Editorial Note

This issue of our journal, which was prepared from start to finish during the pandemic crisis, comes with a rather predictable delay, yet once again includes papers that provide fresh insights into diverse fields of transcultural theory and action. The reader will have the opportunity to follow the stunning trajectory of a medieval clothing item through space and time, as it underwent several creative processes of appropriation and acquired various symbolic meanings; to track the transcultural encounters of the legendary tradition of glass making in Renaissance Venice through the itineraries of its materials and artefacts; to embark on a delightful and thought-provoking culinary journey on the pathways of diasporic cuisine through a remarkable piece of memoir literature; and finally, to acknowledge that transculturality is not only a theoretical tool, but also has stunning potential for educational strategy.

In a contribution that investigates a case study going back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, during a time pre-dating the advent of global capital and modern communication technologies, Vladimir Aleksić and Mariachiara Gasparini underline the importance of analyzing historical forms of transculturation. Their article takes as its starting point two portraits of the fourteenth-century nobleman John Oliver preserved in the monastery of Lesnovo in present-day Serbia, both of which depicting him wearing a cloud collar. Drawing on visual sources, the authors trace the early history and meanings of this vestimentary accessory to Central Asia and China as far back as the first millennium CE, where it featured in representations of the Buddha as *cakravartin* (universal ruler, literally "he who turns the wheel"). Faced with a fragmentary corpus of written sources, the authors draw primarily on material objects, remnants of textiles, and of course, images to chart the pathways of the cloud collar across the Eurasian expanse since the ninth century. They use this biography of a single object/image to reconstruct processes of transculturation that revitalized insignia of power and ritual practice, as well as propelled the production and consumption of luxury objects, all plausibly facilitated by trade routes and the Mongol conquest of territories across Asia and Europe. This richly detailed, carefully reconstructed investigation throws fresh light on the seminal role of objects and their visual replication, their re-historicization and re-signification within a transcultural constitution of politics and its symbols across vast distances. This study further sensitizes us to the theoretical importance of attending to the ambivalences or contradictions built into long-term processes of transculturation, by highlighting how warfare and conquest, as in the case of the Mongol occupation of vast expanses of Eurasia, brought with them innumerable acts of violence, forceful appropriation, and a rhetoric of enmity. At the same time, this history of the cloud collar also demonstrates that what

is now referred to as Turko-Mongol civilization was constituted, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, through myriad processes of cosmopolitan exchange and a transcultured language of rulership and consumption that encompassed large parts of Europe and Asia.

Emily Hyatt's contribution to this issue problematizes a key trope of art history: the labels attached to objects. Such labels are simultaneously ascriptions of identities and myths of origins, and end up suppressing the transcultural lives of things. Her account of the history of glass making in the workshops of the Venetian island of Murano draws our attention to processes of "Venetianization" of these coveted objects: a conflation of matter and meaning cemented the prestige of glass objects produced there, as the fabled material qualities of finished glass came to be equated with a single locality, Venice, perceived as self-contained. Hyatt instead takes us through a fine-tuned investigation of the multi-scalar and trans-temporal journeys that reveals glass production as a practice distributed across places and times, a story of materials in motion. Raw materials—pebbles, plant ashes, silica, and sodium carbonate—became in the words of the author "a conduit for transculturation" as the course of their journeys resulted in encounters between collectors, buyers, traders across the Italian Peninsula, the Mediterranean and North Africa. Her search for a more precise vocabulary to render the processes of transculturation underway leads her to reject often-used metaphors such as "object biographies," which suggest a linear lifespan, or that of "travelling things," which imply that movement is uninterrupted and universal. Instead, she privileges the notion of an itinerary that attends to shifts and contingencies. Hyatt tells a story of glass making and its valorization in Renaissance Venice, when objects were singled out and appreciated for the artfulness of the final product, wherein the humble origins of its raw materials, of glass before it was glass, as well as the agency of several actors involved as co-producers, were subsumed within the totality of a single aesthetic work. The story is not a univocal one, however. The account recuperates voices—artisanal treatises for example, but also the accounts of merchants and clerical elites—registering a clear awareness of the transcultural transactions that negated the dominant narrative of cultural belonging ascribed to early modern Muranese glass. Hyatt's analysis points towards the potential instability that a transcultural object introduces to the ordered world of museum labels, which conventionally seek to allow a visitor to read "culture" from a thing in a glass case. Such research is valuable for the pathways it proposes for art historical scholarship and curation to tackle the question of how matter shapes culture.

Emilio Amideo presents a sensitive, careful, and multi-faceted exploration of the way Barbadian diasporic food culture is reflected in the "culinary memoir" of Austin Clarke. As Amideo reminds us, we are heirs

to a rich body of scholarship and thought that makes us aware that food is not merely a biological necessity, but also sustains the soul and its worlds of meaning, collectively, culturally, and historically. In the perspective of such work, the diasporic foodways Clarke portrays emerge as a complex site for the (re)construction and maintenance of individual and collective memory, community and belonging, nostalgia and identity, and the negotiation of migrant experience. The case treated by Amideo vividly reminds us that food is a key domain of transculturation. This dynamic is perhaps especially obvious in the foodways of diasporas, but also in domains like the adoption, adaption, and conspicuous consumption of "exotic" cuisines. Reflection on these salient instances, which lie so ready at hand, might also prompt us to think about the ways transculturation gatecrashes the most sacrosanct domains of cultural essentialization, and the illusions they so sedulously maintain—illustrated, for example, by accounts of the "original" emergence and construction of "national" dishes. Amideo's close reading offers several springboards from which we might launch more general lines of thought. Diasporas are not just subjects or vectors of transculturation, but might also be considered as transcultural systems in their own right, with their own particular dynamics, generating new "cultures" as their products—often, in a telling "irony of the transcultural," precisely in the name of nostalgic fidelity to an imagined "authentic" culture of the remote, imagined homeland. Food and foodways themselves, despite their obvious potential, represent a barely tapped, complex domain for theorizing transculturation. As for other domains or facets of culture, a key task for transcultural theory is to ask whether foodways support or facilitate particular species of transculturation, distinct from those that obtain or prevail in other domains (politics, literature, technology... the list is long). Amideo also emphasizes the role played by taste, touch, and visceral experience in the production, consumption, and perceived meaning of food. This points us to broader questions about whether transculturation processes and effects might also differ by sensory domain (is there a domain-specific "transculturation of/by taste," for example?), and prompts us to question the ways that our theories of transculturation—like other domains—might be subject to a kind of hegemony of sight or hearing, and could be enriched by considered extension to the domains of other senses. Furthermore, Amideo's evocation of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling*, *apropos* the close connection of physical touch and the emotions, prompts the reflection that we have barely scratched the surface of the problem of the transculturation of emotions. Amideo also attends to the importance, in the history of Barbadian foodways, of the experiences of subjugation (Clarke writes pointedly of slave cuisines) and "privilege" (a word that emerges with a delightful double meaning in Clarke's work—but no spoilers!). This is yet another domain in which transcultural theory still largely

awaits considered extension: the ways that class, privilege (or denial of it), and other dimensions of social position might also impact transculturation—facilitating certain transcultural processes, while perhaps dampening or repressing others. In short (and succumbing to the obvious pun), in our larger project of constructing general understandings of transculturation, Amideo offers us ample "food for thought."

In the concluding essay of this issue, the conventional model of national cultures, with its deep impact on cross-cultural studies, becomes the object of thoughtful criticism that revolves not only around its theoretical core but also around its applicability beyond academia. Thor-André Skrefsrud's compelling attempt to problematize previous research—and action—in this field begins with an evaluation of Geert Hofstede's premise that each member of a community carries a distinctive mindset heavily determined by its national culture. Hofstede's idea of a "cultural programming" that dictates thinking, feeling, and acting was implemented in a six-dimensional model (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, masculinity, long/short-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint), which became a widely accepted analytical framework for examining—and coping with—cultural difference on the basis of nations and national affiliation. The author exposes the weaknesses of this monolithic concept, with its overemphasis on national borders and its pigeonholing of individuals within fixed schemata of cultural beliefs and practices. A serious consequence of this line of thought is that cultural diversity has been regarded as an obstacle that prevents the progression of cooperation and partnerships in different societal fields. The alternative to this static and stereotypical understanding of individuals and societies, the author argues, is a transcultural approach that highlights the transversal and transformative character of cultures as constantly developing, restructuring, and changing entities. Drawing on the work of Wolfgang Welsch, who revived the notion of transculturality, Skrefsrud calls for the necessity to disentangle cultural traditions from their national straitjackets, and reminds us that in our increasingly globalized world, individuals and groups can retain multiple forms of affiliations and/or identities. Therefore, it is not the fixation on the alleged "essence" of a national culture, but rather the plural and dynamic understanding of cross-border relationships and experiences that facilitates the most appropriate tool for cross-cultural research in the twenty-first century. In the final and very intriguing part of his paper, the author suggests that these theoretical insights may be beneficial in an educational context, as a framework that more effectively copes with the problems that many young migrant people face with regard to issues of identity, origin, and belonging. The transcultural model encourages teachers to recognize each student's wide range of cultural and linguistic expertise rather than to impose restrictions on their identities. Hence, it treats those who differ from the mainstream not as

a problem, but as a challenge, fostering pedagogical practices and discourses that welcome cultural complexity.

As always, we hope you will enjoy reading this issue, and look forward to your comments, critiques, and further submissions.

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