CHAPTER 6.

BAKING IN THE DISPOSITION: THE WAC/WID WORLD THROUGH TRANSNATIONAL LENSES

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Abstract. *In a global perspective for WAC and other writing programs, the singular identifier of the nation still holds a dominance in articles, books, and conference presentations. But, how we understand relationships between different programs on the global writing studies map often demands a more nuanced unpacking than stable nation-markers can offer. Jonathan Hall (2023) calls us to take up "thinking with trans-" in WAC (p. 13). This chapter answers this call first by locating different pieces of global writing program scholarship along a spectrum from those that aim to establish a single, stable identity for a particular (often national) writing location on one end, and on the other, what the author calls critical-transnational narratives that complicate and destabilize identifiers about place. This chapter establishes a way of transnationally reading the world through scholarship—not as a rejection of categories or borders—but as a recognition of, and engagement with, their fluid and emergent character.*

In a global perspective for WAC and other writing programs, the singular identifier of the nation often maintains a kind of dominance in writing studies discourse on the world scale. "The American model," or "Writing Centers in Japan," or "Czech writers" will locate a subject for audiences, or serve to compare between different places. The efficacy and stability of these nation-markers begs some important questions: Can we assume these descriptions really cover all aspects contained within that geography? If not, what is being left out and why? How can we capture the complexities of the relationships between different nations in what is shared and not? These questions can form a simple entry point for a transnational perspective as a platform to explore potential limitations, to articulate new modes of meaning and interaction across contexts, and to demarcate and define WAC programs globally.

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2026.2845.2.06

As this concept of transnationality has developed, there has been some conflation and confusion around how it relates to international or multinational relationships. Sometimes, the term "transnational" works as an adjective to modify a place or a person (e.g., this transnational institution, as a transnational scholar) and this already raises questions about efficacy and stability. An institution with partnerships in different countries—is that international or multinational or transnational? Is a scholar with many passports transnational or is it just when they have worked in different countries or maybe not at all? Where can we say we're representing *enough* connections at the worldwide scale? In trying to answer these questions, it is important to begin to draw a distinction between connecting particulars of place(s) and the ideology/disposition of the transnational. Without this distinction, transnational sensemaking risks dangerous slippage, potentially futile application, and thus further disregard for distant programs.

This article develops the transnational as an ideological disposition or approach that will give WAC/WID scholars much more powerful terms through which to describe, define, and demarcate these programmatic relationships on a global scale. By drawing a connection between translingualism's disposition distinction from linguistic practice, this article shows how some early literature on the more global turn for WAC/WID work demonstrates a disposition in possible rhetorical constructions/moves (listing, defining, parsing). Building an ideological disposition, we can distill an approach untethered from more restrictive constructions of context in order to find something more transferable to help navigate moving across and between committees, departments, programs, and institutions in our work. Woven through these examples is a metaphor of baking, borne out of the rhetorical move of listing and meant to articulate the shift from one state (multiple ingredients) to another (mixing, baking). I offer these ways of transnationally reading the world through global writing studies scholarship—not as a *rejection* of categories or borders—but as a recognition of, and engagement with, their fluid and emergent character. Such engagement is central to all WAC work, but especially crucial to a more global understanding of our shared, and not shared, labors.

TRANSNATIONAL DISPOSITION—UNTETHERING PLACE AND PROCESS

Broadly speaking, the long-term trends of increased access to higher education and the more recent expansion of higher education into a global marketplace via new technological (mass media, transportation), economic (capitalist) and ideological (neoliberal) developments—with the concomitant increases in diversity and mobility of students and scholars—has translated into desires for new

voices, new narratives, and new theories to help understand and represent this growing heterogeneity. With that being said, these changes are also part of a long history of global movements, which predate and continue through these modern developments. The transnational, in a sense, not only crosses borders, it re-draws the maps along extra-geographic subjects, and points us to the very constructedness of those nations that we might take for granted. Terms like "international" or "multinational" help us to broaden beyond a national consciousness, but they can also reify more than resist the assumptions of stable borders as part of these relationships. The basic idea of the transnational—as I see it—opens the doors to a conversation about boundaries; it shows us a more mobile, manifold, and contingent world rather than over-reliance on a received set of political borders. In writing studies, this transnational turn has signaled a need to better understand programmatic connections across *and* within these borders, but the term is not always used to the same effect.

Wendy S. Hesford and Eileen E. Schell (2008) define transnationality as "the movements of people, goods, and ideas across national borders … often used to highlight forms of cultural hybridity and intertextuality" pointing toward a shift in "the objects and areas of study," (p. 463). They are critical of how idealized or romanticized distortions of place elevate hybridity or interconnection without giving enough attention to (U.S. imperialist) power. Transnationality, to them, is too often used as a synonym for present contexts/locations "with little recognition of how transnationality challenges traditional understandings of context" and how such uses signal a synonym for globalization without showing national identifiers as "constructed within and often solidified by transnational connectivities" (2008, p. 464). This focus is a more ideological disposition that shifts to different transnational subjects and more deliberately engages with power and complex national formations rather than relying on it as a simple modifier to define context.

Similarly, as Rebecca Dingo et al. (2013) pointed out, there is a slippage that occurs when the term "transnational" becomes a generically global perspective that lacks a "complex, networked understanding of power" (p. 518). They argue against the use of the term "transnational" to denote global exchange or describe sites for rhetorical and literacy work that happens outside of the US or in locations designated as *other* and describe their surprise that "these lines of scholarship in the field *still* hold to the transnational as a particular location and/or relationship between set locations" and not as a lens that can critique global, neoliberal structures (2013, p. 519). The transnational is rather a "complex, networked understanding of power" (Rebecca Dingo et al., 2013, p. 518), a "theoretical apparatus" (p. 520), and a "process" (p. 526). For them, scholars have a responsibility not just to bring readers into contact with those across the globe but to "show the inherent influence each site has on one-another" (2013,

p. 519). What's at issue here is when particulars of place/context emerge as stable when one is identifying and locating an object of study. There is an important separation they are drawing that asks us to distinguish between using transnational simply to describe a particular location, or multiple locations, and a more critical parsing of the attributes, influences, and processes involved. But do we even have terms yet through which to articulate that kind of process-distinction? How can we describe that shift from single, to multi, to trans in terms of place? And what does this have to do with WAC work?

NOT ABOUT THE NUMBER

Hall (2023) argues that we already "live in the age of trans-" and asks how translingual, transnational, transdisciplinary phenomena are affecting the work of WAC/WID programs (p. 13). Hall works to articulate the effect of the *trans-* prefix as "categorical malleability," and movement through "acrossness," "betweenness," "beyond," and "transcending" borders/boundaries (2023, pp. 13–14). Attaching the *trans*-prefix to gender, discipline, language, and nation, Hall explores how these various transing expressions can relate to WAC work, which is constantly working across and between various categories and boundaries. Christiane Donahue (2016) also draws out the trans-prefix to connect transnational and translingual modes, arguing that when encountering difference, we tend to compare rather than adopt a "trans" orientation. The "trans" orientation can tell a difference between surface feature differences as well as shared underlying moves of negotiation, appropriation, resistance, and adaptation (Donahue, 2016, p. 147). These are some initial terms for that process at the heart of transing. Following Hall and Donahue, I do find that this connection between translingual and transnational work hinges on this separation between "surface features" and a more connected sense of a disposition as a generator of new knowledge.

Translingualism could lead us a bit here as there's been much said about it as a disposition or ideology. Some scholars see translingualism and study it as a more deeply integrated and profound form of multilingualism that blends and mixes languages to challenge monolingual norms. In short, they find it through the *surface* level in oral and written products of language usage or use it as an identifying marker. Others, like myself, see translingualism as profoundly more valuable on the level of an ideological disposition untethered from any *particular* language usage. Bruce Horner et al. (2011) specified that a translingual approach is "not about the number of languages, or language varieties, one can claim to know," it is instead "the disposition of openness and inquiry that people take toward language and language differences" (p. 311). Recently, Horner and Sara P.

Alvarez (2019) have defined translingualism as a "a way to interrogate and unveil terms of language" (p. 1) through ontology, agency, social relations, ideology, *and* practice. The natural uptake is to see translingualism as a way to manifest alterity and reject rigid rules; to call out the elitism and bias they may promote. But, an implication of ideology that is not about the numbers would *also* mean: it could be entirely possible that a multilingual writer composes a multilingual text that still reinforces monolingualist ideological positions, which inherently value the "native" dialect, obsess over grammatical perfection to a particular academic version of the language, and believe in strict borders between those languages—*even* within that multilingual text. On the other hand, it's entirely possible that a text is written solely in one language (a monolingual, not monolingual*ist*, product) yet which moves across dialect boundaries, disrupts grammar norms, and integrates any number of unmarked loan words, thus destabilizing these norms/boundaries (therefore more aligning with translingual ideology).

Rudimentary and fraught though it might be, Table 6.1 attempts to highlight the ways this shift from "mono" to "multi" to "trans" might play out across language and location.

Table 6.1. Delineating Between Practice and Ideology for Language and Location

	Mono-	**Multi-**	**Trans-**
Language Use	Monolingual – one language	Multilingual – more than one language	Translingual – more intense multilingual work?
Language Ideology	Monolingualism – native speaker bias, fixed stable grammar, difference as deficit	Multilingualism – the value of more than one, but still stable borders between languages	Translingualism – change is the norm, borders unstable, difference as asset and invention, challenge assumptions of identity
Location	National – singular label applying within and throughout political border	Inter-/multinational – existing within and beyond a national border, engaging across stable borders	Transnational – Everywhere and nowhere, maybe?
Ideology	Nationalism – identifying and supporting a nation, often through exclusion of others	Globalism – one country cannot be easily separated from another	Transnationalism – challenge stability of single signifier within and across nations, opening new terms of identity and engagement; a process

The key point is that on the level of particular products or practices, language and location do not fit so well within the trans- designation. It is in the ideological/dispositional level—untethered from correlation with the number of languages or nations—that the "trans" modifier really comes to life. Talking about multiple places, even along multiple factors doesn't quite shift us into a new disposition, what we need is a meaningful challenge or articulation to the processes involved in constructing that place. What is also evident is the gap in terminology for describing the split between product and ideology for place-based analysis. Let's look at foundational scholarship discussing writing programs to see what we can glean to help us articulate these processes better.

READING FOR THE TRANSING SHIFT

There are examples of various strategies across global writing program scholarship that can demonstrate ways to rhetorically construct and enact the transnational shift from the inter/-multinational level to trans. These examples are not meant to be exhaustive or an argument for a compulsory list of moves. The purpose is to highlight ways that we can begin to understand when the transnational begins shifting to the level of ideological disposition by being articulated in ways that serve to untether our assumptions of place and move beyond more rigid terms of context—even if they are *multiple*. Some basic ingredients for transnational connectivities are alternative geographic scales that can complement the nation-scale, the inclusion of non-spatial scales to describe subjects (an institution, academic field), and various conceptual frames through which to view the topic/program (gender, religion, psychology). These are the ingredients and transforming those pieces of place into something new and edible, which requires an alchemy that describes what a disposition aims to articulate or obtain.

Listing

A great place to start in examining transnational rhetorical moves is in the introductions of edited collections that are international in scope. Even before the term "transnational" was common, I think proto-transnationalism started with lists. The introduction to the self-described first English anthology on European writing studies by Lennart Björk et al. (2003) does not contain the term "transnational," though its contributors and content span Europe and beyond. This serves to offer us an *alternative geographic scale* beyond the nation (Europe). It also offers a transing *non-spatial scale* by stating that contributors come from a range of different *disciplines*: "mother-tongue language studies, literature, pedagogy, psychology, rhetoric, and medicine" and foregrounds different *conceptual frames*

through which to see the teaching of academic writing: "epistemological, motivational, social, cognitive, linguistic, aesthetic, emotional" (Björk et al., 2003, p. 3). This list sets us up with new geographic and discursive territory through which to find transnational articulation by offering alternative geographic scales and *alternatives to* purely geographic discourse. But are we transing yet? There is still missing information to name how these ingredients change form.

In the introduction to a collection on writing centers in the Arabian Gulf region (alternate geographic scale), Othman Z. Barnawi (2018) does the ultimate list-dance across spatial and conceptual scales (though never uses the term transnational). First, listing the countries in the region: "Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait" and their role in (non-spatial scales) "global socio-political, cultural and economic environments" (Barnawi, 2018, p. ix). Then Barnawi evokes Western educational institutions versus the Islamic World and the emergence between them for (the following conceptual frames) "Englishization, internationalization, privatization and mallification of education" and neoliberal discourses affecting the "community, affiliations, partners, actors, administrative bodies, stakeholders and consumers in the Arabian Gulf region and beyond" (2018, p. ix). Long live the list. There are even more before the end of the piece but suffice it to say the ingredients are in place, yet the recipe is not complete. This dance across spatial and conceptual terms embodies much of what transnationality does by moving between material (geographic, spatial) and conceptual markers—and a list is crucial in framing the multiplicity of these relationships.

I would say we still need some way to describe their relationships and a method by which to sift and distill what moves and doesn't between them if we want to see the potential of transing. The trans-recipe is not yet complete. How do we bake it to turn the parts into bread? Without that, these ubiquitous lists feel more multi- than trans. In a collection introduction pushing for more nuance and terms of engagement, Lisa Arnold et al. (2017) describe and frame the local writing program work as an "intricate 'in-betweenness'" in a super-diverse Beiruti context richly layered in language, politics, history, and cultures, which requires "an abandonment of prior assumptions" and is "best viewed as constant negotiations" (p. 6). That phrase "intricate in-betweenness," which is constantly negotiated, serves to articulate a novel description for the relationships across these spatial and conceptual scales of meaning. This is the subtle shift that can turn a list towards a dispositional understanding of these layers of meaning. What's another move to go with listing of relevant alternate geographic scales, non-spatial scales, conceptual frames, and then naming the nuanced relationships through which they connect? Defining the term "transnational."

Defining

Using the term "transnational" frequently without definition risks slippage, but by explicitly defining it, one may better articulate a perspective on it that gives a recipe some direction. In the introduction to the edited collection *Transnational Writing Program Administration*, David S. Martins (2015) offers us multiple definitions for the term "transnational" and triangulates by parsing pieces from each of them. Starting with one that looks at the evolving relationships across countries, Martins then specifies that "unlike 'global' or 'international,' the term 'transnational' typically invokes a more critical, analytical orientation" and cites the Hesford and Schell emphasis on the feminist challenge to traditional constructions of context and place (2015, p. 4). His definitional paragraph ends with a list and the goal of the collection: "a more nuanced conversation about learning, teaching, and administration in transnational contexts" (2015, p. 4). As we are in search of a dispositional understanding, Martins' definition is getting at the orientation rather than simply a multitude of countries and to do that we need conceptual tools like nuance.

Jay Jordan (2022) describes his project as part of the "transnational experiment" of "teaching, learning, observing, and experiencing" and reminds us of the fact that "relevant writing-related scholarship, teaching, and administration are inextricable from one another" (p. 10). Transnationality as an experiment of the inextricable is an evocative transing definition. Jordan parses transnationality and internationality, saying that both terms are present in his book, but that they are "not ultimately interchangeable" (2022, p. 11). Usage of the term "international" is framed around trends in education, concepts of globalization, and what could readily be contained within discourses around "internationalization" in terms of policy and demographics in the global turn.

The explanation for transnationality is a tour of key definitions we've already encountered with Hesford and Schell (2008) and Martins (2015) as well as others through lenses of social space, consciousness, local connections, and co-constructions of place. Jordan concludes that though the participants in his study were all Korean nationals in Korea, they were subtly but noticeably, acting in the awareness that the particular context of their Asia Campus was different from other Korean educational contexts. He writes of a "friction just beneath the smooth internationalist surface of the university's and government's experiment that was both noticeable and variously productive" (2022, p. 15). The sense of the transnational as friction—compared to a more inter-/multinationalist assumption of smoothness—is a powerful way to parse the distinction. Jordan uses lists, gives us multiple definitions from multiple disciplines, and also disambiguates trans- and inter-national concepts while offering the terms

"inextricable" and "friction" to describe these relationships. Now we're seeing multiple rhetorical moves that are carving out room for a disposition by naming these processes and new forms of connection.

Parsing

Up to now, these cited scholars have set the stage for articulating transnational relationships that move away from static nation-identities, but they have not so much enacted a transing disposition to place. I think the first example of actually doing that comes in actively parsing out aspects of place that thread through the conceptual and spatial scales beyond, intricately in-between, and in friction with geographic identifiers. To study and describe relationships that work on different spatial scales without evoking nations could be seen as one form of transnational discourse, but I think it is *not* as potent, complex, or interesting as weaving new terms for the relationships that use, but don't stabilize or simplify, nations.

Mary N. Muchiri et al. (1995) issued in *CCCs* a strong critique of the limitations facing composition when seen from a more global writing studies view. They remind readers that "[c]learly there is something rather odd about the academic map, so that hundreds of small institutions in North America and Europe are on it, and others elsewhere are off it" (1995, p. 184). The most basic suggestion comes in working to delineate the varied assumptions made by composition research about students, teachers, language, and universities, because some of these are "refreshing in these new contexts, some have to be questioned, and some seem bizarre" (Muchiri et al., 1995, p. 176). Though it is a somewhat small rhetorical move, it is productive to think through this parsing (some aspects as *x*, some aspects as *y*) as a core aspect of a transnational approach. To not take such an approach means collapsing and reducing differences into simplified narratives that may limit the degree to which real relationships can be represented.

An example of delicately parsing across contexts to introduce friction in the relationships between countries comes from Lisa Emerson and Rosemary Clerehan's (2009) discussion of writing program administration work in Australia and New Zealand. They open by pointing out that from an outsider's view, WPA work in North America appears very homogenous, that each program assumes a relationship with a writing center, that they are based around composition courses, that there is a certain commitment to funding, and there is a shared history. While this homogeneity can reveal shared concerns about "access, labor issues, or disciplinary standing," (listing …) the local cultural specificity of the North American literature is hard to penetrate for those in writing programs that present "very different profiles" (Emerson & Clerehan, 2009, pp. 166–167). Emerson and Clerehan describe the central differences in the larger infrastructure:

"entry testing, writing center, Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, and compulsory freshman composition courses" are not a part of the Australian higher education contexts (2009, p. 167). Aside from the region's differences with North American contexts, between Australia and New Zealand, there are also "distinct national contrasts in terms of development, theoretical base, and position within the university" (Emerson & Clerehan, 2009, p. 167). They go into detail about the generative histories of these different national contexts in terms of student demographics, labor conditions, institutional structures, economic and social movements, etc. This attention to parsing the differences across multiple scales and conceptual frames while citing important similarities and differences at these various layers is thoughtful and productive.

Olga Dysthe (2003) outlines a historical and contextual background for the absence of a prominent place for writing studies in Norwegian higher education. She traces various influences from German and US-based institutions in the policies and practices of different Norwegian universities. She writes that while experiences in foreign institutions have shaped the program, "local studies carry more weight as a basis for in service training of teachers than for instance American or Australian research" (2003, p. 158). Dysthe makes moves to position Norway among different influences like this: "Norway occupies a middle position between the United States, where students specialize late, and England and France where students start their specialization in secondary school" (2003, p. 163). This middle position is our transing move and has meant that workshops and courses in academic writing have had to be tailored to the specific curricula in local universities that will help students learn to write in their disciplines in particular ways—drawing on process pedagogy, but not first-year composition courses. Rather than outright rejecting other models, they are adapted and communicated across an array of conditions so particular influences can be traced. A cup of this, a pinch of that, and some instructions on how they interact to form a particular thing. What's happening in both these examples is that there are parts of different places that influence a program, and the nation-marker is used, but quickly localized or contextualized so that it doesn't rest as a reified totality. These are just the initial steps of sensemaking of this kind to articulate what can/should be much more robust theorizing about these relationships.

LOOKING FORWARD TRANSNATIONALLY

To maintain the baking metaphor just a bit further, let's recap. Placing the word "transnational" in front of something basically just gives the name: bread, muffin, scone. That won't help it get made and it won't help anyone else make sense of it. Missing is a list of ingredients—the many things that are needed (spatial

and conceptual markers) but not even to share the specific quantities, yet. This gets us to the line, so to speak, right before we're really transing with a disposition. It is like the technical challenge in the middle of "Bake Off"—a list of ingredients with the instruction: bake. Not super helpful. Ideally, a transnational disposition demands more direction, more quantizing, more description to create something fresh and transferable. The scholars who can do that, and our very analysis of what it means to bring these ingredients into meaningful contact, show how one can understand baking beyond the particular recipe, the process beyond the particulars, the methods and means through which these interactions shape something out of base ingredients. From this foundation, we can start to really tackle the histories and implications of sourcing certain ingredients; the power, heat, and pressure required to form these structures; and the new ways that drive new understandings and responses to changing realities.

So, the source of the power of a transnational disposition operating on the level of ideology or approach (here the baking more than simply a particular recipe) is that one can start interchanging these ingredients (spatial and conceptual scales of meaning) to apply to one's own programmatic context. It is this transing knowledge that allows us to scale down to our institution and understand the discourses, disciplines, approaches, social dynamics, and personalities that come between us and achieving our program goals. Or, we can scale up to see how tracing influences across national borders can sometimes apply and sometimes not apply, thus giving a way to parse more meaningful interactions with programs rather than a binary, wholesale "relevant" or "non-relevant" designation depending on the case. Lastly, we can avoid a trap with an endless stream of more places we need to trace, more terms we need to list, more approaches we need to account for because it's not about the number, it's more about the level of detail in the recipe, or the meta-discourse through which we can reflect on how to even *make sense of* the processes.

With these concepts in mind, when scholar-practitioners encounter or embark on their own transing work, they can aim to be conscientious through some of these discussed rhetorical constructions. They can align with the critique of undue influence of, and limitations in, the US-based composition lens for global writing and a tendency for an import-export, presence-absence binary. But they may also bristle when reading terms like "The American model," which calls one to ask: which one? Which parts? It might end up that what's really being discussed is a linguistic influence that is not just about the hegemonic dominance of English but also a monolingual ideology that is endemic in a local institution with a history of bad policy. Even a simple rhetorical move could elevate that discussion by writing something more like *the English-only aspects of the so-called "American model"* or *certain linguistic practices dominant in many U.S. contexts*. Similarly, if a

foreign, ex-pat colleague works in an institution, say, in Japan, they may interpret institutional reticence as "Japanese-style management," which they must oblige in deference. There is an exigence to unpack that generalization and find more nuanced forms of meaning if they need to grow their program. While it helps, it doesn't require each individual possess all language expertise or a lifetime of local cultural authority to be able to *leave space and develop approaches for* more potential meaning or more savvy rhetorical constructions. The recipe of institutional resistance could be a cup of ideology and just a pinch of nationality.

The gist of this disposition means that when one encounters a big, broad generalized category like a nation, they don't just accept it without some critical engagement. Seeing the world through a transnational disposition starts with reticence at the discussion of what happens in Chinese writing centers or what Brazilian writers are like. This reticence offers a pause to ask for more detail before accepting this term—a more detailed listing and parsing of attributes depending on the claims being made as well as a way to bring these attributes into meaningful contact. If we as a global field want to benefit from the knowledge being made in many contexts, we are also going to need a rigorous way to talk about power. Tracing inequities along material, political, linguistic, social, economic terms give us more tools with which to unpack concepts like U.S. imperial power and open up to the complex nuances of influence.

Current events in many places call for a way to parse nations from religions from political ideologies from rhetorical posturing. And to describe how they interact. The answers may be in other languages and contexts and forms, so we need a transnational disposition capable of parsing these contexts and crossings in order to engage with that knowledge. Scaling down, the work all WAC programs do to traverse disciplines, genres, departments, languages, cultures, spaces, et cetera allows us to sharpen our skills in parsing and moving across these local geographies with a kind of dexterity and fluidity in order to make choices and take actions in the support of our work. In that next meeting, when someone makes a big claim about writing, the sciences, English, French people—one can meet this as an exigence to unpack and articulate more nuance. Ask for attributes, features, or developments to trace that brought about these categories. Ask what other contexts have faced the same questions and how they might have answered.

Translingual and transnational dispositions are connected through their claims about agency: more than the product or the place, what matters is that one acts in the knowledge that they are participating in an ongoing construction of meaning and they have agency. Translingual and transnational dispositions *produce* that agency—they are the heat and chemistry that bakes something out of a soupy bowl of ingredients. The best approach to WAC work often resists rejecting borders/categories while stating the importance of not taking

them wholesale; it accepts the challenges of articulating the across-ness and between-ness, the flexibility and porosity of margins, the ways that concepts and materiality tangle and dance across the maps of space and place. We don't just accept the borders we cross, we make and move them, too. Otherwise, we just let others do it for us and then we're cooked.

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