Forum

Transnationalism in American History
An International View

Ferdinando Fasce and Marco Mariano

Introduction

Transnational history emerged in historical studies as one of several approaches – global, world, international, connected – to the study of history challenging both the study of the nation-state as the major unit of historical analysis and the focus on political/institutional actors as the major force of historical change. What sets apart the transnational approach within this context is the emphasis on flows, on the movement of peoples, goods, practices, and ideas across national boundaries, as well as on the local and global connections that such movements draw across regions, states, empires. The focus is on the networks, institutions, ideas, and processes that these connections produce. As it is not confined to a specific subfield or methodological approach, this "way of seeing" the past seems to have great potential for the study of a wide range of subjects, from diasporas and migration patterns to the spread of nationalist ideas, from environmental issues to patterns of consumption and trade networks. On the other hand, however, the lack of a strong methodological paradigm has often contributed to confine "transnationalism" to the realm of fashionable buzzwords, while the outpouring of empirical research moved by a genuinely transnational gaze has been scant in many subfields.

Similarly, the promise of the internationalization of history implicit in transnationalism has been only partially fulfilled and, especially when it comes to the study of the United States, runs the risk of reinforcing the excpetionalist framework it intended to undermine. As Ian Tyrrell has suggested, the more we investigate the flows and exchanges between the U.S. and the rest of the world, the more we might conclude that American history more than the history of most countries is embedded in a dense network of transnational "forces of integration": the U.S. has been playing a significant role in the framework of contemporary global interdependence and, as a great power, its relation to international law and organizations as well as transnational processes has been peculiar. The challenge for

historians is coping with these peculiarities without falling pray to the old exceptionalist paradigm.

This roundtable aims at discussing the state of the art with a particular focus on the potential and challenges of the transnational turn for practitioners of American history based outside the United States, who have a particular stake in this conversation. In the last twenty years the call for the "internationalization" of the practice of American history led many practitioners to wonder if there is a specific contribution that historians based outside the United States can make out of their specific positionality. This is all the more relevant in the light of the focus on connections transcending politically bounded territories that is characteristic of the transnational turn: to what extent being situated in Europe or elsewhere might facilitate a look at American history that transcends national boundaries?

At the same time, the practice of American history outside the United States deals with methodological implications of transnationalism that are not necessarily related to positionality. As a "way of seeing" history that questions the primacy of the nation-state, transnational history implies a focus on scales: to what extent the focus on local, regional, and global – rather than national – units of analysis has affected scholarship in various sub-fields and/or is likely to do so in the future? The rise of transnational history is indebted to a specific aspect of the "cultural turn": the emphasis on the "circulation" of ideas and practices across national borders which defied traditional dichotomic patterns (center v. periphery, domination v. resistance). To what extent are cultural studies still a source of inspiration for the future of transnational history?

RSA has asked five scholars with different approaches to the transnational turn and significant experience in the internationalization of American history to answer these questions and share their comments. We thank them for their contribution.

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Transnationalism in American History: An Economic Perspective, 1900-2013

As this volume is intended to give a fresh stimulus to the debate on "Transnationalism in American History" and on the concept of "transnationalism" more generally, my particular contribution to the subject focuses primarily on the role of American big business and is designed to complement the other contributions to this anthology. However, before examining the business aspects, here are a few introductory remarks that may be helpful to putting "transnationalism" into a broader conceptual and historiographical framework and to test the viability of some of the other concepts that are in frequent use at this time, i.e., internationalism, multinationalism, and globalism. After all, it is striking how especially the latter two terms have swept the board in scholarly discourse and how it has become almost *de rigueur* to include the adjective "global" in the title of a research project, a conference paper, or a workshop presentation. Hopefully, such a comparative approach will lead to sharper definitions of meanings.

Thus, we have seen a push by those researchers who insist that the nation-state remains the central factor in world politics and that we should primarily study what William Keylor defined "a world of nations" and hence the relations between their governments and public institutions. Some historians have added local and regional perspectives, but this work continued to revolve around the nation-state and simply became more comprehensive if we think, for example, of the introduction of passports and the increasing bureaucratic regulation of *international* exchange.

It looks as if this approach continues to be the main focus of departments and International History (IH) as well as of International Relations (IR), and not too many changes of designations have taken place. As far as I can see, there are no departments of Transnational History or Transnational Relations around the world. Generational and administrative inertia may have contributed to this conservatism. However, it is of course also a

reflection of the fact that the number of nation-states represented in the United Nations has risen to over 190, whose interrelationships are intense, often to the point of military conflict.

To be sure, from the late nineteenth century, "internationalism" also assumed a meaning that reached beyond relations between nations and their institutions. It was defined as a striving by individuals and some of their organizations to constrain the power and influence of the nation-state or even to supersede it. They were in effect "supra-national." Yet, it is significant that not many entities of this type have established themselves and survived over time, however vigorous their advocates propagandized them.

As far as the concept of globalism/globalization is concerned, the argument seems to me to be less complicated. When protagonists of the view that we live in a "globalist" world have raised their often very influential voices, especially in the United States, they have tended to underestimate the United States as a nation-state and the extent to which the "Americanization of the world" that William T. Stead first wrote about in 1902 was still with us in the 1990s. This process was weakened and even disrupted by two world wars that were fought between coalitions of nation-states; but it reasserted itself and finally reached its apex after the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. The revolution of electronic technology and communications that we are still in the midst of was very much driven by American companies. Equally it was the victory of the American neo-classical model of capitalism with its cunningly deployed new financial "instruments" and "vehicles" that was first adopted in post-Soviet Eastern Europe and subsequently also in Asia and Latin America.

To be sure, nowhere was the American model copied in exactly the same form as extolled and generally practiced in the United States. There always occurred a blending of indigenous and imported attitudes and practices, producing varieties of capitalism that are now quite widely studied. But capitalism it was nonetheless, in which the hegemonic position of the United States was preserved. This hegemony was not merely economic, but also political-military and socio-cultural. In other words, the "globalism" of the 1990s was the continued "Americanization of the world," with

the concept of "globalization" acting as a smokescreen for transnational processes that were going on behind it.

However, this contribution is not concerned with the many ways in which the United States projected itself into other societies socio-politically, militarily or culturally. The focus is rather on the American corporations and their operations abroad. These capitalist firms have widely been called "multinationals," and Mira Wilkins has for many years been among the leading scholars to write about them and their "multinationalism." According to her, multinationalism was initially "monocentric," but over time this monocentrism is said to have become "polycentric," though Wilkins continues to speak about "parent" companies and their domestic and foreign branches, subsidiaries, and affiliates. Identifying three stages in the "emergence and maturing" of multinationals, they are deemed to have become decentralized.

Moreover, as in the past they must still bow to the power of "national sovereignties." This state of affairs was probably true when Wilkins wrote her book in the 1970s. But it has been argued that, with mergers and takeovers taking place at accelerating pace, "giant and formidable" (Wilkins) corporations became more powerful than most nation-states, except for the largest among them; they became "supra-national" (Alfred Chandler). No less important, even if there was some decentralization during the 1970s and 1980s, it seems that a recentralization of the power of the parent companies has occurred because of and been facilitated and accelerated by the Internet and the communication revolution of the 1990s.

Here are a few examples of major American corporations that were not international or multinational description as defined above. They had their headquarters in the United States and kept their operations centralized with the parent company rather than developing a multicentric mode of operation. Monocentrism was particularly prevalent in the period before 1914. While a number of American firms engaged in foreign direct investment (FDI) even to the point of moving some of their manufacturing and product assembly abroad, there was a general sense that one did not yet have enough information and experience to adopt a multinational modus operandi. International Harvester (IH) following the merger of Deering and McCormick in 1902 presents a good case in point. Operating

cautiously, the corporation built up a network of agents and ultimately even production facilities in Norrköping (Sweden) and Neuss on the Rhine River south of Düsseldorf. But the parent company remained very much in charge of its foreign operations. Standard Oil is another pre-1914 example. National Cash Registers (NCR) made Berlin the hub of its European sales organization and founded the National Registrier-Kassen GmbH (NRK). Similarly, Merganthaler Linotype controlled its German subsidiary from the United States, while B.F. Goodrich went into France to export its tires to Britain and Germany. Nor did Otis elevators give up its control of its factories in Germany, Britain, and France.

After World War I Ford Motors seems to have diverged from this pattern and developed in the direction of a multinational when it contemplated a joint venture in Detroit and Dagenham. Its factories in Germany were to be guided from the British Dagenham headquarters. However, these plans never got very far, partly because the company failed to modernize and experienced a temporary crisis. Henry Ford, senior, the founder and patriarch, refused to abandon his one-model policy for too long. Somewhat unusually, he also persuaded the chemicals trust of I.G. Farben to take a stake in his company. By contrast, General Motors adopted a strategy that followed established American practice by looking for lucrative takeovers. In Britain, Austin/Morris appeared in the corporation's cross-hairs, that at the time and thanks to Henry Morris's modernization efforts, was reputed to be the most advanced firm in car manufacturing in Britain. When the deal fell apart, General Motors bought Vauxhall, a much smaller manufacturer.

In Germany the men from Detroit were more successful with respect to Opel Cars, one of the market leaders that had developed a small mass-produced car, the *Laubfrosch*. By 1929 General Motors had acquired a large stake in the company until it purchased the entire firm in 1931. The transnationalization of the corporation was complete. American FDI in chemicals and electrical engineering took a different path and concluded cooperation and patent agreements with the British and Germans.

The rise of nationalist protectionism in the wake of the Great Depression of the 1930s confronted many American transnationals with the dilemma of whether to keep their FDI or to cut their losses and get out. This choice

became particularly stark in Germany as the Nazi regime under Adolf Hitler consolidated its power at home and began a rapid rearmament program that pointed toward an eventual aggressive war to acquire "living space" in the East. Hitler admired Ford Senior as the father of assembly line production (suitable for both civilian and military production) as well as a fellow anti-Semite. When he decided to collaborate with the dictator, he enjoyed his protection and prevented local party leaders and the Wehrmacht procurement agencies from exerting an unwelcome pressure on the patriarch's strategic planning. He was happy to accept a decoration for his services, the Grand Cross of the German Eagle for foreigners. Images of Hitler appeared on the front cover of the Ford-Germany newsletter, and he did not return his medal when Germany and the United States entered into an all-out war in December 1941. By that time he had also appointed a purely German management board and had lost control of his factories until his American managers reappeared on the scene soon after the defeat of the Nazis to resume control of Ford's German properties.

In this respect Thomas Watson behaved differently. He returned the Grand Cross that he, too, had received as chief executive of International Business Machines (IBM) for the business machines that had helped to rationalize both the Nazi bureaucracy as well as private enterprise. While Hitler never forgave him for this "insult," Watson moved his operations to Switzerland, but apparently did not stop servicing the calculators and other machines he had delivered. Although he had become a supporter of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his New Deal policies and preparations for war well before 1941, he has been severely criticized for his commercial collaboration with Nazi Germany. Thus Edwin Black charged that "IBM NY [New York] always understood – from the outset in 1933 – that it was courting and doing business with the upper echelon of the Nazi Party" and leveraged its connections "to continuously enhance its business relationship with Hitler's Reich, in Germany, and throughout Nazi-dominated Europe." Whatever the justifications for these accusations, the point to be made here is that "IBM NY" was a *transnational* corporation as defined above and remained one also after 1945.

Indeed, this is the period when American corporations, rather than becoming multinational asserted the mono-centric position in Western

Europe and the Third World even more insistently than before, buoyed by the fact that the United States had now become the hegemonic power of the West in its confrontation with the Soviet Bloc. There is no space to go into the details of this development. Rather I want to take a leap into the twenty-first century to illustrate how General Motors used its transnationalist policies after the 2008 Great Recession when the U.S. Government stepped in to rescue it from total collapse.

This crisis quickly also threatened G.M.'s Opel Cars in Germany with bankruptcy and in turn dragged a reluctant German government into a messy situation to attempt to prevent this. For a while it looked as if the American parent wanted to sell its German and British operations to a consortium that included the Fiat and Magna corporations. But once G.M.'s fortunes revived, it abruptly stopped the negotiations, promised to pay back any loans that had been extended and to invest several billion euros in its European subsidiaries, including Vauxhall in Britain. While the motives for this change of heart are not entirely clear, it seems that Opel's technologies, especially in the field of fuel-efficient engines, were so valuable that Detroit coolly calculated the gains from continued ownership. It also facilitated improved American-made models to be given preferential treatment in third markets. For example, Opel was not allowed to export its *Zafira* model to Latin America. It was a salvage and recovery strategy that demonstrated the power of the parent company in the U.S. all too clearly.

This is why this article, in concentrating on transnationalism in American business and economic history, has not only argued against the use of "multinationalism" or "globalism" to define the field but has also tried to advance a definition of the "transnational" that, with one or two exceptions, aligns it more closely to the corporate realities on the ground from 1900 to the present.[1] Overall, however, what it tried to offer is not

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[1] For a study that takes the concept beyond the history of American business see Tyrrell, *The Transnational Nation.* For a collection that uses Germany as the field of inquiry see Conrad and Osterhammel. See also Iriye and Saunier. More recently, a number of big American corporations have moved their headquarters to a country outside the United States in order to avoid or evade taxes. While this has, perhaps significantly, been criti-

a new research paradigm, but a perspective on how the concept might be used, admitting that there are others that can be taken and also that there are fields in which an approach that starts from a national base is no longer possible.[2]

Donna R. Gabaccia, University of Toronto

"Honestly, if you don't fit in, then you're probably doing the right thing"

Finding the origin of this recent internet meme required a bit of sleuthing but since all indicators pointed toward a kind of creative transnationalism as its inspiration, I pursued them. Thanks then, first of all, to electropop musician and songwriter "Lights" who clearly knows a thing or two about transnationalism; according to Wikipedia, she was born as Valerie Anne Poxleitner, a daughter of missionaries raised in Jamaica, Philippines, and various Canadian cities. Lights has provided me with a better thesis statement than I could ever have devised in the quiet of my own study. She is not an historian, of course, but I think she would understand the point I want to make in my short intervention. Seeking comfort and certainty in the historiographical mainstream of U.S. history is perhaps not the right or best thing to do for those Americanists who – living and working outside the United States – are far better positioned than many scholars in the United States to write about the past in ways that cross, bridge, compare or transcend American national historiography. Innovative intellectual work,

cized in the U.S., it does not change my argument about business transnationalism in American History. After all, the headquarters and hence central control is still based in one country, and it's not divided up.

2 The case for a perspectival definition was made by a number of scholars of Germany at a panel discussion organized with colleagues from Rostock and Copenhagen universities at Copenhagen by the *Forschungsstelle für Zeitgeschichte in Hamburg* in May 2013. See "Zeitgeschichte Transnational" 118. See also Pernau 7ff.

I want to assert more generally, is often written at the margins of national historiographies and from outside the national territory itself.

Lights' aphorism appeals to me because I don't completely belong even among the other authors collected here. In fact I taught American history outside the United States for only a few – albeit profoundly transformative – years in the 1980s. Still, I think I'm doing the right thing by joining the conversation. If I distinguish among those Americanists outside the United States who seek a place in the historiographical mainstream of American history from those who, like François Furstenberg, prefer the historiographical margins, then I – as an historian located in the United States who writes about international migration – more often choose to place myself among the latter group. Since writing this piece in 2014, I have made good on that premise, and now work in Canada.

Methodology partly explains that choice. For twenty years I have regularly and enthusiastically introduced graduate students to transnational methods and have done so because I believed these methods could change the way that students researched and taught American immigration. Here perhaps I differ from committed transnationalists who fear their scholarly field lacks a strong methodological paradigm and may therefore be doomed to a short scholarly life as a kind of fashionable buzzword. These are not fears that trouble me much. Migration historians developed transnational methodologies before transnationalism became a buzzword, and I suspect that many – and especially those who do not live in North America – will continue to use transnational methodologies even as scholarly fashions change, as they almost certainly will.

A good critique of national historiography should, after all, rest on methodological innovation. And at least in the study of migration as a transnational or international phenomenon, it is not at all difficult to find such innovation. Students of migration history can if they wish begin with the useful critique of methodological nationalism offered in 2002 by sociologist Andreas Wimmer and anthropologist Nina Glick Schiller (Glick Schiller will be well known to most readers as the influential theorist of transnationalism.) But even before these two social scientists prepared their critique, quite a few migration historians – in Europe, the U.S., Latin America and Asia – had already patched together methods that allowed

them to portray migration as a phenomenon that is greater than American immigration and broader than the creation of the paradigmatic, American "nation of immigrants." Social historians trained in Europe and in the United States had already in the 1970s begun both to mine the archives of immigrants' homelands and to read the national historiographies of those lands. Growing numbers had trained and done research in both the United States and in other countries. Whether in the U.S. or elsewhere, migration historians had learned the languages of migrants. Methodologically, migration historians had often literally followed migrants' paths outward, beginning in their birthplaces and then seeking out and linking archival (and other) traces of migrants and their travels in at least two, and sometimes more, countries.[1] In doing so migration historians easily and quickly discovered that by no means all migratory paths led to the United States.

The geography of such studies of migration thus expanded well beyond the national boundaries of the United States. And in some cases (as in my own work *Militants and Migrants: Rural Sicilians become American Workers*) historians even followed the returning migrants back to their original homes to examine the historical consequences of migration on sending societies. Or they began to think about migrants as themselves creating long-lasting bridges between two or more countries. Writing ten years before Wimmer and Glick Schiller, Sam Baily, the historian of Italian migration to Argentina, even gave a name – "village outward" – to these methodological innovations. Theirs was not perhaps a methodology that could be used to study all the transnational connections that linked the United States to the wider world, but at least for those who took inspiration from Randolph Bourne's early understanding of transnationalism as rooted in migration such methods provided a firm foundation for a critique of national historiography.

From such simple and pragmatic attempts to overcome the limits of

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[1] Without meaning to provide a full literature review, I point here to the 1970s and 1980s dissertations of U.S. scholars Jon Gjerde, Walter Kamphoefner, Robert Ostergren, and myself and to the networks of European scholars of migration assembled through several Europe-based research initiatives on the Atlantic migrations, notably Dirk Hoerder's 1980s "Labor Migration Project."

methodological nationalism and to focus on human mobility, migration historians did not simply ignore nation states or declare them irrelevant (as at least some early theorists of transnationalism seemed to do). Rather, they sought a larger geographical research frame that could problematize nationality, ethnicity (as it emerged in at least some receiving societies, notably the United States), and nation-building in many locations, allowing them to be compared and connected. As a consequence, a significant number of migration historians, including me, consciously moved themselves to the margins of U.S. history and American immigration history and tried to intervene instead in the expanding field of world or global history. Dirk Hoerder's *Cultures in Contact* and his later book *What is Migration History?*, co-authored with Christiane Harzig, suggested several scholarly strategies for escaping the confines of national historiography while keeping the lives of mobile human beings near the center of scholarly inquiry. While such moves toward the margins of the national historiographies of U.S. immigration history may not always have produced much intellectual comfort, they did create important sites to produce new knowledge about migration, including new knowledge about the United States as a nation of immigrants and about the immigrants of the United States and their transnational connections.

These then are the rather straight-forward methodological expectations I present to students in the United States who wish to study migration as a transnational or international phenomenon. They must know multiple languages. They must immerse themselves in and know well at least two national historiographies. In their dissertation research, they must explore archives and data from more than one country. Finally, they must understand and choose among a variety of alternative geographic and conceptual frames for their research. Most of these alternative frames – whether of Atlantic or Pacific Rim studies, comparative histories of borderlands, diaspora studies, mobility studies, global studies, or transnationalism – also typically introduce students to the interdisciplinarity of fields of study that are much larger and rather different in their intentions and methods from American immigration and ethnic history. Often enough I can then invite such students, even students of U.S. immigration history, to work as Teaching Assistants in the courses I teach on world history and migration in global history. Would I impose such expectations on students interested in other dimensions of transnational American history? I would certainly consider that possibility very seriously.

To be honest, my expectations as academic mentor pose a far more daunting challenge for young scholars born, raised, and educated in the United States than they do for Americanists living and working outside the United States. American education introduces students very early to the old American idea – often encapsulated in the still-widely and approvingly quoted discovery by immigration historian Oscar Handlin that "immigrants *were* American history" – and it also does a rather poor job of preparing students to learn and to use languages other than English in their studies. The monetary costs of doing multi-sited dissertation research can be high, while sources of funding for such historical research are still discouragingly few, especially at a public university such as Minnesota, where most funding for graduate education takes the form of Teaching Assistantships that require students to remain not only in the United States but in Minneapolis, Minnesota, for almost nine months of the year.

Some of my most capable students have articulated even more fundamental reservations about the risks of transnational history. The last thing many wish to do in writing a dissertation is to choose scholarly marginality. They have their eye on dissertation prizes offered in American history, American Studies, ethnic history, and immigration history. These prizes, along with available funding opportunities, define the scholarly mainstream for students and they have sent powerful messages. When students look at the lists of dissertations awarded such prizes, they do not find many dissertations based on multi-lingual or multi-sited research, even when such studies claim the mantle of transnationalism. Poignantly aware of my students' perspectives on the marginality of the transnational methods I urge upon them, I conclude that research on migration and studies of the United States that are framed by comparative, transnational, global, and international methods are more likely to flourish among scholars working outside the United States than they are among the students I mentor in the United States. If indeed, as many scholars suspect, the transnational scholarly "moment" is now passing or even past, then commitment to transnational methods may well survive almost entirely among scholars outside the United States.

But what are they (or I) committed to exactly? I believe I can make a good case for embracing a distinctive, transnational methodology for the study of migration, but I am less convinced that studies based on those methods are

best or exclusively understood as American history, or even the history of a global America. My studies of Italian migrations in the 1990s convinced me, at least, that one can as easily write an internationalized history of Italy as of the United States or of Argentina. Perhaps that is why I do not worry much about the possibility that transnational studies of migration reinforce the kinds of American exceptionalism that transnationalists have hoped to overcome. Transnational methods allowed me to see that Argentina, Australia, and France all exerted powerful attractions on potential migrants from Italy; the United States is not now nor has it ever been the only nation constructed from the unlikely citizenship materials on offer by a mobile humanity. Because I first gained the ability to view the United States and American immigration history from the outside when I studied, researched, and worked outside the United States, I am also still inclined to believe that it will be border-crossing outsiders – those who approach the huge vastness of American historiography from the margins and from outside the United States – who will ensure that transnational methods, if not transnationalism itself, will persist into the twenty-first century.

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The Culture of Transnationalism[1]

The culture of transnationalism – often identified with a "transnational turn" – in American history offers an extended examination of the ways in which American culture has developed across and beyond the borders of

[1] The first three paragraphs of this essay are adapted from my article "Transnationalism in American Studies," written at the invitation of the American Studies Association's editors for the *Encyclopedia of American Studies*: http://www.theasa.net/project_eas_online/page/project_eas_online_eas_featured_article/
Mindful of the objections of others from the Americas, I try to avoid excessive use of "American" to denote the United States, but a certain amount of slippage is inevitable.

the U.S. nation-state, within international networks and exchanges (not always even-handed) of goods, financial and cultural capital, and artistic influence. As scholar Shelley Fisher Fishkin stated in 2004 (in a presidential address to the American Studies Association), the transnational turn began as a strategy for studying critically the place of the United States in the international realm. Looking at the United States from a transnational viewpoint, she concluded, "we are likely to focus less on the United States as a static and stable territory and population whose characteristics it is our job to divine, and more on the nation as a participant in a global flow of people, ideas, texts, and products – albeit a participant who often tries to impede those flows."

One important cause of the transnational turn was the increasing dissatisfaction of Americanists with historical narratives that remained anchored in nationalism – and inextricably entangled with national pride – even as globalization rendered the nation-state increasingly less relevant. In 1997, Thomas Bender organized a set of conferences at La Pietra, Italy, cosponsored by New York University and the Organization of American Historians, to figure out ways to reshape historical scholarship and teaching to reflect America's essential interconnectedness with the world. These conferences resulted in a landmark anthology, *Rethinking American History in a Global Age.* During the 1990s Donald Pease proposed a "postnational" narrative, even as he and Amy Kaplan championed in *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism* the study of imperialism in American Studies. Meanwhile, the growth of American history programs and scholarship outside the United States has encouraged U.S.-based scholars to begin discussion of American culture in an international setting – even if they still generally avoid engagement with texts in languages other than English.

The label of transnationalism covers several approaches. First, there is the theme of border crossings. Scholars of this school have traced the work of American creative artists, religious figures, and political activists within international networks and conversations. For example, in *Transamerican Literary Relations and the Nineteenth-Century Public Sphere* (2004), Anna Brickhouse examines how canonical American authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Harriet Beecher Stowe, or Phillis Wheatley were inspired by and connected with authors, commentators and translators in Latin

America. Shelley Fisher Fishkin edited *The Mark Twain Anthology* (2010), a historical collection of commentaries on Mark Twain by writers around the world, in multiple languages – including a selection from an 1884 study by French critic Henry Gauthier-Villars (AKA Willy), the first-ever book published on Twain. A related field is that of diasporic studies, of which Paul Gilroy's 1993 study *The Black Atlantic* served as foundational text. Works such as Penny von Eschen's 1997 *Race Against Empire* and Marc Gallicchio's 2000 *The African American Encounter with China and Japan* trace how African Americans looked outside the United States to transcend the limited role they were permitted to occupy in domestic affairs. Not only did they associate themselves with worldwide struggles against European colonialism, but they also developed a cosmopolitan style in their own communities that included elements adapted from foreign cultures.

One key element of the transnational turn concerns the relationship between place and subject position – the ways in which the international empowers the transnational in United States history. This prompts a central question: Do historians working outside the 50 states more readily embrace transnationalism in regard to American history than those inside? If so, where can such approaches most be most usefully employed – in privileging the local and regional?

My answer grows out of my own experience as an American-born and -educated historian teaching at l'Université du Québec À Montréal, a French-language university in Montreal, Canada. At the risk of speaking in extremely generalized terms, I find that Canadians – and French Canadians especially – possess a unique "inside and outside" perspective on the United States due to their overall geographical and cultural position, one that informs their writing and teaching of American History. As an adopted Canadian, I can see how it has in turn influenced my own writing.

What do I mean by "inside and outside"? As far as "inside" is concerned, it means that Canadians possess an overall familiarity with American culture (as J. Bartlett Brebner famously noted, Americans are benevolently ignorant about *Canada*, while Canadians are malevolently well informed about the United States). The U.S. is by far Canada's largest trading partner, and Canada is saturated with U.S.-produced news and entertainment media. Canada regularly receives U.S. visitors, while large

numbers of Canadians reside for all or part of the year in the United States (most famously the "snowbirds": men and women, especially elderly, who spend their winters in Florida). As a result, even in a global-media and jet-plane age, the average European lacks the kind of exposure that Canadians get to ordinary life in the United States.

Even within Canada, there are multiple regions, each with distinctive viewpoints. Americanists in Quebec have a particular opportunity to develop comparative and transnational perspectives. On the one hand, the linguistic difference of French Canadians means that Quebecers can claim a greater critical distance from the United States than their anglophone counterparts, as they are less overshadowed by the United States in cultural terms. To give a notable illustration, the most popular television programs in Quebec are all produced in the province, while a large majority of top-rated shows in the rest of Canada (the R.O.C., in Canadian slang) are imported from the United States. By the same token, the province's francophone identity promotes a global view of America, as scholars gravitate naturally towards Europe and the francophone world as well as to the United States for textbooks, source materials, and professional networks. At the same time, Quebec is a longstanding "borderland" site of two-way transborder migration and interpenetration with New England – at least a third of Quebec's population sojourned in the Northeast United States during the long 19th century – that solidified the formation of a common regional culture. It is likely that this particular heritage explains the focus of Quebec scholars on New England in their discussions of American culture.

At the same time, Canadians are able to view the United States from "outside." While Canada is clearly a North American society with demography, customs, and social structures similar to those of its southern neighbor, it has its own distinct history. This provides an extra dimension to Canadian teaching and writing *about* the United States. One notable example of how looking at United States history through a Canadian lens can help reshape conventional views concerns the War of 1812: in the United States, the war is universally accounted a draw, with the U.S. and Great Britain agreeing to return to the prewar status quo. In contrast, the predominant interpretation in Canada is that their side won the war. A similar difference concerns The Quebec Act of 1774, enacted by

Parliament following the conquest of New France by Great Britain, which offered Catholics the free exercise of their religion. Canadian historians agree that the Catholic Church was the pioneering institution in New France, the cradle of its "American" civilization. The Act was thus an enlightened move that enabled the conquered remnants of New France to sustain their culture. Seen against this backdrop, the American Revolution, and in particular the description of the Quebec Act in the Declaration of Independence as a conspiracy against liberty, appears more a triumph of ethno-religious bigotry over enlightenment.

Because of this contrast in the two societies' prevailing political norms and social structures, Americanists in Canada have tools to challenge the exceptionalism that remains a founding assumption of American History, while also highlighting the transnational nature of American phenomena. For example, the main author of *It Didn't Happen Here* (2000), the most penetrating historical analysis of the failure of socialism in the United States, was the late sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset, an adopted Canadian. Lipset, who taught for some years at University of Toronto, afterwards devoted significant attention to the contrast between U.S. and Canadian values and institutions, most notably in his binational study *Continental Divide*. In *It Didn't Happen Here*, Lipset and his coauthor Gary Marks noted that ever since Werner Sombart in 1906, when theoreticians have asked "Why is there no socialism in the US?", their answers have most commonly centered on geographic mobility and immigration. Yet in Canada, another "frontier" society that welcomed the same transnational flows of migrant labor, socialism has remained a mainstream, if minority movement. Social Democratic parties have held power in provincial governments (most notably Tommy Douglas's administration in Saskatchewan in the 1940s, which originated universal health care insurance), and on the national level there is a strong social democratic party, the New Democratic Party (until recently the Official Opposition in Ottawa). By explicitly referencing Canada as a contrasting test case, the authors are able to conclude that racial heterogeneity and geographical dispersion are insufficient explanations for the failure of American socialism.

Finally, transnational North American studies provide useful tools for revealing both the specificity and the workings of government policy in

the United States. To take an area that I know well, the official removal and confinement of ethnic Japanese during World War II (often called the "Japanese internment"), a set of events already extensively covered in the historical literature on the United States, has been opened up in recent years through works by Canada-based scholars. Books such as Stephanie Bangarth's *Voices Raised in Protest* (2008) and this author's *A Tragedy of Democracy* (2009) have looked at official wartime and postwar policies towards ethnic Japanese in the United States in concert with similar actions in Canada (and also Mexico). The study of these parallel movements provides further insight into the root causes and impact of official policy in the United States. For example, one oft-heard justification of Executive Order 9066 and mass removal of Japanese Americans was that Army chiefs on the West Coast had a genuine fear of subversion by ethnic Japanese in case of a Japanese invasion. According to such a thesis, military necessity alone motivated the White House to order the "evacuation" of the local Japanese population: the historic prejudice against ethnic Japanese on the West Coast and lobbying after Pearl Harbor by white nativist and commercial groups and their political representatives in California were irrelevant, or at least not determinative.

However, an examination of events in Canada alongside those in the United Sates gives the lie to such assertions. In Canada, there was a similar history of anti-Japanese prejudice on the West Coast, as well as parallel public fear of invasion. Nonetheless, the nation's military chiefs, notably Maurice Pope, the Vice Chief of the Canadian Army Staff, advised Prime Minister Mackenzie King against mass removal. Nevertheless, due to pressure by West Coast lobbyists on government officials in Ottawa, the Prime Minister overruled his military chiefs in mid-January 1942. In fact, at first King proposed a halfway measure: he signed an order removing adult males of Japanese ancestry, but not women or children, from the West Coast. The move was intended as a compromise to satisfy public concerns for security. However, West Coast racists were not appeased, and did not wait to see the impact of such measures. Instead, the only result of the partial removal was to make them press more energetically for expulsion of the entire ethnic population, which King finally ordered six weeks later, in the wake of Executive Order 9066. The fact that the initial

actions in Canada occurred weeks before President Roosevelt's executive order, and were more punitive, suggest that constitutional guarantees provided a certain restraint, though not an absolute brake, on arbitrary government action in the United States. At the same time, the lobbying by British Columbia political actors for extreme action even before the impact of a more moderate policy could be established reveals that the policy in both nations was driven by ideological considerations. West Coast interests were not concerned with balancing the actual questions of defense with the minimum interference into the lives of an entire population, but demanded the ethnic cleansing of the region.

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Intervening Spaces: Transnationalism and the Disintegration of American History

Transnationalism has no specific "contribution" to make to the study of American history, yet it offers a pathbreaking historiographical perspective. The reason for this blunt, if ambiguous answer to the first question raised by the roundtable organizers is that understanding transnationalism in terms of "contributing" to American history is problematic. It potentially reduces the meaning of transnationalism to "contribution history" in the way ethnic, race, and gender history has at times been treated in the mainstream historiography. Contribution history mainly serves to integrate previously excluded groups into an existing master narrative, adding a bit of color and vibrancy to the anemic story of white Anglo-Saxon advance and supremacy.

In other words, viewing transnationalism in terms of its "contribution" defangs the more insistent questions it asks about the extent to which racism, exploitation, and exclusion are built into the very foundations of the American economic and political order. It diverts attention from one of the key aspirations of the transnational project, namely, to "dis-

integrate" U.S. history in ways that question the focus on the nation-state and a coherent, all-encompassing national narrative. We should, therefore, not view transnationalism as a convenient instrument for establishing the contribution European or other non-US historians can make to the field of U.S. history. Instead, we need to recognize it as a way of breaking through some of the axioms, unquestioned assumptions, templates, and tunnel visions of modern (American) historiography.

As a "way of seeing" history, transnationalism is not primarily designed to shed a global light on previously ignored aspects of American history, or to give a voice to foreign scholars. Instead, it should be seen as a mindset and a "gaze" that, independent of where the historian is located, counters narratives of fixity, continuity, and identity. As Daniel Rodgers reminds us in *Atlantic Crossings*, the task of the historian studying intercultural transfer is not to focus on "identities but processes, not essences but geneses." Transnationalism's focus on connections, linkages, and circulations thus conveys a sense of fragility, temporality, and constructedness. To use an urban metaphor, it shifts the gaze from the buildings and structures to the spaces in-between – the transitory and elusive "connecting tissue" that nonetheless holds everything together.

Broadly speaking, the transnational project has two main dimensions. First, it offers a historiographical perspective that, while still regarding the state as a significant actor, examines circulations, interactions, and connections beyond the nation state. It shifts the emphasis from "government" to more complex systems of "governance." The latter involves not only public agencies but also nongovernmental organizations and multinational networks. It examines their involvement in the intercultural transfer of ideas across oceans, regions, and continents through personal friendships, organized exchanges, institutional ties, and the like.[1] Transnationalism, however, not only contextualizes, historicizes, and deconstructs established nation-centered discourses. It also offers a fundamental counternarrative. This is particularly apparent in its self-reflective dimension. In questioning the nation as a key concept that has

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1 See, for examples, Clavin and Conrad and Osterhammel. I have explored this in a number of studies: *American Progressives*; "W.E.B. Du Bois"; "German Historicism."

shaped modern political consciousness, transnationalism takes a stab at the cognitive and institutional foundations of the modern field of history itself, whose research areas, professional societies, university departments etc. were created largely in the context of the rise of modern nation-states in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Second, anchored in the cultural turn, transnationalism emphasizes hybridity, interstices, fuzziness, and transient meanings. It is writing the history of instability, not identity, of meanings always on the verge of collapse. Indeed, the very origin of the term "transnational" in Randolph Bourne's 1916 essay in *Atlantic Monthly* spells out the vision of the U.S. as a "no-place" where ethnic and racial "citizenships" are constantly re-formed through processes of cultural intermingling. In the same vein, as Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann have pointed out, transnationalism is not just a method that, for example, differs from comparative or international history. It is also a temper, even a political statement, that reflects a postmodern and poststructuralist mindset. It conceives of knowledge in terms of connectivity, relationships, and mutual construction, rather than in terms of analysis, dissection, and categorizing. W.E.B. Du Bois, for example, one of the high priests of the transnational gaze, clearly regarded his concepts of "double consciousness," "twoness," "second sight" and "seeing oneself through the other world" not just as analytical categories for understanding the African American experience, but as broader conceptual tools for transcending the ideology of fixity and givenness embedded in systems of oppression.

There is a fly in the ointment of this fervent iconoclasm, however. The transnational gaze also reflects the historical context of its creation. Indeed, transnationalism can be difficult to separate from the broader discourses of economic globalization. By challenging the epistemic dominance of the nation, transnationalism potentially provides legitimacy for a neoliberal view that relegates national administrative capacities to the sidelines while adulating global players, international finance capitalism, and big business that operate in an interconnected, mobile world, evading taxes via a mouseclick, moving goods and headquarters around the globe, and dividing up lines of production across national boundaries. In the same vein, transnationalism's postmodern, trans-cultural questioning of all substances and identities can lead to its assimilation into a normative code

of global consumer capitalism and thus, while putatively liberating us from the layers of deception and illusion, help create new ones.

What is more, the transnational project is not only at times in danger of becoming an unsuspecting handmaiden of neoliberal economics. It is also in danger of being co-opted by neoconservative politics. While it questions the nation-state as a historical construct, it simultaneously recognizes nations as crucial entities that organize knowledge, implement policies, define social identities, and serve as objects of collective identification. In this regard it displays structural similarities with neoconservative sentiments expressed in concepts such as "USA Inc.," "UK plc" or "Deutschland AG." These concepts merge the economistic concept of an interconnected world of competing global players with the emotive appeal of the diminished nation-state. The political Right in particular has perfected this combination of nationalistic nostalgia and global turbo-capitalism. Meanwhile, the Left has been struggling to combine its own transnational multiculturalism with the nationalism embedded in social democratic welfare states.

In order to prevent transnationalism from either becoming part of "contribution history" or from inadvertently promoting nationalism in a world of globalized capitalism, researchers need to focus more closely on the connection between the trans-national and trans-cultural angles within the concept. This is what I seek to do in my current research, which pursues a transnational study of the nexus between immigration and social welfare policies in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany in the decades after World War I. The interwar years were a crucial period for both the establishment of modern migration regimes and twentieth-century welfare states in the three countries that represent the main types of nations, immigration experiences, and social policy models in the West. Rather than comparing national experiences, the project explores how international networks of social scientists, civic reformers, trade unionists, immigrants, and business lobbyists forged the semantic and institutional linkages between immigration and social policy. It suggests that migration discourses and policies were central to the development of modern social welfare regimes.

On this basis, the project challenges conventional narratives that regard immigration and welfare states largely as independent variables and provides

a synthesis of social policy and migration studies that is still missing in the scholarly literature. In particular, it examines four policy areas – health care, public housing, labor laws, and settlement policies – where (a) immigration debates and social policy were closely intertwined and (b) important impulses for the development of modern welfare states originated. At the same time, it seeks to recover the fluid setting in the aftermath of the war that opened up space for alternative conceptions of social welfare provision. In particular, the project studies transnational networks of professionals, social reformers, and immigrant activists who formulated a distinctive vision of "cultural social politics" that sought to reconcile ethnic pluralism, social justice, democratic participation, and cultural modernity.

The transnational perspective provides important conceptual tools for this effort to connect social policy, immigration, and international networks, which scholarship has tended to isolate on separate tracks. In terms of public policy, it highlights how the quintessentially national (state welfare policy) is negotiated in the context of the quintessentially *trans*national (immigration). The key factors behind modern welfare policies are labor migration, global competition, warfare, and social upheaval in the context of rise of modern industrial capitalism, the transportation and communication revolution, and imperialism. At the same time, the key means of welfare policy are nationalized "expert" service provision replacing, funding, or regulating local, church, kinship, or paternalist systems. Exploring the immigration-social policy nexus shows that the nation-state is a highly unstable political form molded on the basis of calibrating between discrimination, exploitation, and integration of ethnic groups in the very process of the transnational encounter.

In terms of cultural politics, the transnational perspective sheds light on the pressure to reconcile solidarity and diversity. As the dynamics of migration clash with established community ties, they pose a fundamental challenge to in-group bonds of mutual obligation. This diversity necessitates a reordering of the boundaries of inclusion/exclusion, principles of recognition/empathy, and systems of mutual care. The main challenge is to provide care of strangers beyond familial, kinship, or patronage ties. On the one hand, the transnational perspective helps expose the conjunction of racialism and democracy in the liberal capitalist state, in which the

functioning of republican institutions was predicated upon shifting definitions of "whiteness," which subsumed European ethnic divisions while simultaneously reinscribing racial hierarchies. It shows how the immigration-welfare complex reflected and reproduced the established lines of socioeconomic, political, and regional division in the ethnic and racial tapestry of the United States. On the other hand, however, as Matthew Frye Jacobson has shown, transnationalism also emphasizes subaltern self-assertion and identity formation within a social and political order that alternately employed strategies of discrimination and integration. Likewise, the focus on the cosmopolitan breadth of interwar reform highlights the emergence of new ways of connecting welfare and migration. These reverberate in contemporary efforts to address the dilemma of high levels of immigration undermining support for welfare states.

Unearthing the institutional and intellectual roots of the welfare-immigration-complex in modern social policy on the basis of a transnational analysis can thus provide clues as to how to connect "national" and "global," "cultural" and "social" in more productive and imaginative ways than what is on offer in mainstream politics today. As we enter a new period of resurgent nationalism in Europe, the transnational angle can help challenge the "monistic pathos" embedded in reified concepts of the nation that continue to resonate with the public, even as the meaning of nation is hollowed out through tying the "national interest" ever more closely to the incessant demands of global corporations.[1] At the same time, a transnational perspective can preserve skepticism toward what David Hollinger has called the postmodern "celebration of sheer difference" that has led to a new essentializing of cultural separateness and its reification in modern identity politics.

It is for this reason that I see both deconstructing the nation-state and the cultural turn as crucial elements in transnational history – as long as its practitioners continue to be aware that transnationalism itself can be bound up with and absorbed by what it seeks to subvert.

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[1] The American philosopher Arthur O. Lovejoy (13) uses the term "monistic pathos" to describe nineteenth-century notions of national essences, genetically fixed cultural traits, permanent racial hierarchies, and putatively eternal laws of the market.

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Walking and Chewing Gum at the Same Time: Nation and Transnational History

The growth of transnational history has been uneven and fairly slow. Resistance to transnational history has come from those afraid that it gives too much space and recognition to the national, and those who think the opposite. More disturbingly, there are criticisms associated with arguments about the insubstantiality of transnational history. All of these concerns are misplaced and reflect too myopic an immersion in contemporary events. It is necessary to take a longer-term view of historiography and the historians' location, the methodology of transnational history, and the place of exceptionalism and national history within this tradition.

1. Historiography

Considering transnational history within historiography helps to get perspective on this stormy and sometimes ill-informed debate that has transpired over the last two decades. If we see transnational history for a moment not as an interpretation or methodological maneuver, but as part of the social production of history, the course of historiography in transnational topics appears in a new light. If we think about the sheer size and complexity of American historical production, and the supremacy of methodological and even ideological nationalism over a very long period, it is hardly surprising that transnational history has not yet produced revolutionary effects. Those who expect otherwise are expecting too much. As I have argued in my recent essay "Historical Writing in the United States," American historiography in the early twenty-first century is far too

diverse to contain within any single label, let alone one that is accused of seeking to overturn the life's work of so many.

By locating the case of transnational history's development within wider historiography, we gain an important perspective. How do historiographical breaks occur, and what is the pattern of such breaks? Are they common or uncommon? When can we ascertain that there has been a fundamental shift? There have in fact been only a few major shifts that might be termed "revolutions" in historical writing about the United States. And none of them has occurred with particular rapidity. The role of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis from his landmark paper of 1893 was arguably the only major break in American historiography until the 1960s and the rise of the New Left. It should be noted that the frontier thesis took about thirty years to work its way through into the dominant interpretation of U.S. history by about 1920. More recently, the rise of the New Left and the new social history failed to make a significant impact upon political history until at least the 1980s, a period of perhaps twenty years. Transnational history began to make its impact only after the holding of the series of La Pietra conferences from 1997 to 2000 in Florence. In some ways, however, the development of transnational history was linked to the new social history with its move away from political and state-centered history as much as it was to cultural studies. If we follow this alternative perspective, we are in the middle of a much larger and longer transition from the nation-state centered historiography that developed in the nineteenth century that progressive historiography in fact perpetuated in the early twentieth century, and that only began to be undermined in the 1960s. Either way, transnational history has emerged too recently, relative to long-term changes in historiography, to evaluate fully. "It's early days yet," as the Anglophone saying goes. This is not simply a problem of historians lacking long-term perspective on contemporary events in historical writing. An equal impediment is the fact that we are analyzing ourselves. Historians are not particularly good at viewing their place in a historical process from the outside. They do not see that there is, all around, a growing body of transnational work that is more aware of wider contexts than the nation, and that is already changing historical interpretation and producing new syntheses, like Thomas Bender's *A Nation among Nations: America's Place in World History*.

2. The role of the outsider and the weight of numbers

Given this emphasis that I am urging upon the *social production of history*, and its relatively slow momentum of change, non-U.S. scholars are unlikely to alter radically the nature of U.S. historiography because of the numbers. European Americanists make up less than 5 percent of all U.S.-based American historians. Nevertheless, outsiders do have a role, provided insiders are receptive. It is easier for historians outside the United States to contribute significantly to the reshaping of American historiography if, as I think is true, there is a growing body of opinion within the United States that American history should be re-thought. In this process, outsiders have what the insiders are seeking – a new perspective, a sense of span and context that can compliment the deep and specific knowledge of the insider. But the potential for outsiders to develop a new perspective requires collaboration for its fulfillment. One type of collaboration has been the efforts under EU funding, for Americanists in Europe in the project *Historians across borders*, which considers the networks of and social production of European versions of American history. While being situated in Europe or elsewhere might facilitate a perspective on U.S. history that transcends national boundaries, working in conjunction with U.S. based historians to effect the new paradigm is more promising. As communications networks have improved since the 1990s, the capacity for intellectual collaboration has increased across the North Atlantic centers of knowledge. Many such linkages are being established through graduate study, sabbaticals, formal collaborations of universities, and scholarly institutions that cross national boundaries. For example there is the regular interaction of Americans and British historians in the Cambridge conferences on American political history, such as the post-1945 history conference on "American politics, world politics" held in April 2011, convened by Andrew Preston and Doug Rossinow. It is a bleaker story for the Pacific, because of the greater distances to the United States. In this case, bilateral rather than multilateral interactions with American scholars still predominate. Though the Japanese American Studies Association has been active in making links with the Australian and New Zealand equivalents, Pacific perspectives are still difficult to project into a position where transformations of American

historiography can occur. This remains true despite the reputed tilt of U.S. foreign policy under Barack Obama. In practice, as Bruce Cumings has argued, the American re-positioning towards Asia is fraught with financial and political difficulties for the United States. Obama's rhetoric has not been backed with logistical support. If Atlanticist perspectives continue to predominate, that will allow transnational perspectives to develop further, but the enrichment of a truly global participation in the transnational history project requires engagement with the Asia-Pacific and about the Asia-Pacific, and that agenda is made more difficult by current economic and political constraints.

For all Americanists outside the United States, a major contribution comes from being able to see how American ideas and institutions translate "on the ground" – in practice – in the full spectrum of countries across the world. Non-American records on American history need to be looked at more closely than hitherto to further this transnational agenda. I found in my own work on the American conservation policy in the Progressive Era that British sources such as the Foreign Office records and the personal papers of Lord James Bryce were very helpful in tracing certain cross-national networks in both formal conservation diplomacy and informal transnational conservation thought and practice. It is possible using such records to see Rooseveltian conservation before World War I as part of a changing international sensibility on the transformation of nature.[1] Discovery of the European records of American moral reform movements such as temperance organizations or religious support societies such as Christian Endeavor sheds similarly new light on the global impact of American religion and self-help ideas. Only from multi-archival approaches can we de-center the American case and prevent transnational history from simply being the study of a projection of American values abroad and a reflection of American concerns. We need to start from questions posed by circumstances outside the United States. About these links with American history we still know relatively little. We know so very little about the impact even of reform movements outside the United States in the British "settler" colonies such as Australia and Canada.

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[1] Tyrrell, *Crisis of the Wasteful Nation.* See also "To the Halls of Europe."

3. Theory and method

These points are empirical and practical, but much of the promise and pitfalls of transnational history concerns method and theory. While there may seem to be a "lack of a strong methodological paradigm" in transnational history, the foundations for an epistemic break are being laid. Again, it is important to emphasize that this will take time to develop, but there are signs that it is emerging with the publication of Pierre Yves Saunier's 2013 book, *Transnational History*. If the absence of a definite paradigm of scholarship has "contributed to confine 'transnationalism' to the realm of fashionable buzzwords," and kept "the outpouring of empirical research" restricted or "scant in many sub-fields," there is no longer any excuse for such a trivial and unthinking application. Transnational history as method is coming of age. Transnational history uses the approaches of historicism and of empiricism through "following the trails," in Saunier's words, of commodities, people, ideas, and organizations, and by seeking to link the inside and the outside of American history as one interrelated whole. The "cultural turn" has, to be sure, propelled such an emphasis on "circulation" of ideas and practices across national borders breaching "traditional dichotomic patterns" of center v. periphery, and "domination" against resistance. But there is no reason why analysis of relations of power should be abandoned. One of the main tasks here is the need to map specific concentrations of power. While the field of "cultural studies" has been productive for the deconstruction of power relations, it has not been effective in contributing to a more positive reconstruction of history. Saunier offers in his chapter on transnational circulations a wise set of strategies to overcome this deficiency. It is necessary to map a particular set of flows through their "catchment" areas. This is not a nation-to-nation circulation, based on "bilateral tropism," as Saunier puts it. Rather, the circulations and flows must be appropriate to the topic. One appropriate scale is the bioregion that is often studied in the specialization of environmental history and environmental studies. As Joseph Taylor points out, such environmental histories do not have to show uniformity of ecosystems any more than uniformity of political and legal conditions. One can envisage ecological histories as following the flows and mapping

the contours of exchange and power, such as of the Great Plains where the area of analysis is not determined by nation-state structures but ecological conditions and bioregions. This is truly transnational history – it transcends national boundaries, and it is not simply the study of Canadian-American relations.

Yet the interposition of state policy must still be considered. State political actions in one jurisdiction, in this case, the United States, can affect the other side of the international border. Take the well-known case of Sitting Bull after the killing of George Armstrong Custer at the battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. Sitting Bull and his fellow tribesmen of the Lakota Sioux fled across the Canadian border to the more favorable protection of the "Great White Grandmother" (Queen Victoria). He and his Sioux warriors were allowed to stay in western Canada under certain conditions of non-interference with the local tribes. Yet the slaughter of the buffalo on the southern Great Plains, egged on by the U.S. Army's desire to remove the Sioux's primary food source, eventually starved out the Indians who had fled north, because the migratory buffalo did not respect national borders. The slaughter south of the border affected the migratory herds north of the 49th parallel each summer. The Canadian government was not willing to grant the Sioux permanent land grants, and pressured the tribe to return to the United States.[1]

In environmental history there is a tendency for state formation to come to the fore in studies of environmental management, with more emphasis upon the repressive power of the state through the impact of James C. Scott and his *Seeing Like a State*. But research is also being done on how state formation has multiplied or been duplicated around the world, producing a transnational discourse and practice over state-making and the forging of nationalist versions of nature, for example through national parks. The understanding of state practices is being profoundly changed to incorporate historical comparisons of state-making, and greater understanding of the need to take into account the roles of transnational actors such as, in environmental history's case, wildlife crossing national borders, peoples migrating, conservationist activism, and international science. As well

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[1] Manzione and Daschuk are suggestive but not exhaustive on this topic.

as border-crossings, there is in environmental history the capacity to use shared contexts to illuminate larger political and social changes. We certain have exemplars such as John McNeill's *Mosquito Empires*, which "argues that yellow fever and malaria, both mosquito-borne diseases," undermined colonial state structures and thereby "helped make the Americas free" in the age of the North Atlantic democratic revolutions.

Already we see that transnational history has an evolving research programs to which the strategies of empirical research in circulations and flows can be applied. These include not only environmental movements and state formations; they also encompass other social movements; migration rather than immigration; science; intellectual history; and the study of empires, to name a few. Though transnational history has a method as Saunier shows, and a corresponding research program, what it lacks is a theory. The theories are derived from external social science (network communication theories or modernization) or politico-economic traditions such as Marxism concerning economic connections of commodity and capital flows, and class formation.[2]

4. Exceptionalism and the Nation

I do not agree that these practices of transnational history reinforce exceptionalism, because the nature of exceptionalism should not be understood in a static way. Precisely because the United States "is embedded in a dense network of transnational 'forces of integration,'" as the introduction to this forum maintains, U.S. history is best understood as part of systemic changes, not as exceptional. If other nations were studied as intensely, their own embedded nature would also be revealed. The role of the United States within this system has changed over time. In the period of the "American Century," the United States became the world's most powerful nation, and exerted great international influence. Its systemic connections were different in degree and composition from those of other

[2] The contributors to *A World Connecting, 1870-1945*, ed. Emily Rosenberg, are particularly helpful on this score.

nations, but so too are other nations different from one other. The current place of the United States within the world system is based on political and military power, but what also makes the U.S. seem exceptional is the relative size of the economy and population. It still has the largest economy, the fourth largest area, the third largest population, and the highest energy consumption. But its systemic connections mean that the United States cannot be an exception. Most notable is its uneven integration into the global system, but this is not a nation-to-nation phenomenon. This integration is also a regional phenomenon that goes beyond the state-centered paradigm, as was shown in the nineteenth century by the case of California. Even today, California is more deeply integrated in world trade and more diverse in population than some other parts of the United States. Though it is true that the United States has been playing a strong role in the framework of contemporary global interdependence, it is not necessarily the only country to do so. China has become important to global integration, for instance in its resource consuming, and in its expansion of trade and investment, as well as the sheer size of that country demographically and geographically.

Closely linked to exceptionalism, as an American tradition, is the role of "nation." It is mistaken to see the aim of transnational history of the United States as being either to undermine national history *or* to reinforce it. One result of the transnational method is to produce a more historicized and contingent understanding of nation. Yet a second aim is to produce a transnational history beyond the nation, but this would not be U.S. history. It could be Atlantic history, Pacific history, or North American history, including Mexico, and Canada. It could also be global history. The United States would, however, be part of any of these larger histories. The historian can walk and chew gum at the same time.

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