

## Editor's Note

**M**URIEL HASBUN'S *TODOS LOS SANTOS (LA LLEGADA)* (1995), THE cover image of this issue, is a suggestive visual complement to many of the questions addressed in the essays that follow. A photograph of a reflection of the Salvadoran landscape, it contains the artist's fantasy of her exiled Palestinian grandfather's arrival in El Salvador in 1914. The granddaughter of exile imagines that what her grandfather saw was not the landscape of his destination country but a reflection of the palm trees and churches of his Bethlehem home projected onto his New World surroundings. The essays in this issue enact such cultural reclamations and such border crossings in time and space as the artist, following her grandfather, undertakes. They describe the traces and fantasies of a generation haunting its descendants, who, allowing themselves to be haunted, face back toward the past, contemplating its reflections in the present. Conversation, such as the one Hasbun implicitly (and posthumously) carries on with her grandfather, is the dominant mode of the essays and special features alike.

It is always satisfying to assemble a coherent journal issue out of random submissions. The May issue traditionally contains the MLA Presidential Address and the Nobel Prize speech in literature, and thus, more than other issues, it offers a space for topical preoccupations. Robert Scholes's Presidential Address, on "the humanities in a posthumanist world," and Elfriede Jelinek's "Im Abseits" ("Sidelined") do indeed speak powerfully to our current intellectual and political situation, and interestingly to each other. The multi-voiced Guest Column, by Toni Morrison, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Ngahuia Te Awakotuku, contributes productively to this

dialogue. Along with several hundred other listeners, I attended the special forum at the 2004 convention organized by the Executive Council, "The Future of the Humanities in a Fragmented World," and, in a burst of enthusiasm, I invited the three speakers to re-stage their lively and inspiring exchange for *PMLA* readers.

Together these reflections introduce a series of essays on textual border crossings in what has always already been a fragmented, fractured world: Fredric Jameson's encounter with Dante's *selva oscura*, Chester Himes's with surrealism and the *Série noire* in Paris, Thomas Harriot's with the Algonkians. Chicano/a literary history is recovered "beyond borders," *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is reinvented in Spain, and the Chinese Renaissance is reevaluated in transcultural perspective. These dialogues are also intergenerational, as Bill Brown rereads Jameson and Ed White rereads Stephen Greenblatt. Under "Theories and Methodologies," four short essays engage in memorial and tributary acts of rereading

Susan Sontag in the role of an important—and much missed—cultural mediator. Under "Little-Known Documents," we reprint Amelia Blandford Edwards's 1887 lecture "The Social and Political Position of Woman in Ancient Egypt." A special Forum discussion by a group of interdisciplinary scholars engages the issues—particularly religion and postmodernity—raised by Brown's essay, "The Dark Wood of Postmodernity (Space, Faith, Allegory)."

This issue begins with Toni Morrison's cautious, tentative, and beautiful affirmation of art as an act of "translat[ing] . . . trauma and turn[ing] sorrow into meaning, sharpening the moral imagination." It ends with Elfriede Jelinek's searching attempt to speak instead of being subjected by a language that is always threatening to "leave" and to leave her, one, us, "sidelined." In between we are invited to think about and to practice the humanities in a fractured world.

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