

INTRODUCTORY PAPER: CULTURES UNDER NEGOTIATION: DISCOURSE, IDENTITY, AND THE RECONFIGURATION OF MEANING IN GLOBAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract. This introductory paper to the special issue Cultures under negotiation: Discourse, identity, and the reconfiguration of meaning in global contexts theorises the conditions under which symbolic and discursive practices are produced, contested, and transformed in the contemporary global conjuncture. Drawing on postcolonial theory, discourse studies, platform theory, and cultural sociology, the paper argues that cultural reconfiguration is neither a passive response to globalising forces nor a straightforward assertion of local resistance, but a dynamic, politically charged, and epistemologically consequential process. The paper maps the issue's conceptual architecture across four thematic axes — (1) representation and power in literary and media discourse; (2) identity, satire, and resistance in postcolonial and diasporic contexts; (3) technological and algorithmic mediation of cultural memory; and (4) institutional, ritual, and sociolinguistic dimensions of cultural practice and identifies three cross-cutting tensions: the local/global dialectic, the continuity/rupture tension, and the dynamics of resistance and co-optation. The paper contributes to current debates on transnationalism, algorithmic culture, decoloniality, and the politics of representation by demonstrating that interdisciplinary approaches to cultural analysis are not merely methodologically convenient but epistemologically necessary.

Keywords: cultural reconfiguration; symbolic production; discursive formations; algorithmic mediation; postcolonialism; identity politics; transnationalism; cultural authenticity

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1. Introduction: Theorising Cultural Reconfiguration

The title of this special issue — Cultures Under Negotiation — is a deliberate provocation. It refuses the two most seductive options available to cultural analysis in the present moment: the nostalgic affirmation of cultural authenticity as recoverable ground, and the celebratory embrace of hybridity as liberatory flux. Both of these options, this issue collectively argues, mistake an effect for a cause. They describe cultural conditions without analysing the power relations and mediation processes that produce them. To speak of culture as perpetually under negotiation is to insist, instead, on the irreducibly political, historical, and discursive character of cultural production — and to ask, in each case, who is negotiating, on what terms, and with what stakes.

The scholarly context for such questions has rarely been more consequential. Three developments in the contemporary global conjuncture make them particularly urgent. First, the deepening penetration of digital platform architectures into everyday cultural life has restructured the conditions under which cultural meanings are produced, circulated, and received, introducing new mechanisms of curation, suppression, and algorithmic amplification that profoundly affect what is culturally visible and what is rendered marginal (Bucher, 2018; Viallon & Trestini, 2019; Gillespie, 2014). Second, the consolidation of decolonial and Global South epistemologies in the humanities and social sciences has challenged the unreflective universalism of metropolitan theoretical frameworks, creating new demands for scholarly humility, epistemic plurality, and attention to the situated character of knowledge production (Mignolo, 2000; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Santos, 2014). Third, the resurgence of cultural nationalism and identity politics in multiple geopolitical contexts has reinvested questions of cultural authenticity, heritage, and continuity with renewed political urgency — making them objects of both popular mobilisation and scholarly concern (Calhoun, 2007; Hall, 2019).

The twenty-five contributions in this issue engage these conditions from a range of disciplinary positions — literary and cultural studies, sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, media studies, social identities, cultural anthropology, political economy — and from a range of geographic locations spanning Africa, the Arab world, East Asia, Europe, and the Americas. Their heterogeneity is not incidental; it is epistemologically motivated. The issue proceeds from the conviction that no single disciplinary tradition and no single regional perspective is adequate to the complexity of the phenomena under investigation — and that the forms of disciplinary self-sufficiency that have historically governed humanities scholarship are themselves symptoms of the epistemological monoculture that this issue, in various ways, contests.

2. Theoretical Coordinates: Power, Discourse, and Cultural Mediation

The issue is theoretically anchored in three intersecting intellectual traditions. The first is the Gramscian-Hallsian tradition of cultural hegemony and ideological critique, which provides the foundational claim that symbolic and discursive practices are constitutively entangled with relations of power, and that the production and naturalisation of cultural meanings is a political process even when it presents itself as self-evident, universal, or tradition-bound (Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1980, 1997). This tradition informs the issue's consistent attention to the question of whose cultural forms are rendered legitimate, whose are pathologised or ignored, and through what institutional, medial, and discursive mechanisms these asymmetries are sustained and occasionally disrupted.

The second is the tradition of postcolonial and decolonial thought, from Fanon's (1961) analysis of the psychic and cultural damage of colonialism through Bhabha's (1994) theorisation of colonial mimicry and the 'third space,' to Mignolo's (2000) concept of colonial difference and Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2018) work on epistemic freedom in Africa. This tradition is operative not only in the contributions that address explicitly colonial or postcolonial objects (Hamzaoui; Ferhi; Aberi & George; Tahir) but in the issue's broader insistence that the geopolitical asymmetries structuring knowledge production must themselves be objects of critical scrutiny. Authenticity, in this framework, is always the authenticity of someone — produced under specific historical conditions,

claimed within specific power relations, and contested by actors whose interests in the outcome are by no means symmetrical.

The third tradition is that of media theory and platform studies — a rapidly developing field that has challenged the relative neglect of technological mediation in earlier cultural theory. Building on Appadurai's (1996) account of global cultural flows and Castells's (2009) analysis of communication power, and extending into the more granular investigations of algorithmic culture by Bucher (2018), Gillespie (2014), and Viallon and Trestini (2019), this tradition insists that the question of how cultural meaning circulates is inseparable from the question of what it means. The material architectures of media systems — whether colonial radio administrations or contemporary recommendation engines — do not passively convey pre-formed cultural contents; they actively reconstitute them, shaping what can be expressed, what can be heard, and what can be remembered.

Methodologically, the issue is committed to disciplinary pluralism without methodological relativism. Contributors deploy tools from Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2003; van Dijk, 1993), Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), Peircean and Barthesian semiotics (Barthes, 1972; Greimas, 1983), cognitive linguistics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), ecocriticism (Garrard, 2004), and feminist literary theory (Butler, 1990; hooks, 1984). What unifies these approaches is not a common method but a common problematic: the analysis of culture as a site of contestation, mediation, and asymmetric power, in which meaning is never given but always achieved — and always capable of being contested again.

3. Thematic Axis I: Representation and Power in Literary and Media Discourse

A constitutive claim of cultural studies is that representational practices do not merely describe social reality but produce and reproduce it (Hall, 1997). The contributions assembled under this axis operationalise that claim across a range of textual and discursive objects, demonstrating in each case how the forms and genres of literary and media representation are themselves bearers of cultural and ideological content that exceeds authorial intention and resists purely aesthetic analysis.

Ahcene Cherifi's ecocritical reading of Katie Hale's *My Name Is Monster* (2019) theorises the post-apocalyptic novel as an 'ecological palimpsest' — a narrative form in which the traces of past ecological and cultural formations persist within, and give meaning to, the conditions of catastrophic rupture. Cherifi's analysis contributes to a growing body of ecocritical scholarship that reads speculative fiction not as escapist fantasy but as a displaced site for processing the cultural contradictions of the Anthropocene (Garrard, 2004; Nixon, 2011). By reading post-apocalyptic collapse as a condition of cultural possibility rather than merely of loss, he opens new perspectives on the relationship between environmental discourse and cultural continuity.

Mohamed Elamine Rabia and Mohammed Gouffi examine cognitive dissonance and magical realism in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, arguing that the text's formal hybridity — its deliberate entanglement of memoir, mythology, and feminist critique — is not a generic aberration but a culturally specific epistemological strategy. Their analysis extends scholarship on diasporic writing and double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903; Gilroy, 1993) by attending to the cognitive dimensions of generic choice: the way in which narrative form can model, and thereby partially manage, the contradictions of a hyphenated cultural identity.

Maria Beyboumezrag's comparative study of literary tropes challenges the received opposition between cliché and illumination in literary criticism, arguing that what conventional aesthetics dismisses as repetition or formula is frequently a condensed epistemological model — a means by which cultures encode and transmit their most fundamental assumptions about time, materiality, and perception. Her reading draws on cognitive linguistic approaches to metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) while extending them into a broader cultural semiotics of literary value.

Samir Ferhi's postcolonial reading of E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924) places a canonical literary text under decolonial scrutiny, revealing the ideological labour that Forster's humanist liberalism performs in naturalising colonial spatial and social divisions. The paper contributes to a now extensive body of postcolonial literary criticism (Said, 1993; Boehmer, 1995) while also raising a more general question about the relationship between literary canonicity and cultural power: the extent to which the selective preservation and global circulation of certain texts is itself a form of cultural imperialism.

Nadjet Abdellaoui's theoretical contribution on the foundational structures of cognitive linguistics provides an epistemological grounding for the volume's concern with how linguistic forms encode cultural knowledge. Her exposition of prototype theory, conceptual metaphor, and frame semantics (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Langacker, 1987) offers a systematic account of the cognitive architectures through which cultural meaning is stored and transmitted — architectures that, as several other contributions demonstrate, can be destabilised, hybridised, or contested under conditions of cultural contact and change.

Aboubakr Abbassa's mixed-methods analysis of cartoon content on Facebook's 'Cartoon Box' page extends the axis's concern with representation into digital visual culture. His finding that a statistically significant proportion of the sampled content normalises violent ideological values under the cover of humour raises important questions about platform governance and the politics of digital cultural production. His analysis converses productively with platform studies scholarship (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2014) while contributing a specifically cultural-critical dimension that that literature has sometimes lacked.

4. Thematic Axis II: Identity, Satire, and Resistance in Postcolonial and Diasporic Contexts

Satire has long been recognised as a form that operates at the intersection of aesthetics and politics — one that derives its critical force precisely from its indirection, its capacity to say what cannot be safely said in more direct registers (Test, 1991). The contributions in this axis extend that recognition into postcolonial and diasporic contexts where the stakes of cultural representation are particularly high, and where the relationship between resistance and co-optation is particularly fraught.

Yun-hao Chuang's reading of Paul Beatty's *The Sellout* argues that the novel's radical satirical mode constitutes a formal refusal of the consolations available to identity-based protest fiction. Where earlier traditions of African American writing mobilised racial solidarity and moral righteousness as sources of counter-hegemonic authority, Beatty's hyperbolic absurdism implicates all identitarian positions — including those of the putative victim — in the racial logics it lampoons. Chuang situates this move within debates on post-race ideology and satirical form (Rankine, 2014; Dickson-Carr, 2001), arguing that it represents a significant development in the aesthetics of postcolonial resistance.

Tajudeen Akanbi Kolapo and Sikiru Adeyemi Ogundokun examine satirical strategies in Elnathan John's *Be(come)ing Nigerian* and Adamu Usman's *Bivan's House*, reading both as diagnostic interventions in the ongoing crisis of Nigerian postcolonial identity. Their comparative analysis contributes to a developing scholarship on Nigerian literary satire (Kehinde, 2008; Oha, 1998) while demonstrating that satirical form functions simultaneously as cultural critique, communal self-examination, and creative affirmation of the vernacular resources through which ordinary people navigate institutional dysfunction.

Al Amin Mohammed El-Nasir's contribution extends the analysis of satire and social decay in Nigerian literature, arguing for the distinctiveness of Nigerian satirical tradition and against its absorption into Western generic frameworks. His argument resonates with broader decolonial critiques of comparative literature (Wa Thiong'o, 2009; Quijano, 2000), and makes an important

methodological contribution to the field by insisting that non-Western literary genres require analysis on their own genealogical and cultural terms.

Raed Nafea Farhan's feminist analysis of Anna North's *Outlawed* examines how the novel's generic hybridity — its occupation of the Western frontier mythos from a feminist revisionist standpoint — produces a form of cultural critique that operates through narrative genre rather than through argument. Farhan's analysis draws on feminist dystopia scholarship (Moylan, 2000; Baccolini & Moylan, 2003) to show how literary fiction can function as a space for imagining cultural alternatives that have not yet found institutional form — a function with particular salience in contexts where alternative identities and social arrangements are actively suppressed.

Joel Lyiola Olaleye and Toyese Najeem Dhunsi's *Appraisal Theory* analysis of Facebook and Nairaland discourse surrounding Nigeria's 2025 UTME crisis offers a micro-level complement to the macro-level analyses of postcolonial literary culture. Their demonstration that evaluative language in ordinary digital discourse constitutes a form of micro-political resistance resonates with de Certeau's (1984) account of tactical everyday practice, and contributes to a growing sociolinguistic literature on digital communication, affect, and political agency in Global South contexts (Androustopoulos, 2014; Braimoh, 2024).

Farid Metrouh's semiotic analysis of *Cartooning for Peace's* editorial cartoon on the 2023–2025 Gaza conflict examines the political cartoon as a transnational medium of moral vindication. His Peircean analysis demonstrates how the cartoon's multi-layered iconicity enables it to function simultaneously within and across cultural and linguistic communities — generating forms of political solidarity that, as Viallon (2005) has argued in relation to intercultural media communication, are always semiologically complex and never simply transparent.

George Aberi and Peter Oino's socio-anthropo-linguistic analysis of NGO advocacy discourse applies a decolonial lens to the language through which international development organisations position African communities as passive beneficiaries of external intervention. Their identification of what they term discursive colonialism in development rhetoric extends postcolonial discourse analysis (Escobar, 1995; Mohan & Stokke, 2000) while offering a practically oriented critique with implications for NGO practice and development policy.

Tajudeen Akanbi's Foucauldian reading of Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* demonstrates how literary dystopia can function as a theoretically sophisticated analysis of contemporary authoritarian governance — one that the constraints of direct political commentary would make impossible. His use of the panopticon concept extends Foucault's (1975) theoretical framework into the specific context of Arab state surveillance, contributing to a growing literature on dystopian fiction and political resistance (Moylan, 2000) while demonstrating the continuing theoretical productivity of Foucauldian analysis in non-Western literary contexts.

5. Thematic Axis III: Technological and Algorithmic Mediation of Cultural Memory

The concept of cultural memory — the selective, socially organised retention and transmission of the cultural past — has been extensively theorised in the humanities and social sciences (Assmann, 1995; Nora, 1989; Halbwachs, 1950). What has received less systematic attention is the way in which the technological infrastructures through which cultural memory is constituted shape both what is remembered and the social functions that memory serves. The contributions in this axis address this gap from two temporally distinct but structurally analogous perspectives: the colonial management of cultural expression through radio broadcasting, and the contemporary algorithmic curation of collective cultural narratives through digital platforms.

Yasser Sedrati's analysis of algorithmic recommendation systems and collective cultural memory offers the issue's most direct engagement with platform capitalism and its cultural epistemology. Extending the platform studies tradition (Bucher, 2018; Gillespie, 2014; van Dijck, 2013) and connecting it to cultural memory studies (Hoskins, 2011; Garde-Hansen et al., 2009), Sedrati argues that recommendation algorithms do not merely reflect pre-existing cultural

preferences but actively constitute new forms of collective memory by systematically privileging the familiar, the dominant, and the commercially viable. His analysis contributes to the emerging literature on 'algorithmic culture' (Striphas, 2015) while foregrounding its consequences for cultural diversity — consequences that Viallon and Trestini (2019) have identified as structurally paradoxical: digital media that promise cultural connection while architecturally producing cultural fragmentation and homogenisation.

Hakim Hamzaoui's historical analysis of French colonial broadcasting policy and Algerian cultural programmes provides an important long-term perspective on the politics of cultural mediation. His archival research demonstrates that the tension between cultural authenticity and mediated representation is not a problem generated by digital technology but a structural feature of cultural communication under conditions of power asymmetry. By showing how colonial authorities simultaneously deployed radio as an instrument of assimilation and instrumentalised Algerian cultural expression as a tool of strategic governance, Hamzaoui's analysis contributes to media history (Hilmes, 2012; Siebert et al., 1956) and postcolonial studies while anticipating the structural logics that, in Sedrati's account, now operate through algorithmic rather than administrative means.

Farid Metrouh's analysis of the circulation of the Gaza cartoon across digital platforms, addressed in more detail in the previous section, connects the question of political representation to the question of cultural memory in a particularly acute way: what happens to the memory of political violence when its visual documentation circulates through platforms whose recommendation logics are optimised for engagement rather than accuracy or accountability? This question, which Metrouh's paper raises without fully resolving, constitutes one of the most pressing unresolved problems in the intersection of visual culture and digital media studies.

6. Thematic Axis IV: Institutional, Ritual, and Sociolinguistic Dimensions of Cultural Practice

Culture is not only produced in texts and circulated through media systems. It is also enacted, negotiated, and reproduced through the everyday practices of institutions, rituals, and linguistic communities — practices whose significance for cultural continuity and change has sometimes been obscured by the literary and media bias of mainstream cultural studies. The contributions in this axis attend to these more immediate and embodied dimensions of cultural production, from luxury discourse and ritual heritage to organisational culture and educational theatre.

Babou Amina's sociolinguistic study of luxury discourse in London's elite retail environments makes a theoretically sophisticated contribution to the sociology of cultural distinction (Bourdieu, 1984) and the sociolinguistics of style (Coupland, 2007). By analysing the specific linguistic strategies through which luxury brands construct and maintain social hierarchy — code-switching, hedging, the deployment of prestige markers — Amina demonstrates that cultural distinction is not merely a social-structural phenomenon but a discursive and semiotic achievement that must be continuously performed and re-enacted. Her findings contribute to the emerging sociolinguistics of the economy (Heller, 2010; Cameron, 2000) while raising broader questions about the commodification of cultural authenticity within the circuits of global capitalism.

Charles Patrick's ethnographic study of the Òsé (Ìjesu) Festival of Òkèmèsí-Èkìtì provides an important empirical grounding for the issue's theoretical concern with cultural continuity. His analysis of women's roles in the festival demonstrates, against both romanticising and declinist accounts of African ritual heritage, that traditional cultural practices survive through creative adaptation rather than faithful reproduction — a finding that resonates with Hobsbawm and Ranger's (1983) classical analysis of invented tradition while insisting that the concept of invention should not be understood as delegitimising. The festival survives because it is continuously reinvented by participants who find in it resources for addressing contemporary social needs.

Sara Guellil's contribution on reception and meaning-making in educational theatre for children approaches cultural transmission from a pedagogical and performance studies perspective. Drawing on reader-response theory (Iser, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978) and cultural performance theory (Turner, 1982; Schechner, 1985), Guellil argues that children's active, performative reception of theatrical performances is a culturally constitutive practice — one that develops not merely cognitive skills but the specifically cultural capacities of interpretation, empathy, and critical imagination that make intercultural understanding possible.

Lamia Elmechta and Meriem Guerniche's quantitative study of the relationship between critical thinking and intercultural intelligence among Algerian EFL undergraduates contributes to the growing literature on intercultural competence in higher education (Deardorff, 2006; Bennett, 2009) while raising important questions about educational policy in postcolonial multilingual contexts. Their finding of a significant positive association between critical thinking dispositions and intercultural intelligence supports the argument that genuine intercultural understanding is an epistemological achievement requiring cognitive as well as attitudinal development — and that language education, properly conceived, is a vehicle for that development.

Belkacem Boumaza's sociological analysis of institutional bureaucracy and organisational culture in Algeria makes a distinctive contribution to the issue by attending to the cultural dimensions of administrative and institutional life — dimensions that are often treated as merely instrumental in cultural analysis. His demonstration that Algerian bureaucratic culture is shaped by the interaction between formal institutional structures (themselves carrying the legacy of French colonial administration) and informal cultural norms constitutes an important contribution to the post-independence sociology of Algerian institutions, while connecting the issue's broader concerns about power, culture, and legitimacy to their most mundane and pervasive instantiations.

Mohamedamine Tahir's analysis of Annemarie Schimmel's scholarship on Islamic Sufism raises fundamental questions about the ethics and epistemology of cross-cultural scholarly knowledge production. By examining how a Western scholar navigated the structural asymmetries of Orientalist scholarship to produce work that is by turns penetrating and limited, Tahir contributes to ongoing debates about methodological decoloniality in religious studies and area studies (Said, 1978; Ahmed, 2015; Mandair, 2009), while demonstrating that the problem of cultural representation in scholarship is not merely a concern for literary critics but for all humanistic disciplines.

Finally, Tara Brabazon's essay on vampire capitalism as a cultural trope brings the issue's thematic concerns into direct dialogue with political economy and cultural theory. Her argument that the vampire — eternally consuming, never satiated, sustained by the vitality of others — has found its historical moment as a figure for financialised capitalism, demonstrates the continued analytical productivity of cultural trope analysis (Jameson, 1981; Fisher, 2009) while extending it to address specifically contemporary forms of economic organisation and cultural pathology. Her contribution exemplifies the issue's broader claim that cultural criticism and economic analysis are not separate enterprises but mutually constitutive modes of social understanding.

7. Cross-Cutting Tensions and the Scholarly Contribution of the Issue

7.1 The Local/Global Dialectic

Reading across all four axes, the most pervasive structural feature of the issue is its sustained engagement with what Appadurai (1996) called the tension between 'global homogenisation and heterogenisation' — the simultaneous pressure toward cultural convergence and the persistence of irreducible cultural difference. What the contributions assembled here collectively demonstrate is that this tension cannot be resolved at the level of theory; it can only be investigated, case by case and context by context, in the specific sites where global forces encounter local practices. The issue makes a methodological argument by exemplification: that such case-by-

case investigation, conducted across disciplinary and geographic boundaries, is the primary means through which the local/global dialectic can be understood rather than merely named.

7.2 Continuity, Rupture, and the Politics of Transmission

A second cross-cutting tension concerns the conditions under which cultural forms endure, mutate, or disappear. The issue's contributions resist both the nostalgic valorisation of cultural continuity as an unconditional good and the uncritical celebration of cultural change as progress. Patrick's festival ethnography and Guellit's performance study demonstrate the creative resilience of cultural practices under modernising pressure; Sedrati's algorithmic analysis and Abbassa's platform study document the real costs of technologically mediated cultural transformation for marginalised communities and minor cultural traditions. Continuity and rupture, the issue insists, are not naturally opposed values but structurally entangled processes whose evaluation requires attention to context, power, and the interests at stake in any particular cultural negotiation.

7.3 Resistance, Co-optation, and the Limits of Cultural Agency

The third cross-cutting tension — between resistance and co-optation — is perhaps the most theoretically productive in the collection. From the satirical literary texts analysed by Chuang, Kolapo and Ogundokun, and El-Nasir, through the decolonial discourse analyses of Aberi and George and Boumaza, to the platform-critical analyses of Sedrati and Abbassa, a consistent pattern emerges: resistant cultural forms are perpetually vulnerable to absorption by the structures they oppose. Satire becomes a commodity; decolonial rhetoric is institutionalised; algorithmic platforms offer the appearance of cultural diversity while architecturally narrowing the range of what is heard. This finding does not counsel despair. It counsels, rather, the sustained analytical attention to the specific mechanisms of co-optation that several contributions in this issue model with considerable rigour — and a corresponding modesty about the capacity of cultural analysis itself to escape the structural conditions it critiques.

8. Editorial Contribution and Future Research Agenda

This special issue makes four distinct scholarly contributions that warrant explicit statement. First, it advances the conceptual vocabulary of cultural analysis through its sustained, multidisciplinary engagement with the three governing terms of authenticity, continuity, and reconfiguration, demonstrating that none of these terms can be taken as given and that all three require continuous contextual interrogation. Second, it makes a substantive decolonial contribution by foregrounding scholarly voices, cultural contexts, and epistemological traditions from Africa, the Arab world, East Asia, and the Global South, extending the journal's established commitment to genuine internationalism in cultural scholarship (Idri, Sarnou & Schug, 2025; Guerniche & El-mechta, 2024). Third, it provides one of the more sustained recent treatments of the intersection between platform culture and cultural memory in a humanities context — an intersection that will require increasing attention as algorithmic mediation continues to reshape the conditions of cultural production and reception. Fourth, it demonstrates the specific value of thematic issues that bring together work from genuinely different disciplinary traditions, showing that the insights produced at disciplinary intersections are not merely additive but analytically transformative.

Several questions raised by this issue remain open and constitute a productive agenda for future research. How do subaltern and minority cultural communities develop long-term strategies for navigating algorithmically managed cultural environments? What forms of institutional support and policy framework are needed to sustain cultural diversity in the context of platform capitalism? What ethical frameworks should govern cross-cultural scholarly collaboration in a research landscape still structured by profound colonial and economic inequalities? What new methodological approaches are needed to study cultural phenomena that are simultaneously local and transnational, textual and digital, historical and emergent? These questions do not have ready answers. What this issue demonstrates is that they have productive scholarly traction — and that

interdisciplinary, internationally collaborative cultural analysis is the most powerful instrument available for pursuing them.

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