Introduction

Dislocations across the Americas

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"Dislocations across the Americas" speaks to a moment of stark interest in interdependent relations of power, violence, and place. If scholarship interested in global and hemispheric scales has traditionally tended more toward comparisons than connections, transnational studies have in the past decade brought interdependencies into clearer view. Transnational method, unconfined to any given field, has been a welcoming site for the accumulation of border-transcending insights across the (inter)disciplines. Indeed, the youth and indeterminacy of transnational study may make this proto-field better able to foster such insights, thanks to the very absence of recognizable borders, obvious objects of study, and leading figures on which to pin its tenets. The approach has yet to clarify that its practitioners neither assume nations to be obsolete nor simply study the whole wide world, and certainly it still continues to suffer from confusion over what distinguishes it from the related concepts of globalization and migration. Its very ambiguity seems to make transnational method particularly productive for spatially focused innovation.

Transnational method is one of the ways scholars around the globe are attempting to make sense with space. Gone is the epistemological privilege of time; questions of temporality, of our point along the timelines of modernity or coloniality, are fatally rent by critiques of their normative evolutionism. Temporality is instead now an integrated piece of the "spatial turn," the analytic toolkit of critical geography so useful to historicize the narrative lines of globalization.[1] With attention to the generative centrality of complex interrelations of scale and of phenomena that resist the space-time of the nation-state, transnational scholarship joins border studies,

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geography, area and ethnic studies, and other interdisciplines in shifting boundaries of field, period, and place.

The inspiration and focus for much of this work is far from a joyous notion of globalization that erases impediments to world travel and communion, but a much grimmer understanding. The global processes in focus in this special issue are those in which, as Arturo Escobar explains, "violence takes on a central role in the regulation of peoples and economies for the control of territories and resources."[2] The import of violence on the border has long been a commonplace, its "organizing principle," in Ana María Alonso's words.[3] No wonder, then, that refusals of spatial distinctions between border and nation, margin and center, are "centering" questions of violence.

The transnational turn highlights violence due to the shape of the world it describes, in which neoliberal economic policies and the shift from Cold War to war on terror have only aggravated the concentration of wealth and extended the reaches of misery. Mary Louise Pratt fixes a steady gaze on the problem:

> Neo-liberal policies exacerbate economic inequality, concentrating economic power in the hands of ever smaller numbers of people, and relentlessly immiserating everyone else. One result are vast zones of exclusion inhabited by millions of socially organized people who are and know themselves to be utterly dispensable to the global order of production and consumption. All over the planet, then, large sectors of organized humanity live conscious of their redundancy to a global economic order which is able to make them aware of its existence, and their superfluity. People recognize themselves as expelled from the narratives of futurity the order offers, with little hope of entering or re-entering. This expulsion from history has been accompanied by rapid pauperization, ecological devastation, and a destruction of lifeways unprecedented in human history. My impression is that such a situation has not existed before now, certainly not on this planetary scale.[4]

A Latin Americanist, Pratt confirms that the Americas have offered particularly fertile ground for spatially innovative thinking. Scholars of North and South America have at hand a long history of the regions' mutually constitutive relationship, as was evident at the conference where the essays collected here were first presented. This gathering, the annual Tepoztlán Institute for the Transnational History of the Americas, brings together in Mexico scholars from the United States and Latin America who share an interest in transnational studies but whose shared concern is the starting point rather than the analytical yield. The passage by Pratt cited above is drawn from her contribution to the 2008 conference. It considered a religious-spiritual movement based in rural Peru, where extraterrestrial knowledge and global consciousness evince an emergent

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"planetary optic" that speaks to the frustrations of individuals who find themselves with (often literally) no ground on which to stand.[5] The turn to the transnational, then, is one of many spatial imaginings—including, according to the Zapatistas, even the intergalactic—that attempt to represent the crises of place we are calling "dislocation."

Dislocation may inspire a sci-fi imaginary, but fanciful it is not. The essays in this volume are all tragedies. They dramatize fragments of a contemporary world that seems more mobile and fluid than ever—the changing "scapes" of postmodernity, the migrations of globalized capital, the shrinking distances bridged by faster, more available communications media, including those that communicate people from one place to another. Compounding the world's motility today are fluctuating academic arenas in which interdisciplinarity displaces field and transnationalism blurs the bounds of nation. Yet despite myriad dimensions of motion, these essays sink back deeply into place: Havana soldered into misery by the U.S. embargo, Guantánamo seen through prison bars, an Indian reservation transformed into a battlefield, the border area one enters to traverse but never leaves, the body. These essays see and describe multiple mobilities, but refracted through the prism of neoliberalism and globalization into agonies of displacement. They trace the brutal landscapes of dislocation.

The concept of dislocation allows a crucial series of reformulations of transnational method, shading its nation-bound referent and multiplying its metaphors of movement. Transnational scholarship is often interested in people who move across national borders; dislocation recalls their unwilling movement, pointing to the painful socioeconomic conditions that uproot them. Yet dislocation conveys not only the despair of the forced migration of refugees or exiles but also their hope for solidarity in new contexts. Dislocation recalls sharp, tragic pain inflicted on the body, but also the relationships that displacement allows—the articulation between joints that Brent Edwards theorizes as diaspora, the "join" Homi Bhabha sees as the expression of desire for solidarity provoked by attempts to survive in our "unhomely world."[6] Dislocation is not always destruction: dislocated parts can survive, quintessentially mobile, ready to come together in new formations. Dislocation's useful "dis" questions "location," problematizing place just as José Muñoz's powerful exploration of "disidentification" unseats the politics of identity.[7] A dislocated place, like a disidentified subject, can connect to other places free of the simplistic assumptions of commonality that require a violent exclusion of the different. The "dis" of dislocation further evokes the "dys" of dystopia, refusing the "no place" of utopia in an embrace of the here and now that still yearns for solid ground. It embraces and reworks dystopia—a place that is abnormal, difficult, impaired, bad—as the very grounds for

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engagement, insistently and hopefully so. Disidentifying with dystopia, dislocation can ground a politics of coalition.

It is the world around us that calls forth such methodological splicings and recombinations. United States interventions in the Middle East may have displaced Latin America from the center of U.S. empire, but academic attention to empire in the Western hemisphere is still urgent. The sites of U.S. empire and anti-Americanism in the Middle East and Muslim world were reconnected to those in Latin America as U.N. Ambassador John Bolton — who in the 1980s had stonewalled Iran-Contra investigations as a Justice Department attorney — plotted Cuba along George W. Bush's "axis of evil," and the U.S. government used Guantánamo, yet again, as a site for illegal detentions and the suspension of rights. The contemporary resurgence of empire globally must be understood in relation to U.S. exploits in Latin America throughout the twentieth century; as Greg Grandin and others have demonstrated, those interventions were models for the war on terror.[8] Grandin has also shown how anti-Americanism has a history deeper and wider than that which is routinely associated with the Muslim world currently, and one with transnational currents: Huberto Alvarado Arellano, for example, a Guatemalan activist writing in the wake of the CIA-backed ouster of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, drew on Walt Whitman's unfulfilled hemispheric vision of America in *Leaves of Grass* as a source of his avowed anti-Americanism.[9]

It would be a mistake, however, to take Grandin's insights as suggesting that we read the history of U.S. empire in Latin America as a mere precursor to Afghanistan and Iraq. In such a view, sustained engagement with the transnational history of the Americas, as well as attention to persistent concerns about migration, translation, and sovereignty, falls from view, sharply limiting the futures we can imagine. The recent devastations in Haiti hammer this point home once again, as pathos over the "natural" disaster of the earthquake is paired with defamatory blaming of Haiti for poverty actually inflicted by global marginalization and political mismanagement arranged courtesy of U.S. intervention. "Haiti is known for its many man-made woes — its dire poverty, political infighting and proclivity for insurrection," explains the *New York Times*, and then praises U.S. and other nations' aid efforts.[10] Erased is no "proclivity" but transnational histories and contemporary multiscapes of U.S. imperialism in the Americas. These histories literally, materially exacerbate the earthquake's harm. We must see them.

Casting new critical light on the centrality of place in transnational scholarship owes much to Pratt's now-canonical idea of contact zones, "spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination."[11] Imagined as social rather than physical spaces, contact zones

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locate the workings of such global political phenomena as military intervention, diplomacy, foreign investment, and empire in the field of culture. Pratt herself was especially attentive to the ways that Europeans' constructions of their subordinated subjects gained traction in the sites of their imperial exploits—and, in turn, bore traces of those subjects' own self-understandings and their responses to metropolitan modes of representation. Subsequent scholarship invoking the contact zones concept occasionally downplayed the power relations emphasized by Pratt and acquired the cheerful, underpoliticized patina characteristic of cultural eye-openers such as cruise ship lectures, mall food courts, and Esperanto congresses. But for scholars of Latin America who sought to understand U.S. influence beyond politics and economics, the concept provided a vocabulary and analytical framework to imagine what became known as the "close encounters of empire." From this perspective, formal political and economic power articulate with cultural and social practices neither distinct from the authority of the nation-state nor confined by it. Contact zones thus delineate key sites and conjunctures of transnational power, even though they are "not geographic places with stable significations" and blur "boundaries of who or what is 'local' and 'foreign,' 'inside' or 'outside.' "[12]

Our hope is not to imagine transnational futures to the exclusion of others. Any monoscalar framing—national, local, hemispheric, or intergalactic—distorts critique and analysis. It is in part this tendency that "Dislocations across the Americas" attempts to confront. After all, the turn to the transnational is triggered by temporal as much as spatial provocations. In assessments of the unfixity of place implied in the transnational—the movement of people, capital, and commodities across borders—debates about globalization index debates and disagreements about time: is the world now "post-national"? Was it ever fully "national"? When is or was "modernity"? Behind those questions lies the idea that we live in a different "now" that requires new epistemological and political positions that address the change.[13] Emphasizing the transnational is an imperfect solution to the problems posed by what Nancy Fraser calls the "transformative politics of framing." Just as there have been successful intellectual and political projects conceived and executed within national frames, so too can the transnational provide some space for reimagined politics, albeit a space no more or less categorically stable and durable than the national, whose "grammar is out of synch with the structural causes of many injustices in a globalizing world, which are not territorial in character. . . . By partitioning political space along territorial lines, this principle insulates extra- and non-territorial powers from the reach of justice."[14] Privileging the hemispheric Americas in this special issue should not suggest that the insights raised by the authors or by our critical embrace of transnational

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scholarship are limited to the United States and Latin America. Rather, it provides an opportunity to see how scholars are currently understanding places that have been comprehended through multiple framings over a long time, and to take stock of what the transnational can reveal about Latin America and the United States: cultural exchanges and political situations whose cross-border moorings offer as many challenges as possibilities.

The essays in this volume are all in conversation with the contact zone concept, some quite explicitly. A. Naomi Paik mobilizes a successor concept, “zones of exclusion,” itself a widely circulating notion.[15] Paik’s zones of exclusion are both literal and discursive, the first in the asylum processing center on the U.S. base at Guantánamo, the second in the testimonies of HIV-positive Haitians who sought refuge in the early 1990s. Refugees are the quintessential dislocated subjects. The people Paik introduces stand at the receiving end of a range of injustices: hailing from an embargoed, feared island pounded by centuries of malign isolation, they lost even the protection of their state after the 1991 coup. Adding injury to insult, they were infected with a terrifying virus that diminishes their social position further, not to mention their physical health. Paik’s analysis of this group’s dislocation extends to the language of their legal process. Testimony, she points out, has an inherently “indeterminate relation to its referent in reality,” despite its claims to both truth and transparency. It is also translated, with translation itself a form of dislocation as it imposes yet another remove from a speaker’s intention, compounding the rupture language enacts between sign and signified anyway. The inchoate relationship of their testimony to truth echoes the amorphous relationship the refugees held to time and place. Among the most brutal of their tortures, Paik diagnoses, was the “indeterminacy of time and space in which they and all the conditions of their confinement were situated.” The Haitians in Guantánamo were in no place, no time, neither here nor there, and on their way to neither.

Focusing even more intently on the question of violence is Rodrigo Parrini, whose essay is a devastating meditation on the upheavals of globalization. Parrini’s piece urges focused attention on the body as a critical arena of the globalized world. If the corporeality of contemporary life is forgotten, he cautions, so too does its violence disappear. Parrini adds the corporeal to Arjun Appadurai’s well-known cluster of “scapes,”[16] arguing that it is not merely “a receptacle for other social relationships,” not only “a mute space in which meanings are opened up and reconstructed, but . . . a specific space or particular locus of the globalization processes that will have some more or less pressing corporeal dimension.” If the corporeal sites of the violence Parrini exposes are individual physical bodies, the territorial sites are Mexico’s borderlands, north and south. Parrini retains none of the sense of borders as meeting places or contact zones rich with possibility.

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Instead he ventures the suggestion that borders be seen as mass graves. The disruptions of border violence have even severed the dead body from its death, he notes of the *femicídios*, or violent killings of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez.[17] In a reflection pertinent to Paik, Parrini calls into question both judicial process and its product, legal "truth." This version of the death of the subject — concrete, irrevocable — gives a sociological immediacy to its postmodern literary referent. Parrini suggests there are lessons in this violence, itself a pedagogy of pain. While some bodies are forced to undergo this learning process, others could and should notice and learn from it too, despite their relative insulation from its ravages. What they can derive from the dystopia he describes, he hopes, is the possibility and indeed urgency of reimagining a world to be desired.

There may be no more urgent reminder than the *femicídios* in Ciudad Juárez that the political and economic logics of borders — imprecise and unstable as they may be — depend on the violent enforcement of gender and sexual norms. The bodyscapes Parrini identifies in contemporary Mexico find a historical counterpoint in Nicole Guidotti-Hernández's discussion of the gendered dimensions of violence in the massacre of Aravaipa Apache at the Camp Grant Indian Reserve in 1871. Her essay speaks to the dislocation of indigenous people from lands claimed over time by Spain, Mexico, and the United States, as well as the narrative displacement of Mexican, indigenous, and Chicano involvement in the memory and history of the massacre. The participation of a woman of Mexican and indigenous descent in planning the massacre shows the political and economic status some Mexican women could acquire by visiting violence upon other indigenous women. Guidotti-Hernández warns that the embrace of indigeneity by many contemporary Chicano/a studies scholars obscures this particular violence. The consequences of this invisibility, Guidotti-Hernández points out, strengthened alibis for expanding capitalism in Tuscon, since Anglo, Mexican, and Papago Indian sexual violence against Apache women was justified by casting the Apache as savages whose values, including their gender order, were at odds with the other groups' shared investment in a particular form of capitalist development. In "marginal territories such as Arizona," Guidotti-Hernández contends, violent conflict between rival groups was and surely is a constant expression of "divergent ideologies about order, civility, gender, sexuality, and the value of life."

Jill Lane's essay considers overlapping ideologies of race and gender that have fixed the attention of nineteenth-century Spaniards and contemporary tourists on the bodies of Afro-Cuban women. Lane offers an expert exegesis of the figurines, now common in Havana tourist markets, that feature Afro-Cuban women smoking cigars in fruit-topped nineteenth-century dress. During the rapid transformation of the Cuban economy in the post–Cold War "special period," Lane encountered an image that

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circulates in a "racial and ideological economy" both national and transnational — in the nineteenth century, when it first appeared, as well as today. The image of the smoking *habanera* is "capital" in this economy in that it is the accretion of the surplus value produced by a proletariat whose labor renders relations of race, gender, nation, and capital. Following Walter Benjamin and Michael Taussig, Lane identifies the smoking habanera as a "dialectical image" that "performatively enacts the historical relation that it proposes," juxtaposing past and present in clanging discontinuity. This temporal dislocation is crucial to the work the smoking habanera performs, as she rallies memory and forgetting in the service of pleasure and profit. She also channels a series of applied dislocations involving the brutal inequities of Cuba's material and symbolic economies. Lane highlights the dismal conditions of life for many Afro-Cuban women, past and present. Her careful sifting through material objects to their situated history centers marginalization, from the forced relocation of Africans to slavery in Cuba to the relegation of the island to the political periphery in the 1990s to the depredations of racism and sexism within and across Cuban borders. This merry clay figure contains the sedimentation of compounded dislocations.

In contrast to the limited mobility of Cubans largely confined to their island, film as a medium seems fundamentally mobile. As Adrián Pérez Melgosa comments in his appraisal of hemispheric romance in film, movie "directors, actors, actresses, technicians, as well as technology and producing companies, have traced their own paths of circulation among the cinematic industries and audiences of the continent." These "itinerant processes," he notes, constitute a contact zone of transnational proportions. Spatial metaphors abound in this piece. Pérez Melgosa sees film as a site for the imagined negotiations among national, regional, and hemispheric identities, and he calls films "fictional renditions of . . . dislocations," a timely phrasing given the recent application of "rendition" to name deterritorialization for the purpose of torture. This insightful mobilization of space as metaphor helps to undermine the privileged status of physical space by underlining the fact that films are not "sites," not places where one can go, except in the imagination; they are not located anywhere even when they are shot "on location"; they are dislocations of fantasy and memory onto celluloid, now digital stream. In sum, Pérez Melgosa analyzes a nomadic, dislocated form which nonetheless wrestles centrally with questions of place.

Perhaps it is not coincidence that Pérez Melgosa's essay is both the freest in its use of the concept of the contact zone and — despite his recognition that film channels profound "social desires as well as . . . fears and resistances" — the sunniest in tone. Yet there is a way in which his essay may be of a piece with its fellows, in the dire view of the heavy hegemonic order

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film has helped to impose. Pérez Melgosa ends with the haunting suggestion that film has scripted the possibilities for the conceptualization of Latin Americanism in its dual iterations (as domination and as utopian dream) so that conventional notions of affect now structure and limit hemispheric relations. Or is his resting point ultimately the opposite: that the base of the prevailing paradigm in inter-American relations is love? Whether in love, fear, or a brutal twist of the two, the interdependent Americas call for unflinching views of their devastating, intimate relationships.

Notes

1. Important recent contributions include David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development* (London: Verso, 2006), and *Cosmopolitanisms and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1996); Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989); Judith Resnik and Seyla Benhabib, eds., *Migrations and Mobilities: Citizenship, Borders, and Gender* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Katherine McKittrick and Clyde Woods, eds., *Black Geographies and the Politics of Place* (Toronto/Cambridge: Between the Lines/South End Press, 2007); Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994); Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005); Matthew Sparke, *In the Space of Theory: Postfoundational Geographies of the Nation-State* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); Kathleen Stewart, *A Space on the Side of the Road: Cultural Poetics in an "Other" America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Matthew Pratt Guterl, "The Importance of Place in Post-Everything American Studies," *American Quarterly* 61 (2009): 931–41.

2. Arturo Escobar, *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life,* Redes (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 303.

3. Ana María Alonso, "Reconsidering Violence: Warfare, Terror, and Colonialism in the Making of the United States," *American Quarterly* 60 (2008): 1091.

4. Mary Louise Pratt, "Planetary Longings: Sitting in the Light of the Great Solar TV," in *World Writing: Poetics, Ethics, Globalization*, ed. Mary Gallagher (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 210–11.

5. Pratt, "Planetary Longings," 219.

6. Brent Hayes Edwards, "The Uses of Diaspora," *Social Text* 66 (Spring 2001): 45–73; Homi Bhabha, citing Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, in *Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 18.

7. José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

8. Greg Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (New York: Metropolitan, 2006); see also Amy Kaplan, "Where Is Guantánamo?" *American Quarterly* 57 (2005): 831–58.

9. Greg Grandin, "Your Americanism and Mine: Americanism and Anti-Americanism in the Americas," *American Historical Review* 111 (2006): 1043. See also Alan McPherson, *Yankee No! Anti-Americanism in U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

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10. “The Earthquake in Haiti,” *New York Times*, 17 January 2010, www.nytimes.com/info/haiti-earthquake-2010/.

11. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4.

12. Gilbert M. Joseph, Catherine C. LeGrand, and Ricardo D. Salvatore, “Introduction,” *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), 5, 16.

13. Geoff Eley, “Historicizing the Global, Politicizing Capital: Giving the Present a Name,” *History Workshop Journal* 63 (2007): 154–88.

14. Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimagining Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 23.

15. See, for example, Stephen J. Collier and Aihwa Ong, “Global Assemblages, Anthropological Problems,” in *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems*, ed. Collier and Ong (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005): 3–21; Jean Comaroff, “Beyond Bare Life: AIDS, (Bio)Politics, and the Neoliberal Order,” *Public Culture* 19 (2007): 197–219; and William Rasch, “Human Rights as Geopolitics: Carl Schmitt and the Legal Form of American Supremacy,” *Cultural Critique*, no. 54 (2003): 120–47; and Pratt herself, “Planetary Longings,” 210.

16. Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

17. This is a phenomenon that stretches beyond Mexico. For a discussion that frames the Ciudad Juárez killings alongside similar patterns of violence in Argentina, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Peru, see Rosa-Linda Fregoso and Cynthia Bejarano, eds., *Terrorizing Women: Feminicide in the Américas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010).

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