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On Arriving Late to the Table that Alfred Hornung Set

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I received my PhD in English with emphases in American studies and African American literature. That was in 2008. By this time, Alfred Hornung had already accomplished enough to fill two or three careers and was nearing what would have been a traditional retirement age in the United States. My late arrival in the field of American studies, as compared to Alfred's arrival and impact, meant that from the moment of my entrance I was already benefiting from the structures and innovations that he and his contemporaries had brought to the table.

I first heard of Alfred's scholarship during my PhD coursework—as I recall, friends recommended it when I was reading on multiculturalism. While writing my dissertation, I attended the Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth College and heard again about Alfred as a scholar to watch. Shortly thereafter, as I was examining the new critical geographies that had arisen in what was coalescing as American studies's transnational turn, I read an article by William Boelhower, "'I'll teach you how to flow': On Figuring Out Atlantic Studies."[1] For me this article was an orientation on what Atlantic studies had been and could be, and it highlighted Alfred's work on "the storyline of [Olaudah] Equiano's travels in the circum-Atlantic world" and his "extensive ocean-spanning experiences."[2] Thinking with Boelhower and with Alfred inspired me as I took my first steps, with Michelle Ann Stephens, toward conceiving of an island ocean–oriented American studies that was archipelagic, later culminating in the 2017 collection *Archipelagic American Studies*[3] and my 2021 book *Borderwaters: Amid the Archipelagic States of America*.[4] I was honored to receive an invitation to contribute a chapter on archipelagic thinking to *The Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies* (2022), edited by Alfred as well as Nina Morgan and Takayuki Tatsumi.[5]

A shift occurred when I was invited to join the editorial board for the *Journal of Transnational American Studies*. I was no longer simply admiring Alfred's field-defining scholarship from afar. I now have the privilege of associating with and learning from

him at a personal level, particularly as I have assumed editorship of the journal's annual *Reprise* feature and he has become the *JTAS* editor in chief. I have learned—and am continuing to learn—from the acuity of his vision for not only finding but cultivating and nurturing strong scholars and scholarship, from his generosity and readiness to praise the work of others, and from his dedication to creating and strengthening academic and personal communities of great meaning.

Alfred and his contemporaries set the abundant table from which I have been eating during my past two decades as an American studies scholar. For as grateful as I am for that, I'm still more grateful for my chance to work with him personally, to sit and break bread together.

I know that my experiences with Alfred—from his scholarship to his mentorship and friendship—are slight in comparison to the decades of students, teachers, researchers, editorial teams, and journal readers whose professional and personal lives he has expanded and shaped for the good. Thank you, Alfred, for the impact you're having on my life, and for the impact you've had on the lives of the generous and ethically committed colleagues and friends I work with.

Notes

1 William Boelhower, "'I'll teach you how to flow': On Figuring Out Atlantic Studies," *Atlantic Studies* 1, no. 1 (2004): 27–48, https://doi.org.10.1080/1478881042000217160

2 Boelhower, "'I'll teach you how to flow': On Figuring Out Atlantic Studies," 32.

3 *Archipelagic American Studies*, ed. Brian Russell Roberts and Michelle Ann Stephens (Duke University Press, 2017), https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822373209

4 Brian Russell Roberts, *Borderwaters: Amid the Archipelagic States of America* (Duke University Press, 2021), https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478013204

5 Brian Russell Roberts, "Archipelagic American Studies: An Open and Comparative Insularity," in *Routledge Companion to Transnational American Studies*, ed. Nina Morgan, Alfred Hornung, and Takayuki Tatsumi (Routledge, 2019).

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