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Looking Back, 2018-1916: The Cosmopolitan Idea in Randolph Bourne’s “Transnational America”

Abstract: This article re-examines the classic 1916 text by Randolph Bourne, considered a forerunner of today’s multiculturalism, to demonstrate how Bourne’s cosmopolitanism (defined as transnationalism) related to the ideological and intellectual currents of the Progressive Era, and how it registers with today’s readers’ different sensibilities (*vis-à-vis* issues like race, ethnicity and democracy) as well as some of the new theoretical perspectives on cosmopolitanism and transnationalism. While the article argues for an unceasing relevancy of Bourne’s text, it also identifies the problems today’s readers may have with it, most importantly with the author’s Eurocentrism as well as the exceptionalist underpinnings of his argument.

Keywords: Cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, transnationalism, Progressivism, American exceptionalism, Eurocentrism

Randolph Silliman Bourne—a Progressive Era intellectual who died at the young age of 32 in the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 (along with some 675 thousand other Americans)—was doubtless one of the most interesting and original young minds of early twentieth-century America. Bourne was many things at the same time: a brilliant writer; an iconoclast fighting the conservatism of America’s Anglo-Saxon cultural elite (Genteel Tradition in American philosophy and letters, Anglophilia, the anti-intellectualism of American collegiate culture); a rebel rejecting the suffocating conventions and prejudices, embracing socialism and cultural radicalism, supporting syndicalism, feminism, attacking wealth and privilege; a pacifist in the time of war. On a human level, a truly heroic—and tragic—figure, whose personal life was marred by the deformities suffered at birth and from a tuberculosis of the spine. Bourne’s untimely departure hurt the cause of the cultural and political left in the United States at a truly crucial historical moment (the triumph of Wilsonianism and the growingly conservative climate of the 1920s). In an emphatic statement by the historian of the American Left Edward Abrahams, the death of Randolph Bourne marked the end of an era: “For his contemporaries as well as for many intellectuals since 1918, Bourne’s life represented an unfinished search for a new culture that would have enlarged personal freedom at the same time it supported collective social ideals. Few of Bourne’s admirers did not interpret

his passing as signifying the end of their own hopes for a cultural revolution in the United States” (Molloy 31).

This article will focus on a single essay published almost exactly 100 years ago, in July 1916 issue of *The Atlantic* magazine, titled “Transnational America.” The essay is, arguably, the most often anthologized and quoted piece of Bourne’s writing and has a prominent place in David Hollinger’s two-volume sourcebook *The American Intellectual Tradition*, a standard college reader used in courses on American intellectual history. Significantly, Hollinger called Bourne’s essay “the most significant piece of writing by multiculturalism’s most illustrious precursor and prophet” (93), while another commentator, Chris Lehmann, on a more recent occasion (“Randolph Bourne’s America” panel, 2004) referred to “Transnational America” as “a foundation text for the multicultural ideal.” As observed by Andrew Walzer, contemporary historians often refer to Randolph Bourne’s cosmopolitanism, as outlined in “Transnational America,” in their search for the early expositions of “civic” (trans)nationalism, as opposed to the cultural nationalism” (Walzer 18).

In the essay, Bourne proclaimed the failure of the melting pot and proposed to take a second look at Americanization. Instead of trying to enforce a speedy assimilation to mold the immigrant to become an Anglo-Saxon, Bourne urged that the non-Anglo-Saxon “races” he specifically mentioned—Germans, Scandinavians, Slavs (Bohemians, Poles), Jews and the rest of recent immigrants of European origins—ought to be allowed to keep their separate cultures and not be expected to give up their separate legacies. Because of the cultural dominance of the of the Anglo-Saxons (accused by Bourne of hopeless conservatism and provincialism), America was threatened with stagnation and needed a reinvigorating change. America, claimed Bourne, badly needed this “cross-fertilization,” while the expected—and hoped for—assimilation could only result in a “tasteless, colorless fluid of uniformity” (90). Bourne did not hesitate to offer a low estimate of the claims of cultural patriots: “there is no distinctively American culture,” he wrote, calling instead for the recognition of America as a multicultural nation *par excellence*: “It is apparently our lot... to be a federation of cultures” (91).

Bourne’s vision of the U.S. society as a federation of cultures is an early expression of the beliefs apparently shared by the majority of Americans today (to quote Nathan Glazer’s book title from 1997: “We are all multiculturalists now”). Yet it took some courage, back in 1916, to write in this vein—at the time when the U.S. was in the midst of an Americanization campaign and the country was bracing for a plunge into the darkness of World War I. Less than two years before, Bourne had returned from a year-long stay in Europe as an enthusiastic Europhile for whom it was Continental Europe, rather than his native country, that deserved being called the land of the future. Now, those hopes were dashed by the onslaught of the war, the year 1914 marking the end of an era of a quickly globalizing world. The war was certainly a debacle of the European civilization Bourne had been paying homage

to in his early writings, notably in "Maurice Barres and the Youth of France" and "Impressions of Europe 1913-14" (the latter being a report for Columbia University from a trip enabled by a fellowship to study town planning in Europe).

In the U.S., the war-time patriotic agitation was grounded in the rising anti-European, anti-foreign, and increasingly xenophobic mood symbolized by the rebirth of the Klan and, on the cultural front, by the resonance of books like Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) and of the Hollywood blockbuster *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). The country's Anglo-Saxon, openly Anglophile elites stood in fear of possible subversion from the still unassimilated groups of foreign ancestry recently arrived from Europe as part of an unprecedented massive "invasion" of immigrant "hordes" from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe. The result of those fears was the government-backed attempt at speeding up assimilation of the freshly arrived "hyphenated Americans." Celebrating the immigrants' cultural difference, insisting on their right to keep their own foreign ways and notions, was obviously inconsistent with the widely circulating patriotic ideals and became almost untenable at the moment the U.S. was drawn into the war. It was at this point that Randolph Bourne parted ways with the group of pro-Wilsonian intellectuals he associated with before the war: John Dewey, Herbert Croly, Walter Lippmann, George Creel, and others. Instead, Bourne joined ranks with a small and viciously attacked group of pacifists and anti-war objectors, including, among others, Jane Addams.

Thus Bourne's cosmopolitan vision of an American federation of cultures needs to be studied in the political and ideological context of the time, when the prevailing political winds were blowing in the opposite direction. While proclaimed in a politically tense moment, this vision was not, to be sure, entirely unprecedented. And, ironically, it shared some recognizable components with the ideology formulated and espoused by Woodrow Wilson and his followers. One obvious influence (recognized by Bourne in a later text) was the voice of Horace Kallen, whose most influential text, "Democracy versus the Melting Pot" was published in February 1915 in *The Nation* magazine. In it, Kallen famously rejected the assimilationist ideology of the Melting Pot, embracing the idea of cultural pluralism, very much in the way Bourne did it a year and a half later (precise timing seems of importance here, as every successive month led to the spread of nationalist and patriotic feelings, supportive of speedy assimilation of the immigrant). Unlike Randolph Bourne, a native born of Anglo-Saxon parentage, Kallen was a Jewish immigrant from Silesia (he came to the U.S. as a 5-year-old child). And even though he himself seemed to be a perfect example of successful assimilation (the first Jewish-American teacher at Princeton, a Harvard Ph.D., and one of the founders of the New School in New York City), Kallen embraced a vision of American society as a primarily economic and civic polity, cemented by its use of English as a lingua franca, but at the same time a society consisting of culturally autonomous segments, grounded in diverse cultures brought over from Europe by the major immigrant groups—including, of course, the Anglo-Saxons, with the latter regarded as but one of many.

Compared with Kallen's, Bourne's vision, as articulated in "Transnational America," underemphasized the autonomy of each group of different national origin, instead insisting on their interaction and mixing—though not in the Melting Pot fashion, in which the immigrant was meant to be "Americanized." Thus Bourne's essay demonstrates a visible tension between a cultural pluralist and a cosmopolitan perspective, in the sense of promoting a transnational anchoring of identities in more than a single national tradition. Bourne insisted on making a dual citizenship possible for the immigrant, both in the legal and in the "spiritual" sense, and welcomed the back-and-forth mobility between the U.S. and the immigrant's mother country (seeing the return migration as a major instrument of America's influence abroad).

Looking back at Bourne's cultural manifesto from the vantage point of one hundred years later, one may conclude that in some important ways he sounds very modern, very up-to-date, one might even state, if one thinks, for example, of the "transnational turn" proclaimed recently in the social sciences and humanities, including American studies itself, and of the reawakened interest in the cosmopolitan idea. Alas, such a "looking backward"—a phrase bringing to mind the title of Bellamy's utopian novel—does not allow a look on the "backward" times from the vantage point of social utopia achieved, as was the case with the novel, given today's spread of xenophobia worldwide, and an obvious lack of progress in terms of securing the human rights. The transnational idea—formulated by Bourne contrary to the drift of the contemporary events (it came at a moment when the nineteenth-century world system was quickly falling apart)—seems to raise similar hopes, and run against the same obstacles, as it did at the beginning of the twentieth century. The quick spread of globalization in the wake of the collapse of the Cold War world order, as well as its angry contestation from both the political right and left, seem to be the major reasons behind the revival of the transnational and the cosmopolitan idea, leading to a new "paradigm shift" in the cultural and social sciences.¹ Talking from the perspective of American studies, Donald Pease—having given credit to Randolph Bourne for coining the term "transnational America," goes on to assert the significance of the historical moment: "But the term [transnationalism] did not achieve popularity within American studies until the cessation of the Cold War in

1 Today's globalization—and the hopes it engenders (including the hope to build a cosmopolitan society), roughly parallel the world situation preceding the outbreak of WWI. As stated by Eric Hobsbawm, "the major fact about the nineteenth century is the creation of a single global economy, progressively reaching into the most remote corners of the world, an increasingly dense web of economic transactions, communications and movements of goods, money and people linking the developed countries with each other and with the undeveloped world... This globalization... continued to grow... massively in terms of volume and numbers—between 1875 and 1914" (62). Apart from the movement of goods and people, the pre-WWI world system involved a wide exchange of ideas, including the social-democratic solutions espoused by the Progressive reformers and their equivalent in other countries, including Australia and New Zealand. See, for example, Peter J. Coleman, *Progressivism and the World of Reform* (1987).

Europe led us American studies scholars to consider a transnational framework to be a salutary alternative to American exceptionalism" (Pease 39). Bourne's passionate embrace of cosmopolitanism and internationalism in the midst of the war waged one hundred years ago seem almost prophetic, given the increasingly palpable effects of globalization in our time. Consider the recent words of Ulrich Beck:

cosmopolitanism has ceased to be merely a controversial rational idea; in however distorted a form, it has left the realm of philosophical castles in the air and has entered reality. Indeed, it has become the defining feature of a new era of reflexive modernity, in which national borders and differences are dissolving and must be renegotiated.... This is why a world that has become cosmopolitan urgently demands a new standpoint, the cosmopolitan outlook, from which we can grasp the social and political realities in which we live. (3)

Having given to Bourne his due as a forerunner of today's "transnationalism," we should also reflect on how his ideas fit into today's debate on the meaning of this keyword. First of all, as Donald Pease observes, the semiotics of the term is open to negotiation: "Shifts in the meaning of the term 'transnational' depend on the disparate purposes for which it gets used... the transnational is a highly contradictory concept, invested with multiple and incompatible significations. Since its significance gets particularized differently each time the transnational appears in a particular context, it is necessary to distinguish and clarify these different uses and meanings" (Pease 40). Likewise, the meaning of the term "cosmopolitan" (used—and understood—by Bourne as synonymous with "transnational"), in the view of Victor Roudometof, lacks a "universally shared definition," and may range, for example, from a "thin" cosmopolitanism (referring to a separation from the local), through "rooted," or "vernacular" cosmopolitanism (valorizing and cherishing the local), to "glocalized" cosmopolitanism, where "global detachment and local attachment coexist in a symbiotic relationship" (Roudometof 149).

Bourne's cosmopolitan vision was certainly not a "thin" one, but rather close to "rooted"² or what Kwame Anthony Appiah calls a "partial cosmopolitanism," one

2 The term was apparently coined by Mitchell Cohen in 1991: "What is needed is the fashioning of a dialectical concept of *rooted* cosmopolitanism, which accepts a multiplicity of roots and branches and that rests on the legitimacy of plural loyalties, of standing in many circles, but with common ground" (qtd. in Werbner 9). The concept seems an attempt to exonerate cosmopolitanism from the stereotypical condemnation of it as "the unrealistic utopia of a rootless cosmopolitanism where everyone is supposedly a 'world citizen', in a borderless world" (Ang 229). Consider also the comment by Pnina Werbner, arguing against the repeatedly verbalized prejudice characterizing all cosmopolitans as "rootless": "Against the slur that cosmopolitans are rootless, with no commitments to place or nation, the new post-1990s cosmopolitanism attempts to theorise the complex ways in which cosmopolitans juggle particular and transcendent loyalties—morally, and inevitably also, politically" (Werbner 2).

that does not “disdain the partialities of kinfolk and community” (Appiah loc. 162, 180). In a larger sense, his was the voice of a generation of Progressive reformers inspired by the worldwide trend toward social democracy which considered the latter as the way of fulfilling the “Promise of American Life,” to quote the title of Herbert Croly’s manifesto of Progressivism. The historian Jonathan M. Hansen listed Bourne together with William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams, Eugene V. Debs, W. E. B. Du Bois, Louis Brandeis, and Horace Kallen, who

repudiated liberalism’s association with acquisitive individualism and laissez-faire economics, delineating a model of liberal citizenship whose virtues and commitments amount to what I have labeled ‘cosmopolitan patriotism’.... While celebrating individual autonomy and cultural diversity, the cosmopolitan patriots exhorted Americans to embrace a social-democratic ethic that reflected the interconnected and mutually dependent nature of life in the modern world. (Hansen xiv)

Indeed, Hansen’s definition of “cosmopolitan patriotism,” an oxymoron at a first glance, may probably be applied to most American intellectuals, in the past as well as in our time, attempting to combine their left-wing, or more specifically social-democratic ideas, with patriotism (think, for example, of Richard Rorty’s “leftist patriotism” postulated in *Achieving Our Country*), or at least with the need to seek accommodation with the cultural and political context of their life and work. Likewise, Bourne felt the need to distance himself from the “rootless” cosmopolitanism by subscribing to the idea of America as the world’s first truly cosmopolitan nation: “America is already the world federation in miniature, the continent where for the first time in history has been achieved that miracle of hope, the peaceful living side by side, with character substantially preserved, of the most heterogeneous peoples under the sun” (93). “The miracle of hope... achieved” was clearly a trope positioning Bourne’s essay in the hallowed tradition of American millennialism, and turning it into a patriotic narrative symptomatic of his rootedness in America’s mainstream tradition.

Yet, despite its visionary quality, Bourne’s writing contains some disquietingly darker tones, striking a discordant note with today’s sensitivities. There are passages, for example, where Bourne obviously speaks in the voice of his class, or even more significantly, moments when he chooses not to speak at all, evidently following the “custom of the country,” or at least of “white” America. Today’s reader may be struck, for example, by occasional outbursts of condescension in Bourne the intellectual—but also the avowed democrat—toward the emerging mass society and culture of his time, and the condition of marginality characterizing the life of the immigrant masses. The erosion of national cultures tends, he writes, “to create hordes of men and women without a spiritual country, cultural outlaws without taste, without standards but those of the mob” (90). Inhabitants of this cultural fringe, he argues, make for “detached fragments of peoples, the flotsam and jetsam of American life,

the downward undertow of our civilization with its leering cheapness and falseness of taste in spiritual outlook. The absence of mind and sincere feeling which we see our slovenly towns, our vapid moving pictures, our popular novels, and in the vacuous faces of the crowds on the city street" (90). Bourne bemoans the "tasteless, colorless fluid of uniformity," "Americanization understood as leveling down of national differences and replacing them with vapid, tasteless, 'rudimentary' American culture of the cheap newspaper, the 'movies,' the popular song, the ubiquitous automobile" (90). This is clearly the voice of Bourne the elitist, yearning for a national high culture that could stand up to the European standards.

Then there is the striking omission crying out from the text: Bourne basically ignores the race issue. The dual citizenship he is talking about—and defines as "the rudimentary form of that international citizenship to which, if our words mean anything, we aspire" (93)—extends to all the European nationalities and ethnic groups listed in his essay: French, German, Polish, Jewish, Anglo-Saxon. Yet this dual citizenship visibly excludes the African-American, the Asian or the Mexican. One can only regret Bourne takes no cognizance of the work of his great contemporary, W.E.B. Du Bois. For today's reader, the notion of "striving" for a "dual spiritual citizenship" immediately brings to mind Du Bois's famous proclamations about the "double-consciousness" and the "double self" being the lot of the black intellectual who wants to move across the ever impenetrable color line:

It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (*Souls* 8)

Du Bois wrote those lines for his *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903 (which apparently Bourne read); and in *The Atlantic* magazine, in the essay "The African Roots of War," he called for a full incorporation of "black men" into a democratic world-order as the necessary precondition for achieving a lasting peace worldwide: "We shall not drive war from this world until we treat them [black men] as free and equal citizens in a world-democracy of all races and nations" (712). The text was published one year before Bourne's contribution in the same magazine, hence it is almost certain that Bourne read it. Yet, Du Bois's was the voice crying in the wilderness: white America, including the Progressive intellectuals, was not ready for that call, and while some, like Bourne, were ready for "a world democracy of nations," they were certainly—and painfully—unwilling to invite Du Bois's "black men" and, indeed, the black women to participate (with the political status of the white women still hanging in the balance at this point).

Compared with Du Bois's, Bourne's perspective is largely Eurocentric, even though, like many of his Progressive contemporaries, he believed that it was

in America, actually, that the European cultures can thrive far better than in their proper homelands:

No intense nationalism of the European plan can be ours. But do we not begin to see a new and more adventurous ideal? Do we not see how the national colonies in America, deriving power from the deep cultural heart of Europe and yet living here in mutual toleration, freed from the age-long tangles of races, creeds, and dynasties, may work out a federated ideal? America is transplanted Europe, but a Europe that has not been disintegrated and scattered in the transplanting as in some Dispersion. (91)

Bourne's Eurocentrism diminishes him in the eyes of the contemporary reader, even though, it should be stated, the exclusion of the African-American from the visions of Beloved Community was hardly Bourne's peculiarity: he seemed to share with most of the white Progressive Era intellectuals the lack of empathy for the parallel strife of another race to achieve the "dual cultural citizenship" status he so passionately endorsed for the groups of European origin. In that regard, Bourne was no longer a rebel, but conformed to the notions of his contemporaries about the "incompatibility" of white and black within the body of American society.

Indeed, the racism and xenophobia of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century reformers remain a blemish on the legacy of American progressivism and its image today. Inevitably perhaps, the widespread xenophobic views and nativist outbursts of the era poisoned the minds of the founders of twentieth-century American liberalism and this fact can be regarded as the 'original sin' of twentieth-century reform thought and practice. Herbert Gans, in *We're All Multiculturalists Now*, observed that "the significance of this episode [the Progressive Era] in the history of American thinking about race and ethnicity is that the argument over assimilation and Americanization evoked by the mass immigration of the period 1880-1924, and by the pressures of World War I simply did not take blacks, let alone Mexican Americans or Asians, into account" (112).

Today the Progressive Era's backlash against the ethnic and racial other seems to be coming back with a vengeance. This is perhaps the reason for what seems like a revival of interest in Progressive era's politics, including the cultural politics of the time. The September 2016 issue of *Perspectives on Politics* (a journal published by the American Political Science Association) may serve as an example: it is largely devoted to the legacy of Woodrow Wilson, tainted by his racism and endorsement of racial segregation in the federal government, as well as his opposition to the enfranchisement of women. In the words of one of the featured authors, Desmond King, "however formulated, illiberal invective marinated progressivism," and the "overpowering racism and illiberalism" of the leading Progressives "reek like chloroform." King takes Wilson to task for his "oppressive presence" in the era when "[t]hose alleged progressive heroes of factory laws, non-partisan ballots, and state intervention hated

all those unlike themselves—dodgy immigrants, African Americans, Mexicans, and anyone else they bothered to think about who offended the ascriptive hierarchies and codes... by which they lived" (King 788-89). King's critical estimate of Wilson was largely shared by most contributors to the "Reflections Symposium" on Wilson's legacy, featured in the same issue.

Bourne's virtual exclusion of the non-European from the vision of Beloved Community (the phrase he owed to the Harvard philosopher Josiah Royce) was symptomatic of the larger currents of his time, his opposition to Wilsonianism notwithstanding. Had Bourne lived longer, he might have taken a clearer stand on the issue. Perhaps he would have distanced himself from the skepticism of Horace Kallen who looped around the racial issue in his essay "Democracy versus the Melting Pot," restricting himself to the statement that "there seems to be some difference of opinion as to whether negroes should constitute an element in [this] blend" (meaning the putative "American race", understood as "a blend of at least all the European stocks"; 194). Yet, Bourne's "significant silence" on the matter may be disappointing for today's reader, given his standing as a forerunner of today's multiculturalism. No wonder perhaps that in some estimates Bourne's status as the "founding father" of multiculturalism becomes shaky. In the reading by Andrew Walzer, for example, Bourne emerges not so much as a "true" multiculturalist but a cultural nationalist, envisioning the future American national identity formed on the basis of ethnic exclusion, as well as—in Walzer's interpretation, based on his reexamination of Bourne's earlier texts—on "the ideal of the nation as a deep fraternity of male citizens and site of male power" (Walzer 18).

To complete the critical re-reading of Bourne's famous essay, one should turn to the ideological underpinnings of his "transnational" idea which—despite his reputation as a cultural and political radical—bring him unexpectedly close to Wilsonian exceptionalism and belief in America's world-mission. Thus, along with the dismantling of the old exceptionalist framework based on the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon, a new exceptionalist narrative is being born:

Only America, by reason of the unique liberty of opportunity and traditional isolation for which she seems to stand, can lead in this cosmopolitan enterprise. Only the American—and in this category I include the migratory alien who has lived with us and caught the pioneer 'spirit and a sense of new social vistas—has the chance to become that citizen of the world'.... America is coming to be, not a nationality but a transnationality, a weaving back and forth, with the other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. (96)

Thus the ending of Bourne's essay points in a direction not unlike that taken by Woodrow Wilson in his "mediating nation" speech from April 1915, in which the American president argued that "[w]e are naturally the mediating nation of the world" (Cadle loc 209-210). In this and many other political speeches, Woodrow

Wilson encompassed a vision of America as a “world-nation,” uniquely qualified to act as a world leader; in fact, the world-saving mission is very much at the heart of Wilson’s message to his country as well as to the embattled Europe. And so Bourne’s cosmopolitanism, initially built on the assumption that American national culture hardly exists in itself, or at least is derivative vis-à-vis its British “original copy”—so that in order to constitute itself it needs sustenance from the rich cultural traditions brought over from the continent of Europe—morphs into an argument using exceptionalist clichés.

In a recent essay, Winfried Fluck writes about the paradox of a “transnational perspective” which, on closer inspection, sometimes betrays a “hidden agenda.” Fluck argues that, in recent Americanist scholarship

the transnational project is not just innocently aiming at a cosmopolitan broadening of interpretive horizons. It also pursues the goal of reconceptualizing America—that is, the very thing from which it apparently wants to escape or distance itself. Consciously or not, there is always—inevitably and always already—an underlying assumption at work about the current state, not only of American studies, but also of ‘America,’ and this assumption will determine the direction in which a transnational approach is taken. (367)

Fluck distinguishes what he calls an “aesthetic” transnationalism, celebrating cross-fertilization, mobility, and diversity as if for their own sake, and he goes on to say that “by redirecting our attention to the fact that the ‘United States... has always been a transnational crossroads of culture,’ aesthetic transnationalism... rejuvenates an America that has lost its multicultural vigor because of a narrow-minded nationalism” (368). “America becomes a world leader again,” warns Fluck, “but paradoxically enough, no longer as the America of American exceptionalism but as ‘Transnational America’” (370). Seen from this perspective, Randolph Bourne’s now-classic essay from one hundred years ago may serve as an early manifestation of the pitfalls of the transnational idea that can so imperceptibly, almost against itself, be co-opted and harnessed to serve the larger purposes of American exceptionalism and world-mission ideology, even though—ironically—Bourne’s writing took on Wilson as the main foe.

All in all, Bourne’s ideas still resonate with the contemporary reader. Neither the exceptionalist underpinnings of his argument nor his upsetting silences can undo his important contributions to American intellectual history and public debate. Apart from his claim—secured by “Trans-National America”—to be regarded as one of the “founding fathers” of today’s cultural pluralism and multiculturalism, Bourne’s legacy lives on in other forms, and other contexts, based on other texts. Most importantly perhaps, his anti-war views (of which his statement that “war is the health of the state” is certainly the best known sample) are invoked by the political and cultural left today because of the many parallels existing between Wilsonianism—opposed

by Bourne—and the ideological formulations that can be heard from the American politicians today, especially in the area of the U.S. world role and its hegemonic foreign policy.³ Likewise, Bourne's protest against what he believed was the pro-Wilsonian intellectuals' cynical will to power (and their misplaced hope of using the war to promote the Progressive reform) may seem uncannily up-to-date in view of the liberal elites' similar moral dilemmas of today. For all these reasons, Bourne's "ghost" is still visibly present with us.

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3 See, for example: Robert Bly, "War is the Health of the State," *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Feb 24, 1991, repr. http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/bly/war.htm; Franklin Foner, "Once Again, America First," *New York Times Online*, Oct. 10, 2004; Chris Suellentrop, "Libertarians for Obama?," *New York Times Online*, Sept. 9, 2009.

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