

Editorial Note

By one of the odd asymmetries that language is heir to, in English, we say that we “make friends with” someone—but we do not usually say “make enemies *with*.” Rather, our language figures the process of enemy-making as entirely one-sided, and we say instead that we “made an enemy *of*” someone—as if the enmity arose solely through our own powers alone, and the resulting enemy had little say in the matter.

The contributions to this special issue, and the larger project that they herald, aim to redress this bias, and undo the blind spot it conditions. Enemies and enmities, our authors contend, are made—they are constructed—and they are made *together*, in the often-intimate relation that enmity comprises. Enemies also make each other, often quite fundamentally, and an enmity can thoroughly remake a culture or a polity.

A little attention to history or the news shows that enmities are often fundamental to cultures, and to the identities that cultures construct and wield. Almost automatically, this means that the production and reproduction of enmity itself is a transcultural process, and enmity a transcultural product; and indeed, this is a point made explicitly and forcefully by our guest editors in their own Introduction. Conversely, it also means that in its impact on various wider dimensions of cultures, enmity is a vector or species of transculturation, or a transculturing force.

From the perspective of our collective work to build more a comprehensive and articulated theory of transculturation, then, the study pursued here represents a chance to theorize the dynamics specific to enmity as a particular modality of transculturation. In this regard, the project promises to serve as both a component of the larger theory of transculturation that we work towards, and a model for analogous work required in other areas.

In the largest perspective, the flexible, nuanced theory of transculturation that we strive for must comprise at least two levels: On the one hand, we certainly require general propositions or theses characterizing all types of transculturation processes, which must guide us in their study; at the same time, we also require more specific theorization of subspecies of transculturation characteristic, various facets of culture, cultural contexts, vectors of contact, and so forth. The focus on enmity that we see in this project encourages us to think about ways that transculturation might differ, depending on the valence of relation between the interacting cultures. Eventually, we might envisage a theory that systematically explores the way transculturation changes when embedded in various modes of relationship: not only in relations of enmity, but also valences like friendly symbiosis, dependency, idealistic adulation, or distant mutual regard.

Our authors also overturn the usual presupposition that enmity is characterized by entirely negative attitudes or affect, and advance and explore

the proposition that it is fundamentally ambivalent. Hardly anything could better convey the inherent ambivalence of transcultural processes than some of the stories in the present volume, in which the enemy becomes a source of inspiration and admiration, even while hostility or hatred endures. The explicit thematization of such attitudinal or affective dimensions of our relation to our objects of study holds potential lessons that could be extended to theory-building in transcultural studies, beyond enmity itself, reaching to other modes or vectors of transculturation. In various respects, we need to take care, lest patterns of affect, and patterns of attention conditioned by them, produce blind spots or biases in the way we theorize. There is a risk that we will attend only to apparently positive and active processes and types of transculturation. But already a decade ago, Monica Juneja drew attention to a complex spectrum of “negotiation” characterizing transcultural “contacts and encounters”: spanning “selective appropriation, mediation, translation, re-historicizing and rereading of signs” at the positive end of the scale; but also embracing such negative modes of interaction or reaction as “non-communication, rejection or resistance.”¹

This basic point bears frequent reiteration and revisiting. Work on transculturation sometimes tends toward a normative promotion or celebration of selected modes of intercultural interaction and even multiculturalism.² This approach also tends overwhelmingly to “accentuate the positive” (as Bing Crosby and the Andrews Sisters had it). But at a more fundamental level, at which we theorize transculturation as the formation or reformation of any and all aspects of cultures in the crucible of cultural interaction, negative processes and experiences are every bit as much a part of transculturation as the positive—indeed, they can arguably be even more complex and intriguing as case studies. Even efforts to refuse transculturation, or the appearance of rejecting it, or the pretense of exemption from it, are themselves often modes of transculturation. Cultural chauvinism, purism, and xenophobia are often as profoundly transcultural as well-meaning cosmopolitanism, with its sweetness and light and festival tapestry. Along the lines modelled by the project of our present authors, then, we can expect that any eventual, fuller and more adequate theory of transculturation will also benefit from explicit and disciplined attention to ambivalence.

This special issue comprises six inaugural contributions to the collective and systematic study of ambivalent enmity, which will subsequently be

1 Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna, “Understanding Transculturalism: Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation,” in *Transcultural Modernisms: Model House Research Group*, ed. Moira Hill, Christian Kravagna, and Marion von Osten (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), 22–33; 25.

2 Wolfgang Welsch, “Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today,” in *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, ed. Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999): 194–213.

pursued in an ongoing collective postgraduate research and training program at Heidelberg University and the Heidelberg University of Jewish Studies, funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (almost all of our authors are members of this project).³ In their Introduction, Johannes Becke, Nikolas Jaspert, and Joachim Kurtz lay out the theoretical framework for the program, and ably delineate its connections to the transcultural paradigm. The remaining five contributions comprise a first clutch of case studies—surely only the first taste of a rich crop to come. These case studies range from enmity and amity in Israel and Palestine (Derek J. Penslar); through the situation and experiences of a young woman in Nazi-occupied Ukraine (Tanja Penter and Svenja Taubner); the contestation of monumental remains of historical empires in South Asia (Monica Juneja); the comparative study of cultural and political revivalist movements in modern Israel and China (Johannes Becke and Joachim Kurtz); and the extra-jurisdictional killing of political enemies (“defiant political murder”) as practiced by Russia and North Korea (Sebastian Harnisch). For more detailed précis of individual contributions, I defer to the Guest Editors’ Introduction; it would be redundant to duplicate the task of summary here. The Introduction proclaims an explicitly interdisciplinary agenda for their project, and this interdisciplinarity is already central to the collection of work we see here. Two of the contributions are co-authored, and the contributions are rooted in disciplines including history, Judaic Studies, Sinology, psychology, political science, and art history.

A special issue on this topic is regrettably timely. All around us, the smithies of enmity are fired up, and working hammer and tongs to pound out their product. Not only are we beset by old-fashioned, hot-button enmities between nation-states, at crucial geopolitical flashpoints. Domestic politics in countries across the world are also characterized by new levels of antagonism, embracing domains formerly characterized by apparent consensus; our cultures often appear to us like battlegrounds, stalked by “cultural warriors”; and urgent issues in fields like technology and climate are contested by groups who construe each other as enemies. We urgently need nuanced scholarly attention to the complex cultural and political work by which enmities are constructed, and the real contours and structures characterizing the ambivalent, tension-ridden products of that work. Amid the gloom and smoke pumped out by the enmity mills, such work promises welcome light.

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3 <https://ambivalentenmity.org/>.