UC Santa Barbara

Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title

Homage to Alfred

Permalink

https://escholarship.org/uc/item/3g9351ws

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 16(2)

Author

Gail, Dorothea

Publication Date

2025-12-21

DOI

10.5070/T8.61708

Copyright Information

This work is made available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License, available at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

Homage to Alfred

DOROTHEA GAIL

Alfred Hornung is an example of an American Studies researcher who was fully dedicated to the unipolar liberal international world order, liberal in the lower and upper case. This included an embrace of the pluralist transatlantic world, minority rights, women's rights and identity politics among many other topics, but also a steadfast belief that the US would stand for these values in infinity, and that the Fukuyama moment would spread democracy around the world. And in that capacity, he was open for new approaches when I walked into his office on a snowy April day in 2013, proposing to write about how American musicians negotiated their artistic production in a changing world of increasing neoliberalism and identity politics since the 1980s. Unfortunately, this foundation, on which all of his and also my research is based, has now broken away. The US seems no longer to be spreading democracy and pluralism but autocracy and the social Darwinist rule of the majority. In this new world we are all challenged to find new approaches, while one thing is clear: We can't go on as if nothing has changed. We all, Alfred included, are now called to respond. The next decade might actually turn out to be the most important in Alfred's career and might bring out an American studies scholar who can lead us in this time of darkness. I surely hope so, because I am scared.

Brosna, Co. Kerry, Ireland
December 2025