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Working Together with Alfred Hornung Over the Years

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Alfred Hornung and Dorothea started working together around 1995. MELUS, The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, had approached a group of European scholars inquiring if we wanted to start a MELUS-Europe branch. Since the organization had an outstanding scholarly reputation, we started to think about creating a European chapter and how to finance such a move. Our interest in literature, cultural studies, and history within the context of ethnic studies made joining MELUS with a European chapter attractive. The funding of such a project, including conferences and publications, became a stumbling block, and Alfred made decisive contributions to our search for solutions. After a number of steering committee meetings that focused on conceptualization and funding, including one at the English Department of the University of Venice, overlooking the Grand Canal, we arrived at an idea for the beginning of this adventure. Alfred's reputation as a scholar in the field certainly facilitated our successful application for MELUS-Europe seed funding issued by the US Information Service (USIS), with subsequent substantial funding by the German Research Foundation (DFG), and the University of Maryland, Europe. For the first MELUS-Europe conference, the association invited a stellar cache of plenary speakers: Juan Bruce-Novoa, University of California, Irvine; Michel Fabre, Université de Sorbonne; Elaine Kim, University of California at Berkeley; Nellie McKay, University of Wisconsin, Madison; and Daniel Walden, Pennsylvania State University. The German American Institute (DAI), provided us with the use of their newly renovated building in Heidelberg. MELUS-Europe was born there at the 1998 conference. It was a heady moment! It was also when Rocío joined the organization as part of the first steering

committee. Alfred was elected as the association's first president, and he was to significantly influence the development of ethnic studies as a field and a community of scholars in Europe from this position.[1]

Two years later, at the second MELUS-Europe conference in Orléans, France, the board of MELUS-Europe decided to separate from the US organization, forming MESEA, The Society for Multi-Ethnic Studies: Europe and the Americas. To this day, it feels like a "palace revolution." After a nightlong session in the cramped quarters of the university's student dormitory, the MELUS-Europe board understood that our aims involved a heightened interdisciplinarity and the need to engage our perspectives as European scholars. In other words, we were not seeking to replicate the MELUS focus but needed to complement it by bringing in the transnational and transcultural perspectives that shaped us and that could potentially reshape ethnic studies. Before the membership meeting, Alfred and Dorothea broke the totally unexpected (and even to us surprising) news to the MELUS board who had traveled from the United States to participate in the MELUS-Europe conference. Great consternation, as to be predicted, was the reaction to our decision. Fortunately, to this day, a number of MELUS board members have remained active MESEA members as they understood our move not as a rejection of the significant work MELUS has always done, but rather the need to move in our own, newly defined direction within a European context. There is a standing agreement that members of each organization have reciprocal membership rights when attending each organization's conferences. Alfred's work and his extensive influence in the scholarly community helped to make this possible. As of 2025, MESEA has hosted thirteen biennial conferences at universities throughout Europe: Heidelberg, Germany; Orléans, France; Padua, Italy; Thessaloniki, Greece; Pamplona, Spain; Leiden, Netherlands; Pecs, Hungary; Barcelona, Spain; Saarbrücken, Germany; Warsaw, Poland; Graz, Austria; Larnaca, Cyprus; and Joensuu, Finland. The 2026 biennial conference will take MESEA's vibrant community of international scholars to Zakynthos, Greece. A wide range of publications based on these conferences has been issued over the years.

Moving beyond the work that MESEA has made possible, the idea developed of a journal emanating from MESEA's conceptualization. The journal was not to be based on a comparative theoretical approach but rather on inter- and transcultural exchange. Finding a publisher for a journal is never an easy undertaking since it is based on the highly risky necessity of continuity—there must be a guarantee that the journal will arouse continuing scholarly interest and input. Fortunately, Taylor and Francis agreed to take this risk, and a contract was signed by MESEA. *Atlantic Studies* was established as a multidisciplinary quarterly, publishing cutting-edge research *and* studying the Atlantic world as a conceptual, historical, and cultural space. It explores transnational, transhistorical, and transdisciplinary intersections, but also addresses global flows and perspectives beyond the Atlantic as a closed or self-contained space. As a result, the journal now has a new subtitle, "*Global Currents*," since oceans and their liminal and littoral spaces are not separate but rather flow into each other. Now

in its twenty-second year, *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* looks back in gratitude to Alfred's vision of a wider scope for ethnic and global studies that has yielded fruit and continues to grow from his position on the journal's editorial board.

Notes

[1] In the context of our work together on various projects. Alfred and I often had to clarify our shared name "Hornung" in what we started to refer to as "the conference striptease"—no, we are not family members, not married, divorced, brother and sister, nor any other possible familial connection, just having similar scholarly interests and a shared name.