BOOK REVIEW

Sonia E. Alvarez, Claudia de Lima Costa, Verónica Feliu, Rebecca J. Hester, Norma Klahn, and Millie Thayer, eds. *Translocalities/Translocalidades: Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2014.

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Caren Kaplan argues that “in a transnational world where cultural asymmetries and linkages continue to be mystified by economic and political interests at multiple levels, feminists need detailed, historicized maps of the circuits of power” (qtd. in 168). The feminist scholars’ essays included in the collection *Translocalities/Translocalidades* do just this, locating the fluid, varied, and ever-changing positions of these “circuits of power” and their influence on the transit of literature, theories, feminist ideals, bodies, identities, culture, and transnational relations. The authors, who originally formed *Translocas*, a cross-border research group of Latina and Latin American(ist) feminists (3), analyze these “circuits of power” from diverse disciplines, methodologies, and points of inquiry. However, despite their differences, what the essays in this book share is a dedication to bridging global, transcultural relations through feminist perspectives, and thus informing and directing future feminist movements, approaches, and scholarship.

Part I of this collection, “Mobilizations/Mobilizing Theories/Texts/Images,” details how and why texts, theories, authors, and cultural productions have traveled across borders, and who has the power to influence this travel. These chapters point to the ways travels and translations often question the Western influence determining the authenticity of academia and feminist political concerns. To do this the authors explore the emergence of the testimonio into the forefront of feminist inquiry (Klahn, chapter 1); the relevance of Gloria Anzaldúa’s borderlands theory as it relates to contemporary Bolivian politics (Prada, chapter 2); theorization of the body and identity politics in the context of contemporary Brazilian cultural and literary productions (Schmidt and Lyra [trans], chapter 3); a reflection on the translation processes and positionalities of the translator (Espinal, chapter 4); and an enactment of the “pedagogy of the double” (Rius, chapter 5).

In the second part of this collection, “Mediations/National/Transnational Identities/Circuits,” authors turn to an analysis of both the silences and acknowledgments that dictate (in part) the mobilizations of feminist discourses and practices. Using feminist publications in Brazil (de Lima Costa, chapter 6) and Mexico (Millán, chapter 7), the first two chapters illuminate trends in feminism, the women’s rights movement, and the emerging interest in inquiries surrounding gender. The publication of some ideas and the absence of others speak to the way...
feminist discourses are received, translated, and dispersed transnationally. Looking at the broader discourses of health promotion (Hester, chapter 8) and development discourse (Asher, chapter 9), the next two chapters evidence the way discourses exclude and/or further marginalize subaltern populations based on their failure to consider the contradictions and complexities of women’s lived experiences. Next, Gómez-Barris (chapter 9) explores the musical offerings of Afro-Chilean performer Moyeneí Valdés, arguing that the translation of cultural memory to a younger, “post-memory generation” (216) is both an immediate concern in cultural practices and a crucial feminist undertaking.

Part III of this collection, “Migrations/Disrupting (B)orders,” directs readers toward an analysis of sexualized, racialized, gendered, and class-based bodies and borders to analyze the responses of feminist organizations and popular representations to particular transnational issues. In the first two chapters of this section, Teresa Carrillo (chapter 11) and Verónica Feliu (chapter 12) question the ethical implications inherent in the absence/silence on the domestic labor problems plaguing society both in the United States (Carrillo) and among the Chilean feminist class (Feliu). In the following two chapters, both Suzana Maia (chapter 13) and Adriana Piscitelli (chapter 14) rely on the circulation and perpetuation of the representations of the Brazilian woman as a stereotypical trope for all men’s sexual desires. Therefore, Brazilian women who work as erotic dancers in New York City (Maia, chapter 13) and in the sexual tourism economy of Fortaleza, Brazil (Piscitelli, chapter 14) embody stereotypical mixed-race characteristics, and will translate themselves, their identities, and their bodies, to suit the needs of their (usually) male consumers.

“Movements/Feminist/Social/Political/Postcolonial,” the final section, analyzes the question of why particular theories and ideas are translatable in the dominant political and cultural feminisms in Latina and Latin America. The authors examine feminist ideas circulated through three historic feminist movements (Blackwell, chapter 15); the conversation between two feminist locations and interpretations (Bueno-Hansen, chapter 16); the translation of a U.S. medical text (Shapiro, chapter 17); representations of indigenous non-gender conforming women (Bañales, chapter 18); black borderlands in the African diaspora (Lao-Montes and Buggs, chapter 19); and feminist discourses (Thayer, chapter 20). These analyses point to complexities at play in the process of translating ideas through other languages, cultures, and political/economic/social geographies, as well as across geographic borders.

The authors in this collection provide a vast array of theory, methods, points of departure in their research, self-reflection, and conclusions. The arrangement of essays makes logistical sense, although I would have preferred a more detailed explanation on the politics behind the chapter groupings. Another specific critique I would offer is with regard to Simone Pereira Schmidt’s chapter (chapter 3), for which Ramayana Lyna is mentioned as the translator. A common critique in translation theories is the lack of the translator as a crucial second author, as pointed out in Klahn’s essay (chapter 1). It was surprising and disappointing that
Lyna was not included in the list of contributors or acknowledged with any deeper reflection on her role as cultural/linguistic mediator.

This collection offers valuable insight into the processes of translation spanning beyond the most widely understood linguistic translation. The chapters are thoroughly enjoyable to read, particularly so in the ways in which the authors seem to be in conversation across the borders of the sections of the book, adding to, questioning, and reinforcing one another’s works. I would recommend it to anyone interested in the fields of feminism, translation, transnationalism, postcolonial theories, or borderlands theories and practice, and indeed anyone concerned with issues of power and the ways in which that power is maintained and reinforced by sources not immediately apparent.

It would be both unethical and unintellectual of me to ignore my own position as a translator, as I translated this book within the confines of contemporary Western academic guidelines dictating the form of a book review that appears in an academic journal. As Klahn points out, it is crucial that a new method for translating texts emerge; one that privileges the process of translation as an “ethical endeavor” and underscores the historical and literary contextualization so as to guide the unfamiliar reader (53). With this in mind, I would like to acknowledge the extraordinary and visible effort on the part of this collection’s collaborators to include works by feminist Latina authors and scholars. As many of the included authors have done in their research, I will end with a question instead of an attempt at an answer: What is lost through translating an entire book written by Latina scholars to the confines of a book review authored by a Western academic existing within the very institutions being problematized through the original text?