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# Toward a Multilingual Victorian Transatlanticism

JESSIE REEDER

EVERYWHERE you look in Victorian studies—at books, articles, conference proceedings, job advertisements, and syllabi—you find clamorous interest in the wider world beyond Britain's shores.[1] In the forty years since Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), we have pursued geographic "width" with an urgency that is evident in proliferating paradigms like empire studies, world literature, cosmopolitanism, the global, network analysis, and oceanic studies. Such global approaches have faced accusations ranging from conceptual incoherence to disciplinary treason, but at their best they have also helped disrupt the whiteness, insularity, and nation-centrism of our field, all while exposing us to new texts that bring both insight and pleasure. Indeed, it is not only geographically where Victorian studies seems open to change. The field has seen a number of manifestos recently, from the V21 Collective's "Ten Theses" to Caroline Levine's "From Nation to Network." The manifesto is a knotty genre: an antagonistic insider, it is admonitory or defiant toward the audience it hopes to draw and yet, if effective, simultaneously a statement of shared values. It tries to sweep the dust off our well-trod ground and reveal new paths forward. Victorianists, then, appear eager to go to difficult new places, both cartographically and methodologically. This makes it all the stranger that one of our most popular approaches to geographic expansion—the transatlantic—has become so conservative. Especially as practiced by Victorianists, transatlantic studies has settled into an unquestioned, glossocentric, nearly exclusive focus on the anglophone North Atlantic world. This essay, itself a manifesto, will attempt to harness something the manifesto genre "knows"—that language is political—to argue that Victorianists' interests in the paradigm-challenging potential of transatlantic study, on one hand, and our monolingualism, on the other, are incompatible.

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*Manifestos when they work must serve as mirrors, as opportunities for self-recognition.—Helena Michie*

Transatlantic studies promises bold, important conceptual shifts. Ashgate's Series in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Studies describes the field as invested in "exchanges, interactions, and negotiations" and claims that "by examining . . . travel and exploration, migration and diaspora, slavery, aboriginal culture, revolution, colonialism and anticolonial resistance," transatlantic studies "calls into question established disciplinary boundaries," "challeng[es] . . . periodization and canonization," and "offers new insights into the hybrid or intercultural basis of . . . identity, politics, and aesthetics."[2] No single organization speaks for transatlantic studies, but this account, including its boldness, is reasonably representative. Apparently, by accounting for transnational encounters such as travel, diaspora, slavery, and empire, transatlantic studies can help us rethink not only the boundaries of our discipline but also the very epistemological ground of concepts like identity. These may be lofty goals, but they are worthwhile, and, to some extent, we have seen them fulfilled: scholars working under the transatlantic banner have indeed forced us to question the idea of national boundaries as rigid cultural containers, and they have helped mobilize concepts like network and flow.

But in other ways, transatlantic studies falls frustratingly short of its revolutionary ambitions. As Amanda Claybaugh pointed out ten years ago, the theoretical work of challenging national boundaries has not actually shaken up our disciplinary boundaries, and we remain dogged by "an unthinking resort to the nation as the organizing principle for both our scholarship and our teaching."[3] Others claim that transatlantic scholarship has not decentered categories like whiteness, the metropole, or the English language, and as I will argue, these three problems are immovably intertwined and especially intractable in Victorian studies.

Victorian studies as a whole shows an eagerness to break racial and geographic bounds, pushing into colonial and extracolonial space, following the slave trade, and theorizing networks of commodity traffic. But it is stubbornly resistant to multilingualism, with two linked results. One, such expansions are accomplished by reading anglophone texts, implying the nonexistence or at least lesser value of texts in other languages that circulated in these broader geographic spaces. And two, as our gaze is recentered on the sites of anglophone text production, the

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desired geographic expansion is, in turn, constrained. Limited geography and limited language, therefore, produce one another in our work, and this problem is particularly evident in the supposed boundary-shattering subfield of transatlantic studies. Despite its desire to breach national boundaries, Victorian transatlanticism has been *overwhelmingly* limited to anglophone texts or exchanges, which keeps the field geographically lodged in the North Atlantic. This essay argues that transatlantic studies, especially as practiced by Victorianists, urgently needs to become multilingual. This is both a methodological call to better fulfill our geographic ambitions and an ethical and epistemological call to a more complete scholarship. If, as Robin Lakoff argues, language is politics and politics is language,[4] then a fully potent transatlanticism—one that fulfills ambitions like revealing "the hybrid or intercultural basis of . . . identity, politics, and aesthetics"—is duty-bound to thickly contextualize such categories within the multilingual striations of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world.

*At a time when immigration is such a hot-button issue in the three central locations for Victorian studies—North America, Britain, and Australia—there also seems to be somewhat of a return to monolingualism.—Ross Forman*

Transatlantic scholarship is not, of course, limited to Victorianists; in addition to its roots in American literary studies, the term "transatlantic" also circulates widely in Spanish-American studies, history, political science, economics, and beyond. But while English glossocentrism haunts transatlantic studies in all disciplines,[5] Victorianists have done some of the least work to correct it. Victorian literature scholars have been eager to take flight from the constraining shores of Britain, but they have often found in transatlantic studies a too-comfortable way to retain familiar methods or merely scale them outward. I will argue, first, that the English glossocentrism of Victorian transatlantic studies represents an ethical and epistemological failure of the field to meaningfully pursue its own stated objectives and, second, that this conceptual failure is mutually constitutive with the lack of institutional frameworks that would support such work. Throughout, I focus on the conspicuous absence of Spanish—and ergo Latin America—but it should be read as a proxy for the dozens of Atlantic languages that go unremarked in our scholarship.[6] I will then offer a brief case study to highlight the potential that

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reading in Spanish has to reinvigorate the way we conceptualize geography, politics, and community. And I will conclude with some remarks on the institutional norms that restrict our access to multilingual study, arguing that we must be bold not only methodologically but also institutionally if we want our work to be both ethical and sustainable. We must widen our frame to the entire Atlantic world, not in spite but because of the ways it demands us to reorient and decenter the language in which Victorian studies has defined its objectives.

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Across disciplines, transatlantic studies has a core existential conflict: it promises radical geographic breadth but almost exclusively produces scholarship confined to the anglophone North Atlantic world. Consider the social science *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, which claims to cover "the transatlantic region broadly defined," including "the Americas[,] the Caribbean[,] . . . Europe[,] . . . the Middle East and Africa."[7] This is promisingly inclusive, with a notable nod to the plural, nonhierarchical "Americas," but the journal's contents default over and over to the anglophone North. Fifty-four out of the 315 articles in its history treat the anglophone North Atlantic, while less than half that number discuss any geography in the entirety of Mexico, Central America, and South America. A journal professedly interested in more than four continents, then, devotes 17 percent of its total output to the relationship between essentially two countries—Britain and the United States, with some little attention to Canada—and one language.[8] *Symbiosis*, a transatlantic literary studies journal, has an even more lopsided mismatch between its professed aims and its publication history. While its mission statement claims interest in "literary and cultural relations between the British Isles and the Americas"[9]—note again the optimistic use of the plural—all but a small handful of the journal's 249 articles treat British–U.S. literary connections.[10] This isn't surprising, though, since despite advocating geographic breadth in the form of the plural Americas, *Symbiosis* simultaneously puts linguistic limits on that expansion, "address[ing] the artificial divide between literatures in English on either side of the Atlantic."[11] According to such reasoning, geographic boundaries are "artificial" wherever they pass through a common language, but the reverse is apparently not true. *Symbiosis* does not suggest that a common geographic space—like the combinatory, circulatory Atlantic—might render divides between languages artificial as well.

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Instead, they would have us break free from the constraints of national boundaries only to lodge ourselves within linguistic ones.

Prominent titles in transatlantic literary studies reproduce the same fork-tongued logic. The anthology *Transatlantic Feminisms in the Age of Revolutions,* published in 2012 by Oxford University Press, for instance, defines transatlanticism as "the study of the transnational and intercultural networks of literary and cultural movement around the Atlantic world, including Europe, Africa, and the Americas," but nonetheless restricts its contents to texts from "the English-speaking North Atlantic world."[12] Likewise, the editors find conceptual unity by focusing on "the new Enlightenment republics" established during the Age of Revolution but cut off their texts at 1808, a seemingly deliberate choice to truncate the Age of Revolution just as Latin America was taking its turn.[13] The essay collection *Transatlantic Literary Studies, 1660–1830*, published by Cambridge in 2012, takes its date range through the Latin American independence movements, but the editors title their introduction "British and American genres," and the first word of the book is "Anglophone."[14] I mention these two titles not to single them out but rather to offer representative examples of a trend that pervades monographs and essay collections in transatlantic studies. And my point is not to suggest that scholars and editors should not delimit their subjects; all histories must be bounded in some way, and moreover, there are plenty of good reasons to study anglophone exchanges in the North Atlantic world. But transatlantic scholarship, particularly in nineteenth-century literary studies, is plagued by the pervasive tendency to *conceptualize* the subject inclusively while *producing* it narrowly.

This comes, I believe, from the limitations of monolingual study. The field has ambitious desires—transatlantic practitioners want to upend conceptual categories and reveal surprising networks, which leads to definitions of the Atlantic world as a dynamic, transformative, inclusive geography. But we apparently have no such ambition to broaden our linguistic horizons, and as a result, the exclusive study of anglophone texts renders geographic inclusivity essentially impossible. Much of the actual work being done, therefore, leverages the conceptual potential of a broad geography to make bold claims about a much smaller space. And so, while seeking to explode the concepts of border and belonging, transatlantic scholarship only does so where those borders separate the already similar or perceived-to-be-similar. Such limits constrain our understanding of how Britain and the United States (our "home" objects of study) connected with the world via Atlantic

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movement, and they lead to the stubbornly default assumption that the anglophone North is the proper object of transatlanticism. We see this assumption all the time, in other recent titles like *Transatlantic Romanticism: An Anthology of British, American, and Canadian Literature, 1767–1867* (2006) and in book series like Edinburgh University Press's Studies in Transatlantic Literatures (2005–14) or Ashgate's Series in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Studies (2013–17; mentioned above), both of which published monographs that overwhelmingly focused on the anglophone North.[15] The northern default is further bound up with the conflation of "American" with the United States, a habit frustrating to those who live in and study the rest of the Americas.

Certainly, there have been some books, chapters, articles, and conference papers treating the literatures, languages, and cultures of the southern Americas. But I have focused on journals, book series, and anthologies because they act as disciplinary gatekeepers, offering both explicit definitions and implicit boundaries for transatlantic studies. And when we narrow from the multidisciplinary field of transatlantic studies writ large to literary transatlantic studies and, within that frame, to the work being done by Victorian scholars, we see less and less attention given to the southern Americas. Instead, we see an increasing reliance on the assumption that "transatlantic" simply *means* "northern anglophone Atlantic."[16] Our scholarship has reified the Mercator map orientation by defining "trans," or "across," as what appears to be a horizontal journey between Europe and North America, even though the Atlantic Ocean can be—and always has been—crossed from any compass point to another. When scholarship that calls itself transatlantic does make a north–south connection, as in Rebecca Cole Heinowitz's *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777–1826* (2010) or Adriana Méndez Rodenas's *Transatlantic Travels in Nineteenth-Century Latin America: European Women Pilgrims* (2013), that work tends to come from adjacent fields (Romanticism and Latin American studies, respectively), and it still primarily—as these two books do—reads work by anglophone writers *about* Latin America, rather than engaging hispanophone texts. Victorian transatlanticists have, by and large, closed our eyes to nineteenth-century Atlantic traffic flowing in and out of the southern hemisphere, and we have stopped our ears to conversations occurring outside of English—a mutually producing constriction of geography and language. While we conceptualize "the Atlantic" as a subversive watery geography capable of disrupting terracentric models of boundary and community, our monolingual methods re-erect those borders upon the waves and direct our attention to the space they delimit.

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Some would argue that the default to an anglophone transatlanticism is a feature rather than a bug. In fact, as the term "special relationship" implies, many scholars acknowledge the mosaic plurality of the Atlantic but maintain that the anglophone channels of the North comprise a uniquely integrated community, one that merits special attention precisely *because* of the shared language that intensified its affiliations. This camp, according to Joseph Rezek, "contends that Anglo-American literature coheres through shared aesthetic qualities, common ideological investments, and transatlantic reading practices."[17] Such a perspective suggests that it is *by design* that the term "transatlantic" refers only to the Anglo-American network, and that calls to expand the field misunderstand what it is. But this segregation is ethically, historically, and methodologically problematic. First, asserting the conceptual significance of the shared English language helps mythologize that commonality as originary or authentic, rather than the result of colonialism. The anglophone North Atlantic region only bears the appearance of unity because it forcibly inscribed itself upon a space of linguistic and cultural plurality. To be sure, important literary, political, and economic structures emerged out of British–U.S. continuity, and these merit our attention, but privileging and reauthenticating the special relationship over and above adjacent or competing kinds of contact—especially without acknowledging or justifying the choice to do so—facilitates the historical erasure of difference. And as Rezek points out, such scholarship perpetuates the same imperialism it elides, since taking "the Anglophone world as synecdoche for the Atlantic as a whole . . . falsely universalizes not just one perspective within a multilingual Atlantic but often the most privileged."[18] Continuing to promote the historical significance of English, therefore, risks supporting its mounting supremacy as the global vernacular today, spreading at the expense of literatures in other languages.[19]

Second, such linguistic and geographic partitioning wrongly implies that Britain and the United States historically formed a bounded cultural unit surrounded by difference. Britain and the United States are triumphantly revealed as standing in porous neighborliness, but they are either explicitly or implicitly understood to be surrounded by—that is, wherever they abut linguistic difference—much more impervious borders. This model is both underwhelming in its transformative potential and a poor reflection of history. Provocations from Americanists pursuing "hemispheric studies" can help us understand why. Pointing out that the United States has never been contained within the "artificially hardened borders and boundaries" that scholars treat it as having,

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hemispheric studies instead acknowledges the "intertwined history of nations in formation" throughout North and South America.[20] This work reminds us that the emergent United States had meaningful connections not only with Europe but also with Spanish-speakers and Spanish-language texts that traversed its "borders."[21] Hemispheric studies is a call to correct geographic and linguistic narrowness within American studies, but, by "emphasiz[ing] the relations (comparative, genealogical, etc.) among the literatures and cultures of the New World," it also serves as a methodological counterpoint to transatlantic studies, which "has traditionally emphasized the relations of each New World culture to its Old World counterpart—affinities of language, cultural heritage, or racial ancestry."[22] And it helpfully counters the assumption of a monolingual North America that often underpins transatlantic scholarship. Hemispheric studies shows why linguistic pluralism is essential not only to understanding more inclusive geographies but also to more fully accounting for diversity within the narrower geographies we treat as exclusively anglophone. Britain, of course, was also permeable and multilingual, and while they have not yet had their own version of hemispherism, Victorianists are beginning to acknowledge the importance of Latin America to Britain's nineteenth-century economy, empire, and scientific discourses. We know, too, that the British and Spanish empires in the Americas, even where they did not produce dynamic zones of overlap and exchange, operated according to parallel logics that invite comparative study.[23] But transatlantic studies has not been appropriately disrupted by such insights—its practitioners continue to isolate the United States from its neighboring Americas and to study the anglophone North as a space whose integrity, separateness, and scholarly value need not be justified.

And third, a focus on Anglo-American relations makes silent methodological choices we may wish to question. Notably, it neuters our pursuit of political criticism. Privileging the shared English language perpetuates the idea that language is an invisible medium through which politics passes, rather than what it is: politics itself. Translation, mistranslation, and nontranslation are some of the most intense fires in which inclusion and exclusion, sovereignty and dependence, values and vices are forged. Further, when it comes to our methods, why, within the apparently dynamic, contingent, unruly, boundary-shattering space that we have theorized the Atlantic to be, should we elevate relations of commonality and cooperation—like those encoded in the title *Symbiosis*—rather than those of friction, misunderstanding, or

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antagonism? It is true that the anglophone North affords the study of notions like partnership and influence, but partnership and influence also occurred *across* language divides, and moreover, it is not self-evident that relations of fluidity are inherently worthier of study than more strained or difficult encounters made possible by multilingual Atlantic currents. The prefix *trans* should guide us here: its meanings not only of "across" or "over" but also of "on the other side of" imply significant distance traveled both spatially and ontologically—it signals both a boundary-crossing and a change of state. In uses like "transgender," "transcultural," "transform, "transplant," and "transgress" (not to mention "translate"), *trans* designates uncommon, challenging, perilous, and, therefore, political crossings, and as such it should point us not to the obvious or seamless migration but to the uncomfortable one. Finally, from a methodological perspective, ignoring Latin America is particularly ironic, since as Ralph Bauer points out, British and American literary scholars have eagerly deployed notions like "transculturation" and the "contact zone" while disregarding where they came from in the first place—studies of how Latin America engaged with the Atlantic world.[24] For all these reasons, expanding beyond national borders but remaining within linguistic ones is methodologically conservative and arbitrary.

I am not the first to critique the limited scope of transatlantic studies. In 1996 theater scholar Joseph Roach called for attention to "a circum-Atlantic world (as opposed to a transatlantic one)," a framework that he argued would center "the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity."[25] And in 2002 David Armitage celebrated a recent increase in "multicolored Atlantic histories . . . that encompass more than just the anglophone North Atlantic," calling this an important corrective to earlier work that had focused on—or more accurately, produced—the "white Atlantic."[26] But the field has marched on with its partiality toward the North and the English language; consider that the four "gatekeeper" venues I analyzed above for their lack of diversity (the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, *Symbiosis*, Edinburgh's Studies in Transatlantic Literatures, and Ashgate's Series in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Studies) were all founded *after* Roach's and Armitage's provocations.

And often, calls for expanding the field have, like Roach's push for the "circum-Atlantic," been calls for redefinition. Romanticist Joselyn Almeida argues that transatlantic scholarship's monolingualism ignores the historical fact that "the Atlantic was a heteroglossic space across which multiethnic crossings were possible," and that we should instead

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reorient our scholarship around what she terms the "pan-Atlantic," a frame that better highlights "the cultural history of the multiple crossings between North and South Atlantic."[27] And in 2016 Edinburgh University Press rebooted their transatlantic series with the new goal of "expand[ing] our list in African-Atlantic, Caribbean-Atlantic, Latin-Atlantic, and indigenous-Atlantic studies . . . [and] treating exchanges across any regions of the Atlantic."[28] For her part, Almeida pays admirable attention to writing in Spanish, and one hopes the Edinburgh series will do likewise. These are important steps. But it is worth noting that both Almeida and Edinburgh Press see the need, as Roach did, to rename the field. Almeida marks her interest in a more comprehensive Atlantic world by replacing the prefix "trans" with "pan." Meanwhile, Edinburgh has done away with the prefix altogether, calling their rebranded series the "Edinburgh Critical Studies in *Atlantic* Literatures and Cultures" (my emphasis) and pointing to various *sub*-Atlantic communities under the markers African-, Caribbean-, Latin-, and Indigenous-, a move that seems descended from Paul Gilroy's early interest in the "Black Atlantic." Both Almeida and Edinburgh promise more cultural and geographic inclusion—one through amalgamation and the other through partition—but only by abandoning the term "transatlantic" altogether. Roach, Almeida, and Edinburgh Press, then, all agree that transatlantic studies badly needs geographic expansion, but their move to do so by renaming the field also suggests that this expansion cannot happen *within* what we call the transatlantic. They seem to say that in order to fix the whiteness of the transatlantic, one has to abandon the term "transatlantic."

Some might argue that there is no problem here. Alternate frameworks can account for the South Atlantic, while transatlantic studies may be left in peace to the study of anglophone British–U.S. relations. But calls to achieve linguistic diversity by pursuing it under alternative banners like the cis-, circum-, pan-, Black-, latin-, or indigenous-Atlantic are unsatisfying. To begin with, these alternative atlanticisms look to distinct bodies, languages, and geographies, but they profess the same goals as transatlantic studies: the explication of how oceanic space produced hybridity, exchange, and porosity. This suggests not that their pursuit is essentially different but, rather, that transatlantic studies has not yet fulfilled its own aims. Such calls for segregation, then, merely resign the transatlantic to its insistence on linguistic myopia, instead of demanding that it develop the methods required by its own stated ambitions. This would be less of a problem if the term "transatlantic" were not still the hegemonic approach to Atlantic studies in our field.[29] But until and

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unless the "pan-Atlantic" begins to rival the transatlantic in journals, book series, and job ads, those of us who would like to see a more diverse atlanticism should not self-marginalize and cede the space. Finally, it is not yet clear that alternately titled atlanticisms will, in fact, adequately pursue the linguistic diversity they advocate. In Edinburgh Press's new "Atlantic" book series, for instance, the first two titles study Italian-American and Franco-American relations, offering glancing interest in nonanglophone communities but no migration into southern waters. The next three titles retreat firmly back into the anglophone North. And while Joselyn Almeida's "pan-Atlantic" work reads hispanophone Latin American texts, this does not yet seem to be the beginning of a movement.[30] So if all atlanticisms seek to question boundaries, but none has yet succeeded in centering the southern Americas, then what we have is not a terminological problem but a methodological one.

Despite the drawbacks and slow starts, however, it is both good and important to see calls for the geographic and linguistic broadening of transatlantic studies. But it should give Victorianists particular pause that these calls are, by and large, not coming from us. Rather, they have come from historians like Armitage, the theater scholar Roach, Romanticists like Almeida, Rezek, and Heinowitz, or from Americanists. In 2003 Americanist Dana D. Nelson took her colleagues to task for their lack of comparative methods in transatlantic studies, arguing that "the only way to begin remedying historical biases, expanding archives, and recovering crucial perspectives is with a consciously comparative methodology, not just inter-American, not just trans-Atlantic, or even 'circum-Atlantic' in Roach's phrasing, but all of that taken together and in combination with a more careful attempt to understand the histories, literatures, and perspectives of indigenous Americans."[31] Kate Flint echoed this critique in 2009, arguing that too much transatlantic work "fall[s] under the rubric of Anglo-American rather than transatlantic studies. . . . This inevitably entails a geographic and linguistic constriction of the Atlantic—indeed, of the Americas" and thereby fails to live up to what Paul Gilroy understood to be "the Atlantic in its fullest sense."[32] Flint is a strong voice in Victorian studies, but her critique of transatlantic studies' narrowness was published in *American Literary History*, suggesting a more receptive audience among our Americanist colleagues, where the hemispheric movement has at least cracked open the door to the southern Americas.

It may be that Victorianists are less vocally critical of the northern anglophone biases of transatlantic studies because we have been less

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inclined to launch such critiques in general. Sharon Marcus points out that glossocentrism is at work in all our purportedly global fields, whether they go by the name transnationalism, comparative literature, or empire studies, and that while we have been busily expanding our spatial horizons, the pages of *Victorian Studies* have remained English. Marcus rightly notes that this leaves us analytically unidirectional, constraining us to the study of white English speakers' perspectives on their cultural others.[33] She does not discuss the Atlantic world, likely because transatlantic studies had not yet taken off at the time of her writing in 2003, but this should be all the more troubling for Victorian atlanticists, who have watched the field mature without heeding her warning. Pablo Mukherjee echoes Marcus's lament that "debates about 'comparativism' and 'world systems' are more muted in Victorian studies than comparative literature,"[34] and we may perhaps attribute these failings to what Caroline Levine chidingly identifies as Victorianists' unquestioning reliance on texts and authors that are "autochthonous" to nineteenth-century Britain.[35] While Aamir Mufti's welcome polemic *Forget English! Orientalisms and World Literatures* (2016) critiques anglophone bias in the field of world literature, Victorian studies has not yet opened a similar debate. So perhaps Kate Flint was right to suggest that the very term "Victorian," by invoking chronological and cartographic boundedness, inherently "poses significant limitations when it comes to discussing the dynamics of transnational cultures . . . [and] carries with it an unmistakable national, and nationalist, overtone."[36]

But I would like to argue that despite the legitimate frustrations of scholars like Marcus, Mukherjee, Levine, and Flint, Victorianists are in many ways the *best* positioned to push transatlantic studies into multilingual southern waters. Our period demands it of us. Here let me say that I have not tried to account for every geographic or linguistic dead spot in transatlantic studies—of which there are as many as there are languages beyond English, and among which African and indigenous languages like Igbo and Maya suffer particular neglect. Even within Latin America, of course, there are dozens of languages, the study of which might help us better understand complex Atlantic contacts. But I have focused on the linguistic-geographic convergence of the Spanish language and the southern Americas for two reasons. First, the sheer size of this region and the number of Spanish speakers within it highlights just how surprising its absence from transatlantic studies is—or should be. Second, the lack of attention to the hispanophone Americas startlingly belies its significant material and ideological relevance to both

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the United States (as hemispheric studies shows) and Great Britain. We would do well to pay attention to the wide variety of languages circulating within the broad Atlantic geography we have conceptualized. But if we cannot or will not make what might be the easiest and most obvious move into the hispanophone Americas, further linguistic and geographic expansion seems unlikely.

Victorianists should consider Latin America as *central* to their conception of Britain's Atlantic experience. Consider that Latin America's rejection of European empire, and their complicated self-production as sovereign liberal republics, began at the dawn of what we call the Victorian period. If Britain's "special relationship" with the United States is meant to mark a shared Enlightenment inheritance, common approaches to liberal governance, and a mutual history of entanglement in revolution, surely we must consider it meaningful to our work on Atlantic community that Britain and Latin America have these histories in common, too. To name just a few nodes in this network: British soldiers fought under Simón Bolívar; British developers flocked to Latin America in the mid-nineteenth century to work in mines and on railroads; Latin American elites were educated in Europe, lived and wrote in London, and sought British and French models for their constitutions and national institutions; and nineteenth-century immigration and trade routes had major hubs below the equator. Latin America effected a tumultuous shakeup of European–New World power dynamics and rerouted Atlantic flows of commerce, migration, labor, and letters *precisely during* the Victorian decades. This history gives the lie to the notion that the northern nineteenth-century Atlantic world was somehow different and worthy of discrete attention, unless we hold to the tenuous position that shared language produces rigid boundaries in oceanic space.

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To illustrate how reading in Spanish challenges the view of a partitioned Atlantic and speaks directly to the concerns of Victorian studies, I will now introduce a brief case study in the form of a text likely unfamiliar to Victorianists: *La novia del hereje: o, La inquisición de Lima*, an 1854 historical novel by Argentine writer and historian Vicente Fidel López.[37] To the best of my knowledge, no English translation of the novel has been published, but the title best translates as *The Heretic's Bride: or, The Lima Inquisition*. López wrote the novel under conditions of strained national self-fashioning: after Argentina achieved independence from

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Spain in 1818, it fell under the rule of a dictatorial governor, Juan Manuel de Rosas, who pursued his own power instead of national consolidation. Two decades later, feeling that the promise of the revolution had gone unfulfilled, a group of intellectuals calling themselves the *Generación del '37* (named for the year in which they opened their salon—the same year Victoria ascended the throne of England) began to push for reform. This group, which included López, sought a constitutional republic explicitly modeled on European Enlightenment ideals, of the kind that were forming across the southern Americas in those decades. López's novel, *La novia del hereje*, revisits the early years of Spanish colonialism and imagines Francis Drake and the British as a pleasant counterfactual alternative to the violence of Spanish Catholic rule. The story remembers the Spanish–English rivalry that made the southern Americas so relevant to the sixteenth-century Atlantic world, and it leverages that history to invite new British–Latin American material and ideological ties in the mid-nineteenth century.

The novel, then, both assumes and promotes a vision of the Atlantic world as a space of cross-linguistic sociopolitical influence, within which a complex array of British, Spanish, Creole, African, indigenous, and mixed-race stakeholders, who converse within and across Spanish, English, and Inca, contest questions of national identity and international allegiance. López does not see himself, his nation, or his novel at the margins of an anglophone Atlantic; rather, he takes for granted the reality of hispanophone communication and translation that was formative in building ties between Britain and Latin America. Moreover, in his preface to *La novia*, López names both Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper as his models for how to write a national literature, remarking: "Creía que los pueblos en donde falte el conocimiento claro y la conciencia de sus tradiciones nacionales, son como los hombres desprovistos de hogar y de familia. . . . Esta es quizás la causa de que Walter Scott y Cooper sean únicos en el mundo moderno: es un hecho al menos, que los pueblos para quienes escribieron son los únicos en donde se respetan las tradiciones nacionales como una creencia inviolable."[38] López's novel, inaccessible to us unless we read in Spanish, reveals that as Argentina entered the Atlantic world as an independent nation, its concepts of constitutional republicanism, Euro-American relations, and the historical novel were all shaped by British and American models—and that, in return, the influence of writers like López helped Latin American nations not simply fall victim to a unidirectional, predatory British aggression but to actively negotiate the terms of their own "special relationships" with London.

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But this isn't just a story about nationalism and literary influence. At the time López was writing *La novia*, he was exiled in Chile where British immigrants were flocking by the thousands and setting up expatriate communities. He did not, in other words, have to *imagine* the kinds of Atlantic flows that might connect South America to the British; he was already steeped in the heterogeneous communities those flows had created. If you visit the Biblioteca Nacional in Santiago, you can read periodicals from this era, which were printed both in Spanish by Chileans and in English by anglophone migrants from Britain and the United States. Both English- and Spanish-language papers were under development at the same time, and they often shared printing offices and presses. Reading these papers reveals the British settlers as both isolated within their own linguistic community and forging connections beyond it, which can be seen in explanations of Chilean holiday celebrations, advertisements for language lessons, and translations of articles from the hispanophone press. A major theme of the newspapers from the 1840s and 1850s—the time in which López was not only living in Chile but actively contributing to the development of its periodical press—was the question of cross-cultural marriage, since English Protestant immigrants were forbidden to marry Catholic Chileans, and some argued that this was a barrier to the creation of shared community. This debate appears in and across the English- and Spanish-language periodicals, whose writers even quote and translate one another for their respective audiences as they help build the case for an increasingly integrated community. And it assuredly informed López's novel, which allegorizes the value of British–Latin American political relations through a transnational, transreligious marriage plot.

The method I am advocating—multilingual reading—opens up geographies that deserve consideration from transatlantic studies. Reading López's work, as well as hispanophone periodicals, reveals that books and ideas circulated within and helped produce a multilingual, multinational, immigrant, and diasporic print culture, which, in turn, established the terms of its own transatlantic composition, helped writers like López turn cultural debates into the figures and forms of literary narrative, and contributed to the economic ties that would yoke Britain to Latin America for the rest of the nineteenth century. This, I hope, exposes the tenuousness of transatlantic studies' deference to shared language. The highlights of the story I've just told—international literary influence, migration and settlement, cross-pollination in the periodical press, religious debate, the development of republics—are the very same we find in so

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many studies of nineteenth-century British–U.S. transatlantic exchange, but here we can see them coalescing around and in spite of a language divide. Surely, if transatlantic studies is interested in material, institutional, and literary convergences in the Atlantic world, there is no reason to pursue these only where they occurred within a single language. Reading in Spanish widens our frame to include geographies that transatlantic studies often claims to be interested in but rarely investigates.

Yet I am not advocating simply adding more territory to maps we've already drawn. Reading beyond English further opens new questions about our methods and our field. For one thing, it troubles the very Atlantic geography that it helps to fill in, as cross-continental movements like López's exilic migration connected the bustling Atlantic port of Buenos Aires to the Pacific nation of Chile. Such overland crossings—across the Andes in South America and the isthmus in Central America—which were so central to nineteenth-century concerns about mobility,[39] draw both Britain and the Pacific into view simultaneously and show how Latin America exceeds and challenges what we think we understand as the boundaries of Atlantic space. And multilingual methods also complicate our categories and assumptions. Our understanding of hierarchy and control in the Atlantic world remains incomplete without seeing how Spanish speakers like López negotiated international political influence and social relations, all under the specter of British informal empire in Latin America. And the migration of bodies and texts that facilitated new transnational families and influenced literary traditions shows how neither family nor literature in the Atlantic world was a monolingual concept. Reading beyond English opens up all these subjects in new ways, but it also, in turn, forces further methodological reflection. Consider that the effort by men like López and his peers to draw English settlers into Latin American families—something we can only fully understand by reading hispanophone periodicals—inverts our sense of British diaspora and emigration. What we often think of as a propulsive imperial expansion outward from Britain was also, simultaneously, a centripetal pulling from Latin America's capitals, an effort to disconnect the British from their homelands and use them to build new ones. Their migration was an expression of both dynamics operating in tandem. We must ask ourselves, therefore, whether concepts like community, diaspora, influence, encounter, and exchange can be adequately theorized without observing how they are shaped by their negotiations in and through plural idioms.

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If we return, then, to the professed goals of transatlantic studies—rethinking borders and boundaries, questioning community as a function of the nation alone, "offer[ing] new insights into the hybrid or intercultural basis of. . . identity, politics, and aesthetics"—it is clear that identity and politics, borders and community, are thrown into even more dynamic and productive displacement by multilingual reading. Transatlanticists rely on the ocean as a destabilizing, displacing substrate, capable of reorganizing the bodies that traverse it into new and unexpected relations. As Kate Flint puts it, "The Atlantic is a space of translation and transformation, rather than of straightforward transmission."[40] If indeed it is a zone of "translation," we must think this concept in all its forms, not merely as the relocation of bodies in space, but also as the passage of ideas across the boundaries of language. Taking account, then, of the fact that Britain and Latin America shared goods and ideas throughout the Victorian period in ways that were formative for both should not merely be one possible avenue among many for transatlanticists to pursue. Rather, we should acknowledge that, unless and until Victorian transatlantic studies explores the cross-linguistic, north–south community formations that unsettled and remade the very Atlantic we are theorizing, the field cannot claim to have fulfilled its own ambitions. In her own manifesto "From Nation to Network," Caroline Levine questions why Victorianists offer justifications when discussing texts and authors that originate outside of nineteenth-century Britain, while assuming the study of autochthonous ones needs no such explanation. We have, she points out, lapsed into the unquestioned view that there are objects of analysis that are "proper" to us, and that these lie within temporal and geographic boundaries.[41] Mine is an analogous provocation. We must defamiliarize the anglophone North Atlantic such that it no longer appears to be an authentic, natural, or given domain but rather a space whose contours we have assumed, selected, and created at the very outset of our study. There is no need to aspire, futilely, to comprehensive coverage of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world in any single project, but precisely because such coverage is futile, we should acknowledge the selections we have made, not just when we expand into southern or multilingual spaces, but especially when we do not.

Of course, expansion has risks. Americanists pursuing hemispheric approaches understand the fine line such work has to walk. While, as Paul Giles puts it, hemispheric studies should put "yet another stake

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through the heart of the unquiet corpse of American exceptionalism,"[42] Ralph Bauer acknowledges that it could easily reinforce that very exceptionalism: it might treat the southern Americas as a less-developed, noncoeval, or undifferentiated background for continued focus on the United States, and it could constitute a colonization of Latin American studies by English departments.[43] But as Giles and Sophia McClennan both argue, we are more likely to fall into such traps if we continue to work only in English.[44] It is precisely by expanding into Spanish, Portuguese, French, Haitian Creole, Yoruba, Cherokee, and Quechua (to name a few) that we can best avoid reproducing imperialism in our work. However, this, too, raises concerns: Giles argues that "it is undoubtedly the case that the next generation of American literary scholars will need to be more fluent in a wider variety of languages than was thought necessary twenty years ago, but it would also be true to say that any quest for full multilingual (or multicultural) competence is not only inhibiting but, ultimately, impossible." But, he notes, while we might never be linguistically sufficient nor fully able to account for the "inexhaustible range of material" suddenly thrust upon us by our voyage south, our efforts are nonetheless absolutely crucial to the project of decentering the United States and "forcing American literary history into unfamiliar shapes and patterns."[45] In my analogous call for transatlanticists to shed their anglophone partiality, I share Giles's simultaneous ambivalence and conviction. Victorianists should be eager to learn from nonanglophone texts, but in doing so we must be cautious not to center the "Victorian," an already troubled category that loses coherence the farther we get from Britain. We must be aware of our necessary insufficiency as scholars of unfamiliar zones and second languages, but we also *must* venture into them if we are to begin to see outside our own narrow purview. We cannot, in other words, let our fear of imperfection trap us in inadequacy.

This means—and I am explicitly advocating—that transatlantic scholarship, particularly in the Victorian period, must begin to read frequently and robustly in languages other than English. The geographic expansion (or "width," as this *VLC* special issue terms it) that Victorianists are so apparently invested in *demands* different methods than those we use elsewhere; specifically, it demands that we work comparatively and multilingually. We simply cannot unthink categories like boundary and community without decentralizing the linguistic homogeneity in our methods. The English language was never hermetically protected from translation or encounter with its own linguistic others, and it did not erect walls in oceanic space that sealed core nineteenth-century ideas

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within. I am not arguing that every member of an English department, nor every Victorianist, must work in multiple languages. (Nor am I suggesting that Spanish is the only language in need of attention.) But within transatlantic studies, perhaps most of us should at least venture across the borders of the English language. In order to lay legitimate claim to the transgressive potentials that we claim for the transatlantic, we must account as fully as possible for the multilingual Atlantic past. Of course, the geographic expansion I am calling for requires more of a methodological shakeup than just multilingual study. Conjoined geographic and linguistic expansion also mean we will have to rely less on certain methodological approaches with which we have become quite comfortable, such as the study of partnership and influence. Working translinguistically will not displace these, since we know they also occurred within linguistically heterogeneous spaces, but it will require us to think about the collision of ideas and cultures as more contestatory, uncomfortable, and even mistranslated than we are used to doing.

*After our conversation, I think of our pieces as more closely linked than I had imagined when we began this session. Specifically, we each take a term—in Jessie's case, "transatlantic," and in [my] case, "cosmopolitan"—that are not terribly new or innovative in and of themselves. Each of us, however, suggests or argues that these terms can reinvigorate Victorian studies under the pressure of new locations and new uses. What does "transatlantic" do to the field if we take the South Atlantic rather than the North Atlantic as our destination? How does our field imagine itself and carry out its work anew if we (at least) construe it as a multilingual field? If we include nonhuman life in our considerations of the "cosmopolitan," how does it gain new significance in Victorian studies? These questions suggest processes of displacement: displacing settled ways of thinking with new ways of framing older terms or questions.—Lynn Voskuil*

Our monolingualism does not stem from some inherent provinciality in Victorian studies, a reluctance to ask new questions with new methods. Victorianists have in other ways led the charge on interdisciplinarity, spearheading work in material culture studies and new formalism. Members of the V21 Collective are challenging us to think connectivity in difficult but important new ways through their revaluing of presentism. Victorianists are not timid about developing new methods and theories, but crossing the language divide has seemed to stymie us. While some might argue that reading beyond English belongs to other disciplines like comparative literature or area studies, that perspective originates, I believe, less in real concerns about the so-called borders of our

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discipline than in the institutional structures in which we operate. Laura Stevens and Lyn Pykett both argue that because transatlanticism inherently demands we increase our areas of expertise, we should pursue "collaborative research and cross-regional dialogue" and "creative working in multidisciplinary teams."[46] Stevens and Pykett are not discussing the specific challenges of multilingual reading, but their recommendation of cross-disciplinary collaboration, though perhaps uncomfortable to many humanists trained in single-author scholarship, would certainly be one way for Victorianists to explore beyond English.

Yet we must also be capable of reading for ourselves. And here, what Levine refers to as the institutional "path dependency" of Victorian studies keeps second and third languages well out of reach.[47] At what point in our training or careers would we be materially supported if we set aside the time to learn Portuguese or Quechua—not well enough to pass a graduate language-proficiency exam, but deeply enough to become critical readers of original texts? How could we persuade departments or deans reading tenure files to see not only the amount of labor behind a language certificate—far greater in many cases than that which lies behind a journal article—but also the disciplinary significance of that labor? Or persuade search committees to value this labor as highly as they do a publication record? While job ads increasingly use the term "transatlantic" to describe desired future colleagues, we do not have sustainable models for supporting the work those colleagues likely need to do. When Paul Giles says that "it is undoubtedly the case that the next generation of American literary scholars will need to be more fluent in a wider variety of languages," I cherish a similar vision for the future of Victorian studies. But I do not share his sense that a new generation of multilingually competent critics is "undoubtedly" to come. Such a future seems not at all inevitable but rather something we must diligently pursue in the face of stubborn institutional norms.

Victorian studies continues to "widen," and transatlantic studies in particular shows no signs of imminent obsolescence. And yet we've expanded geographically without expanding linguistically (thereby, in turn, limiting that very geographic expansion), not because of an authentic belief in the boundedness of language communities but simply because our institutions better equip us to study broader geographies than to study foreign languages. Our focus on English more accurately reflects our bounded and monolingual twentieth-century institutional silos than it does the unbounded and multilingual Victorian Atlantic. Language is politics and so is method, and it is past time to acknowledge that geographic expansion without linguistic expansion is not merely

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conservative but ineffective—if not colonial. When we express an intellectual commitment to internationalism but remain anglophone, we are only defining an internationalism that is English-speaking and English-reading. We quite clearly believe that the ambitious questions raised by geographic boundary-crossing are worth asking; what we need now are the methods to answer them more fully. Victorian transatlanticists should lead the way.

## Notes

1. For a good recent survey of global Victorian studies, see Lecourt, "That Untravell'd World."
2. "Ashgate Series in Nineteenth-Century Transatlantic Studies."
3. Claybaugh, "New Fields, Conventional Habits," 443.
4. Lakoff, *Talking Power*, 13.
5. Or, in Spanish-American studies, Spanish glossocentrism.
6. It may very well be that other methodologies—such as world literature or comparative studies—already do some of the work I am asking transatlantic studies to do. But the solution to the problem of a method that is not living up to its promise is not to look for supplements elsewhere; rather, we should rigorously interrogate the source of the failure, particularly when it is internal to a paradigm that has already become so standard in Victorian studies as to feature in journal titles and job ads.
7. "Aims and Scope."
8. The number of articles treating each subject were found via searches conducted in February 2018, using the website for the *Journal of Transatlantic Studies* (www.tandfonline.com/toc/rjts20/current). The search terms "Anglo-American," "special relationship," and "North Atlantic" were used, on one hand, and "Latin America," "Central America," "South America," and all of the individual countries therein, on the other. Terms were searched in both article titles and keywords, with duplicates counted only once. Articles containing multiple search terms were likewise counted only once. The total number of articles in the journal's history was calculated by counting the number of articles in each of the journal's fifty-two issues, spanning vol. 1, no. 1 (2003), to vol. 16, no. 1 (2018). Book reviews were not included, but introductions to special issues were.
9. "About Us."

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10. This data was gathered using the website for *Symbiosis*'s article archive (www.symbiosistransatlantic.com/essay-index). This is not a searchable database, nor are the articles tagged with keywords. Nonetheless, the full title of every article is listed.
11. "About Us."
12. Moore and Brooks, introduction to *Transatlantic Feminisms,* 8.
13. Moore and Brooks, introduction to *Transatlantic Feminisms,* 10.
14. Bannet and Manning, "Introduction."
15. Only one title in either book series reads texts in non-English languages: *Nineteenth-Century U.S. Literature in Middle Eastern Languages*, by Jeffrey Einboden. It is worth noting, however, that Einboden's study does not read original works in Middle Eastern languages but, rather, reads contemporary translations of nineteenth-century American texts into those languages, privileging the American productions and not illuminating cross-cultural exchange within the nineteenth century. Three books in the Edinburgh series include geographic breadth but only read texts in English: *Transatlantic Women's Literature*, by Heidi Slettedahl Macpherson; *Spanish America and British Romanticism, 1777–1826: Rewriting Conquest*, by Rebecca Cole Heinowitz; and *South Asian Atlantic Literature, 1970–2010*, by Ruth Maxey.
16. It is worth noting that in Spanish and Latin American literary studies, the term "transatlantic" overwhelmingly indicates a focus on hispanophone literatures. This suggests that the term either specifically serves to demarcate monolingual communities and exchanges (a boundary at odds with both the history of the Atlantic and the field's avowed ambitions of fluidity) or that it has simply hardened around academic silos.
17. Rezek, "What We Need," 793.
18. Rezek, "What We Need," 795.
19. For more on this contemporary phenomenon, see Mizumura, *The Fall of Language*.
20. Levander and Levine, "Introduction," 3, 7.
21. See, for instance, Gruesz, *Ambassadors of Culture*.
22. Bauer, "Hemispheric Studies," 238. This sentence was misprinted in the original article, prompting a correction in the next issue of *PMLA*. The corrected version has been used here.
23. See Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*.
24. Bauer, "Early American Literature," 259.
25. Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 4.

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26. Armitage, "Three Concepts of Atlantic History," 15.
27. Almeida, *Reimagining the Transatlantic*, 238. In an earlier essay, Almeida argues that "to invoke the Americas, the Caribbean, and the Atlantic, and ignore the crucial presence of Hispano-Americans, whom Romantic authors themselves acknowledged, is an act of critical oversight that becomes less and less viable" ("London–Kingston–Caracas," n.p.; para. 4).
28. "Edinburgh Critical Studies in Atlantic Literatures and Cultures."
29. As Rezek puts it, "No longer a trend, the transatlantic is an institution" ("What We Need," 791).
30. Consider that a JSTOR search for the combined terms "pan-Atlantic" and "Victorian" produces only nine results, none of which postdates Almeida's book.
31. Nelson, "From Manitoba to Patagonia," 372.
32. Flint, "Transatlantic Currents," 325.
33. Marcus, "Same Difference?"
34. Mukherjee, "Introduction," 8.
35. Levine, "From Nation to Network."
36. Flint, "Why 'Victorian'?" 230.
37. López claims to have written the novel in 1840, and he likely did, but it was not printed in complete form until 1854, after the repressive Rosas administration was toppled in Buenos Aires and liberals like López were allowed to return from exile and publish again.
38. "I believed that people who lack clear knowledge and awareness of their national traditions are like men deprived of home and family. . . . This is perhaps the reason that Walter Scott and Cooper are unique in the modern world: it is a fact at least that the nations for whom they wrote are the only ones where national traditions are respected as inviolable belief." López, *La novia del hereje*, 11–12 (translation mine).
39. For more on how the crossing of the isthmus was central to the nineteenth-century Atlantic world, see Aguirre, *Mobility and Modernity*.
40. Flint, "Transatlantic Currents," 325.
41. Levine, "From Nation to Network," 664.
42. Giles, "Commentary," 648.
43. Bauer, "Hemispheric Studies," 236–37. Giles voices this second concern as well ("Commentary," 653).
44. Giles, "Commentary," 648; McClennan, "Inter-American Studies?" 402 (cited in Bauer, "Hemispheric Studies," 237).
45. Giles, "Commentary," 653–54.

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46. Stevens, "Transatlanticism Now," 95; Pykett, "Changing Faces and Spaces," 15.
47. Levine, "From Nation to Network," 654–55.

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