

Jie Lu and Martín Camps, eds. *Displacing Area, Expanding Transpacific Frames between/beyond Asia-Latin America Transpacific Literary and Cultural Connections: Latin American Influence in Asia*. Palgrave MacMillan, 2020. 269 pp.

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*Transpacific Literary and Cultural Connections: Latin American Influence in Asia* embraces the expansion of literary studies that highlight the exchanges, influences, and imaginaries that bond literary and cultural productions from Asia and Latin America. As such, this edited volume offers expansive reflections around practices and methodologies in transpacific scholarship to build historical bridges and dialogues among aesthetic, political, and cultural thematic between contexts that are not usually considered together. Edited by Jie Lu and Martín Camps, both Professors at the University of the Pacific, the essays in *Transpacific Literary and Cultural Connections* configure what Junyoung Verónica Kim (2017) dubbed “Asia-Latin America as method” as a site of knowledge production that challenges and remaps the politics and practice of comparison.

The anthology departs from usual explorations of the Asia-Latin America connection through diasporic, demographic, or economic ties by emphasizing conceptual and imaginary influences that evince “diverse trajectories of globalization” that resist naturalizing the paradigm of “the West” as a center, drawing from critiques proposed by scholars of critical area and postcolonial studies including Rey Chow, Chen Kuan-Hsing, and Naoki Sakai, whose phrase, “the dislocation of the West,” is highlighted in the book’s argument (2). As its editors, Jie Lu and Martín Camps assert,

we propose forming a new field of inquiry in Asian Studies that incorporates Latin American intellectual and cultural influences. Latin America-Asia connections should be viewed as a means to make sense of the regions, transforming knowledge production, reckoning with the challenges of Western epistemology, modernization and development, and locating Latin America-Asia in the broader Global South as a “process and practice.” (6-7)

In highlighting the importance of practices of knowledge production and epistemological models that seek to refine cross-cultural literary and media studies, the contributors to this volume make an important intervention to understanding the “Latin America-Asia connection.” Throughout, the transpacific is approached as a site that deconstructs a tradition of Eurocentrism to argue for a politics

of knowledge production that responds to the demand for Global South and decolonial praxes in the broader fields of literary, cultural, and area studies.

Excluding the introduction, the volume is arranged into nine chapters, organized into three separate sections: “Latin America and the Philippines in the Transpacific Connections”; “Shared Issues of Identities, Traumas, and Migrant Experiences Across Two Continents”; and “Magical Realism in Its Asian Turn.” In their introduction, however, the editors posit that these categories are all marked by an interest to “account for greater diversity, hybridity, marginality, and distinctiveness,” in how Asian and Latin American writers and artists contribute to understandings of cultural globalization in historical and theoretical perspectives “that takes place outside Western centrism” (12).

The first part of the volume includes chapters authored by Ignacio López-Calvo and Axel Gasquet that bring focus to the modernist Filipino writer Jesús Balmori as a figure of transpacific literary production. In “A Peripheral, South South Literary Exchange,” López-Calvo delineates the influence of Latin American *modernismo* on Balmori’s poetry, addressing the limits of the form in the context of Balmori’s experiences during the Asia-Pacific War and during the colonial occupation of Japan in the Philippines. Axel Gasquet’s chapter, “Filipino Poet Jesús Balmori,” elaborates the study of Balmori’s Hispanophone lyrical poetry to chronicle the poet’s travels in Mexico in the 1930s, emphasizing the transpacific link that Balmori’s work embodies. In the same section, Eugenio Matibag’s “Transpacific: The Queering of Philippine and Hispanic American Literatures” argues, through a critical and close analysis of the work of Philippine and Latin American fiction from the 1970s, that the influence and globalization of queer perspectives demonstrates redefining of the politics and performance of queer and homosexual identity within repressively patriarchal cultural and social structures. Drawing from the philosopher and activist Natty G. Manauat, Matibag reveals that the literary fiction in the Philippines and Latin America that centers homosexual experiences and queer spaces, exposes the never-ending process of coming out across histories and cultures.

Part two introduces three essays around trauma, cultural identity, and representation. The section opens with Martín Camps’s essay on Young-Ha Kim’s *Black Flower*, a Korean-language novel that offers a historical fictionalization of Korean immigration during the Mexican Revolution and examines the influence of Latin American magical realism in Kim’s form. Miguel Rojas Sotelo’s “Common Ground: Shared Textuality and Visuality in China and Latin America” illustrates an interdisciplinary juxtaposition of environmental and decolonial politics in the artwork of Libia Posada and Qin Ga. Ga and Posada, Rojas Sotelo’s chapter argues, highlight “the way minority voices (indigenous and first nations)” in Latin America and Asia (specifically Brazil, Colombia, Argentina,

and China) contend with the impact of environmental degradation and incorporate bodily inscriptions (tattoos, scars) into political commentary on issues facing the territoriality, displacement, and dispossession of minoritized populations (124). In the third chapter of this section, Min Suk Kim elaborates the transforming image and imaginary of Latin America and Latin American-ness in South Korean media, focusing on post-2010 television travel shows.

The third and final section of the book reflects on Latin American magical realism in Asia since the 1970s through three essays that shift our focus to literary production in modern Indonesia, China, and India. In “*Beauty Is a Wound: Retelling Modern Indonesian History Through Magical Realism*,” Marco Ramírez Rojas analyzes Eka Kurniawan’s novel *Beauty is a Wound* to underscore how the author applies magical realist thematics and rhetoric to create a historical account of political violence in modern Indonesia. The narrator of Kurniawan’s novel, Ramírez Rojas delineates for us, guides us as a mediator of the ghosts that inhabit the liminal state of a postcolonial reality haunted by the collective memory of traumatic history. In the following chapter, Jie Lu examines the traumatic structure of history in two Sinophone films, Jiang Wen’s *The Sun Also Rises* (2007) and Jie Han’s *Hello, Mr. Tree!* (2011) to examine how Chinese directors engage with the post-socialist realities of global modernity through the aesthetics of magical realism. The final chapter, “Transcontinental Journey of Magical Realism: Study of Indian Literatures” by Vibha Maurya, takes up the influence of Indian vernacular literatures as what Maurya calls “geoepistemic spaces” for magical realism. The chapter’s argument tends to a logic that ties cultural history to a geo-national model of literary analysis to construct a view of Indian magical realism that “transcends” the colonial categories of modernity. Nonetheless, the chapter conflates the term “subaltern” to apply to all literary voices in the Indian subcontinent without considering how the very traumatic histories articulated in the magicalist realist form often displace and render impossible a logics that represents subalterneity (none of the authors analyzed are caste-oppressed). Overall, in tracing the political and speculative (and the speculative as political), the authors of this third section argue for a cross-cultural reading of magical realist literary practices against paradigms of post-enlightenment Eurocentrism or “comparative modernities.”

*Transpacific Literary and Cultural Connections* may be most relevant to scholars interested in comparative approaches to literary and cultural connections that do not privilege European or Anglo-American perspectives, but its discussions address a range of issues about inter-cultural imaginaries that emphasize horizontal modes of relating and comparison. The chapters feature rich, detailed close readings of iconic figures in transnational cultural production. Combined, the conversations that this volume builds address a range of theoretical and methodological questions that may appeal to those

interested in the broader humanities, including the relationship between globalization and localization, environmental justice, diaspora, historical traumas, and decolonial methods and praxes for epistemological production. In doing so, the conversations crafted by the anthology shift away from the common focus on the role of Orientalism in Latin American literatures and arts. Indeed, one of the biggest strengths of this volume is that, rather than attempting to provide cross-cultural translations or de-codifications between Asia and Latin America, its essays adapt a renovated and nuanced response and position that joins ongoing dialogues around the role of Latin American cultural production in the transpacific approach.

Yet, despite its wide array of critical and comprehensive interventions, perhaps the volume's biggest flaw is that the majority of its content abstains from engaging conversations in critical race studies, transnational feminist critique, queer of color critique, indigenous studies or any projects that substantially address the intersections of race, sexuality, gender, class, and caste. In other words, the content and framing make few gestures as to how the book's proposed interrogations incorporate a more diversified and ethical politics of citation. For instance, the introduction heavily quotes and paraphrases Junyoung Verónica Kim's "Asia-Latin America as Method: The Global South Project and the Dislocation of the West," first published in Andrea Bachner and Pedro Erber's special issue of *Verge: Studies in Global Asias* (2017). Kim's work, however, is only parenthetically cited; nowhere in sight do we see an acknowledgment of how Kim's oeuvre heavily inflects the framing of the volume's organization and its intended intervention. Greater and sustained attention to voices in the study of the connections between Asia and Latin America and in transpacific studies that highlight a practice of feminist, Black, Indigenous, Dalit, decolonial, and transpacific epistemologies would be welcome by readers. All these perspectives are not only relevant, but indispensable, to any critical decentering of the coloniality of area studies, critical theory, and comparative literature.

As with many of the volumes that have been recently published out of Palgrave MacMillan's Historical and Cultural Interconnections Between Latin America and Asia series, *Transpacific Literary and Cultural Connections* is a unique contribution of densely detailed close readings of literature, film, art, cultural studies, and critical theory that meaningfully and creatively link Asian and Latin American cultural productions from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Its chapters stage a conversation from diverse contributors from all stages of academia, ranging from graduate students and contingent faculty to retired professors. In this collaboration, we therefore find important critical academic work and a remarkable set of studies in literary and cultural analysis that serve as building blocks toward novel definitions of transpacific and comparative methodologies.