

comentario editorial

Theoretical Cross-Pollination in Latin America: Mapping Transnational Exchanges

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The seventh issue of *Brijula* focuses on the inherently transnational and multilingual nature not only of Latin American art and culture, but also of the frames of knowledge and theories that define Latin America as a field—be they “misplaced,” “pluritopic,” “dependent,” “hybrid,” “diasporic,” or “traveling” theories. The literary, aesthetic, and cultural works of this volume explore ways in which Latin America and the rest of the world interact through theoretical comparisons, influences, exchanges, intersections, and resistances. As guest editors of this issue, and as students of Comparative Literature, we are deeply interested in the opportunities for comparison and intellectual collaboration that these interactions offer.

The very name *Latinoamérica* offers the possibility of mapping a historical trajectory of the political debates that surround the discipline. At stake in the differing naming of the spaces referred to as ‘Latin America’ is the inclusion of French-speaking territories (French included here as another language that derived from Latin). At stake here, also, is the claim of French literature departments to the literary productions of these territories. Other options, such as *Iberoamérica* or *Hispanoamérica* circumscribe the relation to Portugal and Spain, and to an earlier model of colonial relations. In any of these cases, the spaces to which these names are pointing stand in a relation to another (European) space. This relation tends to be conceptualized as a hierarchical relation in which the ‘—american’ space occupies a peripheral position.

These designations reflect an inherently “international” relationship, a former colonial inflection translated to the academic stage.

But the relation can also be conceptualized as a more complex one: as a response to this “academic internationalism” from within, which emphasizes Latin America’s transnational characteristics. Roberto Schwarz’s notion of “misplaced ideas,” for instance, uses the distance between European literary forms and their belated redeployment in the context of Brazilian culture, as the possibility for a critique of complicities between literary form and social form. Ricardo Piglia describes the founding position of Argentine nineteenth-century writers as a form of “strabismic” vision. This is conceptualized as form of double vision—and also as a double bond—that implies a constant relation to European languages, literary practices, and temporality, but has to acknowledge, at the same time, the other point of view informing this relationship. Walter Mignolo searches to define a “pluritopic hermeneutics,” in which a single subject can occupy the two positions at once. Gloria Anzaldúa’s “new mestiza consciousness” articulates geographical, cultural, and/or linguistic hybridity as the point of departure for a plural consciousness to be celebrated rather than ostracized. The shift of perception that these theoretical approaches promote has played a key role in the movement from an academic “internationalism” to the more fluid boundaries of “transnational” studies in the field of Latin American literature and culture. Our goal for this issue was to learn about how students and new scholars in various disciplines are approaching today the many ways in which Latin American literature and culture establish transnational relations and re-draw previously hegemonic mappings into cross-pollinating spaces.

In this volume’s *Perspectives* article, entitled “Monstrous Mapping: A/Typical American Journey Through the Re-mapping of the Americas,” Dane Johnson offers a guide to our exploration by practicing a complex hemispheric mapping and remapping of literary and pedagogical approaches to Comparative Literatures of the Americas. Johnson demonstrates the problematic nature of the signifier “literature of the Americas,” as well as a few of the extraordinarily rich and varied ways one can map this journey. As he reminds us, the Americas include “30 or so nations; hundreds of languages now; thousands past in a history of millennia” (Johnson 25). By underscoring the given standpoint of any questions, connections, and intersections that arise in any kind of mapping of Comparative Literatures of the Americas, Johnson’s article offers old and new perspectives on an area of literary study that is both well traveled and waiting to be discovered.

Susana Romano’s article for the *Archivo* section reminds us that the practice of translation can offer an entry into the mapping not only of linguistic and literary relations, but also into the social and political discourses

and institutions of Latin America. Sued transcribes chapters one and six of the translation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's first book of *Du contrat social*, edited, and perhaps even translated, by Mariano Moreno, and circulated in print in 1810, the year of the May Revolution. Starting from a facsimile edition of the original, held in the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Romano plays with the relations between original and translation, and with the spaces created in-between the two, and in between the 1810 Spanish version, the 1762 French edition, and two twenty-first-century Spanish translations.

Articles by Claudia Francom, Timothy Gerhard, Maryam Monalisa Gharavi, Moisés Park, and Kristin Squint give shape to an *Enfoques* section that builds arguments surrounding the mobilities that have existed in perceptions and representations of spaces, theoretical constructions, artistic productions, and notions of nationalism in the 20th century in relation to Latin America. Some of these mappings shed new light on key connections, such as the history of the Mexico-U.S. border and the intellectual relations between Latin America and France; others bring together spaces that are less often connected, including the conceptualization of Syrian identity in Brazilian poetry, the representation of Colombian soldiers' experience in Korea, and an approach to the literature of the Americas that links South American, Mexican, and Southern U.S. narratives.

Through the analysis of postcard and newspaper photographs, Claudia Francom's article, "La imagen de la frontera en la época de la Revolución Mexicana: el caso de ambos Nogales," studies the conceptual and visual development of the *frontera* (border) between the two towns of Nogales (Nogales, Sonora, in Mexico, and Nogales, Arizona, in the U.S.) during the period of the Mexican Revolution. The many extant postcards of this border reveal the enthusiasm for the new medium of photography (Eastman Kodak invented the camera in 1910). Francom sees in these images both a rich source of historical visual documentation and a factor that helped shape the perception of this border from that of a space of local relations between two towns, with practically no visual markers, to that of a militarized "international" border.

Timothy Gerhard's article "Wild Dreams of a New Beginning" discusses the relationship between the French surrealist poet Benjamin Péret and Mexican Nobel Laureate Octavio Paz in the context of World War One and the Mexican Revolution. The article traces a change in the model of cultural relations between Latin America and France—from France's lack of awareness of being the "focal point through which Latin American writers viewed Occidental culture and its literatures" to a more dynamic relation in which France becomes more cognizant of Latin American literature as independent from Spain.

In “Travel, Anti-Travel, and Subjectivity in the Poetry of Waly Salomão,” Maryam Monalisa Gharavi investigates the multiplicitous nature of the work of Salomão. Gharavi presents his historical position as a poet emerging out of the *Tropicália* movement conjoined with his own national identifications with Syria and different areas of Brazil. The argument is that both positions are related to Salomão’s depictions of subjectivity, which Gharavi analyzes through the lenses of linguist Émile Benveniste’s work. Ultimately, this approach to Salomão urges a “reflect[ion] on travel versus fixity” that “forces us to reread established notions about the poetic ‘I’ in modern poetry” (Gharavi 89).

Probing some of the darkest forms of mobilities and crossings, Moisés Park’s article “*Mambrú*, novela sobre el Batallón Colombia en la Guerra de Corea: Memoria, erotismo y olvido en la doctrina Marilyn Monroe” article offers an analysis of a visit by Marilyn Monroe to Korea depicted in *Mambrú*. Park proposes that this 1996 novel by Colombian author Rafael Humberto Moreno-Durán illustrates the erotic value of Marilyn’s visit to Korea during the war as an economic stimulus to forget the horrors of the war. This forced oblivion, through erotic pleasure, functions as an obstacle for the soldiers to go through a mourning process that could have helped them deal with this inter-national trauma.

Closing the *Enfoques* section, Kirstin Squint’s article “American Inheritances: Crumbling Patriarchies in ‘Southern’ Narratives” examines four twentieth-century novels—William Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*, Juan Rulfo’s *Pedro Páramo*, Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, and Isabel Allende’s *The House of the Spirits*—and explores points of contact between the history of Latin America and the South of the U.S. with regard to gendered representations of patriarchal structures. Each of the analyzed texts depicts a southern family genealogy that ends up on the brink of disintegration due to patriarchal history and politics. By comparing gendered, modernist aesthetic strategies with post-modern strategies, Squint demonstrates that post-modern representations of authoritarian patriarchies and oppressive histories allow pluralistic readings that ultimately offer new possibilities for transformation from the past’s oppressive histories.

In this issue’s *En Route*, our interest in cross-pollinating exchanges took the shape of an invitation to reflect and give practical advice for collaborative teaching and writing in the humanities. Anne Salo—who also helped us give shape to this project in its initial stages—and Belén Bistué collaborated to prepare this section, whose pieces cover multiple aspects of academic practice—theoretical, pedagogical, psychological, and political—and place the experience of collaboration in different contexts. Antonio Gómez reflects on the growth process that results from the experience of sharing the speculative

and the writing process, and, in particular, of observing another in the act of intellectual production as one becomes more conscious of his or her own thought and writing strategies. Elizabeth Russ and Suzanne Bost consider the theoretical, pedagogical, and ethical opportunities and challenges that team-teaching presented for a U.S. Americanist and a Latin Americanist educated in a postmodern, Inter-American, comparative tradition. Gail Finney and Diana Lysinger describe, in two voices, the collaborative teaching experience of a professor and a teaching assistant. Collaboration has been central to the development of a professional identity for Amy S. Gerald, Kathleen McEvoy, Shannon C. Stewart, and Pam Whitfield, who provide a map of their “collaborist” navigation through graduate school and the first years of their academic careers. In the last piece of this section, Jeffrey Shantz proposes collective and participatory academic work as a possible solution for the conditions of economic and political insecurity faced by adjunct faculty and teaching assistants.

Arte Factu's artist is Enrique Chagoya, whose works we take as the emblem of our focus in this volume of *Brijula*. Looking at several works found in his recent exhibit, *Enrique Chagoya: Borderlandia*, Belén Bistué, Shawn Doubiago, and Daphne Potts demonstrate how Chagoya's art both illustrates and subverts important cultural theorists' ideas about space, place, and time. Using recognizable icons from various cultures, mixing artistic techniques, and satirizing everything, Chagoya offers us intelligent and critical sociopolitical commentary through art.

The *Topographies* section is comprised of a discussion the guest editors were fortunate enough to have with Sharon Doubiago about the conception and writing of her 1992 narrative poem *South America Mi Hija*. The poem narrates a mother-daughter journey from North to South America. The journey traces the personal, the national, the political, the gendered, the linguistic, the familial, the mythological—the multiplicity of epistemologies between spaces that exist between and within North and South Americas. Our freeform conversation with this award-winning poet and thinker questions the genesis of this stirring poem and what the implications of this sort of journey are in terms of conceptualizing Latin America.

The book reviews that Karina Zelaya brought together for *Travesía Crítica* question some of the frames that sustain our conceptualizations of Latin America. Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra's *Puritan Conquistadors* (reviewed by Emiro F. Martínez-Osorio) challenges the dichotomy in traditional historiographical approaches to British and Spanish colonization of the New World. Francisco Alejandro Méndez's *Hacia un nuevo canon de la vanguardia en América Central* (reviewed by Brian Davisson) revises some of the chronological, geographical, and generic limits that gave shape to this canon. Zoila Mendoza's *Creating Our*

Own: Folklore, Performance, and Identity in Cuzco, Peru (reviewed by Isabel Porras) points at the interaction between different social classes in the creation of a *cuzqueño* identity.

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