, students, and readers. We hope that this productive partnership will allow the American Studies Program at Stanford University in the US and the Obama Institute in Germany to foster outstanding scholarship in Transnational American Studies for many years to come. We are especially delighted to announce *JTAS*'s new Editor-in-Chief will be the Director or “Speaker” of the Obama Institute, Alfred Hornung, one of the leading Americanists in the world.

The Obama Institute of Transnational American Studies was founded as an interdisciplinary, research-focused institute tasked with a leadership role in defining global and twenty-first century trends in Transnational American Studies. With the permission of then President Barack Obama, and with the support of a foundational and long-standing academic commitment to American Studies at JGU Mainz reaching back to the teaching of American Literature in the early 1950s, the Obama Institute in Mainz opened officially in 2017. Today, the Obama Institute is flourishing, having grown into a multicontinental network of research and teaching faculty as well as international Obama Fellows who collaborate on interdisciplinary projects, conferences, and the teaching of undergraduate and graduate students in American Studies. (See: <http://www.obama-institute.com>.)

Like the Kennedy Institute in Berlin, the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies continues a German tradition of scholarly internationalism and global outreach, yet its focus is on cross-cultural, transdisciplinary collaborations, engaging fields that include law, politics, and medicine. *JTAS* is grateful for the support

of Mainz University President Georg Krausch and the Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture of the State of Rhineland-Palatinate and looks forward to working closely with the entire Executive Board of the Obama Institute: Mita Banerjee, Jutta Ernst, Alfred Hornung, Axel Schäfer, and Oliver Scheiding.

This issue of *JTAS* is also being published at a time of global reckoning. The uneven distribution of and access to resources throughout the pandemic has laid bare the systematic inequities that serve as the very foundation of our daily lives and has revealed (again) the implicit tie of exploitative practices to space and race. The threat of the virus has heightened awareness of the borderlessness of pathogens that travel and mutate, not autochthonous to a specific nation or origin. The movement of the virus has also made visible the stranglehold of violent police brutality and staunchly virulent racism that infects ordinary lives around the world. Provoked by a social media imaginary wherein new alliances and new challenges may signal shifts in perception and practice, these conditions prompted *JTAS* cofounder **Shirley Geok-lin Lim** to ask about the impact of these intersecting crises on those teaching and researching in our field. Senior Associate Managing Editor **Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci**'s fine introduction to the *Special Forum* essays on Covid-19, which she edited for *JTAS*, puts into context the voices of four professors—**Perin Gürel**, **Wen Liu**, **David Goodman**, and **Douglas B. Craig**—who speak in powerful and open ways on their new insights amidst the pandemic.

Anaïs Maurer and Rebecca H. Hogue in their *Special Forum* “Transnational Nuclear Imperialisms” and in their cowritten introduction provide *JTAS* readers with material, insights, images, and arguments that together comprise a stunning academic achievement. Nothing short of brilliant, these essays by **Anaïs Maurer** and **Rebecca H. Hogue**, **Aimee Bahng**, **Kyoko Matsunaga**, **George Gregory Rozsa**, **Fiona Amundsen** and **Sylvia C. Frain**, and **Jessica A. Schwartz** reconstellate Nuclear Studies and Transnational American Studies to form a path-breaking analysis of the multiple sites of resistance enacted by transnational Indigenous constituencies. They trace the histories of these Indigenous groups' diverse encounters with colonial, imperialist, and technological powers in order to pivot toward new alliances of thinkers and activists whose commitment to Indigenous sovereignty shifts interlocutors, redefines terms, and directs narratives toward Indigenous communities, their agency, and their futures. This is transformational reading: rich, revealing, compelling, and ethical. Taken together, the essays in this *Special Forum* represent the best of what we hope for in the scholarly endeavor. *JTAS* congratulates *Special Forum* Editor **Erika Doss** on curating these valuable contributions to Transnational American Studies.

*JTAS* has a tradition of acknowledging and commemorating the important contributions that our colleagues make to our shared fields. In 2019, we dedicated an issue to the inspiring work and poetry of **Shirley Geok-lin Lim**; every summer issue, *JTAS* publishes an excerpt from the winning submission to the American Studies Association's **Shelley Fisher Fishkin** Prize for International Scholarship in Transnational American Studies. Disciplines have a history, and individual professors as researchers, men-

tors, and teachers have lasting impacts both on the future trajectory of scholarship and on their own students' and peers' lives. In that light, this issue of *JTAS* shares a symposium in honor of *JTAS* Editor emeritus and American historian **Thomas Bender** whose foresight led the way to transnational approaches in the teaching of History. These personal reflections on the practices of teaching History, organized and introduced by **Elaine S. Abelson** and **Daniel P. Kotzin**, highlight the development of transnational methodologies inspired by the mentorship and intellectual guidance of Tom Bender. His former students—**John S. Baick**, **Andie Tucher**, **Tracy Neumann**, **Greg Robinson**, and **Marc Aronson**—bring us a behind-the-scenes retrospective on the individual and public challenges faced in teaching and writing about transnational history from K-12 to the university.

This issue sees the debut of **Brian Russell Roberts** as our new *Reprise* Editor. In his section of the journal, Roberts opens with a powerful, informative, and insightful (in other words, “must-read”) introduction—“Between a Knee and the Overrepresented Ground of Man: On Black and Other Human Archipelagoes,”—which thoughtfully carries readers through his selections by drawing together Western European philosophy’s racist geography (here represented in Hegel’s essay on the “Geographical Basis of History”) and the history of the spacialization of race (traced in **Gary Y. Okihiro’s** “Island Race”) to contextualize current intellectual interventions in a centuries-long program of geographical and racial domination. Such interventions constitute academic, interdisciplinary systems of thought that define and analyze issues of, for example, environmental sovereignty as is demonstrated by **Jay L. Batongbacal** in “Defining Archipelagic Studies”; or, such interventions necessarily reconceive the history of man to overturn its failed cartographies in favor of new terrain for the human as argued in **Katherine McKittrick’s** essay on the remarkable Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter. Roberts’s framing of *Reprise* with a longer interpretive introduction promises to become a much-favored resource for *JTAS* readers!

*Forward* Editor **Jennifer A. Reimer’s** introduction surveys recent scholarship in Transnational American Studies with volumes that reframe familiar American standards by studying them in a global context, and with new research that highlights the hauntological valences made visible by transnational approaches. Beginning with excerpts from *Uncle Tom’s Cabins: The Transnational History of America’s Most Mutable Book*, edited by **Tracy C. Davis** and **Stefka Mihaylova**, Reimer’s selections highlight this collection’s reevaluation of the inheritance of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s famous novel as analyzed in the contexts of Liberia (**Marcy J. Dinius**), Cuba (**Kahlila Chaar-Pérez**), and Bulgaria (**Mihaylova**); additional contributions to the anthology address Canada, France, Spain, Romania and Moldova, Germany, Brazil, Southeast Asia, Poland, Lebanon, and Iran. In her selections from *Anthologizing Poe: Editions, Translations, and (Trans)National Canons*, edited by **Emron Esplin** and **Margarida Vale de Gato**, Reimer offers *JTAS* readers the editors’ introduction to the collection, which helps readers trace one hundred seventy years of global Poe studies. Although not featured here, we are happy to note that *JTAS* Editor and resident Poe scholar **Takayuki Tatsumi’s**

essay, “Editing and Anthologizing Poe in Japan,” is included in the volume. Reimer’s *Forward* also offers excerpts from the award-winning *Colonial Phantoms: Belonging and Refusal in the Dominican Americas, from the 19<sup>th</sup> Century to the Present* by **Dixa Ramírez D’Oleo**, and *Black Land: Imperial Ethiopianism and African America* by **Nadia Nurhussein**, a historical examination of how a conflicted attraction toward transnational Black empire in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Ethiopia impacted African American writers. As Jennifer Reimer notes in her introduction and as Brian Russell Roberts observes in detail in *Reprise*, *JTAS* is grateful for the publishers’ permission to share these excerpts with our readers.

In addition to all of the contributions of the individual editors and writers whose work comprises this issue, the production of this journal also relies on great scholars around the world who serve as our anonymous peer reviewers, publishers who kindly agree to share permissions to showcase important work, and a wonderful team of faculty and graduate students on the managing side of our operations who facilitate so much behind the scenes. A great deal of this effort is accomplished thanks to the tirelessness, tenacity, and intellectual grace of our Managing team: Managing Editor Sabine Kim (Mainz University), Senior Associate Managing Editors Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci (Koç University) and Selina Lai-Henderson (Duke Kunshan University) as well as Associate Managing Editors Sabine Walter (Philipps-Universität Marburg), Cynthia Garcia (Stanford University), and Mai Wang (Stanford University).

As I have often observed in over ten years of editing *JTAS*—first as the editor of *Reprise* and then as Editor-in-Chief—this kind of work is only possible through the constant collaboration and generous commitment of time and effort of dedicated scholars around the world, around the clock. I am grateful for the honor and have enjoyed the opportunity to work with each and every one of you to bring to a global audience the important, innovative, transdisciplinary scholarship that defines our field.