Red Migrations

Transnational Mobility and Leftist Culture after 1917

EDITED BY PHILIP GLEISSNER
AND BRADLEY A. GORSKI

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS
Toronto Buffalo London

© University of Toronto Press 2024
Toronto Buffalo London
utorontopress.com
Printed in the USA

ISBN 978-1-4875-4388-4 (cloth) ISBN 978-1-4875-4389-1 (EPUB)
ISBN 978-1-4875-4390-7 (PDF)

Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Red migrations : transnational mobility and leftist culture after 1917 / edited by Philip Gleissner and Bradley A. Gorski.
Names: Gleissner, Philip, editor. | Gorski, Bradley A., editor.
Description: Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20240347331 | Canadiana (ebook) 20240347390 | ISBN 9781487543884 (cloth) | ISBN 9781487543891 (EPUB) | ISBN 9781487543907 (PDF)
Subjects: LCSH: Soviet Union – History – Revolution, 1917–1921 – Influence. | LCSH: Soviet Union – Emigration and immigration – Political aspects. | LCSH: Transnationalism – History – 20th century. | LCSH: Intellectuals – History – 20th century. | LCSH: Ideology and literature – History – 20th century. | LCSH: Slavic literature – 20th century – History and criticism. | LCSH: Aesthetics, Modern – 20th century.
Classification: LCC DK265.9.I5 R43 2024 | DDC 947.084/1–dc23

Cover design: Hannah Gaskamp
Cover image: Regina Bilan/Shutterstock.com

We wish to acknowledge the land on which the University of Toronto Press operates. This land is the traditional territory of the Wendat, the Anishnaabeg, the Haudenosaunee, the Métis, and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

University of Toronto Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario, for its publishing activities.

Canada Council for the Arts | Conseil des Arts du Canada

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO
an Ontario government agency
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Funded by the Government of Canada | Financé par le gouvernement du Canada

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To the memory of Helen Fehervary and Katerina Clark.

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Acknowledgments

All books are journeys, and this has been – appropriately – an especially long, peripatetic, and collaborative one. We put together our first Red Migrations event – a round table at the annual ASEEES convention – in November 2018. The enthusiastic response there helped the idea blossom into a long-term collaborative research project. We hosted another series of panels at the AATSEEL conference in spring 2019, and just as we were putting together a workshop for the papers-in-progress that eventually coalesced into this volume, the COVID-19 crisis closed borders and stymied mobility in a way we never thought possible in the twenty-first century. Through that difficult time of isolation, however, our research on the idealistic transnationalism of the post-Revolutionary years became something of a lifeline for us. Our international travellers – the leftists, artists, and revolutionaries who fill these pages – had brought us together for years, and now they connected us even during lockdown. The Red Migrations virtual seminar series spanned the fall of 2020 and provided yet another opportunity to refine the research collected here. In this way, this book is a product of the pandemic. It was finally worked out in the months of isolation, through computer screens, and in two dimensions. And perhaps for that reason, it is everything the pandemic was not. It is expansive, idealistic, collaborative, and we hope inspiring. For that, we have many people to thank.

First, we want to thank all of our collaborators. Those whose contributions fill this volume stuck with us through many iterations, several rounds of edits, and the inevitable silences of academic publishing. Their work is the best tribute to their efforts. But many more worked with us along the way. The first round table included inspiring work by Elena Ostrovskaya and Thomas Kitson. Kaitlyn Tucker, Holly Myers, Elise Thorsen, Elena Zemskova, Katherine Reischl, and Milla Fedorova presented polished research that pushed our panel series and seminars to

a higher level. Galin Tihanov launched the seminar series with an incisive keynote that added depth to the way we connected transnational movements and aesthetic theories. Greg Afinogenov, Rossen Djagalov, and Helena Goscilo volunteered their time as discussants and provided invaluable commentary that advanced the research further.

We would also like to thank the various institutions that have supported this project, including the program committees of ASEEES and especially AATSEEL, which provided Red Migrations with a stream of panels at its 2019 conference. Thanks also go to our home institutions, Georgetown University and the Ohio State University, both of which provided us the stability and support necessary to carry out such a long-term project. Georgetown University supported this research through a Summer Salary Supplement grant that facilitated the completion of the manuscript. The College of Arts and Sciences at Ohio State awarded Red Migrations a Conference Support grant and generously allowed for it to be used as a book subvention grant, after we had to cancel our in-person conference, replacing it with a number of virtual events.

We would also like to thank our tireless editor at University of Toronto Press, Stephen Shapiro, who has championed this project from its early days and has seen the manuscript through many iterations, transmogrifications, and blown deadlines. His stewardship of the project has been invaluable. The intellectual generosity of the two anonymous reviewers helped sharpen and deepen the book's arguments, and we would like to express our sincere gratitude for their willingness to carefully review this lengthy volume.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge that the long and oftentimes joyful process of creating this volume also included moments of profound grief. On 13 April 2023, our contributor Helen Fehervary passed away unexpectedly in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Her impressive research on leftist German literature, and especially Anna Seghers, documents with great depth and genuine personal involvement the history of the transnational mode of intellectual life in the twentieth century. Less than a year later, we lost Katerina Clark on 1 February 2024. A pioneering scholar of socialist internationalism, Katy defined the field to which this book contributes. She attended our very first roundtable and gave characteristically generous and incisive feedback to everyone throughout the process. As her work has been at the heart of this research project from the beginning, it is only fitting (though unplanned) that her contribution finds its place at the very center of this volume. We dedicate this volume to the memory of these two enthusiastic and inspiring scholars and colleagues, and express our heartfelt sympathy to their families, friends, and students.

Introduction: From Internationalism to Transnationalism

BRADLEY A. GORSKI AND PHILIP GLEISSNER

As we enter the third year of Vladimir Putin's brutal and unprovoked war against Ukraine, it may seem an odd time to think about transnational movements sparked by the 1917 Russian Revolution. But it is precisely at such moments of isolationism, xenophobia, and rising nationalism that we need to examine alternative ways of being, to recall the hopes and possibilities that drive cross-border movements and create hybrid identities. Indeed, new transnational imaginaries often coincide with isolation, separatist tendencies, and state violence. When Russia launched its full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, borders closed and travel (not to mention archival research) became more difficult. The invasion itself was based on a delusion of Russian exceptionalism and a paranoid fear of Ukraine's increasing openness to the West. The Ukrainian people have suffered immeasurably because of that delusion and paranoia. But Ukraine has only become more a part of the "collective West" (as Putin often characterizes his "true" enemy). Flows of refugees, monetary aid, and military support have criss-crossed the Ukrainian border. The war has forged one of the strongest international alliances in recent memory to impose sanctions on Russia and support the Ukrainian cause. Even Russia, despite its increasing isolationism, has become more transnational, not less, as a wave of conscientious objectors settled abroad in the first months of the war, and another wave fled mobilization in October 2022. Nearby capitals from Tbilisi to Tallinn have been overrun with Russian citizens, who still maintain ties – economic, informational, affective – with those within Russia proper. New transnational solidarities have been formed, often with Ukrainian artists and activists in the lead, that are rallying support from international organizations and allies from around the world. Far from stamping out personal and economic transnationalism, Russian brutality has made such ties more important than ever.

Red Migrations looks back across the century to the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution as a very different moment of intensive transnational connectivity to understand what previous movements, networks, and solidarities might have to offer us today. What emerges is a complex constellation of transnationalism that cuts against two dominant narratives of the post-revolutionary moment. The first, characteristic of traditional émigré studies, frames the revolution as a rupture, a breaking of ties between Russia and the rest of the world. That narrative, as we argue below, was long at the heart of the discipline of Slavic and East European Studies as it grew up among the binary thinking of the Cold War. An important counternarrative, which has attracted renewed scholarly attention in recent decades, centres on the Communist International and the Soviet Union's ambitions for world revolution. That counternarrative, however, tells only part of the story. At least as important as the Soviet state, we argue, were the transnational movements and networks of individuals motivated by desires, hopes, fears, and affections. For this reason, *Red Migrations* proposes a third way of thinking about spatial displacement after 1917 – through the lens of transnationalism – in order to expand the two paradigms of traditional émigré studies and Soviet internationalism. *Red Migrations* sees mobility after 1917 as infused with the hopes of world revolution and activated by protean networks of individuals, institutions, geographies, and ideas. It is a version of leftist internationalism, but informed by theories of transnationalism: an internationalism from below.

The Revolution and World Culture

The decade immediately following the revolution – the 1920s – was one of intense intercultural ferment. Although initial hopes that the 1917 Revolution would immediately spark a worldwide communist conflagration were stymied when Polish forces repelled the Red Cavalry in 1921, the Third Communist International, or Comintern, founded two years earlier, actively developed communist parties throughout the world. This political internationalism was always accompanied by cultural analogues. Maxim Gorky founded the "World Literature" publishing house immediately after the revolution. By 1920, Anatoly Lunacharsky, the People's Commissar of Enlightenment, had found himself head of a (short-lived) Kul'tintern or Cultural International. Later, at the Fourth Comintern Conference, Lunacharsky would propose an equally short-lived Literary International. In 1927, under the auspices of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) and the International Bureau of Revolutionary Literature (Mezhdunarodnoe

biuro revoliutsionnoi literatury, MBRL), Moscow hosted the First International Conference of Proletarian and Revolutionary Writers, with attendees from fourteen countries. Early the following year, the *Herald of Foreign Literature* (*Vestnik inostrannoi literatury*) began publication, with Lunacharsky as its chief editor. In Berlin, the International Workers' Aid Organization or Mezhrabpom was formed; it soon focused its efforts on its film studio, which would connect not only German and Soviet filmmakers but also other representatives of leftist world cinema.[1]

The 1930s are usually remembered as the decade in which Stalin's "socialism in one country" won out over the hope for world revolution. (Indeed, by the late 1930s world revolution had become associated with the Trotskyite "left opposition.") But on the cultural front, the 1930s were perhaps even more international than the 1920s. In 1931 the journal *Literature of the World Revolution* (*Literatura mirovoi revoliutsii*) launched, continuing the work of *Herald of Foreign Literature*, and changing its name to *International Literature* the following year. Associated now with the newly founded International Association of Revolutionary Writers (Mezhdunardonyoe ob"ednienie revoliutsionnykh pisatelei, MORP), the successor organization of MRBL, it maintained its commitment (for the time being) to publishing a broad array of literature in first four and then six world languages.[2]

The anti-imperialist play *Roar China*, which Sergei Tretiakov had written after his own travels east, premiered in Moscow and then travelled the world from New York to Guangzhou.[3] In fact, as Soviet cultural policy narrowed towards the adoption of socialist realism in 1934, cultural leftism spread around the globe in sometimes planned and sometimes unexpected ways. The Communist Party of the United States founded John Reed Clubs as havens for proletarian literature, while the New York–based émigré newspaper *The Russian Voice* – and its literary editor David Burliuk – actively cultivated Russian-language leftist poetry in the US (see chapter 11 in this volume). In 1935 in Paris, the Comintern sponsored the anti-fascist First Conference for the Defence of Culture; a Second Conference would follow in 1937, at the very peak of the Stalinist terror at home. Leftist cultural institutions also moved farther afield; for example, the Marxist Workers School (MASCH), expelled from Berlin in 1933, was reimagined by its visionary director as a workers' school in Mexico City (chapter 12 below), and the Indian Progressive Writers' Association convened its inaugural conference in Lucknow in 1936.[4]

This cultural ferment of the 1930s was inextricable from the diffusion of political leftism in the same decade. As the Soviet vision of world revolution faded, different leftist political imaginaries took hold in various parts of the world. Mao Zedong's peasant-focused collectivism

had found popularity in the southeastern Chinese province of Jiangxi, where he was elected chairman of a semi-autonomous "Soviet Republic" amid growing political instability in the country. The American communist Harry Haywood enthusiastically adopted what he called the "Black Belt" thesis, which argued that African Americans within the US constituted an oppressed nation. The Russian-Jewish poet Osip Mandelshtam interviewed an emerging communist leader from French Indochina, who would later take on the name Ho Chi Minh, and heard in his words "not European culture, but the culture of the future … the approach of tomorrow, the oceanic silence of universal brotherhood."[5] In Britain, a small group of influential Trotskyists lamented the abandonment of world revolution and what they saw as Stalin's betrayal of leftist ideals. One member of the group, the Trinidadian historian C.L.R. James, wrote the first book-length study of the Comintern, *World Revolution, 1917–1936*, which appeared in 1937. For James, these decades represented Moscow's best attempt to disseminate communist politics and culture throughout the world.[6] But it is not James's story, nor any of the other stories sketched above that has dominated the study of East European cultural or political transnationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. That story has been dominated by the so-called white émigrés.

White Culture, White Politics

The First World War, the Revolution, and the Russian Civil War displaced an enormous number of Russians, anywhere between one and three million according to various estimates by international organizations conducted in the early 1920s.[7] Although many were prisoners of war who were eventually repatriated, nearly a million remained abroad permanently.[8] This "first wave" of Russian emigration, as it came to be called, shaped the interwar and even post-war Western imagination of both Russia and the Soviet Union. It was often suggested that "Russia Abroad" at this time was a more authentic version of Russia than that which had fallen to the Bolsheviks.[9] "The revolution and the civil war split Russia in two – literally and figuratively," Marc Raeff wrote in the opening of his classic study *Russia Abroad*. "One lost the very name of Russia and became first the RSFSR and then the USSR; the other, defeated by Lenin's government, rejecting and escaping the newly created RSFSR, constituted itself into a Russia beyond the borders, Russia Abroad."[10] Here, characteristically, the two Russias are presented as vying for legitimacy (Russia "split in two"), but the advantage is clear: one has transformed itself into a changing series of acronyms, while the other still constitutes "Russia," only now beyond borders.

A more recent book by Greta Slobin invokes the same binary opposition and assigns the groups their now familiar colours: "The October Revolution of 1917 and ensuing Civil War divided the citizens of the Russian Empire into the Reds and the Whites, creating a political schism."[11] In this framing, it is the whites who constituted the authentic Russia beyond borders, Russia Abroad.[12] It is true that many of those fleeing the revolution had some affiliation with the White Army (the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia was happy to claim, dubiously, that "within the white émigré community there are at least 1,000,000 participants in the White Army") and that others were monarchists – the political affiliation most directly associated with the term "whites."[13] But the emigration was much more diverse than this description allows. Burliuk, for instance, an anarchist, painter, and Futurist poet who found his way to New York, where he worked for "a firmly Soviet newspaper" in what he called "the country of predatory capitalism," would be counted among the first wave and by implication the white émigrés, as would many Social Democrats, Mensheviks, and other leftists.[14] Chapter 5 in this volume addresses this ambivalence of the first wave, which often maintained a surprising openness towards continued association with the Soviet state.

Researchers often acknowledge this political diversity, yet it is commonly downplayed in the historical narrative and all but lost in the popular imagination. Gleb Struve's encyclopaedic *Russian Literature in Exile* (*Russkaia literatura v izgnanii*, 1959) features a thorough index of émigré personalities, including many who appear in this volume: Shklovsky, Ehrenburg, Gorky, and even Burliuk. The protagonists of the narrative part of Struve's book, however, are different: the firmly anti-Soviet writers Ivan Bunin, Dmitry Merezhkovskii, Vladislav Khodasevich, Zinaida Gippius, Viacheslav Ivanov, and so on. When Bunin gave his 1924 speech, "The Mission of the Russian Emigration," he noted that there were three million Russians in emigration but suggested excluding from that number any who might be secret supporters or even sympathizers of the Soviet Union and who had found their way abroad only "in order to shame us in front of foreigners and to sow discord."[15] Belonging to the true Russian emigration, in other words, was determined by political affiliations and was arbitrated by powerful cultural figures.

This exclusive community had a mission, as Bunin further elaborated: to be a "threatening sign to the world and capable fighters for the eternal, divine fundamentals of human existence that nowadays, not only in Russia, but everywhere have been shaken."[16] For Bunin, as for many of the influential figures of the first wave, the revolution was a downfall of biblical proportions, and embracing it was a sin.

Emigration, he proposed, was a matter of choice, a demonstration of rejection at the price of leaving everything that was once held dear. The fashioning of exilic reality as a moral choice among the white émigrés is nowhere as pronounced as in the slogan "We are not in exile; we are on a mission" ("My ne v izgnanii, my v poslanii," commonly ascribed to Merezhkovskii and Gippius, although it originated in a 1927 poem by Nina Berberova).[17] As the white émigrés' self-fashioning was embraced in scholarly works, that slogan became something of a truism, synthesizing ideological uniformity and political commitment that framed migration in moral terms, as a deliberate act of negating the revolution.

But if emigration was a political statement, it was often oversimplified into the "absolute rejection of the Bolshevik regime." And it was also expressed primarily through culture – specifically a high, largely literary culture, which saw itself as detached from politics.[18] "Culture, for the Russian émigrés," writes Raeff,

> was an essential aspect of their national identity, of the identity as educated, at whatever level, Russian people. It consisted of all those manifestations of … "high" culture: the literary, artistic, and scientific or scholarly creations of the nation, which are promulgated by such institutions as church, school, theater, books and journals, informal clubs, societies, and organizations. In all of these manifestations, however, there was a specifically *Russian* identity.[19]

This assertion that culture, not politics, constituted the core of Russia Abroad is at the centre of many such accounts.[20] Indeed, the priority of an authentic culture untouched by the volatile politics of the twentieth century became an essential aspect of the Russian emigration's self-fashioning. Vladimir Nabokov, perhaps the English language's most forceful spokesperson for this view, would later write that "a work of art has no importance whatever to society."[21] But of course, culture *is* important to society, and it *is* political. Indeed, the politics of the Soviet Union, where culture could not be divorced from politics, was the major (and political!) reason why the white emigration insisted on a culture that rejected politics.[22]

The vehement denial of politics was a political stance in itself. Moreover, the fixation on the "whiteness" *and* cultural purity of the first wave of the Russian emigration carried significant political baggage.[23] And that baggage has, to a large extent, defined not only émigré studies but the field of Slavic and East European Studies more broadly. In the post–Second World War period, many of the white émigrés and their descendants made their way across the Atlantic just at the time when the US was ramping up both its funding for area studies and

its anti-communist messaging. The white émigré narrative of a pure culture disinterested in politics (aside from an "absolute rejection of the Bolshevik regime") found fertile ground in the burgeoning field of Slavic Studies. Many early Slavic departments employed or were founded by white émigré scholars and teachers, and the field's major publications, according to a recent meta-analysis, showed a marked tendency in the post-war decades for discussions of "high," largely pre-revolutionary, culture as detached from direct political concerns.[24]

Without denying the many invaluable contributions to Russian and world culture made by the first wave of Russian émigrés, *Red Migrations* is meant, in part, as a corrective to the mythology and mystique of the white émigré narrative. It interrogates the very roots of Slavic Studies in North America in order to reconceptualize this originary moment as something more open, diverse, and progressive. While émigré studies (and diaspora studies more broadly) posit movements as unidirectional – which, in this case, means *away from* Soviet Russia – *Red Migrations* sees multidirectional and overlapping trajectories: of emissaries sent from the young Soviet Union; of idealists, journalists, and workers attracted to the socialist project; and of émigrés and exiles who later decided to return. Where the white émigré narrative is driven by the single-minded flight from political persecution, *Red Migrations* sees both attraction and repulsion, desire and fear, hope and need as drivers of transnational movements in the years after 1917. By questioning the monolithic vision of the white emigration and introducing a broader spectrum of political allegiances, geographical movements, and international networks, *Red Migrations* brings to light the long-overlooked diversity at the very heart of the field's emergence.

Internationalism as Counternarrative

As a counterbalance to the white émigré narrative, socialist modes of global mobility have gained significant scholarly attention in recent decades. Such accounts inevitably start with the Comintern, Moscow's project for forging an international alliance of communists in the 1920s and 1930s. In these decades, Moscow became – in Katerina Clark's provocative phrase – "the fourth Rome," but not because of the Stalinist doctrine of socialism in one country, the increasingly paranoid repressions, or even the military build-up to war. In fact, it became a global centre *despite* all of these tendencies and because it encouraged cultural and aesthetic exchanges that intersected with an idealistic internationalism in a moment of increasing oppression of leftist politics by the emerging fascist regimes of Europe. The recent volume *Comintern*

Aesthetics highlights this inner contradiction of socialist organizing across national borders in the 1930s: the Comintern's "subservience to Soviet state interests and Stalinist realpolitik," on one hand, and, on the other, its "unrealized and perhaps unrealizable dream: to balance centripetal control with local struggle, internationalism, and nationalism."[25] Art and literature that were internationalist in either their organizational practices or their aesthetics, that volume argues, embodied the spirit of the Comintern, creating an alternative network of world culture that decentred traditional hubs, especially Paris. But, as the editors note, "the sheer variety of contexts … made clear the pitfalls of simply replacing the Parisian centre with a Muscovite one."[26] The culture of the world revolution, albeit heavily shaped by the Soviet Union, was in reality polycentric.

By focusing on mobility and transnational networks and treating the Comintern as only one of many factors in cross-border pursuits, we aim to further broaden the discussion of global leftist culture. Even the Soviet Union itself often played an affective role that went beyond the institutional efforts of the Comintern. For many it was a beacon of hope. It embodied the promise that revolutionary change was possible, it supported the anti-colonial struggle, and – as large swathes of Europe descended into economic depression and fascism – it offered a model of a more just society. Publications around the world – some with direct financial or logistical support from the Soviet Union through the Comintern, others independently – celebrated the revolution and called on working people from the Americas to East Asia to think in new ways about economic and social justice. Emissaries from the Soviet Union travelled throughout the world, some of them agitating for revolution, others cultivating cultural ties, many doing both. These travellers populate the following chapters – Roman Utkin, for instance, introduces the reader to Ilya Ehrenburg, Andrei Bely, and Viktor Shklovsky as they contemplate, not without ideological ambivalence, returning from Berlin to the Soviet Union (chapter 5); Serguei Oushakine follows Sergei Eisenstein, Grigorii Aleksandrov, and Eduard Tisse as they meet Walt Disney and Charlie Chaplin in Hollywood (chapter 1); and Michael Kunichika traces Nikolai Aseev's trip through Europe, where he meets, among others, Maxim Gorky, whose villa in Sorrento serves as a hub of the red migrants (chapter 9).

What unites the chapters of this volume is that they put mobility itself at the centre, demonstrating how the temporary and long-term movements of artists, culture workers, and cultural theorists and the concrete mechanisms of cultural exchange around them shaped their ideologies, social theories, and artistic practices. For many of those drawn towards

the Soviet centre, the institutions of internationalism provided a justification and an infrastructure to pursue a wide variety of projects. In the 1920s and especially the 1930s – the period at the core of the phenomenon Clark describes as Moscow's role as the "fourth Rome" – the country hosted travellers and migrants from the world over. Prominent Marxists like Georg Lukács and Antonio Gramsci came to study at the Marx-Engels Institute, but the institute also attracted lesser-known figures whose trajectories and contributions are explored in this volume for the first time, such as the British Communist Ralph Fox (chapter 7) and the Hungarian Dadaist and Marxist theoretician Janos Mácza (chapter 2). Others were interested in the Soviet Union as a land supposedly free of prejudice, where Black American workers like Margaret Glasgow and Robert Robinson could form an identity not entirely determined by race (chapter 10) and where communists and fellow travellers like Arthur Koestler and Langston Hughes could negotiate the relative values of social boundaries (chapter 6).

Chapters in this volume that are less engaged with physical relocation trace the parallel and concurrent circulation of ideas, cultural forms, and even language, as in Trevor Wilson's chapter on the cross-border exchanges and publication of late socialist works on Marxist philosophy (chapter 4), Elizabeth Stern's chapter on the import of socialist realist ballet to the GDR (chapter 3), and Edward Tyerman's discussion of Chinese migrant workers as a literary trope (chapter 8). What unites all these contributions is that they reveal how neither the paradigm of (white) émigré studies nor the focus on Comintern internationalism in isolation allows for an exhaustive treatment of mobilities to, from, and around the Soviet Union in the twentieth century.

Internationalism, Cosmopolitanism, Transnationalism

Using the tension between émigré studies and research on socialist internationalism as its point of departure, *Red Migrations* straddles two ongoing and vibrant scholarly conversations in distinct fields. The first, in Slavic Studies, re-examines the role of the Soviet Union on the world stage, especially in the interwar period and, to some extent, also after the Second World War. The second, in Migration Studies, addresses the urgent need to understand transnational movements and how they interact with interpersonal networks, economic drivers, political exigencies, and desires. Each of these debates has helped focus the research in this volume, not least by generating a scholarly vocabulary that can be loosely grouped around three key concepts that are essential for understanding movements across borders in this time period: internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and transnationalism.

Internationalism figured prominently in communist thought long before the Bolshevik Revolution, and in the post-1917 era it became the favoured label for the vision of a world revolution – sponsored by the Comintern – that would spread from Moscow to Europe and soon around the world. The Comintern's internationalism, as noted earlier, was a constant negotiation between an aspiration to "horizontal affinities across the lines of nation, race and culture" and a desire for central control.[27] Some, like Tyerman, see this negotiation as a productive tension "between the theoretical power of a Soviet-centric perspective on global history and the need for forms of translation and localized interpretation."[28] Others, like Brigitte Studer, see the Comintern's efforts at solidarity as flawed, at best "hierarchical but polycentric."[29] In its "turn to Stalinist centralization" in the late 1920s, the organization became increasingly unforgiving towards local variation in political positions.[30] Indeed, "internationalism," in Clark's estimation, was used at times as little more than "a euphemism for the cause of Soviet ideological hegemony throughout the world" and the violence that entailed.[31] Amelia Glaser and Steven Lee argue that in order to resist "the overall trend towards centralization" within the internationalist framework, scholars should "emphasize local agency against notions of the Comintern as monolith."[32]

Red Migrations takes up that challenge by focusing attention on the hyperlocal, on the movements and networks of individuals and small groups of cultural and political actors. Additionally, this volume probes another assumption undergirding internationalism, namely its tendency to view its actors within the boundaries of their respective nation-states. Expressed in the term inter-*national* – between nations – this foundational assumption continues to inform world governance today in organizations like the United Nations, NATO, and even the European Union, each of which has at its core the undisputed belief in the autonomous nation-state as the constitutive element of international organizations. This too was the challenge of the Comintern, which started as the *Third* International, a renegotiation between the values of communist solidarity across borders and those of national commitments, a conflict of interests that had fractured the *Second* International on the eve of the First World War.

Ilya Ehrenburg offers a powerful exposé of nationalism within the Second International in his 1921 picaresque novel *The Extraordinary Adventures of Julio Jurenito and His Disciples*. The narrator elaborates that while he had seen many things in life, from the urinals of Paris to Tatlin's project for the Monument to the Third International, nothing compared to this scene of internationalist discontent. At a fictive hotel

in (neutral) Geneva where socialist representatives from both factions of the war were meeting, "the two delegations stayed in two separate buildings: in order to avoid compromising themselves, they not only refused to meet, they even refused to correspond with each other, since they all were good, honest patriots. But, being socialists and members of the International, they all aspired to the renewal of comradely relations just as soon as the war had ended."[33]

Ehrenburg the polyglot reveals here in a comical key the flawed nature of the Second International on the eve of the First World War. National interest and identity become the inherent limitations of the project of internationalism, and the different parties communicate only through posters and slogans displayed in their respective hotel windows. Internationalism, Ehrenburg suggests, inevitably runs up against the nation; the logic of its constituent elements becomes its biggest obstacle.

Cosmopolitanism, on the other hand, has always sought to transcend the idea of the nation. The term can be traced back to the fourth century BCE, when Diogenes the Cynic called himself a citizen of the cosmos, rather than of the political state of Athens. In the Soviet context, cosmopolitanism was not much used by the Comintern and thus did not become a cover for Soviet hegemony. Indeed, its Soviet legacy is something of the opposite: it evolved into a strongly pejorative term, especially during Stalin's increasingly paranoid post-war purges, which chiefly targeted Soviet Jews (see chapter 1 in this volume). At this moment, even Ehrenburg himself, who had so shrewdly observed the lack of leftist solidarity across national borders, now found himself in an impossible position: between opposition to this amalgamation of antisemitism and nationalist insecurity on the one hand, and cooperation with the Soviet state on the other.[34] In today's Russia, the term cosmopolitanism has been revived to add a conspiratorial valence to charges against so-called "foreign agents" and others with international ties. In this way, cosmopolitanism has the dual advantage of moving beyond the nation-state and also being opposed to the distinct history of Stalinist hegemonic aspirations and their connections to state violence.

Like internationalism, cosmopolitanism also articulates a tension between two aspirations, but it is not between the horizontal and the vertical. Cosmopolitanism does not conjure images of central control; even the "kinless cosmopolites" of Stalin's paranoid imaginings are dangerous not because they are active agents of another power, but because they are so dissociated from their own country that they are susceptible to outside forces. The tension in the term cosmopolitanism, then, is not between solidarity and central control, but between universality and cultural particularity. Indeed, in today's critical vocabulary,

the term has been used to signify an aspiration to both universality and particularity at once. Cosmopolitanism is (in Martha Nussbaum's words) the "allegiance to the worldwide community of human beings," but at the same time (in Paul Rabinow's) it is "an ethos of macro-interdependencies, with an acute consciousness … of the inescapabilities and particularities of places, characters, historical trajectories and fates."[35] Recognizing this tension between the universal and the culturally specific, Kwame Anthony Appiah writes that "there is a sense in which cosmopolitanism is the name not of the solution, but of the challenge."[36]

The challenge, for Bruno Latour, is understanding that the "cosmos" in "cosmopolitan" might mean very different things to different actors. Drawing on Isabelle Stengers's work *Cosmopolitique* (1997), Latour proposes a "constructivist cosmopolitics" that would interrogate and value the construction of what it means to be universal, instead of assuming that the "allegiance to the worldwide community of human beings" means the same thing to all those humans.[37] Indeed, the years after the 1917 Revolution provide a particularly clear example of competing cosmoses. If the white emigration imagined a worldwide community based on ideals of individual liberty, aesthetic genius, and dissociation from political concerns, then the Soviet Union imagined something quite different: a universal brotherhood of working people and oppressed nations, and an anti-colonialism that would reject the exploitation of capitalism and ultimately work towards the world revolution. The Soviet vision, perhaps surprisingly, was the one more anchored in the nation-state. Indeed, in Stalin's programmatic text, "Marxism and the National Question" (1913), the path to universalism was mapped out in positively Wilsonian terms. Socialism would protect "the right of nations to self-determination"; at the same time, it would agitate "against harmful customs and institutions of that nation in order to enable the toiling strata of the nation to emancipate themselves from them."[38] The insistence on national self-determination continued throughout the interwar era, both within the Soviet Union and internationally through the Comintern, becoming something of a banner of the anti-colonial struggle. It was, in fact, the white émigrés – largely displaced persons and stateless actors – who abandoned the nation-state as a necessary aspect of political identity. In many ways, the white émigrés might be seen as cosmopolitans. Between the internationalism of the Comintern, then, and the cosmopolitanism of the white emigration, those who populate the following pages would need a third term.

The term transnationalism, which provides the conceptual backbone for this volume, describes a different mode of organization across borders. As a framework in the social sciences, transnationalism has

enjoyed great popularity over the past twenty years for its potential to reveal activity that disrupts clear-cut notions of the nation and its boundaries. It describes social practices created through global mobility that conceive of migration not as individualized incidents of relocation but rather as events embedded in a constant back-and-forth, a continuous negotiation of fluctuating identities and values in multiple places. Since the mid-twentieth century at least, the mobility of migrants has been enhanced by affordable air travel, the financial networks of global capitalism, greater tolerance toward dual citizenship, global systems of communication, and the circulation of political involvement and cultural forms these things facilitate. Increases in labour migration and population flows in the post-colonial and post-socialist era have come to rely on these infrastructures.[39]

Although these kinds of mobility may seem unique to late capitalism, multidirectional movements have long been part of global migration regimes. Many scholars now agree that transnationalism indexes "a novel perspective, if not a novel phenomenon."[40] Even in the earlier history of immigration to the United States, return migration and complex patterns of mobility between Europe and America were more common than often assumed. For instance, in 1921 roughly 800,000 new immigrants arrived in the US, but around 250,000 *left*, either disillusioned by the New World's unkept promises or having fulfilled their financial goals.[41] Although these kinds of mobility were not conceptualized as transnationalism at the time, recent developments in transnationalism studies have heightened awareness of return and circular migration patterns and systems of remittances as consistent elements of global mobility throughout human history. In migration studies, these observations have led to the questioning of the modern immigrant narrative as a story of singular relocation followed by a process of assimilation and negotiations around multiculturalism.[42] Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that if migrants continue to be mobile, concomitant social changes may not be so linear as the one-way narrative of assimilation suggests. Transnational identities remain in flux.

Early applications of this concept in migration studies have used the term transmigrants to refer to those "immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – that span borders," leading to a "multiplicity of involvements" in both countries of origin and countries of settlement.[43] Studying global mobility from this angle means eschewing a narrow focus on statistics of relocation and inventories of motivations and challenges. Indeed, defining who is a migrant as such has become somewhat of a moot point, a shift reflected in the current definition

suggested by the United Nations: a migrant is any "person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons."[44] This volume reflects such diversity of displacements. While some chapters focus on diaspora communities either as cultural agents or as a theme, others focus on lengthy travel or on temporary relocation, and yet others focus on more static subjects surrounded by agile networks of circulating cultural forms and influences. These kinds of mobilities are often interconnected: long-term relocation is entangled with the circulation of aesthetics, travel is embedded in networks of cultural exchange, and so forth. "All displacements are not the same," as Caren Kaplan reminds us, yet they often adhere to the same laws of attraction that set them in motion, shaping similar spaces for cultural exchange and social encounters.[45] More importantly, all kinds of mobility addressed in this volume lead to a similar multiplicity of involvements characteristic of the transnational.

The transnational lens of our volume reflects a diversity of displacements, each treated distinctly in its individual chapter. What these chapters have in common is a conscious shift away from state-sponsored institutions as the main source of agency, which is not to say that institutions do not matter. Quite the contrary. But the chapters in this volume show how institutions functioned as frameworks and facilitators, rather than exclusively as authorities and control mechanisms. Various actors inhabited institutional frameworks in different ways. Ralph Fox, for instance, parlayed his position within the Communist Party of Great Britain to become a leading adviser to the Soviets on South Asia (chapter 7), and German writers in the 1960s used the Writers' Union as a boutique travel agency, even as they withdrew their commitment to post-war socialist literature (chapter 14). In such instances, institutions do not control the movements of subjects. Instead, active subjects make use of institutions as they build transnational networks, motivated by their own hopes, desires, and solidarities.

Committed to the conceptual framework of transnational mobility with its multidirectional and parallel entanglements, this volume resists the urge to organize its chapters in terms of dominant directionalities (outreach versus influx), perceived quality of the relocation (short- versus long-term, voluntary versus forced), or even varieties of political commitment. None of these categories hold up to close scrutiny, which is, after all, one of the central arguments of this volume: mobilities are multidirectional; the duration of relocation is not indicative of its impact; subjective formulations of the desire to move and coerced migration are hard to separate; and ideological orientations are flexible,

subject to pragmatic and at times even cynical transformations. For this reason, we instead organize this book around four key terms, which emerged in the series of workshops preceding this volume: *Forms*, *Geographies*, *Identities*, and *Communities*.

The first section, *Forms*, collects four chapters that trace the movement of aesthetic forms across borders to develop theories of Marxist mobility that are deeply informed by the experience of transnational movements as well as by leftist aesthetics. Serguei Oushakine's chapter locates the cosmopolitan origins of Stalinist cinema in Hollywood and provides a genealogy for the downfall of the late-Stalinist anti-cosmopolitan campaign. By following a particularly influential filmmaker, Grigorii Alexandrov, to Hollywood and back in the 1930s, Oushakine shows how cultural arbitrage – the process of transporting a cultural product across a border in order to increase its value – is key to understanding both the development of Stalinist cinema and the post-war anti-cosmopolitan hysteria. Irina Denischenko traces a different vision of cultural transfer: she follows the Dadaist playwright and Marxist theorist Janos Mácza from the short-lived Hungarian Commune to Moscow, where he used his diverse experience of contemporary art to create the first transnational theory of the avant-garde – a theory previously all but unknown in English-language scholarship. Mácza's theory – complete with striking visuals – posits a concrete historical, rather than simply a formal, commonality among the artistic movements known as the historical avant-garde. Contributions by Elizabeth Stern and Trevor Wilson turn to the post–Second World War era to unearth how ideas travelled between the Soviet Union and its neighbours. Stern demonstrates how East German dance under Soviet rule relied on the belated circulation of Stalinist approaches to depicting the revolution on stage. Importing the Stalinist form of *drambalet*, she shows, proved essential in East Germany's development of a postwar socialist aesthetic that would simultaneously incorporate and deny the classical traditions of music and dance, traditions that had been tainted by Nazi involvement. Wilson reveals how the philosopher Eval'd Ilienkov developed his reconceptualization of dialectical materialism in correspondence with Bulgarian philosophers and the Italian Communist Party. Ilienkov was part of an active trans-European network and was first appreciated in Italy; his work demonstrates that the separation between Western and Soviet Marxism "was defined much more generationally than geographically."

The second section, *Geographies*, argues that red migrations, although traceable on a map, created their own geographies, attaching specific meanings to places, making some of them more relevant and thus

bringing them into closer mental proximity than a map might lead one to believe. In Roman Utkin's chapter, that place is Berlin, which emerges through the performative practices of the literary environment as a politically and aesthetically multivalent space with fluctuating loyalties to the Soviet state. Berlin becomes at once a place of exile, an empty space, and finally a place from which to return, as many of Utkin's émigrés leave Berlin for the East, back to the Soviet Union. With its unusual focus on émigrés commonly associated with the Russian diaspora rather than the Soviet state, the chapter reveals that red migrations are often phenomena of great ideological ambiguity, in which political alliances are as fluid as the actors are globally mobile. In Bradley Gorski's and Katerina Clark's contributions, Central Asia serves as the locus of productive engagement with the project of the revolution. In Gorski's chapter, Langston Hughes and Arthur Koestler experience Soviet modernity as it overcomes boundaries and breaches barriers between ethnicities, genders, and life practices. In their later memoirs, both Hughes and Koestler express these frontiers in terms of disgust – one urging stricter boundaries, and the other celebrating their breach. For Clark, Central Asia becomes a space of political ambitions on a Eurasianist scale, where the British communist Ralph Fox migrates towards Soviet communism through his imaginations of the Eurasian space. Simultaneously, the Central Asian steppe opens onto vistas of historical possibilities, where the legacies of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan can work as foils for current debates on despotic leaders, empirical expanses, and transnational nomadism.

The geography of the Soviet Union, straddling Europe and Asia, makes it particularly fertile soil for the negotiation of national, ethnic, and racial identity in the context of socialist modernity, as the third section, *Identities*, demonstrates. Edward Tyerman traces the trope of the Chinese migrant worker in Russian modernist and early Soviet writing, in which East Asian identities are exploited in order to express ideological positions during the Russian Civil War. He shows how the literary trope of the Chinese migrant focalized at once the desire for solidarity, the anxieties of national stability, and the "limit of community." Michael Kunichika follows the Futurist poet Nikolai Aseev on an "unsentimental journey" to Italy, where Roman ruins become a litmus test for Aseev's commitment to the aesthetic program of modernity. Aseev, Kunichika argues, ultimately travels to reaffirm his identity at home. By contrast, the red migrants who populate Kimberly St. Julian-Varnon's chapter are able to explore their identities away from the strictures placed on them at home. Following several African American migrants to the Soviet Union, St. Julian-Varnon shows how Soviet anti-racist rhetoric

and practice opened up a space for (re)formulating racial identities across classes in the 1920s and 1930s.

The new socialist context inspired new identities while also bringing together new configurations of creative, educational, and political actors, as the fourth section, *Communities*, demonstrates. Anna Arustamova shows how one of the key figures of the pre-revolutionary leftist elite in Soviet literature, the Futurist David Burliuk, organized an unexpected community of socialist cultural production in the United States. Burliuk's attempt to create a "proletarian" literature in America, she argues, undermines many common tropes of émigré culture and reconfigures what we know about both the politics and the aesthetics of interwar Russia Abroad. Helen Fehervary's study of the nomadic intellectual and Hungarian-German socialist László Radványi reveals his involvement in numerous endeavours in workers' education from Weimar Germany to Mexico City. Fehervary shows how education – a particularly important but underappreciated cultural undertaking – creates networks that are essential to émigré and transnational communities. Tatsiana Shchurko's meditation on an image from the Hermina Huiswoud archive demonstrates how, even when the realities of travel inhibited engagement between visitors and Soviet citizens, solidarities could be imagined based on shared experiences of racially determined oppression. Her chapter envisions a potential network of radical feminist solidarity that would connect Black Americans, Soviet Central Asians, and even researchers and activists today. Philip Gleissner's chapter traces how German writers in the 1960s took advantage of Soviet initiatives for cultural exchange to build networks of friendship and kinship across borders that bypassed official ideological commitments. He argues that desire – romantic, geographic, cultural – should be centred in studies of the formation of transnational networks that worked both within and beyond institutional frameworks.

Each of these sections unites multiple historical periods, from the early Soviet years to high Stalinism and the post-war era. It is our hope that this chronological diversity will give rise to new ideas about socialist culture's transnational mode of being and will highlight the agency of individual writers, artists, and activists. Introducing a fuller spectrum of political allegiances, geographical movements, and international networks, and their motivations, *Red Migrations* seeks long-neglected diversity in order to question the monolithic vision of émigré studies that is a central point of origin for the Slavic field and that has shaped our perceptions of mobility and global entanglements of Russian culture and politics to this day.

Notes

1 For a detailed timeline of cultural organization around the Comintern, see Amelia Glaser and Steven S. Lee, eds., *Comintern Aesthetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2019), xiii–xxi.

2 In 1935, MORP was dissolved and International Literature was made an organ of the Soviet Union of Writers. In 1943, the journal was discontinued. For a history of the journal, see Elena Ostrovskaya and Elena Zemskova, "Between the Battlefield and the Marketplace: International Literature Magazine in Britain," *Russian Journal of Communication* 8, no. 3 (2016): 217–29; Elena Ostrovskaya and Elena Zemskova, "From International Literature to World Literature: English Translators in 1930s Moscow," *Translation and Interpreting Studies* 14, no. 3 (2019): 351–71.

3 See Edward Tyerman, "Resignifying 'The Red Poppy': Internationalism and Symbolic Power in the Sino-Soviet Encounter," *Slavic and East European Journal* 61, no. 3 (2017): 445–66.

4 Katerina Clark, *Eurasia without Borders: The Dream of a Leftist Literary Commons, 1919–1943* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2021), 283–4.

5 Osip Mandelstam, "An Interview with Ho Chi Minh – 1923," trans. Clarence Brown, *Commentary*, August 1967. https://www.commentary.org/articles/osip-mandelstam/an-interview-with-ho-chi-minh-1923. The original ran in *Ogonek*, 23 December 1923.

6 Christian Høgsberg, "Introduction," in C.L.R. James, *World Revolution, 1917–1936: The Rise and Fall of the Communist International* [1937] (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

7 Boris Raymond and David R. Jones, *The Russian Diaspora, 1917–1941* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2000), 8–9; John Glad, *Russia Abroad: Writers, History, Politics* (Washington: Birchbark Press, 1999), 105–8.

8 Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration 1919–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 24.

9 Worldcat lists at least four books with the title *Russia Abroad*, along with several more with Russian titles such as "Rossiia za rubezhom" and "Zarubezhnaia Rossiia," alongside canonical studies that continue to shape Western perceptions of Russian émigré culture, such as Glad, *Russia Abroad*; and Raeff, *Russia Abroad*.

10 Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 3.

11 Greta N. Slobin, *Russians Abroad: Literary and Cultural Politics of Diaspora (1919–1939)*, ed. Katerina Clark, Nancy Condee, Dan Slobin, and Mark Slobin (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013), 14.

12 It is worth noting that in this regard, the exodus of the 1920s and current departures from the Russian Federation do not align. Whereas Russia Abroad claimed cultural purity and continuity in opposition to the Soviet

state, the conservative or even nationalist position is today taken by the Russian state itself.

13 Encyclopedia qtd. in Glad, *Russia Abroad*, 107.
14 Burliuk, letter to Erich Gollerbakh, 1929, qtd. in Arustamova, this volume.
15 Ivan Bunin, “Missiia russkoi emigratsii: Rech′, proiznesennaia v Parizhe 16 fevralia,” *Rul′*, 3 April 1924: 5.
16 Bunin, “Missiia russkoi emigratsii.”
17 Liliia Podicheva, “‘Ia ne v izgnanii, ia v poslanii’ Niny Berberovoi: Kanonizatsiia frazy,” in *Tekstologiia i istoriko-literaturnyi protsess: Sbornik statei VII Mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii molodykh issledovatelei* (Moscow: Buki vedi, 2018), 143–57.
18 Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 8.
19 Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 9–10.
20 Greta Slobin likewise sees “an impressive story of remarkable literary, linguistic, and cultural continuity.” Slobin, *Russians Abroad*, 14.
21 Vladimir Nabokov, *Strong Opinions* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 33.
22 Evgeny Dobrenko’s research has revealed this continuity between politics and culture in great detail with regard to socialist realism. He demonstrates how from the 1930s on the aesthetic doctrine of Soviet art was not merely the purely artistic method that it claimed to be but rather functioned as a political institution. Its “basic function,” he argues, was “to create socialism – Soviet reality and not an artifact.” Evgeny Dobrenko, *Political Economy of Socialist Realism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), xii.
23 Whiteness here is meant predominantly in the sense of Civil War–era political commitment but ultimately also in terms of Slavic and Christian identity. For late-Soviet consequences of a similar position, see Rossen Djagalov, “Racism, the Highest Stage of Anti-Communism,” *Slavic Review* 80, no. 2 (2021): 290–8.
24 Marijeta Bozovic, et al. “Knight Moves: Russifying Quantitative Literary Studies,” *Russian Literature*, Special Issue on “Digital Humanities and Russian and East European Studies” (2021): 113–38, esp. 128.
25 Glaser and Lee, *Comintern Aesthetics*, 5.
26 Glaser and Lee, *Comintern Aesthetics*, 529.
27 Edward Tyerman, *Internationalist Aesthetics: China and Early Soviet Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021), 7.
28 Tyerman, *Internationalist Aesthetics*, 8.
29 Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 24.
30 Glaser and Lee, *Comintern Aesthetics*, 10.
31 Katerina Clark, *Moscow the Fourth Rome: Stalinism, Cosmopolitanism, and the Evolution of Soviet Culture, 1931–1941* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 4.

32 Glaser and Lee, *Comintern Aesthetics*, 11.
33 Il'ia Erenburg, *Sobranie sochinenii v deviati tomakh*, vol. 1: *Khulio Khurenito. Trest. D.E. Trinadtsat' trubok* (Moskva: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo khudozhestvennoi literatury, 1962), 137–8.
34 Joshua Rubenstein, *Tangled Loyalties: The Life and Times of Ilya Ehrenburg* (New York: Basic Books, 1996), 258, 262.
35 Paul Rabinow, "Respresentations Are Social Facts," in *Writing Culture*, ed. James Clifford (1986), qtd. in Bruce Robbins, "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism," in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond Nation*, ed. By Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 1.
36 Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), xv.
37 Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck," *Common Knowledge* 10, no. 3 (2004): 450–63.
38 Joseph Stalin, "Marxism and the National Question," *Prosveshchenie*, nos. 3–5, March–May 1913, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm.
39 Thomas Faist and Başak Bilecen, "Transnationalism," in *Routledge International Handbook of Migration Studies*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2019), 499.
40 Lewis H. Siegelbaum and Leslie Page Moch, "Transnationalism in One Country? Seeing and Not Seeing Cross-Border Migration within the Soviet Union," *Slavic Review* 75, no. 4 (2016): 973.
41 Roger Daniels, *Coming to America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 287–8.
42 Faist and Bilecen, "Transnationalism," 505.
43 Nina Glick Schiller, Cristina Szanton Blanc, and Linda G. Basch, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation-States* (Langhorne: Gordon and Breach, 1994), 7.
44 *Glossary on Migration*, International Migration Law 34 (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2019), https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf, 132.
45 Caren Kaplan, *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 4.