

# UC Santa Barbara

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# Forward

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GREG ROBINSON

It is perhaps fitting that the current issue of the *Journal of Transnational Studies* appears around the end-of-year holidays (it is Christmas Day as I write this) since this issue's *Forward* section contains a dual portion of celebration and commemoration. First, the new year 2019 marks a tenth anniversary for *JTAS* and for the *Forward* section. At the same time, however, it brings to an end my term as *Forward* editor, and so I take the opportunity to offer my final introduction and selection of excerpts.

My stepping away from *Forward* does not come without regret, as working on it has been an enormously enriching experience for me. From the beginning, the presence of a regular online forum to publicize outstanding current work on transnational American Studies has formed part of the mission of *JTAS*. It started with an inspired thought by the founders of the journal, Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Shirley Geok-lin Lim. Instead of constructing (yet another) book review section to publicize new work, they reasoned, they could try something different. Since the new journal would be entirely online, they could offer extracts of new works in the field. This would represent an especially helpful aid in the case of published books to which there was no online access. It was an audacious idea, not least because nobody could be certain whether authors and publishers would go for it. Why should they permit us to offer, free of charge, a view of any of their work? At the outset, the potential benefit to them was not established. Meanwhile, once the founding editorial board had approved the *Forward* section for their new journal, the editors contacted me to ask me to serve as its editor. I was flattered to be invited to collaborate by such a set of accomplished scholars, and the mission of *Forward* appealed to me (sometime later I was invited to join the executive board as well).

Looking back now, ten years later, it seems to me that *Forward* has operated very much according to its original guidelines and has worked quite well at fulfilling its mission. Publishers and authors have produced outstanding work and have been generous in permitting us to run excerpts from it—even though the practice of posting online excerpts directly in publishers' websites or on Amazon has grown exponentially since we started. We have hardly ever been refused permission outright, though some copyright holders have been more liberal in the word counts granted for excerpts than

others. One nice thing is that we have spread around the permissions. Over the ten years we have published book excerpts from some three dozen presses. Another gratifying aspect of the *Forward* experiment has been the number of international selections, including translations, from multiple works published in Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Morocco—even a whole special section of essays from China! We have been able in return to provide authors and editors more benefit than we initially anticipated. Our online platform means that we can clock and tabulate the numbers of views and downloads of our excerpts, and our international readership means that authors who appear in our pages are able to attract global publicity and engagement. We have had several repeat authors who, after having an excerpt of one book appear, have subsequently approached us to place excerpts of their new books.

Less anticipated was the overall amount of work that it would take to produce a *Forward* section, the more so as the overall size of the section and the number of pieces has gone up dramatically since the beginning. Even if *Forward* is composed entirely of selections from already-published works, which means that there is a minimum of rewriting and copyediting to do, there are still many other tasks to be accomplished. There is the initial process of finding and selecting extracts, which means reading through a mountain of material. Then there is the need to follow up with publishers to negotiate their appearance and obtain the necessary permissions and PDFs. I have not made matters easier for myself as editor by my long habit of doing most of the work alone. My *JTAS* colleagues have been generous in scouting out material and proposing useful works for publication. However, it was really only for this current issue that I made use of the services of an assistant. Through the recommendation of Shelley Fisher Fishkin, I found the Stanford student Miguel Isaias Samano, who has been most helpful in reading through potential works and offering judgments on excerpts.

As I hand over the editorship of *Forward*, let me express again my gratitude to the authors, editors, and colleagues who have helped make it possible. I leave with the hope that future *Forward* section editors can be wiser than I have been in availing themselves more freely of assistance. I also hope that the *Forward* section can offer more translations from works in other languages. Most importantly, I hope that *Forward* can expand beyond text entries, as we have already done to a limited extent, and offer photos, audio selections, and film.

This issue's *Forward* section features extracts on a variety of themes. Prominent among them is a nice selection of historically informed works, especially connected with Asian American history, all of which is close to my heart. Another interesting aspect of this *Forward* section (and one that is symptomatic of the development of the field of Transnational American Studies) is that the bulk of the pieces excerpted was written by women.

Rajender Kaur's *India in the American Imaginary, 1780s–1880s* is a wonderful exploration of the meanings of India in the popular and literary imagination in the United States during the first century of the American nation's existence. Not only

does the author explicate classic tropes such as Whitman's "Passage to India" and the influence of Indian religions on the New England Transcendentalists, but she also speaks of the real-life influence of the American missionaries visiting South Asia on overall attitudes towards India.

Karen M. Inouye's *The Long Afterlife of Japanese American Incarceration* traces how the shadow of the wartime confinement weighed on Japanese American and Japanese Canadian communities for decades after the war. Inouye discusses how the legacy of the War Relocation Authority camps figures in such diverse careers as that of activist Waren Furutani and sociologist Tamotsu Shibutani. In the current excerpt, she looks at the "diploma ceremonies" by which West Coast American and Canadian universities were confronted by campaigns to honor their Nisei students, whose education had been interrupted by wartime confinement, and then the experience of those who put together and attended the events.

Ana Raquel Minian's *Undocumented Lives: The Untold Story of Mexican Migration* is a historical study of Mexican migration to the United States, told from the point of view of the migrants and their experience. After the end of the Bracero program in 1964, millions of Mexicans crossed the US–Mexico border to work in the United States, taking low-status jobs that Americans did not wish to occupy, but returning periodically to Mexico to renew their ties with families and friends. As the United States tightened border security and made such circular immigration more difficult, the situation of the migrants, both in the United States and in Mexico, became more precarious.

Phuong Tran Nguyen's *Becoming Refugee American: The Politics of Rescue in Little Saigon* deals with the Vietnamese refugees who settled in Orange County following the Vietnam War and formed a diasporic community. Through cultural movements, remittances and letters to relatives, participation in radio shows beamed to Vietnam, founding of counterrevolutionary movements against Hanoi, and other means, the refugees built over time a distinct identity that fused American and Asian elements. Like Ana Minian, Nguyen centers on the migrants' own experience, and makes use of Vietnamese-language sources such as radio broadcasts, newspapers, and—as we see here—even song lyrics.

Rachel Pistol's *Internment During the Second World War* offers a comparative portrait of official confinement by the United States and British governments during the period of World War II. My own book *A Tragedy of Democracy* (of which an excerpt appeared in *Forward* some years ago) compared the confinement of people of Japanese ancestry in the United States and Canada, so I feel especially gratified that Professor Pistol has extended the limits of comparison geographically. By the same token, she widens the field to put into relation the treatment of a single United States ethnic group, Japanese Americans, with a larger range of populations and conditions in Great Britain. While it cannot be said that she is comparing apples with oranges, one might say that her comparison is between apples on one side, and a whole range of fruits on the other. Her achievement is to be able to make sense of the events in both

countries, and without losing sight of the differences, to draw conclusions based on the similar elements in the two countries' policies.

Claudia Sadowski-Smith's *The New Immigrant Whiteness* is an intriguing look at Russian immigration to the United States in the post-Soviet period. Compared to Asian and Latino immigrants, who remained widely stigmatized and racialized as racial "others," recent Russian immigrants have enjoyed "white" status and been encouraged to pursue upward mobility. In the era of Trump, where a US president (married to a first-generation immigrant of Slavic ancestry) openly calls for greater European immigration and derides others as being from "shithole countries" and unwelcome on that basis, such a historical and intergroup transnational study is a particularly welcome tool for understanding the complex dynamics of racialization.

Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci's *Contraceptive Diplomacy: Reproductive Politics and Imperial Ambitions in the United States*, tells the story of the history of birth control movements in the United States and Japan, and uses the lens of movements for women's rights and reproductive freedom as a lens to discuss the expansionist policies of the two nations. The book is a useful corrective to ideas, which seem still to be prevalent among North Americans, that ideas and progress on feminism and birth control were uniquely developed in the West and spread thereafter to Asia and other regions, whereas in fact movements in Japan developed to a large degree independent of, and even in advance of, their Western counterparts. I might mention that it is nice to welcome Aiko, an associate managing editor at *JTAS*, to the journal's author circle.

The editors of *JTAS* are also pleased to include an excerpt from the book *Young Americans in Literature* by Takayuki Tatsumi, a founding editor of *Journal of Transnational American Studies* (the current excerpt is included by unanimous consent of the editorial board, as is the case of all contributions by individual board members). An examination of the "post-Romantic turn" in American literature, Takayuki's book puts authors such as Poe and Hawthorne in transnational perspective as influences, rivals, and avatars, first for each other, then for such Japanese writers as Haruki Murakami, Yone Noguchi, and Edogawa Rampo (whose pen name itself reveals his homage to Poe).

The editors are obliged to the authors and to the following publishers for their kind consent to the publication of these excerpts: Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Publishers; Stanford University Press (twice); Harvard University Press, University of Illinois Press; Bloomsbury Publishing; New York University Press, Sairyusha Press (Japan); plus the *Bulletin d'histoire politique* for my article, which bears a separate introduction.