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Author
Mayar, Mahshid

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Huck in the Balloon, Huck in the Divan—The American Child and the Cartographic Scripts of Empire

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MAHSHID MAYAR
University of Cologne

In the following, and thanks to the generous headspace offered by the editors of the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*, I do three things: first, as I did during my award acceptance talk (held online in November 2022), I take the occasion to thank a number of people who were by my side as I wrote *Citizens and Rulers of the World: The American Child and the Cartographic Pedagogies of Empire* (University of North Carolina Press); second, I briefly discuss what is transnational in the book-length query that *Citizens and Rulers of the World* explores, as it starts and ends with Huckleberry Finn; and third, in an excerpt from my book, I sit with Huck Finn in three vastly different settings, exploring what I term "scripts of empire."

Almost half a year since its publication, and my book is being read. I owe the pleasure of truly celebrating this knowledge to the International Committee of the American Studies Association, who deemed my book worthy of receiving the 2022 Shelley Fisher Fishkin Prize for International Scholarship in Transnational American Studies. *Citizens and Rulers of the World* joins inspiring works by David Marshall Struthers (2019), Christopher B. Patterson (2020), and Padraig Kirwin (2021) in receiving the prize—an award that honors what Professor Fishkin has worked toward for over two decades now: to question the boundaries of our field, to learn to listen to voices often unheard, and most centrally, to question assumptions as to who is an Americanist, what it means to do American Studies, and under what terms.

It was a true pleasure for me to write the acknowledgements to my book, which I am not going to repeat here. What I wish to do, before I discuss the book itself, is in fact to try to expand the list of people I thanked in that four-page document, starting with the members of the American Studies Association's International Committee, Michio Arimitsu, Isabel Duran, Keith Feldman, Perin Gürel, Brian Russell Roberts, Boris

Vejdovsky, Grace Wang, and the committee chair, Selina Lai-Henderson. They have sat with my book and listened to it in ways any author would dream of, especially when it comes to their first book. I would not have learned about or felt encouraged to submit my work for consideration for this prize had it not been for Sabine Kim, my wonderful colleague and friend at the University of Mainz, who sent me an email one fine spring evening, asking whether I was planning to submit my book for the award. M. Buna and John Yargo interviewed me on two separate occasions, during which they shared with me, with generosity and sincerity, what they thought the work does, making me rethink what it could *further* have done—and that is exactly how critical conversations should be like.[1] And, of course, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, whom I wish to thank on multiple grounds: the work she has done in crafting a much-needed space for transnational American studies research as an ongoing, if debated, facet of our field but also her amazing work on Mark Twain have been long with me, helping me become the Americanist I am today. In the end, I wish to thank friends, colleagues, and students who joined this event from numerous time zones, celebrating this wonderful moment with me.

"How far is America from here?"

Since the early 2000s, forceful calls, pioneered by Fishkin, have been made in American studies for scholarship that questions the United States as a "national project." In recent years, the ensuing debates—summed up in works that raise variations of the critical question "How far is America from here?" (the title of a ground-breaking essay collection that was published in 2003)[2]—have attempted to critically refashion American Studies into a discipline that examines the United States as a *trans*national "subject of investigation."[3] Informed by the urgencies addressed by the spatial turn, transnational American studies has called for new modes of mapping the United States, modes that deconstruct our discipline's subject matter and move away from the limiting, violent frame of the nation.[4]

Even so, to examine the geopolitically shifting contours of the United States outside of the epistemological frame of the "national," necessitates, I believe, investigating what nation-building, national belonging, and nationalism exude, expose, and exclude. Put differently, to problematize the national framework does not mean to suspend the study of the nation—with all the tacit and explicit elements that define or defy it. The discussions in my book are therefore founded on the premise that to ask "How far is America from the world?" hinges on attending to subjacent cultural geographical questions about the rise of the United States as empire and its pluriform encounters with others in the world at large. In effect, to ask *how far* America was, or is, from the world necessitates first considering *where* in the world it has been imagined, a question that demands that we examine how Americans and non-Americans have cognitively mapped that world in the first place. Once again, from this stance, the

study of the United States from a transnational perspective entails an endeavor that is, at least partly, spatial.

In the book I make the case that, about the turn of the twentieth century, and before Americans could place their country on the world map or measure their distance from its different parts, they needed first to closely study a world that had been already explored, surveyed, mapped, and colonized. Consequently, in investigating the zeitgeist almost a century before Americanists attempted to question the predominantly national frame of research on the United States by asking "How far is America from here?," the question should be: "Where *was* America at the turn of the twentieth century?" In responding to this question in the first quarter of the twenty-first century and in order to survey the ways Americans responded to it at the beginning of the previous century, I explore geography textbooks as a prime example of geographically scripted material for children and as texts that reflect the range of the foundational revisions that took place in Americans' perceptions of the world at large.

As I demonstrate in the following pages, in *Citizens and Rulers of the World*, we read letters and solve geographical puzzles authored by (white, well-to-do, literate) American children, for many of whom growing up at the turn of the twentieth century also meant learning to view the world through the lens of "home geography." Thanks to the revised drafts of "home geography" that served at this time as a uniquely imperial pedagogic tool, American children not only lived in the safety of their homes (that were associated in this frame with whiteness, literacy, hygiene, heteronormativity, and Protestant values), many of them also learned how to identify or imagine comparable "homes" on the map of the world. As I suggest in my book, the drafts of "home geography" through which American children at the turn of the twentieth century learned about the world scripted particularly messy lessons in world geography as these endorsed particularly violent views of "home" in terms of what/where/who was included or excluded, both within and beyond the immediate borders of the United States.

Profoundly *trans*national in nature, this pedagogic model was certain to shape an understanding of the world in which homes inevitably neighbored "non-homes," thus coding a neatly conceived, pedagogically sanctioned blueprint for exclusion and liminality that begs closer investigation from a transnational American studies perspective – a perspective from which the spatioideological integrity, singularity, and insularity of home, and by extension of nation, are troubled. And yet, while "home geography" coded a neatly conceived, pedagogically sanctioned blueprint for exclusion and liminality, it was the child, as the central figure in the home, who romanced the political, boundary-crossing bonds of kinship that were imagined into existence between family, nation, empire, and what lay beyond them.

Eventually, in its engagement with world geography lessons and the cartographic pedagogies of empire at American schools but also beyond the realm of formal education (including games, toys, presidential campaign giveaways, and adventure fiction), my first book thus offers an intersectional reading of home as a racialized

space where white, middle-class American children (sometimes even regardless of gender) learned about an endless number of boundaries that linked them to but also separated them from "others." With this, I propose a detailed, microhistorical model with which not only to study how the longitudinal projects of expansion and colonization known as empires last and linger but also, more significantly, to explore how they devolve or dissipate, by asking how they try to sustain themselves both along the axis of time (generations of children growing up in but also despite them) and through space (generating maps and spatial imaginaries of the world in which they expand, displacing others and redrawing geopolitical orders), thus turning the study of empire into a project that entails inescapably complex transnational implications.

Scripts of Empire

The study of American childhood as a highly politicized and yet prepolitical category of dependence opens doors to urgent engagements with the ways childhood as an allegedly innocent, ambivalent project of *growing up* corroborated, was shaped by, and gave shape to, empire as an inescapably violent, racialized project of *going far*.[5] Putting these two projects in conversation with one another, *Citizens and Rulers of the World* (including the following excerpt from the book's introduction and conclusion) joins at least two decades of rigorous scholarship in new empire studies, historical childhood studies, and transnational American Studies, as it devises and extends a spatial analytic to the study of the US empire while it sits with the (white, well-to-do American) child.[6] Intrigued by the multilayered liaison between childhood and imperial pedagogy over the course of US national history, the book offers an analysis of mostly unmined archival records left behind by the reading, letter-writing, puzzle-making, and playing child. There, and partly also in this contribution, I argue that children's curious, subversive ways of mapping the world not only added to but also complicated the host of mainly adult-bred cartographic "scripts of empire" (school geography books, juvenile periodicals, dissected maps, and adventure stories) which they had at their disposal in intriguing, even if poorly recorded and archived, ways. Within the limits of the pages offered here, I look at two such adult-bred scripts, exploring some of the ways in which the US empire grappled with the following set of urgent questions concerning the *trans*national nature of its expansion at the turn of the twentieth century:

How and through what forms of geographic knowledge and cartographic material did American adults—professional geographers, writers of school geography books, mapmakers, fiction and travel writers, and toy manufacturers—experience, imagine, and narrate the world outside the continental borders of the United States? More importantly, how did they communicate the nation's transforming ideals, geopolitical aspirations, and cartographic urgencies to the next generation? In turn, to what extent was children's understanding of world geography formed and informed by what they learned at school, played with in the evening, and wrote about while

reflecting on their trips around the globe (or on the world map)? Ultimately, how and by what means did children come to terms with the United States' changing geopolitical imperatives, draw playful sketches of the world, and narrate their own perceptions of the "national," the "imperial," and the "global" in spatial terms?

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, and thanks to the incontrovertibly more central place the United States now occupied in the constricted circle that the "family of nations" consisted of, the knowledge and the imperialist aspirations that the periodical press shared with young readers were shaped under the aegis of forceful geopolitical and commercial interests that the United States had in the world at large. On the one hand, as I suggest in this excerpt, turn-of-the-century American adults added to the already massive body of world maps and revised them to fit the nation's expansionist geopolitical and economic priorities at the dawn of a new century, modernizing geography by defining it in terms of the complex reciprocities between human beings and the environment.[7] On the other hand, laced with patriotism, envisioned on scales both smaller and larger than the nation, and keenly exported by Americans to the world, US geographic knowledge production had finally matured. This comprehensive maturation and reconceptualization (and the imperial scripts that followed suit) were reflected in the enthusiasm with which the juvenile periodical press (among others) both celebrated and promoted the production of geographic knowledge for the world beyond the national borders that the United States was formalizing at the beginning of the new century. The discussion is rounded off with concluding remarks on the most typical image of Mark Twain's Huck Finn: smoking a pipe, purportedly uninterested in and uninformed about his country's global imperial ambitions and schemes.

Huck in the Balloon

> There was one thing that kept bothering me, and by and by I says:
>
> "Tom, didn't we start east?"
>
> "Yes."
>
> "How fast have we been going?"
>
> "Well, you heard what the professor said when he was raging round. Sometimes, he said, we was making fifty miles an hour, sometimes ninety, sometimes a hundred; said that with a gale to help he could make three hundred any time, and said if he wanted the gale, and wanted it blowing the right direction, he only had to go up higher or down lower to find it."
>
> "Well, then, it's just as I reckoned. The professor lied."
>
> "Why?"

> "Because if we was going so fast we ought to be past Illinois, oughtn't we?"
>
> "Certainly."
>
> "Well, we ain't."
>
> "What's the reason we ain't?"
>
> "I know by the color. We're right over Illinois yet. And you can see for yourself that Indiana ain't in sight."
>
> "I wonder what's the matter with you, Huck. You know by the COLOR?"
>
> "Yes, of course I do."
>
> "What's the color got to do with it?"
>
> "It's got everything to do with it. Illinois is green, Indiana is pink. You show me any pink down here, if you can. No, sir; it's green."
>
> "Indiana PINK? Why, what a lie!"
>
> "It ain't no lie; I've seen it on the map, and it's pink."
>
> You never see a person so aggravated and disgusted. He says:
>
> "Well, if I was such a numbskull as you, Huck Finn, I would jump over. Seen it on the map! Huck Finn, did you reckon the States was the same color out-of-doors as they are on the map?"
>
> "Tom Sawyer, what's a map for? Ain't it to learn you facts?"
>
> "Of course."
>
> "Well, then, how's it going to do that if it tells lies? That's what I want to know."
>
> "Shucks, you muggins! It don't tell lies."
>
> "It don't, don't it?"
>
> Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, 1894

Forced to board a mad scientist's balloon and off to a trip around the world, Tom, Huck, and Jim heatedly debate what maps are for.[8] The satirical conversation, excerpted above, documents the boys' lack of experience as world travelers and their apparent unsuitability for the trip as poorly literate consumers of the most basic of tools such a trip would require: The world map. If they cannot read maps; if, in other words, they cannot agree as to how maps relate to landscape, then, how are they going to navigate the world?[9] *Tom Sawyer Abroad*'s characters' diverse patterns of consuming, relating to, and remembering the "truths" that maps represent turn cartography into a site of contention.[10] The boys' disagreement has its origins in the fact that, as Twain reminds us, they encounter and read cartographic maps differently and, as a result, hold dissimilar views about their surroundings and of where and how, in the interaction between maps and landscapes, geographical views are formed. Despite the entirely

different conclusions that Twain makes them ultimately draw as to what a map displays, the stereotypical white American teenagers, Huck and Tom—and, by proxy, Jim, the freed enslaved man—do concur on one point: In their indispensability as tools of a modern life, maps "don't tell lies."[11] In effect, it is immediately after the boys naively agree that maps are incapable of lying that, in comparing maps with their not yet fully formed perceptions of the external reality that maps stand for, their opposing readings of cartographic representations, scalar complexities, and coloring patterns clash.[12] Addressing his young, mainly white, readers, Twain establishes that maps can be just as polysemous and confusing as they are factual and enlightening.

In its brevity, the passage underscores the multiplicity of individuals' mental maps of the seen and unseen landscape. Unlike Tom, Huck insists that Indiana ought to be pink because his initial mental impression of that state was formed by a secondhand encounter with it through a colored paper map of the United States. Since Huck has put his trust in maps, for him pink (or blue or green) would precede the diverse spectrum of colors that the Indiana landscape offers when viewed from above. No doubt, in contrast to the more nuanced geographical understanding that Tom demonstrates, Huck's totalizing, playful, almost fanatical trust in cartographic verisimilitude, his inability to understand the subtleties involved in the concept of cartographic representation, and his presumption of a one-to-one relationship between a map and the landscape it represents appear simplistic.[13] Tom, meanwhile, is incapable of further reasoning when confronted by Huck's question: "Tom Sawyer, what's a map for?" In the end, while still mostly disoriented, Tom and Huck agree that the purpose of a map is "to learn you facts."

As Martin Brückner has observed, thanks to the rise of lithography earlier in the nineteenth century, maps had become so diverse and were so commonly available that Huck's insistence that he had seen the color on "the map" confirms the ubiquity of maps in everyday American life, as a result of which almost anyone could "cite [them] without the need to specify any particulars about the map's make, author, or publisher."[14] Perhaps a commentary on the politics of space, Huck's belief that Indiana should be pink in reality because it is pink in its scaled-down representation on the map reminds of the ways that, at the height of the Age of Empire, cartographic maps were as much about defining, even dictating, the relationship between spatial representation and external reality as they were about charting out spaces and tagging them with colonial toponyms and colors. As Jean Baudrillard writes of maps and mapping since the Age of Empire, "[t]he territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it would be the territory whose shreds are slowly rotting across the map."[15] Expanding on Baudrillard's observations, Thai historian Thongchai Winichakul (whose ideas have informed Benedict Anderson's writing on colonial maps) has persuasively argued that once European empires rose to power, their maps began to precede, even suspend external colonized spatial realities and to impose on them a new order as envisioned by the colonizer.[16] As Tom and Huck's debate confirms, by employing various scales and calculated patterns of absence and presence,

cartographic maps masked, as much as they exposed, the nonlinear regimes of spatial knowledge production and the by-and-large disorienting relationships that groups of people were to develop with spaces and—through those spaces—with each other.

Right at the beginning of their involuntary world tour, Tom and Huck seem unable to relate to the map of their own country, let alone to that of the non-American world toward which they are bound. In Twain's portrait of them, they seem to have a hands-on, if playfully misleading, knowledge of cartography: They know it is fundamental to locating oneself, navigating domestic and foreign spaces, and determining the distance between one's place and other parts of the world. What is more, Twain echoes in the story American adults' ongoing concerns that children's geographic knowledge of the world is evolving, creative, and in urgent need of further formal training. More importantly, as a politically-minded American adult satirizing the limits of geographic knowledge among Americans (child and adult), Twain points in this story at the still relatively peripheral state of world geography as a school subject, thus underscoring the significance of geographic literacy as a topic of national concern in the United States late in the century, and questioning Americans' awareness of this problem.[17] On the whole, the story illustrates the significance of public understandings of geographic space and specifically of refining children's understanding of America's place in the world. As a satirical narrative, it further suggests that children's playful modes of adapting geographic knowledge produces unpredictable relationships to and conceptions of the world.

As an adult-bred script of empire, which entails pointed debates over geographic literacy to its bleak and alarming portrayal of children as inexperienced consumers of cartography, *Tom Sawyer Abroad* sets the stage for an examination of the semantic career of geography and cartography as geo-technologies for teaching Americans about the world in the 1890s.[18] Mapping Huck, Tom, and Jim's fictional adventures onto the lives of real American children in their ambivalent, intimate relationships with maps and instances of mapping (as I have done in *Citizens and Rulers of the World*) allows us to explore the wider political implications of the production and reception of world geography knowledge by Americans and to interrogate the points of convergence between geopolitics, imperial literacy, and the imagined place of the young American nation in—and in relation to—the world at large. In the following section, I close read a second script of empire, with Huck appearing, once more, at its center.

Huck in the Divan

"The Persian Columbus: An Oriental Fantasy" appeared in *St. Nicholas* in 1892.[19] The story is set in summertime Baghdad and the year is 870 in the Islamic calendar. The story starts with a deeply troubled Caliph Haroun Al Huck-El-Berri in his palace. Holding an orange in his hand, he wonders: Is the world flat, as they think in the "Orient"? Or is it, as "Christoval Colon," the Western mariner from Genoa, has claimed, round? Unable to answer the age-old question by himself, the old, fat, long-bearded Caliph—

namesake of the young protagonist of Mark Twain's novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—summons his shrewd Vizier, the Seven Sages of Bagdad (sic), and the Commissioner of Public Schools, demanding that they give a satisfactory answer to the question in fifteen minutes, but they all fail. Flabbergasted as he is by their failure to answer such a foundational geographic question, the story goes, the Caliph takes it upon himself to travel to the end of the world in order to find out whether or not it is like the orange he has in his hand: "If I begin here [pointing to the orange with his index finger] and move onward, my finger soon passes completely around the orange and returns to the point whence it started." [20] Having established this, the Caliph embarks on a journey to explore the world with a royal army.

In the middle of the journey toward the North Star, the king falls asleep. Afraid of falling off the edge of the flat earth, and in a state of confusion caused by horse hooves on the sand, Caliph's Vizier makes the royal caravan take a gradual U-turn back toward Baghdad. As the caravan is about to reenter the city, Caliph Huck wakes up from his sleep, which shall not be disturbed by "a little thing like riding around the world."[21] Upon seeing Baghdad, the Caliph excitedly announces that "the world is round ... [and] that Persia runs completely around it in one direction, and pretty nearly around it in the other." [22] Reminiscent of President McKinley's presidential order to the cartographers at the US War Department to "put the Philippines on the map of the United States,"[23] the story ends as the "discovery" leads to the Caliph's royal order that substantial changes be made in all geography books that have been published across the empire, modifying their false conceptions of the world, its shape and size, and where in its expanse the empire stands.

Written by John Bennett (1865–1956), "The Persian Columbus" forges bonds between the future-oriented course of growing up and the forward-looking cause of going far. What is more, Bennett's story rather playfully engages with American adults' views about the globalizing contours of the US empire, as it also parodically parallels the state of world-geography knowledge in the United States with a number of fictional events in a Middle Eastern court. Joining the public festivities to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of Columbus's landfall in the Americas, the short story seems to have adopted the general plot of Twain's 1889 novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.[24] In Twain's novel, a New Englander called Hank Morgan is transported back in time to the court of King Arthur in the sixth century AD, where he survives by fooling medieval English people with the help of modern science and technological advances. Though loosely inspired by the novel's time travel, Bennett's "The Persian Columbus" could also be read as a prophecy that foresees coming changes in the role the United States was going to play in the world, and the reversal in its position with regard to the material that defined and taught world geography at the turn of the century—as a global producer, rather than a mere parochial consumer. Comparable to Twain's arguments in *Tom Sawyer Abroad*, "The Persian Columbus" acknowledges the clashing "geopolitical imaginaries" of its various characters.[25] Furthermore, the story reminds its young readers that any imagined community—in

its Andersonian sense—though assumed to be homogeneous, in fact enjoys a conglomerate of competing imaginaries. Any community's members, young or old, orphan or emperor, the story further insists, follow unique sets of spatial practices in order to make sense of the expanse of the world and to find their way in and around it.

Although a short story intended for children, "The Persian Columbus" alludes to several central and timely political matters which had surfaced in the United States around the time it was published in the early 1890s. First, the story hints at the transitional state of geography as an academic discipline and as a school subject during the final decades of the nineteenth century and reflects the concerns of professional geographers and schoolteachers about the new definitions of geography and the rewriting of geography textbooks as a national agenda. In the story, even the Commissioner of Public Schools, who as the official adult body behind large-scale changes in the contents and pedagogic methods in (American) public schools is supposed to have a certain understanding of geographical facts to begin with, struggles to answer the urgent, basic geographical questions of the time. Second, the adventurous Huck, youthful despite his age in this short story, explores the world as an imperial adventurer—interestedly yet indolently, as the original Huck would. As an "oriental" Caliph, he finds out that the notion of living on a flat Earth is nothing but a myth; that the Westerner Christoval Colon had been right in insisting, and had proven (through the so-called discovery of the Americas) that the world is round; that, as it takes the Caliph only three hours on camel-back to travel around it, the world is small; and, finally, that it is contiguously imperial, with Persia—one of the earliest worldwide empires of ancient times—right at its center.

By renaming the Abbasid Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid (764–809 AD) as Haroun Al Huck-El-Berri, Bennett attempts either to rejuvenate the grown-up king in the form of an already familiar American juvenile adventurer, Huckleberry Finn, or to age the young American hero into an old, fat emperor who changes the understanding of world geography in the entire expanse of the Persian Empire. Either way, the story's young reader encounters a keen adventurer who is both proximate (Twain's familiar and popular teenage Huck) and distant (garbed as an emperor and situated in imperial Persia of the fifteenth century—which, ironically, coincides with Columbus's landfall in the Americas). Here, stereotypes converge to revise geographic knowledge: the American boy, adventurous and imperial, is also the naive "Oriental" caliph who—thanks to Christopher Columbus and his imperial sponsors in the Spanish court—rescues his people from false beliefs about the world. Though garbed as an Oriental emperor, Huck remains unmistakably American for the young readers of the story: adventurous, inquisitive, playful, and upright. In effect, he symbolizes the qualities American adults hoped their children would acquire as young yet maturing "stewards of empire."

Excited as Caliph Huck is to personally verify the three-dimensional nature of Planet Earth, he is far too lazy to stay awake during the journey. Furthermore, the Caliph naively trusts his Vizier, who—based on the firmly held belief that the world is

flat—tries to fool him. As such, Caliph Huck is "American" to the extent that, once he is confronted with Western facts, he single-handedly manages to save the infantile "Orientals" from false geographic beliefs—thus fulfilling the role of a genuine Western "civilizer." On the other hand, he is convincingly young and naive to the extent that he has little understanding of the world's shape and size and yet is deeply curious to know about it.[26] Therefore, if we accept the Caliph as the young, American Huck, then his conclusion about the size of the world and the place of the Persian Empire at its center could be directly translated into corresponding beliefs about the US Empire. The story conveys the message to its young readers that the world is a contiguously imperial, limitable, imagined community that is centered on the United States and that the American traveler, as a citizen of this globally mappable center, can navigate it.

Finally, and most importantly, the story serves as an endorsement of the common justificatory argument of the time that it is empires' right as well as their responsibility to produce and disseminate (geographic) knowledge across the globe and to their subjects both "at home" and in the so-called "peripheries." After all, the history of modern empires—multigenerational projects of domination and control—has also always been a history of didactic imposition. In concert with the self-professed right and responsibility to disseminate knowledge that is reflective of the empire's supposed moral and scientific superiority, such knowledge production was based, the story seems to convey, on the empire's scientific breakthroughs and on its purportedly authoritative position as civilizer and educator of the colonized.[27] As the following discussion establishes, imperialist Americans wished to believe that it is *their* responsibility as well as *their* right to educate their new "subjects" and to overwrite their allegedly incomplete and erroneous forms of knowledge that were offhandedly earmarked as inferior solely because they were labeled as "indigenous." After all, "The Persian Columbus" was published at a time when the slow but sure "maturation of the United States" in the image of empire and the ensuing set of rights and responsibilities which it was going to assign itself by the dawn of the new century seemed inevitable; violating toward some and welcomed by others.

Huck Napping

Despite American adults' devoted and systematic interest in imbuing children with patriotism, and in preparing them to assume critical roles in sustaining the US empire and fulfilling dreams of their parents' generation as to the future of the nation and the empire, American children consumed geography playfully. Indeed, reminiscent of Huck Finn lying on his back "for a nap before breakfast,"[28] the expansionist scripts of the nation were not always a priority to them, nor were the nation's political concerns beyond its borders always in their hearts. As young citizens of a rising global empire, reading, writing, and playing, American children were, in Tara Zahra's words, "nationally disinterested."[29] They could be passionate patriots and yet invest their

attention in matters other than geopolitics. If we are faced with an ideological, material, and temporal *slippage* between what adults present and what children preserve, however, then the question is: Was American adults' investment in children as the future of the nation and of the empire pointless? Should childhood studies scholars at all bother to study children's magazines, playthings, and school primers? Should historians look at children's archives and examine world cartography in the province of the child?

The short answer to these pressing questions is in the affirmative. Studying children's archives reveals both traces of extensive adult investment in children's (geographical) education and socialization and the unique, but purportedly ephemeral, acts of comprehension and expression, compliance and deviation performed by children themselves. On the one hand, geographical games, periodical publications, and teaching tools, which mixed or else clearly bordered both didactics and entertainment for the first generation of American adults by 1900, were sites of negotiating national identity—sites where spatial positioning, cartographic imagination, diplomacy and commerce, questions of nationalism and imperialism all converged. Moreover, the indifference toward and the inaccurate invocations of the global in the case of children's geographical puzzles, their letters, or the doodles in the margins of their geography primers, must be understood as complementary to and yet compensated for by the competitive, fact-based nature of the magazine puzzles that needed to be answered correctly within three weeks—not in order to achieve something as life-changing as passing the entrance examination to Harvard University, but simply to ensure that a child's name appeared in their favorite magazine.

To answer this set of questions in relation to the types of material examined in this contribution (but, more broadly, in *Citizens and Rulers of the World*), on the other hand, it is evident that we all—child and adult—have elusive, yet supposedly unswerving and highly individual, mental images of what we come to know as the planet and its sociospatial representations as the globe, at times referring to everything residing outside the discernible borders of our corporeal physique as the "world." Knowledge about any such external worlds—in their inaccessible totality, and with varying degrees of comparability to what any other member of human society refers to when deploying the same term—is not and cannot be pointed at easily, sustained inviolately, or analyzed objectively. To begin with, such knowledge is subjective; starting at the level of our very bodies, it is both experiential and volatile. The human body—the microcosm, the irreducible site in which power invests itself—moves through, experiences, and exercises its rule over (and its power is in turn delimited by) this sociospatial "reality." In addition, this reality holds onto social discipline, ethics, and morals, and is inevitably a site of the microcosm's interaction with other micro- and macrocosms. Therefore, regardless of age, gender, class, race, sexual orientation, ability, and nationality, sociospatial realities of the world are not a mere extension of individuals' imagination; far more significantly, these imbricated realities also function as sites where the relational, pluralistic, non-binary exchanges

between micro and macro, individual and collective, national and imperial, local and global,[30] give shape to spatial imagination and knowledge.[31] At the same time, in micro-level cultural geography, "the world is … the sum of human experiences through their encounters with 'external reality,' which cannot be accessed other than through the human mind."[32] Therefore, to get to know the world is, as I noted before, a tentative project of cartography in progress: a subjective, unsettled, bodily, and shifting cognitive, or—at least, imaginative—exercise.

In light of this, at issue in this discussion is to tap into children's archives not solely in a data-driven sense, that is, as a means of tallying how many children knew the place names that letter X stood for and to correctly spell those toponyms, or even how consistently children subscribed to narratives of American imperial superiority, but also to remind ourselves of the variation and deviation in perception that is bound to emerge from interacting with the same set of texts, tools, and toys. Variations and deviations in perception result from the fact that, depending on where we gain geographic knowledge as well as on our backgrounds and intentions, our knowledge as humans is conditional. Geographic knowledge depends, among other factors, on whether individuals gain this knowledge through their own active (con)quest and (un)intended life encounters with different peoples and parts of the world, or whether they are fed a body of information, interpretations, and statements within a larger framework of power, such as a colonial governance or a national primary education agenda. Consequently, to borrow from Arjun Appadurai, we as modern individuals encounter a "plurality of imagined worlds."[33] As shown here, to conceive of this plurality as indexed by American adults and children at the end of the nineteenth century, one needs to consider that different groups of them referred to divergent real or imagined worlds on both the individual and the collective levels. Consequently, in acts of imagination, policymaking, instructing, writing, reading, and playing, Americans—adult and child—did not allude to a *single* non-American world but in fact to a plurality of worlds. Ultimately, as I argued before, mapping and placing the United States in the world at large constituted a plethora of individual and national, imaginative, and scientific projects, each of which conceived of the nation as occupying a slightly different place on the map of a slightly differently imagined world. In light of this, and this is a central argument in this excerpt and the book it is taken from, geographic knowledge is provisional, puzzling, and, most importantly, plural.[34]

To return to Tara Zahra's observations on modern nations, I believe that terms such as national disinterest and "national ambivalence" register the potential disappointment and pejorative connotations which politicians have historically ascribed to the lackluster patriotism of enfranchised adult citizens.[35] In light of the discussions made in the past few pages, a different term, then, needs to be devised in reference to children's responses to world geography; it is in effect more apt, I conclude, to view children's relationships to adult projects to ensure their future as stewards of a global empire as aesthetic, spirited, cartography-in-progress attempts to offset the confusion generated by the immensity of the data about the world(s) that

they were fed through primers, games, periodical press, and conversations with other children and adults. After all, while American politicians and businessmen promised and planned to render the US empire a spatially mappable entity, children responded to those promises and plans with individual, impetuous acts of cognitive mapping.

To conclude, if unaware of the basics of cartography and the blatantly reductionist spatial arrangement of relationship between towns, countries, and continents; if uninterested in the complex colonial histories of the place names they asked about or looked for in order to compose and solve geographical puzzles; if leading localized, domestic lives in the American countryside; if too poor or too ill or too remotely located to travel abroad, children still encountered world geography in contexts beyond the classroom—even outside the domain deemed proper to geography as an area of study. American children's immediate home environment, leisure activities, and educational entertainment—in flux at the pivotal intersection of religion, gender, class, ability, and ethnicity, among others—provided them with a myriad of modes of encountering and making sense of the world. Many turn-of-the-century American children had in fact made it their competitive task to think of their home as one among many in the world, to name and list various parts of the world in geographical puzzles, and to address the tensions between their "national ambivalence" and the expansionist intents of the adults around them by exercising mastery over world geography during countryside picnics or while reciting their alphabet.[36]

Notes

1 These interviews can be accessed at the following: Mahshid Mayar, "Children's Maps of the American Empire: A Conversation with Mahshid Mayar," interview by M. Buna, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 11, 2022, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/childrens-maps-of-the-american-empire-a-conversation-with-mahshid-mayar/; and Mahshid Mayar, "Podcast: Citizens and Rulers of the World—The American Child and the Cartographic Pedagogies of Empire," interview by John Yargo, *New Books Podcast*, June 27, 2022, audio, 36:28, https://newbooksnetwork.com/citizens-and-rulers-of-the-world

2 Theo D'haen, Paul Giles, Djelal Kadir, and Lois Parkinson Zamora, *How Far is America from Here?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005).

3 D'haen, Giles, Kadir, and Zamora, *How Far is America from Here?*, 14.

4 Among the numerous calls for reformed approaches to studying the United States outside the national frame of reference, one major strand has been developed by scholars at the Center for InterAmerican Studies (CIAS) at Bielefeld University. The interdisciplinary project "The Americas as Space of Entanglements" has provided a historically informed and spatially substantiated theoretical framework within which

Americanists have conducted research in order to examine the United States, first as one among many political entities in the Americas, and second as a spatial entity on the map of a complexly interconnected and densely imagined world of dynamic entanglements. For details about the project, see the Center for InterAmerican Studies, "Entangled Americas."

5 This article is based on an excerpt from Mahshid Mayar, *Citizens and Rulers of the World: The American Child and the Cartographic Pedagogies of Empire*. Copyright © 2022 by the University of North Carolina Press. Used by permission of the publisher. www.uncpress.org.

6 Mayar, *Citizens and Rulers of the World*.

7 See Susan Schulten, *Geographical Imagination in America, 1880–1950* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

8 Written in the same spirit as Jules Verne's popular *Five Weeks in a Balloon* published in 1863, *Tom Sawyer Abroad* took Twain about a month to write. The first of an unfinished travel book series for boys, the book was first published in six installments from November 1893 to April 1894 in the juvenile periodical *St. Nicholas* before it appeared as a book based on the manuscript edited by *St. Nicholas*'s editor, Mary Mapes Dodge. It was republished together with *Tom Sawyer, Detective* (first serialized in the *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* from August to September 1896) as *Tom Sawyer, Abroad, Tom Sawyer Detective, and Other Stories* (Mark Twain, *Tom Sawyer Abroad, Tom Sawyer Detective, and Other Stories* [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1896]). We know from Twain's autobiography that he had experienced a balloon ride together with the then-governor of Wisconsin and a few other friends in June 1879. For a detailed analysis of Twain's fiction in relation to his own life events, see the editors' introduction to *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; Tom Sawyer Abroad: Tom Sawyer, Detective*, ed. John C. Gerber, Paul Baender, and Terry Firkins (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

9 In the story, the boys make it all the way to the Sahara Desert and Egypt, where they visit the pyramids and the Sphinx. Twain, *Tom Sawyer Abroad*.

10 For critical reflections on Mark Twain's *Tom Sawyer Abroad* in geographical terms, see Peter Haggett, *Geography: A Global Synthesis* (Harlow, Essex: Pearson Hall, 2001). For a fine-grained study of Twain's fascination with geography in both fiction and travel writing, see Leo Marx, "The Pilot and the Passenger: Landscape Conventions and the Style of *Huckleberry Finn*," in *On Mark Twain*, ed. Louis J. Budd and Edwin Harrison Cady (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 53–70, and Joseph A. Alvarez, *Mark Twain's Geographical Imagination* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009).

11 Tom and Huck's naive trust that maps do not tell lies counters the long-established fact that, in their attempt not only to reduce, connect, or convert dimensions but also

to frame, fabricate, or forge unfounded spatial claims, maps lie all the time and in a host of trivial and consequential contexts. For a fascinating account of maps as medium of deception, see Mark Monmonier, *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

[12] For a compelling survey of the topic in post-Enlightenment map markets and print cultures of Europe, see Nicolas, Verdier and Jean-Marc Besse, "Color and Cartography," in *The History of Cartography, Volume 4: Cartography in the European Enlightenment*, ed. Matthew H. Edney and Mary Sponberg Pedley (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 294–302. For detailed observations on the advances in US cartography, including the adoption of chromolithography during the course of the nineteenth century, see chapters three and four in Martin Brückner, *The Social Life of Maps, 1750–1860* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017). See also David Bosse, "To Give a Strong and Pleasing Effect: Colors on Early Maps and Prints," *Historic Deerfield* 13 (2012): 32–37.

[13] Similar notions of mapping and scalar tension appear in Jorge Luis Borges's 1946 short story "Del rigor en la ciencia," set in 1658. In the story, Borges recounts the mapping of an imaginary empire on a one-to-one scale. The scheme, the story reveals, results initially in self-aggrandizement and exactitude, and later in apprehension and dismissal of the map because it is too cumbersome to study. Jorge Luis Borges, "Del rigor en la ciencia," in *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Viking, 1998).

[14] Martin Brückner, "The Lithographed Map in Philadelphia: Innovation, Imitation, and Antebellum Consumer Culture," *Winterthur Portfolio* 48, no. 2/3, (2014): 160–61.

[15] Jean Baudrillard, "Simulacra and Simulations," in *Jean Baudrillard, Selected Writings*, ed. Mark Poster (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166.

[16] Thongchai Winichakul's views on the colonization of Siam that appeared in his doctoral thesis in 1988 are expanded on by Benedict Anderson in the latter's examination of the material sites of colonialism. For a full account of Anderson's adoption of Winichakul's ideas, see Benedict Anderson, "Census, Map. Museum," in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin und Spread of Nationalism*, revised edition (London: Verso. 1991), 163–85. See also Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994), 130.

[17] By the time *Tom Sawyer Abroad* came out, Twain had already established himself as far more than a literary figure. He was no outsider to debates on politics, geography, and imperialism. Twain's fascination with these topics is apparent in a wide range of his works, especially in lectures he gave on his tours of Hawai'i, the United States, and England, and later in his vociferous anti-imperial essays, such as "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901), "The War Prayer" (1905), and "King Leopold's Soliloquy" (1905).

Twain's long-standing interest in travel and human movement through space catered to the general tendency among Americans to read him as an authority who teased their curiosity and fed their fascination with the reciprocal relationship between geography and politics as an anchor for the changing place of the nation within, and in relation to, the world. For an analysis of Twain's career as a travel writer and the influence his travel writing had on his less well-traveled nineteenth-century American audiences, see the introduction to Jeffrey Alan Melton, *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002), xiii–xv. For a thorough examination of the notions of race and imperialism and of the nativist sentiments at play in Twain's works, see Hsuan L. Hsu, *Sitting in Darkness: Mark Twain's Asia and Comparative Racialization* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

[18] The phrase "citizens and rulers of the world" appears in "Physical Geography in Secondary Schools," an essay that Albert Perry Brigham wrote in 1897 about secondary school geographic pedagogy and the opening of US geography to the world; Albert Perry Brigham, "Physical Geography in Secondary Schools," *The School Review* 5, no. 8 (1897): 530–38, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/abs/10.1086/433850

[19] Jack Bennett, "The Persian Columbus: An Oriental Fantasy," in *St. Nicholas: An Illustrated Magazine for Young Folks* 20 (November 1892–April 1893): 146–50.

[20] Bennett, "The Persian Columbus," 147.

[21] Bennett, "The Persian Columbus," 149.

[22] Bennett, "The Persian Columbus," 150.

[23] Nancy Gentile Ford, *Issues of War and Peace* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 165.

[24] Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Garden City, NY: Nelson Doubleday, 1889).

[25] For an introduction to the notion of "geopolitical imaginaries" and its usage in a historical context, see the special issue of *Forum for InterAmerican Research* on geopolitical imaginaries, especially Angelika Epple and Kirstin Kramer, "Globalization, Imagination, Social Space," *Forum for InterAmerican Research* 9, no. 1 (2016): 41–63.

[26] According to Wiegand, multiple studies have examined Piaget's and Weil's 1951 study "The Development in Children of the Idea of the Homeland and of Relations with other Countries" and have come to the conclusion that children have an inaccurate understanding of both the size and the shape of the Earth; Piaget and Weil, "The Development in Children of the Idea of the Homeland and of Relations with other Countries," 1951. In "The Persian Columbus," it is the so-called Oriental emperor who displays similar child-like naiveté. Patrick Wiegand, *Places in the Primary School: Knowledge and Understanding of Places at Key Stages 1 and 2* (London: Falmer Press,

1992), 38–47. See also Gustav Jahoda, "Children's Concepts of Nationality: A Critical Study of Piaget's Stages," *Child Development* 35, no. 4 (1964): 1081–92; and Joseph Nussbaum and Joseph D. Novak, "An Assessment of Children's Concepts of the Earth Utilising Structured Interviews," *Science Education* 60, no. 4 (1976): 535–50.

[27] The notion of imperial knowledge as part and parcel of the institutionalization of imperial cultures and of imperial governance is further discussed, among others, in Volker Barth and Roland Cvetkovski, *Imperial Co-operation and Transfer, 1870–1930: Empires and Encounters* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Antoinette Burton, *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Ewa M. Thompson, *Imperial Knowledge: Russian Literature and Colonialism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000); and Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993).

[28] Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Charles Webster and Company, 1885), 60. See also the accompanying illustration in the original volume, entitled "Taking a Rest," visualizing the scene where Huck "laid down in the bottom of the canoe and let her afloat … laid there and had a good rest and a smoke out of [his] pipe, looking away into the sky, not a cloud in it"; Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, 59.

[29] Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (2010): 93.

[30] Angelika Epple, "Globale Mikrogeschichte: Auf dem Weg zu einer Geschichte der Relationen," in *Im Kleinen das Große suchen: Mikrogeschichte in Theorie und Praxis; Hans Haas zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Ewald Hiebl, Ernst Langthaler, and Hanns Haas (Innsbruck: StudienVerlag, 2012), 37–38.

[31] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, trans. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 55–58.

[32] "Humanistic Geography," in *The Dictionary of Human Geography*, ed. Derek Gregory, Ron Johnston, Geraldine Pratt, Michael Watts, and Sarah Whatmore (Chichester, Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2009), 357.

[33] Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 5.

[34] See Joyce E. Chaplin, *Round About the Earth: Circumnavigation from Magellan to Orbit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2012) for her fascinating approach to trips around the Earth during and since the age of exploration. Chaplin presents the early history of round-the-earth explorations through the dynamic interactions between sailors'

bodies as microcosms navigating the world's open waters aboard wooden ships, considering ships as worlds in their own right.

35 Zahra deploys the term "national ambivalence" as a modification of the more common term "national indifference," which, she acknowledges, is not free from pejorative elements in terms—such as backwardness, regionalism, and false consciousness—which have been frequently deployed by the political elite to refer to the phenomenon; Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities," 99.

36 Ultimately, the pivotal question that remains open and demands further research to be conducted in the even less systematically preserved archives of childhood in the margins of empires, seems to be: How did children other than the privileged, urban, able-bodied, white, that is, those who lived in the archipelagic expanse of the spatially unsettled US Empire, those who were rushed into adulthood due to a host of urgencies imposed on them by harsh living conditions, the children of those who had newly migrated to the United States, and African American, Asian American, and Native American children engage with the geographical educations they received?

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