

Editorial Note

This issue of *The Journal of Transcultural Studies* opens with a study of memorializing Jewish Salonica in the writings of Cecil Roth: writer, editor-in-chief of the *Encyclopedia Judaica* until his death in 1970, and a well-known collector of Judaica. In his article examining Roth's publications on the significance of the Holocaust for Jewish history in Salonica, Jay Prosser intervenes in ongoing discussions in memory studies that have increasingly begun to question canonical narratives, the foundations of which were laid by the copious work of Pierre Nora and that are premised on a nexus between memory and the nation. Prosser's account of Roth's life and work, which have surprisingly received scant attention, speaks to a transcultural perspective on memory that is non-national and—in the particular example of Salonica's Jewish community studied by Roth—is not reducible to Zionist or even diasporic memory, as frequently encountered in narratives of Jewish history.

Roth's Salonica writings offer Prosser a field from which he extracts a "transhistorical" conception of memory, formed over a *longue durée*, an itinerant memory that connects places and times often not thought of together—Reconquista Spain, the Ottoman Empire, modern Greek attempts at Hellenization, intra-Jewish differences, and not least, the catastrophic events of the Holocaust. Describing the fate of Jews in the Holocaust, Roth read the destruction of lives and communities as a phenomenon that went far deeper than the present: in Prosser's reading, Roth cast the Holocaust as an act that obliterated a trans-temporal memory formed out of a deeper history going back in time, a long and expansive Sephardic history of cultural crossings, embodied in objects and places, such as Salonica's desecrated cemetery whose tombstones went back to the sixteenth century.

While the treatment of Salonica in Roth's work can be read as akin to a *lieu de mémoire*, it refuses, according to Prosser, to shore up this memory within a single national frame. In doing so, Roth's work, he argues, made it possible to read sites as transcultural, anticipating the more recent, critical directions in memory studies. And yet this narrative comes at the price of historical precision: Prosser draws our attention to the multiple literary strategies resorted to by Roth—such as the use of the picturesque or the introduction of recurring archetypes—in order to construct a sense of an unbroken transhistorical world extending from the formation of the Sephardic community to a period of refuge within a tolerant and pluralistic Ottoman Empire, and to then intensify the terrible loss inflicted by the Holocaust. Roth's use of an affective lens to study memory relied on an idealized model of a culturally inclusive Ottoman Empire—eliding any mention of the Armenian genocide—posited against segregationist regimes such as the

Spanish Inquisition, Hellenizing movements conscripted to Greek nationalism, and the Nazi occupation. Even as Prosser reminds us of the historiographic contribution of Roth's writings to latter-day critical memory studies, he draws our attention to the polarity between culturally homogenizing forces and transculturally formed modes of remembering the past that structures Roth's narrative, implicitly suggesting that privileging normativity could become a methodological trap for transcultural studies.

The normative powers of memory are not the only methodological challenge for transcultural studies addressed in this issue. The history of emotions is another area in which both the potential and limitations of the transcultural approach remain to be specified. Recent contributions to this emerging field have assembled strong evidence that emotions play a more consequential role in shaping social codes, norms, and institutions than rationalist and behaviourist explanations of human activity are willing to concede. However, many studies making the case that affective experiences and their conceptualization matter tie them to stable and self-contained affective communities whose boundaries tend to coincide with larger constructs such as "nations" or "cultures." Treated in this way, emotions resemble the "culture-bound syndromes" identified by psychiatrists and medical anthropologists and, like these allegedly unique assemblages of common symptoms, risk becoming reified as markers of fixed identities. Can a transcultural perspective help us gain a more adequate and at the same time less essentialist understanding of "culture-specific" emotions?

This is the question Hye Lim Nam raises in her essay on *han*, a powerful emotion that has been described as a "uniquely Korean psychological state." Combining feelings of sadness, mournfulness, and resentment while also offering glimmers of hope to overturn the conditions from which it emerged, *han* is portrayed as defying both definition and translation. Provoked by universal experiences, it becomes tangible only, its propagators claim, in specifically Korean contexts. Nam reconstructs the successive nationalization of the Korean soul through an analysis of concrete historical situations in which *han* was enlisted to explain and overcome individual and collective suffering. Her careful investigations reveal not only the undeniably transcultural origins of the vocabulary used to verbalize *han* but also highlights the historicity of this peculiar "emotion concept." Her study illustrates that neither emotions nor their verbal expressions can be seen as stable objects; rather, they must be interpreted as embodied indicators of, and factors in, changing realities. Much like the basic concepts of any society's political lexicon, they can be mobilized for different ideological purposes and remain inevitably contested. Zooming in on discussions about the nature and possible functions of *han* in the context of the *minjung*, or "people's," movement

of the 1970s and 1980s, Nam traces the diverse inspirations, many of them from abroad, from which two leading voices in the academic and public discourse on *han* drew to portray the emotion either as the root cause of popular apathy or a latent catalyst for change. Disagreeing as to whether *han* is to be seen as an entirely passive emotion or has the potential to rouse “the people” to decisive action, the two authors locate susceptibility to it in different strata of Korean society. At the same time, both enmesh *han* in a story of national redemption that unfolds from Korea’s bitter past through its uncertain present to a hopeful future in which the country will be unified and democratic, and thus a state where the kind of suffering that produces *han* has been eliminated. Rather than emanating from particular features of a Korean “national character,” Nam demonstrates that the cultural specificity of *han* needs to be understood as the temporally and historically situated expression of concrete social demands whose specific *gestalt* is shaped by transcultural entanglements that reach well beyond the nation-state.

Our third contribution turns from the history of emotions to an analysis of the exhibitionary complex in contemporary art. To what extent is it feasible for a large-scale periodic exhibition such as the *documenta* to engage in a self-reflexive praxis effecting a disruption of continuing structures that have by virtue of the sheer logic of editionality accumulated an authority whose habits resist dissidence from beyond? In her article “Learning from Crisis,” Barbara Lutz addresses this question to *documenta 14* (2017), whose artistic director Adam Szymczyk sought to disengage the hosting institution from its established position with the intent of introducing a new ethics of participation and co-production that would heal some of the wounds inflicted by crises of the present. Cultural production in a globalized world implies, more than ever before, that the location of its actors is no longer necessarily tied to geography. Thus, for the last edition of *documenta*, Szymczyk—following the motto “Learning from Athens”—chose two sites, Kassel and Athens, in a move to dissolve existing barriers and undo the prevailing asymmetries within the contemporary art world. What does it mean, Lutz asks, for an established “Western” institution to abandon its exclusive role as host and to take instead the part of the guest? Reversing the basis of a curatorial system conceived of as a space of “hospitality” (Beatrice von Bismarck) in turn meant repositioning a national logic of belonging that constitutes, among other things, the position of the “foreigner.”

Recent dislocations engendered by mass migration have generated debates about belonging, citizenship, and legality, making questions related to staying on and partaking more urgent than ever. Can the exhibition format, as it emerges in Lutz’s analysis of *documenta 14*, envision alternative possibilities of transcultural cohabitation? Viewing Szymczyk’s curatorial concept of

distributed locations and reversed roles through a transcultural lens, Lutz pertinently asks whether extending an invitation necessarily results in participation, and what struggles would be required to lay down such terms of collaboration that in the end would transform the existing social logic of inclusion within which existing institutional frameworks remain unquestioned. Yet the gaps between the well-intentioned aims of *documenta 14* to “learn from Athens” and the details of individual events that the above account points to, go deeper than the everyday practicalities of organizing a mega-show.

Transcultural modes of thinking can take us beyond now-tired debates that critique “dominant Western and Eurocentric” power structures and might show the way to more experimental modes of engagement with the dilemmas of the contemporary art world. By undermining monocultural notions of belonging, a transcultural perspective draws our attention to altered configurations of the contemporary in which shared concerns and affinities transcend earlier cartographic divides such as “the West and the Rest” or even “Global North and Global South.” The new connections that are being forged between dissident sites and actors centre on issues of belonging, participation, and citizenship—now being ceaselessly debated, manipulated, and injected with majoritarian values by populist regimes across the globe. Only when alternative possibilities of challenging monologic understandings of culture are envisaged for the individual and communities, can a basis for transcultural co-production—be it of art or exhibition practice—be realized.

Transcultural co-productions are not exclusively modern or contemporary phenomena. They were also a central feature of the “itinerant academies” established by Jesuit missionary societies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whose trajectories are traced by Dhruv Raina, a returning contributor to our journal, in the issue’s fourth article. While it has long been argued that the Jesuit order and the long-distance networks it built to sustain its proselytizing drives into Latin America and Asia functioned as early modern prefigurations of today’s multinational corporations, the relative significance and specific contributions of the non-European nodes linking these expansive networks are not yet sufficiently understood. This is especially true with regard to their place in the global history of knowledge. Recent scholarship has acknowledged the role of Jesuit and other religious scholars as active vectors in the formation modern academic disciplines, in the natural as well as the human sciences. But our picture of the geographies of knowledge production that shaped the emerging disciplinary canons and practices is still incomplete. Drawing on his own previous archival work and a wealth of kindred studies that have begun to fill in many blanks, Raina reconstructs the webs of connectivity that sustained the macro- and micro-geographies of Jesuit knowledge-making beyond Europe. Although recognizing that the Collegio Romano played

a pivotal part in collecting, distributing, and authorizing knowledge, he argues that it was far from the only creative centre in the sprawling network of learned institutions that the Jesuits established for their missions. In order to advance their evangelical goals, or simply to survive, Jesuit missionaries needed to assemble detailed and reliable knowledge about their far-flung stations. This was possible only by enlisting the cooperation of local *savants* and by building dense intellectual networks in which the order's best-known European institutions, as Raina shows through the example of the rise of "Catholic Orientalism," filled no more than supplementary roles. Even if these informal networks remained largely virtual, or "itinerant" as the author puts it, the knowledge they helped to disseminate provided crucial building blocks for the construction of the modern disciplinary matrix. Raina's contribution thus not only underscores the transcultural nature of these undervalued but indispensable ingredients. It also demonstrates the extent to which transcultural studies can benefit from focusing on "less visible" actors and institutions whose contributions are customarily ignored in whiggish accounts of the history of science and their parochial equivalents in other domains of research.

Our rubric *Reports from the Field* features a contribution by Sophie Florence, a student in the MA in Transcultural Studies programme at Heidelberg University. The initiative taken by Sophie and her team comes in the wake of rising xenophobic violence and digitally disseminated hatred that have fractured the world across national boundaries and created a climate of fear and misinformation in our everyday lives. In other words, the world today presents us with conditions that call for an engagement with the core concepts of transcultural studies that effectively undermine purist notions of culture on which dominant versions of collective belonging continue to be based. Much of the racist violence, or misgivings *vis-à-vis* migrants and foreigners we encounter on a daily basis—Sophie and her team rightly point out—follow from simple ignorance that in turn breeds insecurity, if not overt hatred. This has motivated this exemplary project of knowledge-sharing beyond the classroom and into the fabric of the city and its communities. Building bridges, finding a language to communicate, to make the results of scholarly production widely accessible lies at the heart of transcultural studies that can be conceptualized as both a field of scholarship and an arena of performative citizenship.

And finally, some welcome news related to our journal. On the occasion of a recent event to honour the founding editor of the JTS, Rudolf G. Wagner, a well-wisher and admirer of the journal from Taiwan (who wishes to remain unnamed) presented us with a gift of €100,000. The money was raised by enlisting two generous benefactors: They are Barry Lam 林百里, the founder and

Chairman of Quanta Computer, who is a patron of the arts and a philanthropist in the area of culture and education, and Tzu-Hsien Tung 童子賢, a Taiwanese businessman and philanthropist, who is a co-founder of Asus and its former vice chairman. He now serves as the chairman of Pegatron. We are deeply grateful for this much-needed support and will endeavour to use this generous donation strategically for the journal.

Monica Juneja and Joachim Kurtz



Fig. 1: Presentation of a grant of €100,000 to The Journal of Transcultural Studies at the Second Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies Open Forum: *China and the World, the World and China*, in Honor of Rudolf G. Wagner to the honouree by Barbara Mittler (Institute of Sinology and CATS). Reproduced with the kind permission of Dietlind Wünsche.



Fig. 2: Presentation of a grant of €100,000 to The Journal of Transcultural Studies at the Second Centre for Asian and Transcultural Studies Open Forum: *China and the World, the World and China, in Honor of Rudolf G. Wagner*. Pictured from the left are Axel Michaels (CATS), Diamantis Panagiotopoulos (JTS), Joachim Kurtz (JTS), Russell Ó Riagáin (JTS), Rudolf Wagner (JTS), Monica Juneja (JTS), and Barbara Mittler (Institute of Sinology and CATS). Missing from photograph: Michael Radich. Reproduced with the kind permission of Susann Henker.