COLLABORATION IN TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

Shelley Fisher Fishkin

Introduction

I embarked on my first collaborative venture in Transnational American Studies in response to being verbally attacked in public in Southwestern China in 2005 by a US government official who had helped bring me there. In retrospect, I ought to thank him. The success of the project that this unexpected event ended up setting in motion prompted me to develop a stimulating and exciting research agenda over the next decade and beyond in which transnational collaboration has been front and center. I’ve never looked back.

But looking back right now strikes me as a fruitful thing to do. This chapter describes the genesis of that first transnational collaboration, and of three subsequent collaborative ventures in Transnational American Studies that I was prompted to propose as a result of that positive experience: a distinctive journal, a unique anthology, and an ambitious research project that now involves over 100 scholars across North America and Asia. I will close by considering some of the challenges collaboration can present, by sharing some current transnational collaborations other scholars are developing, and by reflecting on why collaboration is so central to Transnational American Studies.

June, 2005. George W. Bush was president, the Iraq War was raging, and the administration was in the habit of charging anyone who criticized it with being a “traitor.” As President of the American Studies Association, I had been invited to give keynote talks at national American Studies Conferences in China, Japan, and Korea. The theme of the conference in China, held in Yunnan University in Kunming, was “America at War and at Peace.” My talk, which I titled “Wars of Words: American Writers and War,” surveyed a century of anti-war writing in America from Mark Twain’s “The War-Prayer” (1905) to Calvin Trillin’s 2004 poems on the Iraq War (Fishkin 2005). I included discussions of work by John Dos Passos, e. e. Cummings, Ernest Hemingway, Dalton Trumbo, Langston Hughes, Tim O’Brien, and Bob Dylan, among others—as well as other writing by Twain, such as “The Battle Hymn of the Republic Brought Down to Date,” “As Regards Patriotism,” and other pieces he wrote in response to the Philippine-American War. I noted that the Mark Twain who wrote these pieces was blowing the whistle on the lies his government told him not because he was a traitor, but because he genuinely loved his country and felt betrayed by it. I argued that “The War-Prayer” laid down the tracks for the century of anti-war writing that followed.
When I finished my speech the Chinese scholars who filled the auditorium applauded enthusiastically. But then something unprecedented happened. An American official from the US embassy in Beijing, who had been sitting in the back of the room, demanded to be given time at the podium immediately. His request was granted. He then proceeded to attack me. (Keep in mind not only that embassy officials are not supposed to intervene directly in this way in scholarly conferences they support—but also that this official had greenlighted my plane ticket.)

He proceeded to argue heatedly that although my comments had focused solely on anti-war writing by Americans, many American writers recognized that there were times when “you had to go after the bad guys—like Ho Chi Minh” (a comment that was perhaps imprudent given that this academic conference on war and peace was taking place just about 200 miles from the Vietnamese border). With an anger that was palpable, he then proceeded to list the names of American writers who had been in favor of various wars—writers whose names were as unfamiliar to me as they were to the Chinese scholars in the audience. He left as soon as he’d said his piece. At lunch afterwards, the Chinese scholars with whom I spoke were not surprised at what had just transpired: I had incurred the displeasure of a government official with my remarks, so he attacked me. “That’s what governments do,” they said; “Our government does it, your government does it—nothing unusual here.” When the State Department spends thousands of dollars to fly the President of the American Studies Association to an American Studies conference in China, it was understood to be following the tradition of soft diplomacy that sent Americans abroad to exercise their free speech in public as a way of modeling the freedom that America gave its citizens. But clearly my remarks had pushed my sponsor’s buttons, leading him to behave just the way the Chinese expected their government to behave.

What made him so angry? A colleague of his later described him to me as being “to the right of Attila the Hun,” but something more than politics seemed to be going on. As I pondered that question on my flight to Kansai International Airport later that day, I suspected that it was my having put Mark Twain at the head of the procession. When the official had paid for my flight to attend the conference that Yunnan University had invited me to keynote, he knew I was a Mark Twain scholar, and probably figured I was “safe.” What could be more American than a talk about Mark Twain? But he clearly had never read “The War-Prayer” and it upset him greatly. Lots of people had never read “The War-Prayer” or the other obscure pieces of passionate, eloquent outrage by Twain that I’d discussed. I found myself musing, what if these writings by Twain had not been suppressed and ignored for so much of the twentieth century? What if Twain’s critiques of imperialism and of his government’s arrogant abuse of power had been front and center in our classrooms all these years? How might American history and world history in the twentieth century have been different if “The War-Prayer” had been as familiar to every high school student as Tom Sawyer? If we had made discussions of these texts central, not peripheral, to American classrooms, might we have been more prepared to remind those who called critics of the Bush administration “traitors” that criticizing your country when you knew it to be wrong was as American as Mark Twain?

I was still shaken by the morning’s events when I arrived in Kyoto later that day for the annual conference of the Japanese Association of American Studies. Soon after I arrived, I attended a reception held by the Japan Mark Twain Society. I had long admired the vibrant community of Mark Twain scholars in Japan, and had agreed to contribute to and serve on the editorial board of the English-language journal, Mark Twain Studies, that the Society had launched the previous year, in 2004. I reconnected with Takayuki Tatsumi, a professor of
American literature at Keio University (and editor of the new journal) whom I had met on
an earlier visit to Japan. He could tell that I was upset about something. I told him what had
happened in Kunming. As it turned out, “The War-Prayer” was on Takayuki’s mind, as
well, since he was in the process of writing a paper for an international literature conference
to be held the following spring in Nagoya; it was about postmodern writers’ use of black
humor in their efforts to narrate post-apocalyptic reality in the wake of fatal disaster, and it
began by invoking “The War-Prayer” as an important precursor to these efforts. We agreed
that too few people had read “The War-Prayer,” and too few scholars had written about it.
What could we do to change that?

Might an international forum on “The War-Prayer” in Mark Twain Studies play a role in
prompting broader discussion and debate? We respected each other’s scholarship, breadth of
interests, editorial judgment, political vision, and sense of humor, and welcomed the oppor-
tunity to work together on such a project. The collaboration was as pleasurable as it was
fruitful. We circulated a call for papers, and submissions immediately began filling our
inboxes. The international forum that came out in Mark Twain Studies in 2006 included 26
short essays by scholars based in the US and Japan from the fields of English, History,
American Studies, Religious Studies, Comparative Literature, Ethnic Studies, Philosophy,
and Sociology/Anthropology—as well as a Twain biographer, a poet and artist born in
Vietnam, an independent scholar, a novelist, a rare book collector, and a stand-up political
comic. One of the most insightful and moving meditations on “The War-Prayer” was by
Makoto Nagawara, a justly celebrated Japanese Twain scholar who was also a survivor of
Hiroshima (Fishkin and Tatsumi 2006, 7–118). Readers found the transnational forum fresh
and stimulating, and orders for that issue of the journal, which was available only in print,
began pouring in. The positive experience I had collaborating with Takayuki Tatsumi on this
project helped prepare me to embrace with excitement the next opportunity for transna-
tional collaboration that presented itself.

May, 2007. I was invited to give a talk on Asian crossroads in Transnational American
Studies to students at UC-Santa Barbara by professor Shirley Geok-lin Lim (Fishkin 2006).
At lunch at the faculty club before the talk Shirley and I found ourselves commiserating
about the challenges of building a genuinely global community of scholars working in
Transnational American Studies. We were both aware of valuable articles on transnational
topics that had had trouble finding a home in existing journals and agreed that it would be
great to have a journal that defined its mandate as publishing just such pieces. But the
obstacles were daunting. Colleagues in financially-strapped institutions outside the US often
found it hard to keep up with new work in the field since their libraries couldn’t afford
subscriptions to the key journals or buy the latest books; how would they be able to afford
a subscription to yet another new journal, no matter how helpful it was to their work? Even
scholars in the US had trouble accessing relevant work published in small-circulation inter-
national journals that existed only in hard copy—such as Mark Twain Studies (which required
anyone who wanted to buy a copy of an issue to mail an international postal money order to
Japan). An open-access digital journal would be ideal, we mused. But the prospect of actually
launching such a journal was beyond us. If only we knew someone with the programming
skills willing to help us on a pro bono basis figure out how to create a digital journal. It was a
nice daydream.

At the talk I gave that afternoon, Shirley’s students were lively and engaged and we had a
stimulating discussion. They were clearly hungry for more opportunities to both read and
publish articles in Transnational American Studies, and to have more ways of interacting with
like-minded scholars outside the US. Shirley and I brought up the absence of any online,
open-access peer-reviewed journal focused on this area, and jokingly asked whether anyone in the room had the programming skills to create one. The students—smart and interesting, but trained in the humanities rather than computer science—ruefully shook their heads.

After the discussion we adjourned for dinner that night at Shirley’s home. Over dinner, one of those students, Eric Martinsen, had an inspired idea: he told us, to our surprise, that the University of California system already had in place a free electronic platform for hosting journals: the eScholarship Repository which was part of the eScholarship initiative of the California Digital Library. The roughly two–dozen journals the initiative hosted at the time were all in the sciences or the social sciences. But Eric had read the fine print: there was nothing to prevent a humanities journal from using the platform as well. Caroline Kyungah Hong, who, like Eric, was a graduate student at UCSB at the time, was enthusiastic, as well. The seeds of the Journal of Transnational American Studies were planted that night. Caroline and Eric, now tenured faculty themselves, became JTAS’s first managing editors.

Over the next year and a half, Shirley and I recruited an international board of editors who helped us circulate a Call for Papers, recruit articles, assemble an international advisory board, and shape a new online open-access journal cosponsored by UCSB’s American Cultures and Global Contexts Center and Stanford’s American Studies Program. The founding editors were based in Canada, Germany, Japan, and the US. In addition to Shirley and myself, the group included Alfred Hornung (Obama Institute, Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz), Nina Morgan (Kennesaw State University), Greg Robinson (Université du Québec à Montréal), and Takayuki Tatsumi (Keio University). The advisory board included scholars based in countries including Australia, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Korea, the Netherlands, Russia, Taiwan, the UK, and the US (and soon after included scholars from Argentina, India, and Morocco). We encouraged fellow editors and advisory board members to come up with ideas on how to make the journal into a distinctive home for fresh border-crossing, multi-disciplinary scholarship in American Studies focused on transnational topics. Advisory Board member David Bradley (then at the University of Oregon) came up with the inspired suggestion of having a section of the journal called “Reprise,” which would reprint important articles in Transnational American Studies that had appeared in print in books or journals but that had never had an online life. Nina Morgan agreed to edit the Reprise section. The first issue’s Reprise section reprinted the International Forum on “The War-Prayer” that had been almost impossible for readers outside Japan to access previously. Several of us thought about how useful it would be to colleagues both in the US and around the world to run excerpts from soon-to-be-published or recently-published books. Greg Robinson agreed to edit this feature of the journal, which we called the “Forward” section. We liked the idea of having guest editors solicit articles on particular themes, but hesitated to devote entire issues to these special topics; Takayuki Tatsumi reminded us of the category of “Special Forum” that the Japanese journal Mark Twain Studies had developed—the category, in fact, in which our international forum on “The War-Prayer” appeared. With Herculean effort on the part of graduate students at UC Santa Barbara and Stanford, as well as the editorial board and advisory board, The Journal of Transnational American Studies (JTAS) was launched in 2009.1

Over the past nine years, The Journal of Transnational American Studies has published close to over 300 pieces of scholarship by individuals based in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Korea, Lebanon, Morocco, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, the UK and the US. These included 148 peer-reviewed articles, excerpts from 84 recently-published or soon-to-be published books and articles, and 66 outstanding articles or book chapters that had

JTAS is one of the relatively small number of born-digital journals selected for preservation by the Library of Congress. Collaboration has been key to the journal’s success. The founding editors had previously had experience editing journals, book series, and multi-authored works in five countries on three continents; the group included fluent speakers of five languages; and each of us had experience lecturing or teaching in universities in countries outside our own. We were trained in American Studies, literature, history, popular culture, and women’s studies. We brought our awareness of the culture of the academy in a range of national settings to our shared endeavor, as well as our contacts in different academic communities. Each of us moved in different overlapping intellectual circles, helping us cast a broad net for contributors and reviewers. Caroline Hong and Eric Martinsen, the founding managing editors, did a stellar job of recruiting global peer reviewers for the submissions, with members of the global advisory board pitching in on that effort as well. The editorial board reads every submission that passes peer review before it is published. During the last two years, we have expanded the team to include new associate managing editors and editors with broad-ranging expertise and cultural competencies, along with a deep interest in transnational topics and a commitment to collaboration.

In terms of interdisciplinarity, JTAS has featured work by contributors who teach in and/or were trained in African and African American Studies; American Indian Studies; American Studies; Anthropology; Arts and Cultural Studies; Asian American Studies; Asian Studies; Communication; Comparative Literature; Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity; Crime and Justice Studies; Education; English; Environmental Humanities; English for Speakers of Other Languages; Ethnic Studies; Film; Foreign Languages; French and Francophone Studies; Gender Studies; German; Historical Archaeology; History; History of Science; Indonesian Studies; Journalism; Latin American and Iberian Studies; Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies; Law; Literature; Media and Cultural Studies; North American Studies; Philosophy; Political Science; Religious Studies; Sexuality Studies; Spanish and Portuguese; Sociology; Theatre Studies; Theatre, Film and Television; Visual and Cultural Studies; Urban Studies; and Women’s Studies in North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and Australia/Oceania. The scope of all interdisciplinary journals extends beyond the body of knowledge any one editor has; in a global interdisciplinary journal focused on transnational topics, there is an even more pressing need for the editorial team to draw on a broad spectrum of in-depth knowledge.

A collaborative effort like JTAS could not have existed before email made global communication a simple endeavor. Having a working editorial board made up of scholars based in Atlanta, Hong Kong, Ithaca, Mainz, Palo Alto, Oakland, Montreal, New York, Santa Barbara, and Tokyo turns out to be an insomniac’s dream: whatever hour of the day or night one wants to have a stimulating online conversation, a colleague is likely to be up and about and answering email on some continent or other. And while email may have enabled JTAS to be born, the friendships forged through the collaboration have sustained the journal and helped it thrive, and also helped give rise to other collaborative ventures, like the two discussed below. Various subsets of editorial board members, managing editors and associate
managing editors, advisory board members, contributors and reviewers have connected in person annually at JTAS receptions held at American Studies Association annual meetings, and at other conferences in the US, Europe, and Asia.

July, 2008. I was pleasantly surprised to receive a phone call from Max Rudin, publisher of the Library of America, inviting me to edit a Mark Twain anthology of great writers on his life and works to appear in time for the 2010 centennial of Twain’s death. The Library of America had recently published a volume like this in connection with Abraham Lincoln. I was intrigued by the idea and said yes—although at the time I had little sense of the shape such a book would take. I had a general idea of some of the key essays I’d want in the book—including pieces that I’d commissioned for the Oxford Mark Twain from David Bradley, E.L. Doctorow, Hal Holbrook, Erica Jong, Ursula Le Guin, Toni Morrison, Gore Vidal, and Kurt Vonnegut.2

But ever since my presidential address to the American Studies Association in 2004, in which I had chided colleagues for neglecting American Studies scholarship published outside the US (Fishkin 2005b, 36)3 I found myself wondering whether there might be essays by great writers from around the world responding to Twain over the years that remained unknown to Twain scholars in the US. I knew that he had been popular in Germany from the nineteenth century to the present. When I had lectured in Paris at L’École Normale Supérieure in the 1990s, Huckleberry Finn was on a list of required texts for national exams. And I had read that Twain had been important to both Kenzaburō Ōe of Japan and Jorge Luis Borges of Argentina, but I had never read anything by either of these writers on the topic. I decided to look into writing on Twain in languages other than English from outside the United States. My past positive experiences with collaboration helped persuade me that if I was fortunate enough to locate interesting material that wasn’t in English, I’d be able to find colleagues willing to work with me to make them available to English-speaking readers.

To my amazement, I seemed to have opened a door to dozens of secret chambers—passageways whose very existence astonished me. Previously untranslated texts that I selected for the book included essays by Nobel laureates from Denmark and Japan, by two of Cuba’s most prominent public intellectuals, by Argentina’s most celebrated author, by one of China’s most famous modern authors, by a major Russian poet, and by respected writers from Germany, Italy, Spain, and the Soviet Union—as well as an article from a Yiddish newspaper in Vilna that was a poignant reminder of the vibrant intellectual culture that once thrived in Yiddish-speaking communities in Eastern Europe. These texts were just a fraction of the material that I could have included, material which had largely been consigned to oblivion by the monolingual biases of American literary scholars. It turned out that prominent writers from Europe, Asia, and Latin America, writing in Chinese, Danish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, Spanish, and Yiddish, had all engaged Twain. But aside from a handful of excerpts, the pieces they wrote were unavailable in English (Fishkin 2010).4

I uncovered many of these pieces through bibliographic digging—and the able assistance of Mary-Louise Munill in Stanford’s interlibrary loan division. But although I could read the pieces in Spanish and French, I was sure I was still missing a lot; and the pieces in these other languages remained largely opaque to me. Collaboration was key to realizing the vision of bringing these texts into conversations about Twain that take place in English.5

Colleagues on the Editorial Board of the Journal of Transnational American Studies helped me network to translators around the world and in some cases translated pieces I’d identified themselves. For example, I was startled to discover that the first book devoted to Mark Twain anywhere was published in Paris—in French—in 1884; JTAS editor Greg Robinson
translated selections from that book (which was written by Henry Gauthier-Villars, later best known as the infamous first husband of the writer Colette, whom he married some years after his book on Twain was published) (Gauthier-Villars 2010). He also translated work on Twain by the nineteenth-century French writer Thérèse Bentzon—a piece that Twain had read in French and been infuriated by (although it looked to me as if his anger had been somewhat unwarranted) (Bentzon 2010). Nina Yermakov Morgan (with her colleague Katya Vladimirov) translated a piece by Abel Startsev, a leading Soviet philologist whom I had met in the 1990s and who had given me a book he had written in Russian about Twain (Startsev 2010) she also connected me to Patricia Thompson Rizzo at the University of Padua, who provided a translation of a piece by Italian writer Livia Bruni (Bruni 2010). Alfred Hornung introduced me to Valerie Bopp, an advanced student of his in Mainz, who translated two pieces by the great nineteenth-century expert on the German language, Edouard Engel (Engel 2010a, 2010b). Shirley Geok-lin Lim introduced me to her friend Edward M. Test, who translated a previously untranslated column José Martí had written describing a reading he heard Mark Twain give in New York on the eve of the publication of *Huckleberry Finn*, as well as a piece by Cuban satirist Jesús Castellanos and one by the Spanish novelist Angél Guerra (Martí 2010a, Castellanos 2010; Guerra 2010).

*JTAS* Advisory Board members were extremely helpful, as well. Lu Xun, widely viewed as the father of modern Chinese literature, wrote a preface to the first book-length publication of Mark Twain’s work in Chinese, but it had never been translated into English. *JTAS* Advisory Board member Gongzhao Li helped me identify this piece, and translated it, as well (Lu 2010). Marina Tsvetaeva, now regarded as one of the best Russian poets of the twentieth century, and a writer who helped carve out new roles for women in the arts in the Soviet Union, had found her poetic aspirations belittled by her family during her childhood; during these stressful years, the family’s set of Mark Twain’s works were key to her escape into the world of the imagination. *JTAS* Advisory Board member Yuri Tretyakov helped me identify the important poem she wrote about this, and translated it for the book (Tsvetaeva 2010). Stanford colleagues also pitched in, and were a pleasure to work with. As he helped me follow a footnote trail leading to a Yiddish publication that turned out to be dead end, my colleague Zachary Baker, Stanford Library’s curator of Judaica and Hebraica, got curious and began pursuing other references to Twain in Yiddish newspapers. He uncovered two pieces in *Tog*, a 1924 Yiddish newspaper from Vilna that compared Mark Twain with Sholem Aleichem. They were written by Maks Erik, the pen name of Zalman Merkin a prominent Polish-born literary historian and critic who became known for his groundbreaking history of Yiddish literature and textbooks on Yiddish in the nineteenth century (Erik 2010). He had moved to the Soviet Union under the assumption that Yiddish culture would thrive there. Sadly, he was mistaken. In 1936, during the first wave of persecution of Jewish cultural figures, he was arrested and sent to the gulag, where he died in 1937. Working with Zachary Baker to bring Erik’s extended meditation on the resonances between the work of Mark Twain, and that of the man widely known as the “Yiddish Mark Twain” to an English-speaking audience was both fascinating and poignant.

But it was the challenges associated with translating another piece on Twain by José Martí that most dramatically underlined for me the importance of collaboration: it took three of us—a Twain scholar (myself), a Cervantes scholar (Rubén Builes, a graduate student in Spanish at Stanford at the time), and a bilingual expert in translation studies and nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish literature (Stanford faculty member Cintia Santana) to get it right. The three of us met on multiple occasions to decipher and interpret an intriguing article Martí had written for the Buenos Aires paper *La Nación* in 1890 (Martí 2010b).
A few portions of the piece had been translated into English and published some years back, but it turned out that a translator’s error had rendered those selections nonsensical—a fact which probably accounted for why the piece was virtually unknown. In the one book that presented selections from this piece in English, when Martí discusses a character named “Jin,” the translator, Elinor Randall had translated “Jin” as “Jim,” with a footnote referring to Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*. But as Rubén, Cintia and I grappled with the piece, it became clear that “Jin” is short for “Jim” or “Djinn”—a powerful supernatural creature in Islamic and pre-Islamic folklore and literature, discussed at length in the Koran. It was how Martí rather cleverly translated Hank Morgan’s nickname in Camelot in *Connecticut Yankee*: “the Boss.”

Due to centuries of Spanish contact with the Moors, Martí and his Latin American readers would have been more familiar than English speakers with the Arabic tradition of the Djinn—although “genies” (the English translation of “Djinn”) had made their way into English-speaking culture through *Arabian Nights*, and other popular literature translated from Arabic sources. Martí’s nickname for Hank—“Jin,”—is an especially apt name for a character who awes Camelot with his seemingly supernatural powers. Indeed, I was even more impressed by the appropriateness of Martí’s translation of Hank’s nickname when I recalled Tom’s remark to Huck in *Huck Finn* that genies “don’t think nothing of pulling a shot-tower up by the roots.” In *Connecticut Yankee*, of course, “The Boss,” acts very much like the genie Tom describes, when he blasts Merlin’s tower to smithereens.

The translator, however, in addition to having mistranslated “Jin” as “Jim,” added a footnote about *Huckleberry Finn*, ran these comments together with remarks Martí made four years earlier about a reading at which Twain read from *Huckleberry Finn*, and identified the entire selection with the date of the publication of the first of the two pieces, not the second. All this managed to ensure that Martí’s comments would not be associated with the book to which they actually referred; it made it highly unlikely that English-speaking readers would be aware of the fact that what they were reading was a review of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* that Martí published about a month after the book was published.

Since Martí was reading Twain’s satire set in the era of chivalric knight errantry through the lens of a satire by Cervantes also set in the era of chivalric knight errantry (Martí refers to *Don Quixote* in the first line of his review), it was extremely helpful to have Rubén Builes’ understanding of Cervantes as we tried to grasp the quirks of Martí’s word choice in the essay. Meanwhile, Cintia Santana’s understanding of the ways in which the piece was informed by nineteenth-century Spanish was a great help, as was my own familiarity with Twain’s novel. It was only together that we were able to restore to English-speaking readers an important commentary on *Connecticut Yankee* which had been redlined from American literary studies until *The Mark Twain Anthology* published it in English in 2010.

The piece is wonderful not only for what it tells us about Martí, but also for what it tells us about Martí, who wrote that reading Twain’s book, a book “fueled by indignation,” made him want to meet its author and congratulate him. He recognized that Twain was committed as a writer and as a citizen of a democracy to values that Martí shared: both men rejected the claims of aristocracy to deference and legitimacy; both abhorred injustice; both sympathized with the downtrodden and disempowered; both disdained writing that was pretentious and affected. Martí clearly saw in Twain a kindred spirit (Fishkin 2010, 47–48). Viewing *Connecticut Yankee* as much more than a satire of medieval chivalry, he recognized it as compelling criticism of contemporary injustice. He wrote that Twain “makes evident—with an anger that sometimes borders on the sublime—the wileness of those who would climb atop their fellow man, feed upon his misery, and drink from his misfortune” (Martí 2010b,
Martí clearly saw the author of *A Connecticut Yankee* as one yankee who dissented from some of the conventional pieties of the exploitative society in which he lived, as Martí himself did. He saw Twain as a writer whose critique of modern society paralleled Martí’s own in important ways.

I found the pleasure of grappling with the nuances of translating Martí’s “translation/interpretation” of Twain with Cintia and Rubén so interesting that I was slightly sad when we had finished the task and the book went to press. The experience ignited my interest in translation studies, and when I was invited to serve on a working group to devise a “Translation Studies” minor at Stanford (a group that involved Cintia, as well), I leapt at the opportunity. Stanford’s “Translation Studies” minor is now going strong.

The habits of collaboration with colleagues around the world that working on the *Mark Twain Anthology* required taught me how stimulating and enjoyable such collaboration can be. It attracted me to a collaborative digital venture involving translation in which I am currently engaged with colleagues at the Université de Lille—Ronald Jenn in Translation Studies and Amel Fraisse in Computer Science (as well as colleagues at Stanford)—in which translations of a key novel of Twain’s around the world will be deployed to develop digital materials for technologically low-resourced languages.6

December, 2011. Stanford University was founded with the fortune that Leland Stanford acquired as an owner of the Central Pacific Railroad, which was built primarily by Chinese workers. When I arrived at Stanford, I had gone to Special Collections and asked to see a letter written by one of these workers. I was surprised to learn that they didn’t have any. I was even more shocked to learn from my colleague, historian Gordon Chang, that no library in the United States had any letter or document of any kind written by a Chinese person who worked on the railroad. Indeed, probing further, I found that relatively little was known about the 12,000 to 15,000 Chinese workers whose labors had done so much to create the institution in which I worked and lived. In December 2011, I invited Gordon out for tea and presented what I called “an opportunity”: 2015 would be the 150th anniversary of the employment of the first large group of Chinese workers on the Central Pacific, and 2019 would be the 150th anniversary of the completion of the first transcontinental railroad. Wasn’t this an opportune time to develop a transnational, multi-disciplinary research project to find out all we could about who these workers were, where they came from, what they did on the railroad, what they did after the railroad’s completion, how they changed the US and China, and how they figure in cultural memory on both sides of the Pacific? Gordon agreed. We persuaded Dongfang Shao, who was then head of the East Asia Library at Stanford, and Evelyn Hu-DeHart, a Stanford alumna who was then head of Ethnic Studies at Brown, to join us as co-organizers of the Project. The four of us conferred in person, on email, and on the phone. We made the case for the importance of the project we were
proposing and sent a letter to Stanford’s acting president (and provost) John Etchemendy, requesting seed money. We were truly delighted when he responded positively, in April 2012, with some funds to help us get started. Gordon Chang and I were designated as the Project’s co-directors. We began developing plans on how to collaborate across borders, disciplines, and languages on a venture that has uncovered an extraordinary body of knowledge about this neglected chapter of the past.

We came up with a name: the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project at Stanford University. From the start, we were convinced that this was a story that needed to be told from both sides of the Pacific. The four of us, aided by Hilton Obenzinger, who became Associate Director of the Project, cast our nets wide, querying scholars we knew in a range of fields across the US and Asia, inviting those interested in being involved to a preliminary workshop at Stanford in September 2012. In early 2013, we received a delegation of scholars and provincial officials from Guangdong, the province from which nearly all of the railroad workers came, and signed a cooperation agreement with them.\footnote{7} Shortly thereafter we launched the Project’s website: http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/website/. We developed strategies for mining a broad range of archives in the US and China, digital databases, books, articles, photographs, government records, hearings, and collections of artifacts, and established collaboration agreements with universities including Wuyi University (home of a major Overseas Chinese Research Center) and National Sun Yat-sen University. Stanford Libraries agreed to host the Digital Materials Repository of primary materials we hoped to assemble, and we began working with Stanford undergraduate researchers to identify what should be in it and to enter items into an archiving platform developed at Stanford called Bibliopedia.\footnote{8}

We learned, to our surprise, that although not a single letter from any of the Chinese railroad workers has yet surfaced in either the US or China, historical archaeologists in the US had recovered thousands of pieces of their rice bowls, gaming pieces, food containers, opium pipes, and other items that they had used. Our Stanford colleague in anthropology, Barbara Voss, created the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project Archaeology Network, in the spring of 2013 and soon had over 60 archaeologists sharing research leads via the listserv she created. We also began trying to track down descendants of Chinese railroad workers to videotape family oral histories. We networked among friends and acquaintances, gave radio and television interviews, spoke at colleges and community groups. Public historian Connie Young Yu and filmmaker Barre Fong were soon conducting multigenerational interviews with grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great great grandchildren of Chinese railroad workers, and the Chinese Historical Society of America partnered with us in our efforts to locate railroad worker descendants. Connie Young Yu directs the Project’s oral histories.

In September 2013, Pin-Chia Feng (National Chiao Tung University and Academia Sinica) organized a conference about the Project at the Institute of European and American Studies at Academia Sinica in Taipei that was supported by the National Science Council of Taiwan; the Department of English and Foreign Languages and Literature at National Chiao Tung University, Taiwan; Academia Sinica; and Stanford (as well as a grant the Project received from the American Council of Learned Societies and the CCK Foundation).\footnote{9} Also that fall, Project member Hsinya Huang (National Sun Yat-sen University) organized a group of some ten to 12 scholars based in Taiwan interested in researching the representation of Chinese railroad workers in North America, and successfully sought funding of their own from the CCK Foundation in Taiwan. (Over the next few years, the Taiwan working group would host several meetings with Stanford scholars and in 2017 would publish a Chinese-language collection of new research by Project members, 北美鐵路華工：歷史、文學與視
In October 2013, Barbara Voss organized a workshop at Stanford of historical archaeologists who had worked on Chinese sites along the route of the Central Pacific and other railroads in the American West. (Papers presented at that conference would appear in print in the spring of 2015 in a special issue of the journal *Historical Archaeology* edited by Barbara Voss) (Voss 2015).

In early 2014, members of our team photographed payroll records at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento. When I found the only piece of writing that has surfaced yet from one of the Chinese railroad workers—one line in calligraphy in a Central Pacific payroll record—it was wonderful to be able to share it instantly with Chinese-literate colleagues in both the US and Asia, to decipher what it meant. Yuen Ding (Sun Yat-sen University), one of our key collaborators from Guangdong, said he could tell from the nature of the calligraphy that the person who wrote it had been trained as an accountant! We also fanned out to seek documents in small historical societies in Nevada and California, and to mine archives at Stanford, at the Bancroft Library, the Huntington Library, Brigham Young’s Special Collections, and other repositories. In April 2014, the Committee of 100, an organization of prominent Chinese Americans dedicated to advancing understanding between the United States and Asia, honored Stanford University with its Common Ground Award for the Advancement in US-China Relations, noting the significance of Stanford’s Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project.\(^\text{10}\)

In September 2014, Yuan Ding (Sun Yat-sen University) organized an international symposium at Sun Yat-sen university in Guangzhou, on “The North American Chinese Laborers and Guangdong Qiaoxiang Society.” It was followed by a two-day trip to some of the sending villages from which the Chinese railroad workers came, led by Selia Tan (Wuyi University). In June 2015, Stanford co-hosted with the Chinese Historical Society of America (CHSA) “The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental,” a day that brought together scholars who presented their latest research, descendants who shared family stories, and interested members of the public—some 250 people in all. It marked the first time that Stanford had formally honoured the memory of the Chinese whose labors had played such a key role in creating the fortune with which Leland Stanford founded our university. A representative of China, Ambassador Luo Linquan of China spoke at the gathering as did Stanford’s Dean of Humanities and Sciences. The event also featured an exhibit of historical photography curated by Stanford and the CHSA (Chang et al. 2015).\(^\text{11}\)

The press attention that public events like this one garnered inevitably led to additional contacts, research leads, and suggestions.\(^\text{12}\) We needed to husband our time and our resources, responding to the ideas that seemed most potentially fruitful; but we learned not to be surprised at the unexpected initiatives that found their way to us. For example, we had the opportunity to work with the distinguished Beijing-based photographer Li Ju, who has followed the original Central Pacific Railroad line five times, re-taking in the twenty-first century the original photos taken by railroad photographer Alfred Hart in the 1860s. In November 2015, the Project worked with him to mount a bilingual exhibit of more than 70 frames of historical and contemporary photos called “The Chinese Helped Build the Railroad and the Railroad Built America,” organized by China’s Guangxi Normal University Press, and co-sponsored by Stanford’s American Studies Program and Center for East Asian Studies. This exhibit documenting one of the great engineering achievements of the nineteenth century was held, appropriately, around an atrium in one of Stanford’s main engineering buildings (Wakefield 2015). It is now touring the US. We have also found ourselves...
consultants to the development of an oratorio about the railroad workers being written by a composer in China and a Chinese librettist in the United States. But the principal focus of our attention is shepherding new scholarship to publication and creating the open-access Digital Materials Repository that Stanford libraries will host.

In April 2016, the Project hosted a working conference at Stanford that brought together scholars from Asia and North America who have done sustained research on some aspect of the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America over the last two years, in preparation for books and web-based publications that we plan to publish. There were papers on the transcontinental railroad in global perspective; on who the Chinese labour migrants to the Americas were; on what we know of their life in the villages back in China; on the Hong Kong that the workers had departed from; on how they maintained their health and well-being as they built the railroad; on what we know about their 1867 strike; on how their work camps were laid out and what structures they lived in; on what we learn from studying photographs of the workers and their camps; on Chinese railroad workers' relations with Native Americans; on how the Chinese workers sent remittances back to China; on what their families back in China did with the remittances they received; on how the workers lived and how they died; on the communities they created in the Western United States; on how the Chinese railroad workers in North America have been represented in fiction and drama in English and Chinese; on how they were represented in Chinese historiography and literature; on how they were pictured in magazines; on how they were treated in American history textbooks; on what their descendants went on to do; on what other rail lines they built after the transcontinental was completed, etc. Bringing together researchers from so many different locations and languages and disciplines has its special pleasures: who might have guessed that Greg Robinson, a U.S. historian teaching at the Université de Québec à Montréal would have stumbled upon the only eye-witness account of the 1867 strike as it was happening—written in French, by the uncle of Simone de Beauvoir? And that the prose picture he drew was accompanied by a French illustrator's dramatic image of what the striking Chinese workers had looked like?

The conference was followed by a trip to sites along the railroad route in the Sierra Nevada that the Chinese had built. At both the conference and on the Sierra trip that followed—one could see tangible evidence of the benefits of a collaborative project that was transnational and interdisciplinary. At a Chinese cemetery that included an early twentieth-century headstone of an individual from Taishan (one of the counties from which many of the railroad workers had come), an American archaeologist shared his thoughts about what the fragments of brown glaze ware that one could see around the graves might have been used for, while a scholar from China shared her thoughts on how the railroad workers may have dealt with the challenge of getting the bones of the dead back to China for reburial. As we drove through small towns along the railroad route, an American historian who was an expert on the Chinese communities that grew up in the region fielded questions about what life was like in the late nineteenth century in some of the towns we passed through, during an era when the Chinese were heartlessly and violently driven out of their homes and deprived of their livelihoods.

The terms “collaboration” and “support” took on new meanings for many of us when we visited some of the Summit tunnels the Chinese had built. As we did our best to make our way down hills that were still covered with snow even though it was April, slipping and sliding and falling waist-deep into cold embankments, the helping hand of a colleague could make the difference between a safe landing and a twisted ankle. As we struggled with precarious footholds in dark tunnels paved with invisible stretches of black ice, the physical perils
that the Chinese railroad workers themselves had endured as they built these tunnels were
made tangible for us. They became painfully real when one of the youngest and most fit
members of our group, our dedicated Project Manager, Gabe Wolfenstein, slipped and frac-
tured his shoulder. (This was April—in an era of global warming! What had those tunnels
been like in the colder months?!) The Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project now involves over 100 scholars
from around the world. Many of us find that it has taken over our lives—and that is not a
bad thing. The transnational collaboration has been enormously fruitful intellectually. And
although fundraising has been a constant challenge, it helps to have collaborators who can
draw not only on a broad range of educational institutions for support, but also governmental
entities and foundations on two continents. The efforts of our colleagues in Guangdong have
been supported by funding from Guangdong Province, which has given significant support
to the Guangdong Overseas Chinese Publication Project in which our colleague Yuan Ding
plays a central role. Colleagues based in Taipei and Kaohsiung have received support from
the National Science Council of Taiwan/Ministry of Science and Technology as well as the
Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Exchange. US-based scholars have applied
for and received support from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American
Council of Learned Societies, and the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International
Exchange, among other sources, as well as our own universities and generous private donors.

Coordinating the work of globally dispersed scholars writing in different languages, from
different disciplinary perspectives, and from a broad range of academic cultures can be a
challenge—even on the level of knowing what to call what we do. For example, archae-
ologists in China focus solely on prehistoric periods. They do not recognize what historical
archaeologists in the US do as “archaeology.” We learned that the proper term in China for
what historical archaeologists in the US do is “folk life studies.” The word “collaboration,”
which has been celebrated early and often in this chapter, can itself pose problems. “To
collaborate” takes on different connotations in Chinese than it does in English. “Cooperate”
is the preferred term in Asia. “Collaboration” agreements became “cooperation” agreements.
All of us have learned—and are still learning—important lessons about the subtle art of
translation; and about “back translation”—the problem that occurs when Chinese scholars are
re-translating back into English sources that were originally published in English but that
they personally encountered only in Chinese translation. Many of these challenges are, as
Huck Finn said in a different context, “interesting but tough.” But I think many of my
colleagues would agree that for all its difficulties, the Chinese Railroad Workers in North
America Project is one of the most exciting and stimulating scholarly ventures on which
we’ve ever embarked—and one which continues to bear fruit. An edited volume, The Chi-
nese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental, edited by Gordon H. Chang and Shelley
Fisher Fishkin, will be published by Stanford University Press in April 2019 (Chang and
Fishkin 2019) (several essays in the volume were themselves collaborative ventures). In
addition, a series of digital essays will be published by the Project on our website in 2019,
and a curriculum guide for high school students will be launched, along with the Digital
Materials Repository.

Coda

Although my first transnational collaboration took place in 2006, it was far from my first
experience with collaboration. Working with colleagues on a range of projects from 1990
through the early 2000s had taught me that when I selected the right people to work with,
collaborating could be stimulating, satisfying, and great fun. Co-authoring an article on Frederick Douglass with Carla Peterson in 1990 helped me appreciate the ways in which two scholars could help each other generate ideas that each alone would not have come up with (Fishkin and Peterson 1990). I loved shepherding some 18 cutting-edge books to publication with Arnold Rampersad when we co-edited Oxford University Press’s book series in “Race and American Culture” from 1992 to 2002 (Rampersad and Fishkin 1992–2002). I greatly enjoyed collaborating with five American colleagues—Gloria Anzaldúa, Carla Peterson, Jeff Rubín-Dorsky, Lillian Robinson and Richard Yarborough—to develop and co-teach a class at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México on “Identity in America from a Multi-Cultural Perspective.” Co-editing Listening to Silences: New Essays in Feminist Criticism with Elaine in 1994 (Hedges and Fishkin 1994); People of the Book: Thirty Scholars Reflect on their Jewish Identity with Jeff Rubín-Dorsky in 1996 (Rubín-Dorsky and Fishkin 1996); and The Encyclopedia of Civil Rights in America with David Bradley in 1997 (Bradley and Fishkin 1997) forced me to immerse myself deeply in bodies of knowledge I had only dipped into previously, ascend steep new learning curves, and engage in a spirited give-and-take with ideas and strategies for conveying them with my co-editors. Those experiences transformed the kind of scholar that I was—for the better. Co-organizing a conference on the late works of Mark Twain in 2004 with Forrest Robinson (that took place at Stanford and UC-Santa Cruz and that led to a special issue of Arizona Quarterly (Fishkin and Robinson) and a conference at Stanford for the Paul Laurence Dunbar Centennial in 2006 with Gavin Jones, Meta Jones, Arnold Rampersad, and Richard Yarborough (that led to a special issue of African American Review) (Fishkin et al. 2007) demonstrated for me the pleasures of sharing both the conceptualization and realization of a working conference and a special issue of a journal. And co-editing Sport of the Gods and Other Essential Writings by Paul Laurence Dunbar with David Bradley in 2005 (Fishkin and Bradley 2005) reminded me that having two people with different sensibilities and training collaborate to recover the work of a neglected writer whom both of them cherished could be wonderfully rewarding and serendipitous.

I learned a lot by pursuing all of these ventures—and I found that friendships forged through sharing the challenges of developing an article, a book series, a class, a conference, an encyclopedia or an anthology, made the project at hand more attractive, more stimulating, and more enjoyable. But when it comes to doing work in Transnational American Studies, collaboration is not just desirable: it is essential. Other scholars are increasingly learning this, as well.

For example, Emron Esplin and Margarida Vale de Gato’s co-edited volume, Translated Poe (Esplin and de Gato 2014), demonstrates the possible breadth that collaborative work in Transnational American Studies can accomplish in the digital age. Esplin was trained as an inter-Americanist in the United States, and Vale de Gato was trained as an Americanist in Portugal and has translated scores of US literary texts into Portuguese. Their mutual expertise in literary studies, combined with Vale de Gato’s experience as a translator and the distinct networks of academics that each editor brought to the project, allowed them to tap into various groups of literary critics, translators, and translation studies scholars across Europe, the Americas, Asia, and northern Africa to provide a book that offers 31 readings of Poe translations in 19 different national or regional literary traditions. Their collaboration produced a tremendously stimulating and ambitious volume that brought together commentaries on Poe by scholars based in Brazil, China, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the US; it also situated translations of Poe in multiple world literary traditions, engaged some of the thorny challenges of the translation process, and examined the cultural work that Poe’s...
poetry and fiction performs around the world. It is a model of the kind of work in Transnational American Studies that could emerge only from collaboration.

In addition to making it possible to juxtapose a broad range of readings of and responses to American literature from locations around the globe, collaboration can also yield fresh insight into the genesis of a specific work by an American writer. For example, Ronald Jenn, a professor of translation studies at the Université de Lille in France, is currently collaborating with Linda Morris, a Twain scholar and professor emerita at the University of California, Davis, to explore the role played by French historical sources in Mark Twain’s *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* (1895–1896). They are conducting an exhaustive study of the marginalia Twain wrote in both French and English sources he consulted (volumes now housed in the Mark Twain Papers at UC-Berkeley) in an effort to “reframe Joan of Arc as the climax of Twain’s long time and paradoxical relationship with the French, and their language,” a relationship they view as “the result of a power struggle between France and the U.S.”¹⁵ Their research should also illuminate a conundrum that has long mystified Mark Twain scholars: why Twain considered *Joan of Arc* the best work of art he created.

Jenn also collaborated on a book entitled *Mark Twain & France: The Making of a New American Identity* with Paula Harrington, a professor of American literature at Colby College (Harrington and Jenn 2017). When Twain wrote, “I am quite sure that (bar one) I have no race prejudices” (Twain 1992a, 355) it is widely accepted that the “one” referred to his prejudice against the French. Their book does more than shed light on Twain’s well-known lifelong animosity towards the French. As it examines in detail what transpired during Twain’s multiple periods of residence in France throughout this life (some eighteen months all told), it probes the complex ways in which France and the French served as a cultural foil in Twain’s efforts to construct “a new kind of ‘American’ identity in the second half of the nineteenth century” (Harrington and Jenn 2017, 6). In a welcome departure from the field’s often globally blinkered and hermetically sealed discussions of American exceptionalism, it compares French exceptionalism and American exceptionalism as it shines a light on Twain’s engagement with both (Harrington and Jenn 2017, 8). The Fulbright Program and the *Commission franco-américaine*, allowed Harrington to conduct initial research in Paris as a Fulbright Scholar in 2013 and to begin the conversations with Jenn that developed into the book. They continued their collaboration during stays as Fellows-in-Residence at Quarry Farm, the Clemens summer home in Elmira, New York, run by the Center for Mark Twain Studies. “Because our topic was transnational in essence, the confrontation of our points of view and methods helped us strike a balance between what could be of interest to scholars and general readers in both countries,” they write. “Intense discussions helped us define the general frame of our project and make sense of Mark Twain’s elusive and intriguing relationship to France… Harrington’s writing skills, her ability to contextualize scholarship, and background as a reporter gave zest and energy to what could have been a mere collection of scholarly details. Jenn’s background as a Translation Studies scholar was instrumental in assessing the historical and sociological mechanisms of Clemens’ literary reception in France and his relationship to the French as a nation on a worldwide scale.”¹⁶

As the projects described in this chapter make clear, collaboration is shaping the field of Transnational American Studies in profound ways. It is helping scholars frame questions that cannot be explored from one location alone, or from sources in one language alone. It is opening up fresh avenues of inquiry and generating unexpected insights. Younger scholars needing to establish reputations in the academy may worry that stealing time from writing monographs and single-authored articles to spend time on collaborative projects might be risky. At a moment when tenure committees may be ill equipped to evaluate a junior...
scholar’s role in a collaborative project, they may be right to be concerned. But mechanisms should be developed to make it possible to give junior scholars the credit they deserve for the time and effort they put into collaborative scholarship—to reward them for helping an ambitious, multi-faceted transnational project succeed. Embracing the energy and excitement of collaborative scholarly ventures will help Transnational American Studies ask the bold, complex and imaginative questions it needs to ask and frame the capacious answers those questions demand.

Notes
1 The journal’s first associate managing editors were Nigel Hatton and Steven Sunwoo Lee, then both graduate students in Stanford’s Program in Modern Thought and Literature, and Yanoula Athanassakis, a graduate student in English at UC-Santa Barbara. After the first several issues appeared, Tom Bender (New York University) joined the Editorial Board, becoming an editor emeritus in 2015. In 2015, Hsuan Hsu (UC-Davis) and Kevin Gaines (Cornell) joined the Editorial Board. Chris Suh, a Stanford graduate student in History joined the editorial team, first as Special Forums Editor, and later as Co-Managing Editor. Brian Goodman (Arizona State University) succeeded Chris Suh as Special Forums Editor, a position he now shares with Erica Doss (Notre Dame University). Sabine Kim (Johannes Gutenberg University), who began as an Associate Managing Editor, is the current Managing Editor. Current Associate Managing Editors include Selina Lai-Henderson (Duke Kunshan University), Jonathan Leal (Stanford University), Brendan Shanahan (McGill University), and Aiko Takeuchi-Demirci (Stanford). Former editorial staff are Associate Managing Editors Corey Johnson (Stanford), who also served as Co-Managing Editor and Max Suechting (Stanford). For more, see http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=acgcc_jtas;view=advisoryboard, http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=acgcc_jtas;view=editorialboard, and http://escholarship.org/uc/search?entity=acgcc_jtas;view=aboutus.

2 David Bradley introduced How to Tell a Story and Other Stories and Essays; E.L. Doctorow, introduced The Adventures of Tom Sawyer; Hal Holbrook introduced Speeches; Erica Jong introduced I601 and Is Shakespeare Dead?; Ursula Le Guin introduced The Diaries of Adam and Eve; Toni Morrison introduced Adventures of Huckleberry Finn; Gore Vidal introduced Following the Equator and Anti-Imperialist Essays; and Kurt Vonnegut introduced A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court (Fishkin 1996).

3 “While most Americanists in the United States today reject celebratory narratives of American exceptionalism and nationalism, viewing earlier proponents of them as blinkered and benighted, many have a curious complacency about something that may strike future generations as equally benighted: an intellectual provincialism that is just as problematic. If the old exceptionalist, nationalist scholarship privileged the United States as a unique repository of progress and wisdom, many today privilege the work of U.S.-based scholars in an analogous way. As John Carlos Rowe has noted, ‘Even when we are dealing with international phenomena, such as imperialism, economic trade, and immigration and diaspora, we continue to rely on examples and authors from within the continental United States.’ If the citations in the books and articles we publish refer to nothing published outside the United States, if our syllabi include no article or book by a non-U.S.-based scholar, if the circle of colleagues with whom we regularly share our work all live in the United States, if we assume that the subject of our study is by definition what transpires within U.S. borders, and if all are comfortable reading or speaking no language but English, many of us see nothing amiss…. How can U.S.-based scholars have any perspective on their subject of study if they talk only to themselves? I do not want to privilege or essentialize location as a key determinant of the kind or quality of scholarship a person is likely to produce. What I do want to do, however, is interrogate the privileged position that US-based scholars and publications enjoy in the field of American studies” (Fishkin 2005a, 36).

4 My comments here draw on Fishkin, “American Literature in Transnational Perspective.”

5 Although JTAS friends and colleagues volunteered their advice and guidance on the book as a favor, I offered to pay individuals who did the translations, quickly exhausting my limited Stanford research funds paying stipends in the process. I began to lobby the Library of America for additional translator stipends. They had never been faced with such a request before. After all, they were the Library of America, and had assumed that everything they published would have been originally published in English (despite the fact that Werner Sollors and others had recently been uncovering America’s
multilingual literary heritage). I persuaded them of the importance of coming up with a modest budget for translations (and I was pleasantly surprised when Geoffrey O’Brien, the editor-in-chief of the Library of America, got involved himself in tweaking the translation of an essay by Borges).


7 Members of the delegation from Guangdong universities and the provincial government included: Professor Zhang Guoxiong (张国雄) (Vice-Chancellor of Wu Yi University), Professor Zhang Yinglong (张应龙) (Associate Dean of Department of History in Sun Yat-sen University), Professor Yuan Jing (袁京) (Professor of Department of History in Sun Yat-sen University), Professor Zhu Weibin (朱卫斌) (Professor of Department of History in Sun Yat-sen University), Zhu Jiang (朱江) (Director of Guangdong Provincial Office of Overseas Chinese Affairs), and Cui Dong (崔冬) (Director of a Department in Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of Guangdong Province).

8 Denise Khor, now of Boston University, was Research Coordinator when she was still at Stanford. Other present and past members of the Stanford team include Roland Hsu, who became Research Director after Denise left; Gabe Wolfenstein, our Project Manager; and researcher Teri Hessel, who uncovered valuable materials herself and also helped coordinate the student interns.

9 Full programs for conferences the Project sponsored or co-sponsored in 2012, 2013, and 2014 are available on the Project’s website, archived under the “What’s New” tab http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/whats-new/page/2/.

10 Honoring Stanford University with its Common Ground Award for the Advancement in U.S.-China Relations at its annual conference in San Francisco on April 25, 2014, the Committee of 100 recognized Stanford’s Chinese Railroad Workers in North America Project as well as the university’s scientific and academic exchanges over the years. Stanford President John Hennessey received the award, and the Project’s co-directors, Gordon H. Chang and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, were introduced to the audience. A short video describing the Project was shown.

11 “The Chinese and the Iron Road.” Photographic exhibit curated by Gordon H. Chang, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and Sue Lee, co-sponsored by the Chinese Railroad Workers in North America and the Chinese Historical Society of America. Since its debut at Stanford on June 6, 2015, the exhibit has travelled to the Chinese Historical Society of America in San Francisco, the San Diego Public Library, and other venues.

12 For links to press reports on the Project that have appeared in the US and in Asia, see http://web.stanford.edu/group/chineserailroad/cgi-bin/wordpress/press/.

13 “Identity in America from a Multi-Cultural Perspective.” Class co-taught by Gloria Anzaldúa, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, Carla Peterson, Jeff Rubin-Dorsky, Lillian Robinson and Richard Yarborough under the auspices of Centro de Investigaciones Sobre Los Estados Unidos de America (CISUA) at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, June 1992.

14 Emron Esplin, personal communication, August 26, 2016.

15 France Berkeley Fund grant proposal, 2016, awarded to Linda Morris and Ronald Jenn.


Bibliography


Shelley Fisher Fishkin
Collaboration in TAS


