

Montt Strabucchi, María. *Representations of China in Latin American Literature (1987-2016)*. Liverpool University Press, 2023. 262 pp.

---

DIPTI BUDHA  
PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC

Montt Strabucchi's book delves into the portrayal of China through the lens of Latin American literary discourse. The intricate relationship between China and Latin America has been examined for nearly three decades, not solely for China's exotic allure but also for its rising economic prominence worldwide and how it is perceived in the imagination of Latin America. By examining China through the perspectives of Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Global South studies, Montt Strabucchi provides a comprehensive investigation of how two dissimilar regions participate in a complex cultural discourse. Through the lens of Global South studies, the author questions Eurocentric perspectives and contends that Latin American work is not just a replication of Western narratives of China, but a unique and hybrid depiction of the country. Readers are encouraged to consider the changing perspectives on China in different timelines, which mirror the Latin American region's dynamic changes and new ideas. The book seeks to reinterpret the concept of "otherness," highlighting how essentialism agonizes China as an enigmatic land and pursuing a more complex understanding of identity in the context of Latin America. The dichotomy of East and West as well as the common East-West framework are explored in a more nuanced way in the author's terminology. The author offers a more cohesive perspective that questions standard classifications such as intertwined influences, common histories, or intricate relationships. Montt Strabucchi shows how the identity crisis in both China and Latin America is a similar yet distant concept. It explores the theme of migration and focuses on the experiences of the Chinese diaspora in Latin America. It focuses on the lives of Chinese immigrants, and their integration into local communities, emphasizing the interactions and relationships of Latin Americans and Chinese immigrants. The book intends to shed light on different dimensions of the connections between China and Latin America. Montt Strabucchi has explored a diverse selection of works from Latin American authors that capture their different perspectives on the essence of China. The collection delves into the voices of authors from Mexico, Peru, and Argentina and brings an array of perspectives and discussions to the centre. Her book examines how these novels reflect broader Latin American perspectives on "otherness" and identity,

showing that "China" is a mysterious and distant place. However, numerous writers contested oriental narratives, much like Ricardo Piglia's work that transcended simplistic stereotypes. Through a close examination of each book, the author covers the prism of postcolonialism, demonstrating how these works quietly oppose the processes of the legacy of imperialism. Postcolonial China symbolises a global resistance to Western dominance; the postcolonial discourse primarily broadens South-South relationships and interactions rather than the East-West dichotomy. In the chapters, she discusses the historical and political realities of China and Latin America, highlighting analogies that enrich the narrative. These two far-off places share common experiences, endured the wounds of colonialism and exploitation, and demonstrated many revolutions and resilience. The existence of Chinese communities and lively Chinatowns across Latin America is a testament to the political, economic, and even cultural exchange between two distant continents. These territories challenge the binary constructions of identity and community and highlight the intricacies of belonging in a place formed by native and foreign influences. This interaction questions the traditional concepts of identity, resulting in the emergence of a more nuanced story of cross-continental connections. The term "Chino" is considered to represent the entirety of the Oriental identity, a single word is used to encapsulate a vast and diverse world. The words "Chino" and "Orient" are recognized as frequently tinged with offense and misunderstandings, ignoring the richness of East Asian cultures, languages, and traditions. In parallel, the term "mestizaje" emphasizes the blend of culture and identity, incorporating Indigenous, African, and European influences in Latin America. Montt Strabucchi underscores the common experiences of colonization and investigates cultural mixtures, identity, and the similarities between Latin America's intricate racial history and the evolving relationship with China.

From a Latin American perspective, China faces numerous identity crises under the coverage of racial supremacy. Following postcolonialism, Asia and China are more visible in Latin American studies. The scholars from both sides find a platform to express their thoughts and ideas and how they gaze at each other, building a bridge between two distinctive spaces. Economic and political relations are prevalent to strengthen the relationships in the current era. The exploration of the Global South as well as an increased understanding of its regions, provides a unique view of a more direct, unfiltered interchange of perspectives. Rather than viewing China solely through Western eyes, Latin American literature reframes the traditional image of China, providing more thorough postcolonial harmony and geopolitical concerns. This expanding relationship has opened new avenues of investigation, exposing previously hidden or distant ideas. The time frame outlined by Montt

Strabucchi provides several possibilities to broaden the knowledge of two enormous places where each one is unique in its culture, impacts, and history. The work represents the complexity of their relationship, defining an interest that crosses geographic and cultural boundaries.

One of the critical works Montt Strabucchi employed is Edward Said's idea of Orientalism, which highlights Western intellectuals' distorted portrayal of the East. However, she also identifies instances where these depictions contradict traditional orientalism, complicating the East-West binary by delving into similar postcolonial experiences in China and Latin America. In the expansive story of Orientalism, China has long been portrayed as an exotic and enigmatic character, initiated by the lens of Eurocentrism. The Western paradigm has not only influenced Europe's perspective about the East but also perceptions around the world. While interpreting China, scholars from Latin American scholars explored the emergence of a global power, and also mapped the shifting boundaries of their continent, acknowledging the significant ways in which China had become a significant component of their reality. A deeper dialogue was created where the distant fantasies now felt closer and easier, capturing the essence of the country. The novels provide valuable insights that challenge preconceived cliches and dismantle stereotypical thoughts about China in Latin America. Instead, they allow new perspectives, break old myths, and fill the gap between two worlds. A shift from Orientalist ideologies to globalization and postcolonial identity is the fundamental encounter of Latin America.

This book is for researchers interested in transnational literary studies, Global South interactions, and the intricate dynamics of cultural representation in a constantly changing world. It covers the timeframe from the Qin dynasty in 221 BC to communist rule in the 1970s, which is a testament to Montt Strabucchi's work for justice. China's influence on Latin America is both favourable and unfavourable; however, it is appreciated that these consequences belong to the standpoint of Latin America rather than from a biased Eurocentric viewpoint and they challenge East-West binaries and highlight the dialogue between Global South countries. Latin America is seen as a vital region by China for acquiring resources, boosting trade, and establishing important alliances. China's involvement in intercultural engagement and interaction in the region is motivated by economic and geopolitical benefits. The discussions about China in an authentic and imagined context in this book are not merely about geographical entities, but instead the cultural concepts and the notion of identity, providing a lens to mirror the challenges and conflicts in Latin America. The idea of various sorts of communities in Latin America has been unveiled, leading to a reevaluation of the concept of "Other" for China, and it is now apparent that the Chinese people are being embraced as an integral part of Latin America. The concepts of "other" and "mestizaje" are similar to experiences of hybrid

identities, cultural blending, and a symbol of amalgamation in China and Latin America, supporting a strong relationship despite the distinctiveness. Latin America and China formed their perceptions of each other through the transpacific gaze. Exploring fiction, essays, and poetry by well-known Latin American writers, dualism is a clear aim of Montt Strabucchi's book, which delves into the history of China as a distant land and a consequence of diplomatic and economic engagements with China throughout the years.