TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN SPACES

Edited by

Tina Powell
Concord University

Patricia Sagasti Suppes
Hartwick College

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Foreword

Brenci Patiño
Mary Baldwin University
July, 2021

On one of my first trips to New York City after relocating to the East Coast from South Texas, I took the train from Long Island City to Jackson Heights. It was a cold and sunny spring afternoon and I was looking for a particular place that, up until that day, I had only seen in Facebook pictures, but one that held significant space on my mind for its cultural significance to Latinx communities. As I descended from the 7 train on Roosevelt Avenue, an unexpected scene greeted me: I was welcomed by the smell of freshly made Mexican *tamales*. The young Mexican woman (I presumed) selling said delicious treats smiled at my marveling at the sight of her metal container where her *tamales* were so lovingly wrapped. My incredulity was also surprising to me; after all, I was quite acquainted with scenes like this. I was raised in Mexico and I have traveled through the country where street vendors selling hot foods are as ubiquitous as fast-food chains are in the United States. Newly arrived in the East Coast, however, my encounter with a street vendor selling Mexican food was a completely new experience, and, yet, it was so intimately familiar. I had found a taste of home in the busy streets of New York City. The young vendor had brought with her the culinary and entrepreneurial ancestral knowledge that allowed her to make a living while giving customers like me a piece of our homeland.

As I continued walking down Roosevelt, the smells, sights, and sounds of the bustling neighborhood transported me to my favorite places in Mexico while reminding me that I was, in fact, still in the United States. It quickly became clear that street vendors, restaurants, and stores were all recreating spaces that mirrored Latin American immigrants' towns and cities. Suddenly, I could not only travel to Mexico, but also to Colombia, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and more by just walking a few blocks in the neighborhood. By the time I finally arrived at Terraza 7, my original destination and a performance venue that serves as a community gathering point, I had already taken part in a multiplicity of culinary, aural, and visual transnational experiences.

Much like many of the texts examined in this volume, the *tamales* seller embodied a transnational experience, and one that I might have overlooked if I had been running late to my *son jarocho* workshop taking place at Terraza 7. *Son jarocho*, a musical genre from the state of Veracruz with indigenous,

Spanish, and African roots that originated over 300 years ago, is another example of an American transnational space. This particular type of music is played using guitar-like string instruments and a wooden platform, called *tarima*, that produces percussive sounds and it is played in rural communities in a communal dance and song party called *fandango*. In the United States, it has flourished among both immigrant Latin American and Latinx communities particularly in large cities such as Los Angeles or New York where *fandangos* and workshops are routinely held. With these community gatherings replicating the ones celebrated in the *ranchos* of Veracruz, immigrant communities have created safe transnational spaces to honor their native homelands. As such, s*on jarocho* has become a means whereby immigrants and their descendants from different communities can connect with each other and reconnect with home, thus providing important transnational sites where creativity and a sense of community thrives. Beyond these tangible spaces that are part of the fabric of the immigrant experience, literature provides another vital location for the creation of transnational spaces. It is precisely these literary sites that *Transnational American Spaces* expertly examines.

I had the opportunity to directly interact with co-editor Dr. Patricia Sagasti Suppes at the National Humanities Center's seminar on immigration a few years ago. The care she brought to her work there is mirrored in this volume. One of the many strengths of this text is that it demonstrates the true complexity of the topic at hand. As Sagasti Suppes comes to these spaces from Latin American Literature, her co-editor Dr. Tina Powell brings an expertise in the Vietnamese experience. Together, they have assembled an impressive group of writers who challenge the superficial nature of the U.S. immigrant narrative and the tangible and intellectual spaces they have created in their American homelands.

List of Contributors

Mariana Pérez is a Ph.D. candidate in Spanish, specialized in Latinx and Latin American Literature at Arizona State University (ASU). Now, she works as a Visiting Instructor at the Hispanic Department at Whitman College. Pérez has collaborated with a chapter in a book on Chicana/o muralism and iconography for the *Selena's Readers Book*, soon to be published, and enjoys creative writing.

Denise Jarrett, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of English at Morgan State University. She specializes in Black Atlantic Studies, Caribbean, and Multiethnic Literature. Her recent work focuses on Claude McKay.

Patricia Sagasti Suppes, Ph.D. spent the first years of her career as a faculty member in Spanish, and is currently Director of Global Education at Hartwick College. Her research focuses on feminist works by contemporary Latin American and Spanish writers and on the representation of feminine violence in modern literature. Most recently, she published in *Agencia, historia y empoderamiento femenino*, a special publication by the Association of Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Lucía García-Santana, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at The University of the South. She specializes in displacement in the Americas, in particular the relationship between mobility and social exclusion. Her published work has focused on transnational exchanges and displacement in the Hispanic World, and on the place of women production in mainstream cultural and social movements. She is currently working on a monograph with the tentative title *Within and Without Spanishness: Narratives of Displacement and Exclusion in the Contemporary Hispanic World*. Her research and teaching interests also relate to Eco-criticism, Gender Studies, Cultural politics of the Global South, and Memory and Transitional Justice.

Anushray Singh is an award-winning filmmaker, media professional, educator, and writer who divides his time between India and Canada. He has received his MFA in Film & Media Arts from the University of Windsor (2020) and B.Tech in Civil Engineering from the Vellore Institute of Technology (2017). His teaching, art practice and writing on film, media and South Asian cultures have been realized through affiliations across academia, digital media platforms, publications and non-profits across India, Canada, the UK, the US, Austria, and Hungary.

Renee Latchman, Ph.D. is an English lecturer who taught in the D.C.-Maryland area for over ten years. She now teaches at Shortwood Teachers's College in Kingston, Jamaica. She is from Jamaica, W.I. and has special interest in Multicultural, Caribbean, Postcolonial, Diaspora, Ethnic, twentieth-century Women's Literature,

Children's Literature, and the Digital Humanities. Her publications on Caribbean, women's and migrant literature include *The Impact of Immigration on Mother-Daughter Relationships and Identity Development in Six Novels of the Caribbean Diaspora*, and "Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*: A Critique on the Tradition of 'Testing'." Forthcoming publications cover topics such as environment and postcolonialism, Black on Black Rape, Children and Protests, and identity development.

Barbara Miceli, Ph.D. is Assistant Professor in American Studies at the University of Gdańsk (Poland). The main focus of her research is the relationship between fact and fiction in the contemporary novel. She has published articles and book chapters on authors such as Joyce Carol Oates, Margaret Atwood, Jonathan Franzen, Colum McCann, Raymond Carver, Sylvia Plath, and the Literature of the Obama years.

Adam Nemmers, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of English at Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, where he teaches courses in American literature. His research focuses on modernism and multi-ethnic American literature, including recent essays and articles on Passing, Richard Wright, Faulkner, and radio drama, and a forthcoming monograph on modernist epic to be published by Clemson University Press.

Courtney Mullis is a Ph.D. candidate in English Literature at Duquesne University. Her dissertation focuses on cultural trauma in contemporary American novels. Her scholarly interests include twentieth-century and contemporary American literature, women's, gender, and sexuality studies, and multiethnic literature.

Tina Powell, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of English at Concord University. Her scholarly interests focus on the intersection of U.S. immigration policies, U.S. international policy, and postwar American literature. She is currently working on a monograph that uses cartography to discuss transnational and third space migratory pathways and has published several articles in the field of Critical Refugee Studies.

Jennifer E. Irish, Ph.D. is an Assistant Professor of Spanish in the Department of Foreign Languages at the United States Military Academy at West Point. Her research focuses on the evolving representation of gender, race, and sexuality as related to national and diasporic identities in contemporary Hispanic Caribbean and U.S. Latino Literature. She received her Ph.D. in Hispanic Literary and Cultural Studies from Florida State University in 2018.

Eva Tamara Asboth, Ph.D. holds a Ph.D. degree in history, as well as a Master's degree in communication science. Her research focuses on historical migrant studies and memory studies. She is currently working at the transdisciplinary "Franz Vranitzky Chair for European Studies," which is located at the Department

of Contemporary History at the University of Vienna, where she works on projects dealing with the region of Southeast Europe.

Christine Ristaino, Ph.D. is a college Professor of Italian Studies at Emory University, as well as an Atlanta author whose memoir, *All the Silent Spaces*, has earned numerous book awards in the categories of Inspirational Memoir, Social Change, and Women's Issues. Her book confronts the topics of discrimination and overcoming violence. In addition, Ristaino has published articles in the Guardian, Pacific Standard, the Washington Post, the Huffington Post, and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution on child advocacy, coping with violence, and diversity. Ristaino speaks and leads workshops on fostering social change, challenging and changing the paradigms around sexual assault, leadership through self-knowledge, women's issues, and social justice. Ristaino is also an award-winning advisor and teacher. She is currently co-writing a pedagogical-focused book with Professor Hong Li titled *Umami Teaching*. She is also the author of *Lucrezia Marinella and the "Querelle des Femmes" in Seventeenth-Century Italy*, with co-author Paola Malpezzi Price.

Hong Li, Ph.D. is a Professor of Pedagogy in the Department of Russian and East Asian Languages and Cultures at Emory University. Her research interests lie in the area of Chinese language pedagogy and Chinese syntax. Her work has appeared in journals such as the *Journal of the Chinese Language Teachers Association* and *Routledge Handbook of Chinese Language Teaching*.

Introduction

Tina Powell
Concord University

Patricia Sagasti Suppes
Hartwick College

Culturally homogeneous networks constructed by migrant communities in the United States both shape and are shaped by the spaces they occupy. From these socially constructed spaces, which can be construed as physical, emotional, intellectual, or creative, immigrant groups negotiate their place in U.S. society. This transnational lens affects both individuals' perception of that place and their success or failure to thrive in this new home. The process by which they envision their home as they create a transnational space is frequently reflected in their artistic and literary expressions. The U.S. serves as a vast contact zone and, therefore, is the locus of the chapters in this book. By focusing on one extremely diverse nation, we can explore many aspects of its cultures without excessively diffusing the scope of our analytical lens. Additionally, the U.S. has a uniquely complex history with migration, purporting great national pride in our diversity and at the same time condoning anti-immigrant propaganda, discriminatory laws, and human rights abuses.

Building on the work of border theory, contact zones, and postcolonial theories of space and place, we explore literary and cultural texts that question, challenge, and deepen our understanding of the experience of migration. Our use of the term "space" is shaped by Mary Louise Pratt's concept of contact zones—"social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today"—and is intended to highlight the physical space where, within families, communities, and nations, transnational interactions occur (Pratt 34). Rather than focusing on border crossings and the boundaries that define different nations, this volume is interested in the (physical and imagined) spaces within the U.S. where transnational negotiations occur through intimacy, familial relationships, and interactions within one's community. At the same time, this focus on space allows us to view the physical and imagined place where people live, work, and socialize as its own transnational crossing with complex hierarchies of power. This collection aims to examine how those transnational

relations shape the spaces between borders and boundaries as constructed in literary and cultural texts. Because, as Laura Doyle argues in the inaugural issue of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, "literary forms take shape not strictly within a single national or … political world but rather within a horizon of historical events experienced in common and yet differentially, amid fluctuating… alliances."

Within the context of this volume, we define "transnational space" as a location in which a newcomer or group of newcomers has created an adapted community that incorporates characteristics of their culture of origin and the new, adopted culture. The chapters included in this collection are all engaged in writing about contact zones and focus on the interactions between immigrant groups and the broader U.S. The U.S. stands as a system of cultural, political, economic, and military power in which immigrant groups must negotiate their own paths and identities. In these contact zones—the communal and intimate spaces of transnational life—subjects test, revise, and adapt their lived experience as it is shaped by U.S. dominant hierarchies and discourses.

Transnationalism, Doyle argues, allows one to "piece together the myriad and multisided histories within which nations themselves have taken shape and exerted their force." Focusing on transnational connections is a means to investigate plurality, and it forces scholars to take into account the ways in which national subjects have "involuntary interconnectedness" with other national subjects. This collection's focus on the communal and intimate spaces of transnational subjects allows us to examine the ways that interconnectedness shapes the material as well as the interconnectedness of nations as people move through and within those national spaces. Those interactions can exist in communal and public spaces—places of economic trade or political dialogue—as well as intimate spaces—sexual relations, searching of bodies at border checkpoints, private interactions, or what Doyle identifies as "intercorporeality."

Transnationalism invites us to think about the "economic and discursive formations, *across borders and yet within a certain circumference*" (Doyle). By treating nations and the cultural texts they produce as part of "co-formed nations," scholars can investigate how the "material and ideological forces that continuously transform the existence of both or all national sides" shapes the spaces—communal and intimate—that transnational peoples live in and pass through. Through the transnational spaces they create and inhabit, individuals maintain connections between their culture of origin and their adopted home.

Nira Yuval-Davis points out that culture is a process that incorporates various perspectives: "A much more useful way of theorizing culture has been developed during the last few years, using discourse analyses inspired by both Gramsci and Foucault, in which cultures have been transformed from static reified homogenous phenomena common to all members of national and

ethnic collectivities, into dynamic social processes operating in contested terrains in which different voices become more or less hegemonic in their offered interpretations of the world" (40). The works we analyze explore intersectional aspects of culture that include generational, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, historical, and economic identities of peoples in transition. As we discuss the concept of culture, it is essential to note that culture is far from static—while a culture might have recognizable characteristics, it is more an ever-evolving search for identity than a definable monolith. The fluidity and transitional qualities of transnational spaces invite a broader and more inclusive interpretation of culture.

In his introduction to *Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explains that what he calls "in-between" spaces, or liminal interconnections of culture (such as the transnational communities on which we focus in this volume), are necessary to the definition of a society: "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself." He goes on to explain that "the social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, ongoing negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation" (1-2). The texts we examine in the following essays vary geographically, temporally, and culturally, but in various ways they all engage with cultural negotiations and adaptations.

In considering the social spaces of Pratt's concept of contact zones and Bhabha's interconnections of culture through contestation and collaboration, we have structured this volume to reflect three main areas of intersection: intimate spaces, inherited spaces, and national spaces. We conceptualize this as a progression from that which we keep most private—that is, personal identity—to that which defines national identity. The essays in each section were chosen because they shed light on the nexus of different aspects of transnationalism.

Intimate Spaces

The first section of this volume focuses on the intimate spaces that address sexual identity and intergenerational tensions within families. In these chapters, our authors explore the ways in which the act of negotiating the intersection of two national or cultural spaces gives a greater opportunity for self knowledge and understanding. In the texts—novels and memoirs—that are studied in these four chapters, the characters have to do the work of navigating various layers of self knowledge, pushing past simplistic hyphenated identities in order to embrace their own complexities. In his PMLA article "On the

Irremovable Strangeness of Being Different," Homi Bhabha remarks on the precarious balance between difference and individual identity:

> The anxiety of displacement that troubles national rootedness transforms ethnicity or cultural difference into an ethical relation that serves as a subtle corrective to valiant attempts to achieve representativeness and moral equivalence in the matter of minorities. For too often these efforts result in hyphenated attempts to include all multiple subject positions—race, gender, class, geopolitical location, generation—in an overburdened juggernaut that rides roughshod over the singularities and individuations of difference (34).

The emphasis on the categorization of identity results in reductionist caricatures that dismiss the richness and complexity of individuality. In these four chapters, we look at the most intimate areas of identity and the ways these are negotiated within U.S. transnational spaces. The varying approaches to gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and tradition highlight the pressures and opportunities of transnational liminalities.

The section opens with a chapter by Mariana Pérez, who examines three memoirs by the Chicano writer Rigoberto González. Through the lens of José Esteban Muñoz's concept of *disidentification* and Joanne Nagel's theory of *ethnosexual boundaries*, Pérez examines the ways that Rigoberto González describes his journey as a gay Chicano whose identity is shaped by his borderland upbringing and his family values, but also by his adulthood away from his family. González grew up with traditional Mexican films that glamorize the strong, macho Mexican cowboy, and U.S. films from the same era that also elevate the stereotypes of the strong and brave cowboy or soldier. This chapter links these early experiences of macho homophobia with the tensions that lead González to leave his family. It was only through distancing himself from border culture and the accompanying idealization of hyper-masculinity that González was able to discover his authentic voice.

The struggles of Rigoberto González as interpreted by Pérez introduce and develop the themes of race, gender, and sexuality, and in the next chapter, these topics are further examined through a different lens and perspective. In her chapter "Haunting Past, Daunting Future: A Womanist Reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *Lucy*," Denise Jarrett examines the development of the character of Lucy as a "womanist" work, a term defined by Alice Walker in *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose*. Jarrett explains that Lucy's transition from Antigua to the United States represents a transformative piece of her journey of self-discovery as a Black woman in parallel patriarchal systems that subjugate the bodies of women of color. Like Rigoberto González, her efforts to freely express her sexuality are routinely suppressed by both her cultures. Womanism,

through which women assert themselves outside proscribed societal norms, gives Lucy the power to assert her right to sexual pleasure. As Lucy comes of age, she explores her own transnational identity by casting off colonial constraints and defiantly making her own decisions.

In dialogue with this concept of throwing off the constraints of an oppressive inherited system, the following chapter, "Intolerable Baggage: How new arrivals are haunted by old traumas in Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory*," by Patricia Sagasti Suppes, also follows the story of a Black Caribbean woman (from Haiti) who develops her sense of self separate from her family and traditions, but at the same time nourished by them. Through the process of "postmemory," defined by Marianne Hirsch as an inherited memory of the traumas of a previous generation, Sophie suffers from her mother's sexual assault. Sagasti Suppes looks at the way Sophie's inherited suffering is compounded by the family's tradition of invasive virginity "testing." Unlike Lucy, due to her traumas, Sophie develops an aversion to sex, but similar to Lucy and to González, her place in her transnational conceptual space is both an oppression and a key to liberating self-discovery.

The final chapter of this section brings together several of the concepts from the previous chapters. Lucía García-Santana's essay "Transnational Junctures: Politics of Sex and Kinship in Reinaldo Arenas's *Before Night Falls* and Cristina García's *The Agüero Sisters*" explores Fernando Ortiz's concept of *contrapunteo*, or counterpoint. This theory makes connections between two different elements, in this case, those of the two sides of the Cuban-American hyphen. While Pérez's chapter on the work of Rigoberto González criticizes the hyper-masculinity of the Chicano cultural experience as reflected in his memoirs, García-Santana talks of an inherited cult of virility criticized in both the biographical work of Arenas and the fictional work of García. Arenas navigates the gay community in Cuba and in his exile, while always maintaining a connection to his *cubanía*, or Cuban national identity, within which there is a traditional space for homosexuality, even while Castro's regime persecuted gays. His sexuality is intrinsically tied to his understanding of his transnational community and is a form of defiance of Castro and his Revolution. According to García-Santana, García's novel develops the theme of a matriarchal defiance of the Cuban patriarchy. The story of the two sisters and their complex relationship reminds us of the character of Lucy in Kinkaid's novel, as analyzed by Jarrett, and of Sophie in Edwidge Danticat's novel, studied by Sagasti Suppes. The relationships between the women in these families keep them both firmly rooted in the traditions and culture of their Caribbean origins while complicating their efforts to develop within the context of their new, adopted home in the U.S. All four of these chapters consider works in which characters negotiate

their identities and sexuality through the process of adapting to their new transnational communities.

Inherited Spaces

Within the inherited space, successive generations attempt to develop their own authentic voice—a voice that reflects a negotiation between the broader adopted dominant space and the localized transnational space. Mary Louise Pratt uses Fernando Ortiz's term "transculturation" to describe the interactions of marginal groups that control the extent and content of their expressions in the contact zone (36).

> Autoethnography, transculturation, critique, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary dialogue, vernacular expression—these are some of the literate arts of the contact zone. Miscomprehension, incomprehension, dead letters, unread master pieces, absolute heterogeneity of meaning—these are some of the perils of writing in the contact zone. They all live among us today in the transnationalized metropolis of the United States and are becoming more widely visible, more pressing, and...more decipherable to those who once would have ignored them in defense of a stable, centered sense of knowledge and reality. (37)

The chapters in this section deal with the established and establishing transnational U.S. communities and their inherited forms of expression, in particular the differences in the ways generations negotiate the transnational space.

The emphasis on inherited nostalgia is also threaded through our following chapter, "In-betweenness: South Asian Diasporic Existentialism, Nostalgia, and Identities in Transnational Third Space," by Anushray Singh. Singh looks at diasporic cinema and writing through the lens of Homi Bhabha's Third Space Theory, which identifies cultural hybridities, focusing on films by "non-resident Indians" (NRI) created in Canada and the U.S. for Bollywood, as well as fiction by South Asian writers. In these works, nostalgia is layered over discussions of the transnational experiences of *desi* (South Asian) cultures and their evolving views on social issues. Since mainstream U.S. media continue to depict *desi* characters through stereotypes, this connection to NRI creations in Bollywood, as well as newer diasporic representations by second-generation South Asians in Hollywood, are essential to challenging racial prejudice.

The issue of intergenerational relationships continues to be at the forefront in Renee Latchman's chapter, "Border Clash and Identity conflicts in Julia Álvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*." In this essay, Latchman explores the relationship between the four García girls and their mother and

"other-mothers" (women in the larger transnational community) through the lens of James Marcia's Identity Status Theory. Marcia's concept outlines four categories of identity which are alternately dominant in a person's life depending on the situation and environment. Latchman connects this theory with the broader concept of transnationalism, explaining that they represent pressures on mother-daughter relationships. The García women's participation in their transnational community both strains and strengthens the mother-daughter bond, and plays an important role in the identity development of the García girls. In a new location, without the familiar community network of women, it is much more difficult for the mother to guide her daughters as they grow up. The pull of the home they left behind, and that no longer exists as such, engenders a feeling of nostalgia and displacement that is damaging to their relationship within this new transnational landscape.

In the chapter "'A complicated landscape in which stories could be generated': Displacement and Identity in Aleksandar Hemon's *The Book of My Lives*," Barbara Miceli further develops the topic of displacement through an analysis of Hemon's autobiographical short stories. The author's development of a Bosnian-U.S. identity is examined within the concept of displacement as defined by Al Deek. According to Miceli, Hemon's family's nostalgia is an impediment not only to the family's collective adaptation to their new environment, but it also negatively affects each individual member's integration into the community. Hemon's escape from his unsettling state of displacement comes through language, and his writing in his adopted English gives him an avenue for negotiating a peace between his nostalgia for pre-war Bosnia and his acceptance of his present exile.

While the first four chapters of this section are focused largely on family and intergenerational relationships, Adam Nemmers' focus is on the small, isolated communities of the U.S. frontier. In his analysis of several novels that detail the lives of immigrant families who settled the central and western parts of the U.S., he looks at the role of small farming towns in creating multilingual, mini-melting pots that eventually help to erase differences between ethnic groups. In his essay, Nemmers argues that it was through the transnational towns that the process of assimilating "ethnic" immigrants and turning them into "white" Americans fed the myth of the American Dream. This chapter, as do the others in this section, describes the resilience and adaptation of immigrants, who lean on community and family to help them adapt to life in a new, transnational space.

National Spaces

As the previous two sections are focused on individual and familial transnational spaces, the third unit looks out to nationalized spaces and the

negotiations of national identity that occur within them. In examining the role of place, diaspora, and national memory-making in the Vietnamese refugee community of Westminster, CA, Karin Aguilar-San Juan demonstrates how the organization of communal and public spaces becomes an active practice in the negotiation of national identities and citizenship. Aguilar-San Juan argues that by focusing on this organization and its relationship to national memory, the "spatial and place-related dimensions" of the diasporic experience become ways of understanding how transnational identity is formed and disciplined. For Aguilar-San Juan, "A place, then, is a 'lived world' that draws together territory, culture, history, and individual perceptions" (6) and as such, it functions as a space for transnational figures to negotiate complex cultural and racial identities within or against the assimilation narrative of American exceptionalism as it "focuses on the mechanisms and pace of incorporation into mainstream U.S. society of the immigrants and refugees" (61). By emphasizing how U.S. cultural narratives put pressure on immigrant and transnational spaces, we can better understand how national discourses about identity and citizenship shape transnational subjects.

In the first chapter, "The Danger of the Contact Zone: Cultural Trauma and Islamophobia in Amy Waldman's *The Submission*," Courtney Mullis examines the cultural and national trauma of the September 11th attacks in Manhattan and the ways in which public grief defines and restricts citizenship. Although the World Trade Center in Manhattan was a multinational, transnational space, Waldman's novel demonstrates how the cultural trauma of September 11th shifts that space into a hypernational symbol of U.S. identity and American exceptionalism. Through negotiations about cultural trauma, collective identity, and public grief, the white American characters of the novel dictate who belongs and who does not by their tacit acceptance of who deserves compensation and a voice in the memorialization of victims. It is through the grief of September 11th and the cultural discourse of memorialization, Mullis argues, that the hostilities underlying contact zones in transnational spaces are exposed.

Those hostilities are also foundational to the cultural narrative of the American frontier, as demonstrated in the second chapter, "Resettling the American West: Landscapes of the American Frontier in Vietnamese American Novels." Tina Powell examines the national space of the American frontier as it is navigated by authors Bich Minh Nguyen and Dao Strom, Vietnamese refugees resettled in the United States. Through their characters' engagement with the American frontier—as relayed through the novels of Laura Ingalls Wilder, the cultural texts of television and film, and the landscape itself—Powell argues that the frontier becomes a space where transnational figures move through and are changed. Using Trinh T. Minh-ha's concept of (un)location, Powell focuses on

the specific language of landscape and homesteading in Nguyen and Strom's novels to highlight the very nature of (un)settlement for refugee families.

In the third chapter in this section, "A Body and Mind of One's Own: Affirming Intersectional Dominican Femininity in Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home* and Angie Cruz's *Soledad*," Jennifer Irish-Méndez examines the "inherited" national identity of the Trujillo regime in the Dominican Republic and its repercussions for racially diverse bodies of people. Through the novels of Loida Maritza Pérez and Angie Cruz, Irish-Méndez focuses on the racial and gendered identities of Dominican women in a post-Trujillo era. In focusing on those identifiers, Irish-Méndez argues that these writers queer Dominican cultural norms to interrogate the boundaries of Dominican identity.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, "'Kossovo Day' in New York in 1918: How the Serbian National Defense League of America ties American History to the Future of their Homeland," Eva Tamara Asboth examines the creation of "Kossovo Day" by Serbian immigrants in the U.S. By analyzing the historical moment of the time and the cultural texts that arise out of the Serbian-Slav diaspora in New York, Asboth emphasizes how Serbian nationalism played a role in the formation of Kossovo Day, as well as how the narratives about Serbian identity that were part of this day get translated to shape U.S. perspectives on Serbia and Serbs living in the U.S.

Communicating the transnational experience

One of the most essential forms of cultural expression is our food, and this is precisely the topic of this section, comprised of the essay "Food as Transnational Space in the United States as Shown Through the Concept of Cultural Hybridity," by Christine Ristaino and Hong Li. This final chapter serves as a conclusion that serves as a window on a successful project of teaching about the literature of transnational communities in an undergraduate setting. The theoretical focus is on the power negotiations between generations within families (generational, gender roles, etc.), for whom the everyday interactions around food serve as a means of communication. Starting from Marwan Kraidy's concept of cultural hybridity as a window through which to view the relationships between the cultural practices of different generations of immigrants and the ways that these interactions are negotiated through the sharing of food, Ristaino and Li reflect on the various readings and a student blog in a course they team-taught at Emory University entitled *Noodle Narratives on the Silk Road: A Cultural Exploration of China and Italy through Noodles*. In the narratives they study, family lore and traditions involve and are passed down through food and pride. Nostalgia and lessons on resilience are expressed in shared meals.

We chose to close this volume with Ristaino and Li's chapter because it offers a practical look at the ways that the study of literature can help college students process personal experiences with cultural hybridity. In the frank conversations, personal reflections, and reactions to the literature mentioned in this chapter, students learn to negotiate and appreciate the transnational and transgenerational language of food.

While the sections of this book emphasize distinctly different perspectives, they undoubtedly overlap, thus underlining the universality of some aspects of the transnational experience. The progression from private to inherited to national spaces guides the reader through the "contact zone" and its interaction with individuals and communities. From navigating the very intimate, to negotiating within families and between families and communities, to developing a communal sense of national identity, every chapter strives to further elucidate the struggles and triumphs of the immigrant experience in the United States.

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