UC Santa Barbara
Journal of Transnational American Studies

Title
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Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5g99346k

Journal
Journal of Transnational American Studies, 16(2)

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Publication Date
2025-12-22

DOI
10.5070/T8.61670

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Ceci N'est Pas une Laudatio

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How do you sum up the impact of a life-long mentor, teacher and friend (if I may) in a short reflective essay? Just last month I had the pleasure of sitting next to Alfred Hornung in a meeting: He took part as Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz's Ombudsperson whom you can contact on questions of good scientific practice or scientific misconduct, I in my current position in university management. We discussed constructive advisory and complaint policy and procedures in all areas of our university. It is my thirtieth year working with Alfred Hornung at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz. I can safely say that in every conversation we have held so far, I learned something new.

Alfred Hornung has many roles: professor, researcher, teacher, mentor, spokesperson of cooperative research projects, founder, editor, conference organizer, leader, keynote speaker, advisor, crisis manager, strategist, family person, cheesecake connoisseur. He consistently applies his diverse experiences to his teaching activities for the benefit of his students. His way of teaching—interconnecting literature, history, culture, and art—highlights just how important the Humanities can be for a better understanding of the world around us—now, perhaps, more than ever. Positioning the Humanities for the future, sketching out constraints but also opportunities is what Alfred Hornung does every day of his working life—be it co-founding the Journal of Transnational American Studies or the Obama Institute for Transnational American Studies, redesigning MELUS Europe (Multi-Ethnic Literatures of the US) into MESEA (Multi-Ethnic Studies of Europe and the Americas), reviewing for the DFG German Research Foundation, the Fulbright Commission, the German National Academic Foundation or analyzing US-American presidential rhetoric. In many areas of research, Alfred Hornung has expanded the traditional philological focus of the discipline to include cultural and social science dimensions, thereby advancing the interdisciplinary nature of American Studies.

This special section in the JTAS will be filled with the essays of many outstanding scholars whom Alfred Hornung has worked with, whose careers he has shaped or enriched. Some voices, like mine, will come from other areas of the educational sector: research funding, extramural research institutions, high schools, governments. Alfred Hornung's broad-based yet demanding and forward-looking teaching has appealed to generations of students in a mass subject who wanted to develop independent research projects at an early stage. In his consistent promotion of young talents, the high proportion of women is particularly remarkable. He was and remains far ahead of his time, considering how many of them now hold leading positions in society. Alfred Hornung's broad view of the field allowed us to pursue manifold career paths. His insight and recommendation opened doors—not least because he enjoys an outstanding reputation in American studies both nationally and internationally.

Constantly rethinking the field, Alfred Hornung invited scholars from all over the world to Mainz. A Postcolonial Literature class by a PhD student from California State University, Sacramento—one of the many exchanges with partner universities Alfred Hornung helped establish and maintain—sparked my interest in scientific research, first as a MA, then as a doctoral student. Alfred Hornung encouraged me to apply for scholarships with the German Academic Exchange Service, the American Antiquarian Society and Columbia University in the City of New York. I would spend time abroad in Portland, OR, Worcester, MA, and the bustling Big Apple. The resulting transnational experiences and connections continue to shape my personal and professional life, the latter of which I have spent mainly in the free economy and university management. I am deeply indebted to Alfred Hornung for these opportunities. The lifelong friendships I have forged through my studies and research are a very personal reminder of his mentorship.

Alfred Hornung's prolific oeuvre, which spans time, genres and continents, never ceases to amaze me. Personally, as his student, I liked early nineteenth-century American literature the best, unheard voices in particular. My first year abroad introduced me to the "Indian Declaration of Independence"—a petition to the governor of Massachusetts, drafted in 1833 by the Mashpee Tribe. The document, modeled after the US-American example, declared the Mashpees a free and equal tribe in the name of the Constitution. It was published by William Apess, a Pequot missionary and reformer of the Jacksonian era. Located in the crucible of early nineteenth-century tensions, between civil liberty and communal responsibility, between Indian Removal and the American Renaissance, the critical political and cultural awareness displayed in Apess's publications makes him one of the first Native American protest writers.

Apess's eloquent work has found its way into established anthologies and literary guides to the field. His writings suggest that the American Revolution ignited the idea of the "nation" as the significant political, historical, and geographical entity not only in white colonists but also reaffirmed it in the country's first people. Framing and reframing alternative (Indian) nations, I argue, was part of the Native strategy to

counter dispossession and to regain political control of their civic and religious lives in early nineteenth-century USA. Alfred Hornung encouraged me to explore the many ways in which Apess's discourse provides a new context for redefining both the US-American nation and literary realism with respect to the multicultural heritage of the American continent.

One of my personal favorite memories of Alfred Hornung is his visit to Columbia University during which we went out for burgers in a diner around the corner and discussed my doctoral thesis in the making. There was also cheesecake. There were no tomatoes as neither of us likes them. I had just attended a lecture by Toni Morrison and enjoyed a reading by Siri Hustvedt, in which I spotted Paul Auster sitting in the first row. I had a lot to talk about. Alfred Hornung patiently listened, gracing my challenges with humor and helpful advice.

This is how I got to know Alfred Hornung: Despite his considerable responsibilities in academic organization and self-administration and his extraordinary commitment to research, teaching has always been a core aspect of his work as a professor.

Dear Alfred Hornung, to borrow from René Magritte's famous canvas: *Ceci n'est pas une laudatio*. I wish you many happy returns! Thank you for inspiring me to read Emily Dickinson, Homi Bhabha, "Moby Dick", and so much more. I am grateful for your kindness, time, and consideration. See you in the next meeting. I shall bring cheesecake.

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