

Park, Paula C. *Intercolonial Intimacies: Relinking Latin/o America to the Philippines 1898-1964*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2022. 244 pp.

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In 1949, José García Villa, a Filipino poet living in New York, wrote “Centipede Sonnet,” a poem composed of no words or letters, but rather 476 commas arranged into two quatrains followed by two tercets, the traditional Italian sonnet structure famously employed by Spanish Golden Age poets. Paula C. Park, in *Intercolonial Intimacies: Relinking Latin/o America to the Philippines 1898-1964*, helps us understand this punctuational poetic intervention by highlighting the comma’s ability to “emphasize language’s textual quality by cutting the flow of words while still keeping them orderly and tightly sown together” (73). In the case of Garcia Villa, the commas lyricize, from a space between and beyond languages, the poet’s conflicted relationship with US and Spanish cultural heritages and languages. The commas simultaneously connect him with and distance him from Francisco de Quevedo and Emily Dickinson, Gabriel Cabrera Infante and William Carlos Williams, inviting us readers to include Garcia Villa in discussions of US *Latinidad*. Broadly, this emphatic moment of poetic analysis underlines Park’s central idea and methodological contribution of *Intercolonial Intimacies*: that linguistic and cultural proximities underline networks of kinship between the Philippines and Latin America. These networks help us to better understand the distant, yet interconnected regions impacted still by the legacies of colonialism, but not by centering the US and Spanish empires. Rather, Park compellingly traces a new map of affective proximities and rivalries through a rigorous exploration of poetry, prose, journalism, political speeches, and historiography that interpolates and questions the boundaries of the fields of world literature, global Hispanophone studies, Latin American studies, and Philippine studies.

The first chapter traces the development of *Modernismo* in Latin America in the nineteenth century and in the Philippines in the years after 1898. This poetic code of anti-imperial discourse emerged in competition with different calls in the Philippines for *Sajonismo* or “the embracing of US American culture” (42). The most compelling point Park makes here is insisting that while—in accordance with Julio Ramos’s hypothesis in *Divergent Modernities* (2001)—*modernismo* in Latin America represented an assertion of the cultural superiority of “Our America,” rooted in Hispanism and

cultural links with classical Rome, over the materialistic and culturally corrupt ideas about modernity emanating from the US, things were different in the Philippines. Instead of nostalgically exalting the former colonizer (Spain) in opposition to the current colonizer of the Philippines (the US), *modernista* aesthetics allowed Filipino writers to resist US impositions in the space of literature by celebrating and exploring fraternity with Hispanic American *modernistas* across the Pacific, while also staking a claim to their difference by constructing what Park calls the “unique counter-discourse of *morenidad* (brownness)” (25). Chapter 2, as explored above, uses the framework of *Latinidad* in a transpacific context to better understand the poetry and identity of José Garcia Villa, a poet from the Philippines who wrote in English when not just crafting his verses solely using punctuation marks.

Subsequently, in Chapter 3, Park argues that Rafael Bernal’s anthropological history *México en Filipinas* (1965) has been wrongly left out of discussions of Fernando Ortiz’s concept of transculturation, due in part to the Pacific and the Philippines being “areas that were (and continue to be) largely foreign within the Latin American and the broader Hispanic imaginary,” even though this was not always the case (99). This chapter is Park’s most ambitious in that it interrogates historical writing, fiction, travel literature, journalism, and speeches from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, but does so in a way that convincingly and coherently defends the retroactive identification of Bernal as “one of the first Latin American scholars in the field of transpacific studies” (26). The last chapter explores a moment, the early 1960s, when Spanish was becoming more and more infrequent in the Philippines, causing Filipino writer Antonio Abad to attempt a rebranding of Spanish as an “Ibero-American” language. Meanwhile, in Mexico, Leopoldo Zea theorized a “rhetoric of liberation” common to revolutionary writers from Latin America and the Philippines, like José Martí and José Rizal. Park shows how these reframings allowed *hispanismo* to be “envisioned as what it had already been” (145), a framework for decentralizing knowledge and consolidating a “wider intercolonial world order” (26).

The chapters of *Intercolonial Intimacies*, as suggested by the years included in the title, follow a chronological arc from 1898 to 1964. However, some of the most compelling moments are when this arc is broken, like with a section on the Manila Galleon in Chapter 3 and analyses of Rizal’s novels in Chapter 4. These moments point to the value of transcending traditional ideas about chronological divisions and narratives of progress in the same vein as Park’s insistence on a remapping of cultural circuits and affinities between the Americas and the Pacific, that is the need to “interrogate our strictly territorially bound and monolingual-dominated understandings of literary traditions as well as identitarian discourses, which so often mask their imperialist impetus” (14). In the end, each of the

chapters contributes clearly to the book's exploration of affective, linguistic, and literary proximities between the Philippines and the Americas, but the generic and thematic transitions between chapters occasionally can be surprising, due in part to the emphasis on chronology as an ordering principle of the chapters.

Intercolonial Intimacies' many strengths include methodology, theoretical framework, and its engagement with the prior scholarship on the Philippines and Latin America. In terms of methodology, Park employs sophisticated contextualization and genre-specific frameworks for analyzing poetry, prose, journalism, and history, as well as extensive archival work, never sacrificing analytical or historical rigor while challenging established disciplinary divisions. Even though Park interrogates Lázaro Cárdenas's physical gestures, Manuel Bernabé's poetry, and Leopoldo Zea's speeches with the same goal in mind, that is the recuperation of a genealogy of transpacific affinities and anti-imperial collaborations, she employs different analytical tools to engage with these diverging forms of expression, unifying these sections through her innovative deployment of affect theory. Additionally, Park does not shy away from moments of messy and nuanced politics, as seen with her thoughtful engagement with Jesús Balmori's pro-Francisco Franco *modernista* poetry of the 1940s in Chapter 1. What happens when an anti-American genre is employed to support fascist-adjacent politics? Additionally, the erudite theoretical apparatus, including Heidegger, Dussel, Wallerstein, Ortiz, and Rama, among many others, is as provocative as it is helpful, leaving this reader eager to revisit theoretical texts made clearer through Park's diaphanous and attentive prose. Most importantly, Park addresses and transcends many of the pitfalls of prior scholarship within the emerging fields of transpacific studies and colonial Latinx studies. She insists on the validity of focusing on engagements and kinships between regions formerly colonized by Spain and by doing so, she does not center Spain or the US in discussions of Hispanophone or anti-imperialist literatures, two dominant trends in Peninsular and US scholarship about the Philippines. On the other hand, Park is careful not to romanticize these affinities as "a kind of South-South collaboration avant la lettre" (10). Rather, she employs subtle and rigorous analysis, grounded in the texts to—as John D. Blanco puts it in his dust-jacket blurb—reawaken "the forgotten ties between writers and intellectuals speaking across oceans . . . [preparing] us to grasp at once the Latin(x) contribution to transpacific studies and the Philippine contribution to Hispanophone literature."

In sum, *Intercolonial Intimacies* compellingly and rigorously invites us to appreciate how these ephemeral, yet enduring connections between Latin America and the Philippines function analogously to Garcia Villa's surprising, poetic commas, which separate and connect, organize and disrupt.

Intercolonial Intimacies: Relinking Latin/o America to the Philippines 1898-1964 no doubt will soon become required reading for scholars of Philippine studies and Latinx studies alike, two fields whose confines and distinctions are destabilized by this very text.