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### **TRANSMODERNITY: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World**

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*Geografías caleidoscópicas. América Latina y sus imaginarios intercontinentales* (Ediciones de Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2022), edited by Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger and Koichi Hagimoto, presents wide-ranging, decolonizing essays by scholars who explore intercultural dialogues by artists, intellectuals, and writers between Latin America, Africa, and Asia over the past half-century. By its very premise, this edited volume has multiple directions of thought, and its consistencies lie in the similar foci of the authors upon the connections and disconnections between artists and authors of the Global South, as they eschew any subservient role in dialectic with the Global North. Much like in a kaleidoscope, there is an element of chance and chaos between the symmetries and asymmetries of works studied herein. Many of the essays in this book find the hope for solidarity across the Global South to be the unifying feature. Describing some of the works mentioned in one essay, the editors state that two authors “aspiran a establecer conexiones interculturales y transculturales para crear enlaces triangulares correctores de las antiguas estructuras coloniales” (20). This quote captures the essence of the project: studying the desire to find new connections between Latin America and other cultures of the world without engaging in the coloniality of power of the Occident.

At a practical level, some readers will prefer to focus on individual essays (all drawn from conference presentations by the authors at the 36th Romanistentag in Kassel, Germany, in 2019) that relate more specifically to their field of inquiry. Due to the rhizomatic tendencies of thought in several of the essays, the volume can proceed at a clip and then slow down as it navigates dense theoretical frameworks—Deleuze and Guattari are cited by some as much as canonical decolonizing thinkers such as Walter D. Mignolo, Homi Bhabha and Boaventura de Sousa Santos. This collection of essays shows the complexity of the global vision of Latin American authors, primarily with regards to Africa and China, as they build upon attempts at dialogue with the Global South in the twentieth century to demonstrate today the desire for unmediated, global, cultural exchanges.

The collection of essays has three sections that are loosely grouped around African and Latin American relations and a fourth section that is about China as an inspiration or dialectic for Argentine

or Cuban intellectuals. In the first section, “Giros espaciales,” contains two essays. In “Hacia una tercera estética,” Ute Fendler explores the lost cultural memories of African slaves in Spanish, Portuguese, and French as constructed by African and Caribbean writers. She particularly focuses on fragmented memories of slavery and highlights the 2018 play/installation *Quaseilhas*, staged in Salvador de Bahia by Ecuadorian dramaturg Diego Araújo. Drawing upon the theory of Postmemory that Marianne Hirsch developed in relation to Holocaust narratives, this essay proposes that across the varied texts of disrupted cultural memories, a metaphorical broken mirror can be pieced together. The selection of this essay to begin the collection is apropos of its similarity to the collection as a whole: the essay bounds from theorist to theorist, region to region, and language to language. Like the book in general, it finds shards of cultural meaning that contrast in proximity or have lacunae, but that reveal a suggestive big picture when viewed as a whole. The other essay in “Giros espaciales,” by Diana Nascimento dos Santos, is a study on the metaphor, or chronotope, of the ocean for those ensnared in the diaspora of slavery in *Kalunga*, by Angolan author Manuel Rui and *El metro*, by Donato Ndongo-Bidyogo from Equatorial Guinea.

Moving to the next chapter, “Diplomacias estratégicas” does not leave Africa behind. In a fascinating history of twentieth-century efforts to culturally reconnect the African diaspora in Latin America and elsewhere with African states, Estefanía Bournout reviews the successes and shortcomings of Pan-African solidarity festivals begun in 1966 by Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor and attended by Cuban and Brazilian diplomats and cultural figures. This enjoyable essay connects Gilberto Gil and Fela Kuti, and just for that is worth a read. In the next essay, Luis Pulito Ritter discusses the complete lack of representation of black individuals in Panamanian artworks until the 1960s. Unlike the rest of the essays, it looks North rather than anywhere else in the Global South. He finds that the only artworks to feature members of the significant Panamanian black community until recently were made by travelers from the Global North. The last essay in this chapter, “El *Angelus Novus* de la memoria transatlántica” by Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger, jumps back to literary criticism of transatlantic novels that focus on the presence or experience of Cuban soldiers in the Angolan civil war of the 1990s. This theory-driven piece brings attention to a variety of narratives from both Angolan and Cuban authors. The general theme across the various essays is that the spirit of solidarity sought by African and Latin American leaders was imperfectly achieved. The memories of both sides of the Atlantic feature few real dialogues or understandings compared to a great deal of trauma and silence.

The next chapter of the book moves to the Pacific, where, in “Transficciones orientalistas,” Argentine and Cuban authors read, translate, and appropriate Chinese literary sources. Jorge Locane compares Argentine translations of Chinese poetry by Álvaro Yunque in 1958 with those by Juanele Ortiz and Miguel Ángel Petrecca in 2011. Locane finds that these Argentine poets acknowledged their lack of mutual understanding and found this challenge to be a great motivator to make faithful translations of meaning, while respecting the sonoral and technical challenge of translating character-based poetry into alphabetical Spanish, all without having a deep bilingual fluency with Chinese. Locane notes that the challenge of translating works from Chinese to Spanish without mediation from English or French sources attracted Yunque to create his anthology, while Petrecca found the challenge a motivator to devote himself to becoming bilingual with Mandarin and gaining cultural dexterity in order to be a better translator. Staying with the theme of China in the Latin American imagination, the next essay, by Daniela Martín Hidalgo and Nanne Timmer, explores eighteen poems by Cuban poets about Chinese themes in *Caribe oriental. Antología de poesía cubana orientalista*, translated into Brazilian Portuguese by Idalia Morejón and Pacelli Dias Alves de Sousa and published in 2018 by Malha Tinta Cartonera. They focus on the creation of an art-book poem anthology that reunites dispersed pieces by Afro-Chinese Cuban poet Regino Pedroso, ‘camp’ author Virgilio Piñera, and the metaliterary parodies of Carlos A. Aguilera into a meaningful archive that functions as a sympathetic type of Cuban orientalism. The last essay in this chapter is a deep dive by Natascha Rempel into the novel *Teoría del alma china* by previously mentioned Cuban author Carlos A. Aguilera. Aguilera, a Cuban of Chinese heritage, is a co-founder of the Diaspora(s) literary group in Cuba that took advantage of a short-lived thaw in government censorship around the year 2000. Rempel finds that this short novel fits into Aguilera’s theory of free-floating transfiction that is autonomous from closed realist or socialist readings favored by the state. The essay applies Deleuze’s theory of the rhizome to how Aguilera connects languages, themes, and aesthetics across a narrative of stuttering, perverted and bloody cultural encounters between a Cuban narrator and his girlfriend traveling through three versions of China, a Lonely Planet travel guide inspired version, an Echeverrián “Matadero” vision of China, and a Brechtian “China Enana” depiction. Though the chapter does not call this a postmodernist text, the strategies described evoke the truth-undermining strategies of that out-of-style literary movement. The potential negative reaction of a Chinese reader to this book is not discussed.

The last chapter of the book, Sur-Norte-Sur, leaves China completely behind and returns to African and Latin American literary connections and identities, as they exist in the frame of the Global North. Hanna Nohe looks at the 2005 novel *El síndrome de Ulises*, by Santiago Gamboa. She applies

the theory of the Global South by Sousa Santos, the Ethnoscape postulated by Arjun Appadurai, and the Vernacular Cosmopolitan of Homi Bhabha and Walter Dignolo to the exiles, migrants, and wanderers from diverse parts of the Global South who live in the same liminal space in Gamboa's vision of contemporary Paris. She praises the palpable depiction of their struggles for economic security, while fairly critiquing some of the novel's stereotypes for the sub-Saharan characters, as well as the light-skinned protagonist's elision of marginalized racial identity in Colombia. The next essay, by Julianne Tauchnitz, provides an overview of Moroccan narratives written in Spanish as they connect Spain, North Africa, and parts of Latin America. In particular, she points out that authors such as Mohamed Lahchiri and Ahmed Ararou find inspiration in Borges and some of the Boom authors, as they depict the travails of North Africans experiencing economic marginalization and migration between Spain and Morocco. Tauchnitz highlights Lahchiri's characters expressing ideas in Spanish about race, sex, and religion, which they say they would have self-censored if they had been speaking in Arabic. Also, in Ararou's novel, a racist Argentine researcher comes to Morocco with an American passport just to find confirmation of his pre-existing, colonialist beliefs. These books do not establish solidarity across the Global South; rather, they problematize the connections between Latin America, Africa, and Europe. The final essay in the collection, by Julianne Borst, is a study on César Mba Aboga's 2007 novel from Equatorial Guinea: *El porteador de Marlow/Canción negra sin color*. Borst finds a spirit of Global Hispanophone solidarity among African hispanophone people and members of the African diaspora within the narrative. While not finding actual intercultural dialogue, the desire for solidarity is evoked. Mba Abogo gives the narration to the silenced African porter from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, while silencing the white characters. Borst includes a brief discussion on African authors critical of European colonialism, such as Yeison García López, Juan Tomás Ávila Laurel, and Oscar Kem-Mekah Kadzue, who demonstrate that they are readers of Latin American authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Franz Fanon, Alejandro Carpentier, and Marie-Célie Agnant.

*Geografías caleidoscópicas* begins with a study of artistic solidarity projects between Africa and the Latin American centers of the African diaspora. It then jumps to contemporary Chinese poetry collections translated by Latin American scholars. Then, it goes back again to Africans as they appear in Latin American fiction set in Europe and Latin Americans as they appear to African authors. These narratives share a goal of developing dialogues and material exchanges with other regions of the Global South without the mediation of Europe or the United States. They desire to establish transcultural dialogues, even as they acknowledge the many gaps and failures over the last several decades to actually

establish these dialogues. The fact that there are as many setbacks as there are successes and as many disjunctions as there are unions, is fairly signaled by the title. *Geografías caleidoscópicas* studies the ongoing struggle to collect and display the shards of meaning created by authors across Latin America and other parts of the Global South.