

Editorial

In Jonathan Swift's 1726 satire *Gulliver's Travels*, the diminutive Lilliputians present to their emperor an inventory of what they find in the pockets of their prisoner, "the Great Man-Mountain" Gulliver. Prominent among the contents of those pockets is "a wonderful kind of engine" on a silver chain. The Lilliputians were baffled at it, conjecturing it is "the god that he worships . . . because he assures us . . . that he seldom did any thing without consulting it: he called it his oracle."¹

This item was, of course, Gulliver's pocket watch. Three centuries later, the Lilliputians would no doubt have drawn from Gulliver's pocket one of the nearly seven billion smartphones currently in use globally. Time-teller, mail service, telephone, television and cinema, arcade still and video camera, photo album, jukebox, credit card, wallet, tracker, and confessor, among other things, the smartphone has transformed radically our relationships to space, other people, and ourselves in the two decades since its emergence on the mass consumer market. It was only a matter of time before *Transfers* investigated the smartphone as a crucial vehicle for transporting ideas, images, capital, and selves across the globe.

The special section that opens this issue, "Migrants and Their Smartphones," edited by Isabelle Cockel and Beatrice Zani, provocatively and incisively sketches out a new paradigm for scholars in mobility studies and a broad array of allied fields. The seven contributors to this section explore how smartphones serve as our contemporary oracle. These "engines" facilitate and affect commerce, belonging, selfhood, nostalgia, intimacy, and, of course, mobility. These authors show that, by enabling migrants' connectivity with *and* distance from others, smartphones have become essential tools and shapers of the mobile subject as she, he, and they navigate sovereign borders, familial relationships, moral quandaries, markets in goods and services, and gender identities.

This issue also kicks off *Transfers'* newest section, Trajectories, with a review essay from renowned automobility scholar (and journal founder) Gijs Mom. As befits this section, Gijs draws together seemingly disparate works from across the disciplinary spectrum to trace a connecting thread: the uneasy alliance between history and the social sciences in the new mobility studies paradigm.

Our Ideas in Motion contribution, from the geographer Olga Hannonen, invites mobility studies scholars to consider the worldview and practices of the digital nomad, and their relation to regimes of mobility, global capitalism, and various forms of power. Hannonen delves into this phenomenon, which



has seen tremendous growth with the pandemic and its aftermath, emphasizing that it is deeply shaped by technology, as well as power and privilege.

Rounded out by six excellent novel and scholarly book reviews, this issue offers *Transfers* readers a broad array of perspectives, sites, and texts to consider. We hope your travels through it are as illuminating as, if less fraught than, those of Gulliver.

Notes

1. Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961 [1726]), 17–18.