

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Transnational Exchanges in Latin American Art, Literature, and Visual Culture

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This essay reviews the following works:

Theories of the Nonobject: Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, 1944–1969. By Mónica Amor. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. Pp. x + 309. \$65.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780520286627.

Brazil through French Eyes: A Nineteenth-Century Artist in the Tropics. By Ana Lucia Araujo. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015. Pp. xxvi + 238. \$55.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780826337450.

Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil. By Stephanie D’Alessandro and Luis Pérez-Oramas. New Haven: Yale University Press; Chicago: Art Institute of Chicago, 2017. Pp. 192. \$50.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9780300228618.

Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France. Edited by Regina R. Félix and Scott D. Juall. West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press. Pp. 225. \$45.00 paperback. ISBN: 9781557537461.

Proust’s Latin Americans. By Rubén Gallo. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2014. Pp. 280. \$45.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781421413457.

Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists in Paris between the Wars. By Michele Greet. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. Pp. viii + 288. \$27.50 hardcover. ISBN: 9780415933048.

Tropical Travels: Brazilian Popular Performance, Transnational Encounters, and the Construction of Race. By Lisa Shaw. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. Pp. 231. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781477314791.

Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s. By Elena Shtromberg. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016. Pp. 210. \$29.95. ISBN: 9781477308585.

Making the Americas Modern: Hemispheric Art, 1910–1960. By Edward J. Sullivan. London: Lawrence King Publishing, 2018. Pp. 336. \$50.00 hardcover. ISBN: 9781786271556.

With the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978, Edward Said inaugurated new vocabulary for describing the relationship between European nations and the Middle East. For better or worse, the field of Latin American studies has yet to implement a term that similarly describes Europeans’ relationship to their American counterparts. This lacuna—the missing morpheme that encapsulates the lopsided and often debasing power dynamic that developed between the newly independent nations of the New World and the European superpowers—has become a handicap for many authors engaged in detangling transnational exchanges across the Atlantic, especially those focused in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I do not mean to suggest that Latin American scholars have not been attentive to postcolonial and decolonial subjects, but rather that their collective writings have not produced the same widely recognized vocabulary

as that of Middle East and Asia-focused postcolonial scholars and that this disjunction makes conversations about Latin American cultural production somewhat less accessible to those outside the field.

Each of the books examined in this review deal with art produced through encounters between Latin Americans and other Westerners. The books demonstrate the recent explosion of interest in transnational exchange as a prominent force in the formation of the Latin American humanistic canon. Together, the volumes show how Latin American cultural arbiters responded to international pressures to conform to exoticist ideas and how they manipulated these stereotypes to gain artistic recognition. The selections also highlight Latin American artists' and writers' adeptness in mastering technologies, mediums, and popular styles to reach a broad international audience and become interlocutors in globally important dialogues. Latin American creators and performers astutely intertwined local folk traditions, regional artistic priorities, hemispheric influences, and international currents to create deeply meaningful reflections on the racial, economic, and political situations in their home countries and across the transatlantic world, while European visitors to the Americas were largely satisfied to satirize and "other." In highlighting systemic problems and prejudices that Latin American creatives faced (and still face) in integrating their work into the Western cultural canon, the books chart recent attempts to name and codify postcolonial relationships across the Americas. This review focuses on how the books address the power disparities inherent in cross-cultural exchange. The first section investigates episodes scattered throughout the texts in which the authors seek to "name the problem" of cultural capital imbalances, while the subsequent sections consider exchanges between Europe and Latin America, between the North and South, and within Latin America.

Naming the Problem

A major obstacle to interrogating Latin American–European exchanges is the problematic nature of the term *Latin America*, itself born of a Eurocentric worldview that, in spite of recent reconsiderations remains largely intact within academia and the arts.¹ As Michele Greet points out in *Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists in Paris between the Wars*, the first exhibition of "Latin American art" was held in 1924 in Paris and organized by French institutions (61).² Although imagined as vehicles for promoting Latin American cultural endeavors, these organizations forced differentiation between artists from Europe and their Portuguese- and Spanish-speaking American colleagues, even though the artists often worked in the same studios in mutually influential styles. In this way, critics, gallerists, and art patrons reinforced artificial distinctions between "European" and "Latin American" cultural producers based on unstable designations of regional origin, nurturing a center-periphery model of cultural modernism that is still embattled today.³

Rubén Gallo explores the psychic damage done to Latin Americans living abroad by Europeans' (especially Parisians') exoticized stereotyping in his introduction to *Proust's Latin Americans*. After establishing Proust's myopically French perspective—the author spoke no other languages, never lived abroad, rarely traveled, and when he did only went to places where French was "readily spoken" (4)—Gallo asserts that Proust nonetheless knew what it felt like to be an outsider, based on his marginalization as half-Jewish, homosexual, and bourgeois (5). Thus stigmatized, Gallo argues, Proust was in a position to sympathize with the many Latin Americans with whom he socialized in Paris. Gallo's book, aims to reinsert a group of Latin American men and their ideas and writings into the Proustian (and larger transatlantic) narrative. But, perhaps more important, it examines the French treatment of Latin Americans as dominated by the stereotype of the *rastaquouère*, or "rasta" (7).

In Gallo's definition, "rastas" are "the opposite of aristocrats; in contrast to representatives of history, tradition, values, and culture, these newly rich foreigners are rootless transplants whose only value is money" (14). Other texts included in this review—especially Greet's, but also D'Alessandro and Pérez-Orama's and Shaw's—echo the deleterious effect such derogatory characterizations of Latin Americans as uncouth "exotics" had on Latin cultural producers. Indeed, this type of dialogue goes back to the colonial period and, although Gallo's definition of "rasta" doesn't make this explicit, had distinct racial overtones. Spanish and Portuguese colonial powers demonstrated contempt for their American subjects, especially those of

¹ See, for example, Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Latin America: The Allure and Power of an Idea* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017); and Jose C. Moya, "Introduction: Latin America—The Limitations and Meaning of A Historical Category," in *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, ed. Jose C. Moya (New York: Oxford University Press), <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195166217.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195166217-e-1>. I use the term liberally throughout my review and am unable to solve the conundrum of its useful oversimplification of American diversity.

² The exhibition was organized by La Maison de l'Amérique Latine and L'Académie Internationale des Beaux-Arts.

³ Mari Carmen Ramírez provided a critical rethinking of the center-periphery model in *Inverted Utopias: Avant-Garde Art in Latin America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

color, from first contact. Hierarchical ordering systems illustrated through *casta* painting and *costumbrismo* images indoctrinated colonial subjects in the social and racial superiority of Europeans over their American-born counterparts, even those considered “white.”⁴ If an Orientalist paradigm produced depictions of Middle Eastern peoples imbued with “backwardness, degeneracy, and inequality,” the colonial gaze directed toward the Americas replicated many of these ideological condemnations, while also mocking Latin Americans as boorish upstarts who indefatigably mimicked European styles but were incapable of constructing autonomous cultural traditions.⁵

While Gallo and Greet gesture toward the problematic power structures at play in European–Latin American interactions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, neither author names or attempts to define this dynamic (to be fair, this is not the authors’ primary aim). However, in *Brazil through French Eyes: A Nineteenth-Century Artist in the Tropics*, Ana Lucia Araujo directly tackles codifying European prejudice toward Latin American peoples. She valiantly champions the phrase *tropical romanticism* to describe the French (or, more broadly, European) vision of Brazil and South America during the nineteenth century. In her analysis of the illustrations and text of *Deux années au Brésil* (*Two years in Brazil*), published by French traveler-artist François-Auguste Biard in 1862, Araujo asserts that Europeans’ opinions about Brazil were shaped by their interest in the natural history and anthropology of the Americas. Araujo’s aim is to situate Biard’s text within the tradition of European travelogues and scientific writing about the Americas while also demonstrating its uniqueness as an often satirical work. With these aims, Araujo outlines her theory of tropical romanticism as visual or literary production aimed at illustrating Brazil’s “opposition to European civilization” and manifested in the European hero’s confrontation with and subjugation of “people of color, the rain forest, and the exotic fauna” (xix). For Araujo, *tropical romanticism* represents the specific historical trajectory of European exploration, colonization, and exploitation (often done in the name of scientific research) in the Americas more accurately than the broader theoretical categories to which it is related, and thus provides a finer lens with which to criticize Biard’s satirical writings and illustrations of Brazilians.

In crafting her definition, Araujo acknowledges her indebtedness to Said’s *Orientalism* and exoticist tropes but suggests that the Europe–Latin American connection evades codification because it has shifted from country to country and century to century over the five hundred years since the conquest. Araujo dedicates a chapter to defining the parameters of her term before showing how it manifests in Biard’s depictions of “degenerate” black Brazilians, the “luxuriant and mysterious” rainforest, and civilization-corrupted “evil natives.”⁶ According to Araujo, tropical romanticism “constitutes a form of reaction against the scientific organization of nature and rationalism” (35). Nineteenth-century Brazil was an especially prime backdrop for tropical-romanticist attitudes because of its large mixed-race population and scientifically oriented cultural framework. These factors “challenged European travelers to reconsider their own rationality as well as ideas of race and progress” (35). In setting up this reflexive relationship, Araujo replicates Said’s adoption of Foucault’s concept of discourse with its structure of knowledge and power. Though it comes forty-years after *Orientalism*’s initial publication, and in the wake of newer decolonial theorizations,⁷ the term *tropical romanticism* is a necessary, if perhaps underdeveloped, contribution to postcolonial theory. Outlining the specificities of the French-Brazilian power dynamic (not to mention the structure of European–Latin American relationships more generally) deserves more than a single chapter’s analysis, and the proffered label *tropical romanticism* seems a bit clunky and fraught when compared with the acerbic punchiness of *orientalism*. Araujo embraces her chosen term’s associations with European romanticism, but to the author of this review, those allusions make the phrase unnecessarily dependent upon a European ideology that reinforces rather than deconstructs traditional power dynamics. Nevertheless, Araujo’s audacious proposition feels long overdue, as does her analysis of Biard’s production, which is understudied compared to the work of other traveler-artists.

⁴ See Ilona Katzew, *Casta Painting: Images of Race in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979), 204.

⁶ Araujo also provides a useful, succinct account of scientifically oriented travelogues. Although a generous bibliography already exists around these traveler accounts, Araujo quickly and accessibly demonstrates the ideological trajectory of Brazil-bound scientist-explorer’s writings and visual imagery from the fifteenth through the nineteenth centuries. Other exemplary texts on this history include Rebecca Parker Brienen’s *Visions of Savage Paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006); and Darlene Sadlier’s “Edenic and Cannibal Encounters,” in *Brazil Imagined: 1500 to the Present* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2008).

⁷ Here I am thinking of authors like Homi Bhaba, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Philip J. Deloria, and Walter Dignolo.

Transatlantic Exchange and the Primacy of Paris

Transatlantic studies of Latin American cultural production have been in vogue for nearly a decade.⁸ While recent publications have mapped out new routes of exchange, much of the dialogue has centered on the well-worn routes between Latin American (especially Brazil) and Europe (especially Paris). In this section I consider the contributions made by four books—Stephanie D'Alessandro and Luis Pérez-Oramas's exhibition catalog *Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil*, Michele Greet's *Transatlantic Encounters: Latin American Artists in Paris Between the Wars*, Lisa Shaw's *Tropical Travels: Brazilian Popular Performance, Transnational Encounters, and the Construction of Race*, and Regina R. Félix and Scott D. Juall's edited volume *Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France*—which foreground the artistic productivity of European–Latin American exchanges. As a group, these texts offer a broad understanding of the power dynamics that underscore transatlantic cultural exchanges, demonstrate how these exchanges promoted reflexive explorations of national identity, and interrogate the relationship between race and cultural capital.

Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil is a catalog published to accompany the 2017 Art Institute of Chicago and Museum of Modern Art exhibition, Tarsila's first retrospective in the United States. The authors have the responsibility of contextualizing Tarsila's work for US audiences not only within its historical framework but also within the contemporary moment. They confront this task by approaching Tarsila (as she is affectionately called in Brazil) and her works through the lens of her travels and training in Paris, placing her painting practice within a larger constellation of Euro-American cultural exchange. D'Alessandro and Pérez-Oramas attempt to set aside Tarsila's "often mythologized persona in order to consider afresh" her contributions to Brazilian modernism (22). Their job is complicated by the fact that artist's iconic status has made her work widely familiar to Latin American scholars and foundational to the region's artistic canon, but she remains mostly unknown within US cultural circles. In the most compelling passage of the introduction, the authors question, "How is it, exactly, that we have not known about [Tarsila's works] in North America and are only introducing her art monographically nearly a century after it was made? What structures, invisible or not, have inscribed Tarsila's art as a local one, a feminine one, or a decorative one?" (23). While never adequately resolved, these questions demonstrate the authors' openness to the difficult dialogues surrounding race, class, and cultural power at the heart of postcolonial scholarship.

However, both the exhibition and its catalog have proven polemical within the scholarly community, and the catalog essays (especially Pérez-Oramas's) demonstrate why. The authors situate Tarsila within the context of Anthropophagy, a movement she helped to develop in the late 1920s with her collaborator-husband, Oswald de Andrade. Both the exhibition and catalog are focused on her earlier work, so this contextualization is apropos. Furthermore, this chronological framework introduces American audiences to a central preoccupation of Latin American artists operating within global modernist networks: the fear that they would be viewed as mere imitators—Proustian *rastaquouères*. Through their texts the authors shed light on how Tarsila exploited images of "exotic" blackness for her personal gain, a practice that heightened, instead of abating, cultural stereotypes and fueled persistent colorism within the Americas and abroad; however, they fall short of challenging the ethics of her manipulations of black bodies.

Tarsila also capitalized on her own exoticized self-representations, styling herself as a "caipirinha vestida por Poiret" (country girl dressed by [French fashion designer Paul] Poiret). But it is one thing to manipulate one's own image and something else to manipulate the image of another, especially a subaltern. D'Alessandro and Pérez-Oramas detail the sophisticated ways in which Tarsila interacted with the international art scene: how Pierre Legrain's Art Deco frames helped to transform her paintings into art objects (93) or how primitivist works by Gauguin and Brancusi are inflected in her style (41–42). Their examples serve to emphasize that Tarsila's Anthropophagist paintings were created by her consumption of both European and Brazilian culture. Absent is any critique of the social implications of this practice in the present. Tarsila was certainly a product of her cultural milieu, but contemporary audiences have proven themselves ready for decolonial approaches to modern art.

The primary contribution of D'Alessandro and Pérez-Oramas's visually stunning catalog are its crisp reproductions of Tarsila's paintings, sketches, and travel diaries, as well as exhibition pamphlets, photographs, and other paraphernalia that made up her material world. They also include an appendix of important

⁸ Transatlantic studies have a long history but were seldom labeled as such before the turn of the twenty-first century. Micol Seigel's *Uneven Encounters: Making Race and Nation in Brazil and the United States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009) marked a major turning point in the labeling of transatlantic studies as such within studies of Latin American cultural production.

translated texts, including critiques of her work and interviews conducted from the 1920s through the 1970s. These, along with personal letters and reproductions of her “Travel Album” scrapbook, provide an intimate view into Tarsila’s working life and further insight into the visual environment in which she and her paintings circulated. As a resource for reconstructing Tarsila’s cultural landscape and for situating her oeuvre within the ranks of the global avant-garde, it is a valuable addition to English-language Brazilian art history.

Tarsila also plays a role in Greet’s *Transatlantic Encounters*, where she serves as a case study of a Latin American women-artist in interwar Paris. Greet describes her book as an effort to trace the infrastructure and social networks that enticed Latin American artists to come to Paris in the interwar period and allowed them to flourish there. She does this by employing case studies of well-known artists within the Latin American canon, as well as those mostly lost to history. By charting the artists’ movements to and across Europe, Greet repeatedly raises the question of why some artists (like Tarsila) have become well known in Latin America, some (like Diego Rivera) established international reputations, and others (like Ángel Zárraga), who enjoyed robust careers in their day, have now fallen out of scholarly and public favor. Many of these artists worked, showed, and socialized together within Parisian avant-garde circles. By uncovering how vindictive gallerists exacted representational retribution upon independently minded artists, how the decision to return (or not) to one’s home country affected one’s exposure and reputation, and how socialization determined opportunity, Greet demonstrates that a Latin American identity could serve as both asset and liability in early twentieth-century Paris (20–26).

One of Greet’s primary contributions is highlighting the specific galleries, organizations, and sponsors who helped Latin American artists gain a foothold in the Parisian art world. Focusing on networks of this sort is a recent trend in art historical scholarship, and Greet’s book proves an extensively researched addition to this growing library.⁹ By foregrounding the institutions that enabled Latin American artists to successfully operate within the Parisian art scene, Greet structures the core chapters of her book around investigations of the salons, galleries, presses, and informal social structures (like cafés) that shaped Latin American artists’ experience of Paris and helped to formulate their aesthetic views. These chapters present a powerful argument for the inadequacy of essentializing readings of Latin American art, and demonstrate how artists expertly navigated systems designed to reduce them to the status of “other” (26). Greet illustrates her artists’ agency through her assertion that “style and subject matter differed greatly among the Latin American artists who exhibited [at the official Salons]. . . . Many artists used these modernist-leaning salons as a proving ground or venue in which to test and develop new ideas” (94). Even after the Salon des Indépendants began the reductionist practice of hanging art in nationally segregated groups, Latin American artists devised ways to challenge cultural stereotypes through their production (96–97).

The organization of Greet’s book insists that we view Latin American artists as integral to Parisian artistic circles rather than intruders therein. Her analysis is strongest and most informative when it remains closest to its institution-based form. Readings of individual artists, especially the more canonical, creep toward conventionalism and distract from the power of her network-based narrative. It is fascinating to read about the process through which Latin Americans established themselves in the “capital of modernity,” renting ateliers in Montparnasse and weighing the merits of the various independent art academies. As Greet remarks, “More than a spirit of freedom and a place to have a drink, what Paris offered that was not available in most Latin American cities was infrastructure” (40). By uncovering interwar Paris’s artistic byways and zones of contact, Greet invites her reader to navigate the social and professional networks through the proxy of her text. Her gratifying analysis is deep enough to educate veteran Latin American art historians, readable enough to be accessible to students, and broad enough to be of interest to those outside the fields of art history and Latin American studies.

Greet occasionally mentions the racism and xenophobia that impeded the careers of Latin Americans in Paris (6). But of all the texts analyzed in this review, Lisa Shaw’s introduction to *Tropical Travels* gives by far the best theoretical overview of transnational methodology and most clearly locates imbalances of power within the Atlantic world to social hierarchies constructed on the basis of racial essentialism—a belief Shaw boldly repudiates. Shaw’s text analyzes Afro-Brazilian performers in Rio de Janeiro and abroad from approximately 1880 to 1950, but at its core the book is an investigation of how structural racism and popular stereotypes shaped theatrical performances in Brazil’s cultural capital. Where D’Alessandro, Pérez-Oramas, and several other authors here under review do not address their personal stake in the discussion

⁹ Similarly situated studies include Harper Montgomery, *The Mobility of Modernism: Art and Criticism in 1920s Latin America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017); and Lori Cole, *Surveying the Avant-Garde: Questions on Modernism, Art, and the Americas in Transatlantic Magazines* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

of race and transatlantic circulation (after all, the artists and cultural producers featured in these books are largely retracing nautical routes established to implement colonization and perpetuate the African slave trade), Shaw bluntly states her commitment to the deconstruction of racial stereotypes (7). Hers is a firm decolonialist gesture that would be welcome in other texts as well.

Tropical Travels aims to both recover the histories of black Brazilian performers and demonstrate how these performers negotiated racial and cultural stereotypes to attract audiences while maintaining a degree of subjectivity. In the process of doing this, Shaw presents the wide-ranging forms of social repression performers faced, from disparaging reviews (50) to competition from white performers who imported blackface minstrelsy from the United States (63). The first chapter of her book seems rushed as she furiously excavates histories of black performance. However, the second chapter includes a striking example of the power of transatlantic exchange to influence performers' aesthetic choices in her discussion of the Oito Batutas, an eight-piece band of Afro-Brazilian musicians formed in Rio in 1919. From a *sertanejo* self-presentation that adopted loose white suits and turned-up hats to imitate the traditional costuming of the Northern Brazilian peasantry and a reflected distinctly "nationalist" posturing (79), the Batutas transitioned to bourgeois-friendly black tie when they began to perform in Paris in 1922. Their new cosmopolitan style attracted both European and American tourists in the international cultural capital and so was a strategic decision that revealed their performative "blackness" to be based on a "dialectic between performer and audience" (87). Upon returning to Brazil, the Oito Batutas continued to don suits for a period, thus appealing to elite Brazilians' hunger for French-inflected fashions. Eventually, however, the Batutas changed their styling again, this time self-representing as Americanized jazz musicians by playing horns instead of strings, wearing light-colored pants and dark blazers, and posing dynamically for publicity photos. The illustrations accompanying Shaw's descriptions of these savvy stylistic renegotiations are striking, as are her well-drawn conclusions. Caught in this multifaceted encounter, the Oito Batutas were required to redefine "their collective subjectivity, translating their music and visual style for a new audience in a complex negotiation of their identity. They and their music had to be black enough to capitalize on jazz mania, but sufficiently distanced from both the uncivilized connotations of black Africa and the banality of sanitized white culture" (89). Thus, Shaw demonstrates how Afro-Brazilian performers negotiated their racial identity with extraordinary nuance and intellect.

Shaw's forthright discussion of race and racial prejudice within Latin American and Europe is refreshingly honest and provides welcome examples of Afro-Brazilians who manipulated oppressive systems to claim a place within Brazilian society. Unfortunately, this model is not replicated across the other texts. Of those included in this review that approach transnationalism through transatlantic exchange, Araujo is the only other author to broach the subject of racial discrimination so directly. Her measured reactions to Biard's galling etchings reflect her fairness in taking into account nineteenth-century stereotypes but sometimes seem overly lenient. Likewise, Gallo's introduction is promising, but the semi-biographical model he adopts for the rest of his text leaves little room for a broader analysis of racial discrimination within cultural exchange. In fact, the text seems to suggest that although surrounded by opportunities to learn about Latin American cultural perspectives, most nineteenth-century Frenchmen simply did not care to try. Furthermore, Gallo's repeated use of the possessive (Proust's Latin Americans, Proust's Latin lover, Proust's Spanish) is unsettling because it is not entirely clear how he intends it to function as a rhetorical structure. Is Gallo really asserting French ownership of Hispanic individuals and their culture? If not, how is his repeated use of possessive formulations meant to be read? What is Gallo implying about Proust and nineteenth-century French culture more generally?

An essay in Félix and Juall's edited volume may provide an answer to this question. *Cultural Exchanges between Brazil and France* highlights instances of French-Brazilian interconnection from the sixteenth century to the contemporary moment, mapping both physical movement between the two nations as well as the ideological landscape these "exchanges" produced. While the introduction does a good job concisely summarizing this broad territory, the essays themselves lack cohesion. They do, however, effectively challenge the "influence" model of one-way cultural flow. For example, André Caparelli's contribution, "Critical Transfers between Brazil and France in the Nineteenth-Century Press," offers a variant model of transnational exchange as the basis of French-Brazilian literary encounters. He asserts that cultural transfers between France and Brazil were "not confined to the unequal trade between the believed French hegemonic ideal and the implicit Brazilian imitation" (87). Thus distancing himself from a critical narrative that aspires to declare one culture "victor" over another, Caparelli proposes that we instead consider "every possible opposition, negation, and interaction" in order to "highlight the process of narrative transculturation in the Brazilian press" (87). Through "transculturation," formerly colonial nations like

Brazil both internalized foreign culture and vied for the recognition of their own values (87). Caparelli sees the newspaper as the optimum medium for carrying out this process because within nineteenth-century newspapers the local and the foreign, the factual and the fictitious, were published side by side. Via a discussion of the French *feuilleton's* infiltration of Brazilian newspapers and Brazilian writers' subsequent embrace and adaptation of the form, Caparelli reveals how newspapers functioned as both "mediator and mediated" (96).

Caparelli is the only author here reviewed to employ transculturation theory in his analysis, and unfortunately he does not thoroughly explain its mechanisms. This deficiency is made even more egregious by the fact that the framework was developed by a Latin American theorist, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz. Nevertheless, Caparelli's contribution is one of the strongest in a volume that is otherwise uneven. Amy Buono's essay on the brazilwood trade is also very good and draws on understudied histories of colonial material culture. The contrast of these two studies, which range temporally from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, demonstrate the volume's primary contribution: expanding the chronological breadth of transnational research, which has produced scholarship primarily (although not exclusively) centered on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In this vein of broadening transnational discourse, the final two sections of this review will focus on transnational exchanges between North and South America and within Latin America, routes less often denominated transnational.

The United Americas

The United States is often excluded from the Latin American cultural landscape, but recent scholarly writings are beginning to renegotiate this boundary. Edward Sullivan's *Making the Americas Modern: Hemispheric Art, 1910–1960* is emblematic of this new trend. Sullivan possesses an encyclopedic knowledge of artists, critics, exhibitions, and sites of artistic production and with extreme facility marshals this data to illustrate artistic trajectories. Rather than chart the parameters of "American-ness" or craft a narrative of "hemispheric unity," Sullivan "underscore[s] the existence of criteria, patterns, and forms of historical development whose parallels (and sometimes intersections) may serve as illustrations of birth the diversity and common currents of expression" (17). He is largely successful in his aim, blazing new routes of inquiry for hemispheric scholars.

Sullivan's prologue carefully lays out his reasons for the chronological, geographical, and thematic parameters of his study, including his reluctance to create either a survey or new canon. His writing stands out both for its readability and for the radical way he equalizes American landscapes, carefully balancing his discussion so as not to preference any one national tradition. He even includes examples of artworks made in Jamaica, the American south, and other hemispheric regions often passed over in surveys of "American" production. His casual tone and dialectical versatility ideally position his book for a survey course on American modernisms, for which there is not currently a hemisphere-oriented text. While his choice of themes may be polemic in some cases, reflecting the author's particular interests within the field, the book as a whole provides ample space for insertions and substitutions, a point the author himself emphasizes (17).

The book is divided into eight chronological-thematic chapters, focusing on symbolist imagery, land and cityscapes, blackness, social and political engagements, the development of abstraction, and surrealism. These categorizations vacillate between aesthetic, psychological, geographical, and societal logics, reflecting the author's command of established lines of scholarly inquiry. Unlike the other authors in this review who seek to construct cohesive narratives centered on individual works, figures, and/or movements, Sullivan's contribution is an interconnected but inherently nonlinear series of historical "fragments" that point toward those trends in Latin American scholarship that the author finds most pervasive and/or compelling. While this approach can make Sullivan's account of Latin American modernism choppy at times, it offers considerable leeway in reconsidering traditional priorities of Latin American modern art history—especially the march toward abstraction, concretism, and neoconcretism. Sullivan replaces this with a much more humanistic dialogue that reanimates discussions of folk and popular art, social realism, and the surreal. Sullivan's volume offers little that is new to the field, but it serves as a reminder of the cyclical nature of art scholarship while also providing an accessible entry point to art of the region without regurgitating narratives established by pioneering art historians such as Dawn Ades and Jacqueline Barnitz.

The most innovative and timely chapter is "Visualizing Blackness in the Americas." As humanities courses become increasingly invested in the project of diversifying artistic canons, Sullivan recognizes both the ways that artists of color contribute to regional narratives and the ways their art has specifically interrogated the legitimacy of racial constructs. He takes special care to differentiate between the representation of blackness

and its lived experience (89). Sullivan takes up, if briefly, racial concerns surrounding Tarsila do Amaral's depiction of *A Negra* (93) and broaches representation of the black domestic quotidian through images like Barrington Watson's *Mother and Child* (109), issues which other art historians have traditionally skirted. The author also includes an extended subsection titled "Blackness, Dance, Music, and Ritual" that manages to be both enlightening and nonessentializing in spite of the problematic history surrounding narratives of blackness and entertainment elaborated by Shaw.

In contrast to Sullivan's peripatetic history, Elena Shtromberg's *Art Systems: Brazil and the 1970s* is a laser-focused accounting of how a handful of Brazilian artists used popular systems to expose and interrogate government actions. It is one of those rare books that, although a recent publication, has made such an impact on the study of Brazilian art that it feels like a canonical text. The text elucidates North American cultural theory's effect on the formulation of Brazilian conceptual and video art in the long 1970s, and how artworks by Brazilian artists like Cildo Meireles and Paulo Bruscky helped to shape key US exhibitions. Shtromberg demonstrates not only Brazilian artists' deep understanding of texts like Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media* but also their ability to assimilate and critique its core concepts (36, 96). Focusing on how art "infiltrated four central systems of communication, exchange, and representation," Shtromberg highlights artworks that circulated alongside or within currency, newspaper, television, and mapping systems (2). Her "systems" framework is innovative and appropriate for discussing works created in an era of technological development and expanding mass media circulation. In fact, her central idea of "art as an open system, a site that is the matrix of social exchange," is perhaps her primary contribution to the study of Brazilian art in this era, liberating works from their at times stifling confinement within politicized narratives of the military dictatorship (3).

By focusing on systems of circulations, Shtromberg's book develops many of the themes referenced throughout this review, although it is not an explicitly transnational study. For example, her first chapter's focus on monetary circuits demonstrates how the flow of money and commodities, both domestically and internationally, is driven by sociological as well as economic forces (13). Transitioning from a discussion of the *Zero cruzeiro*—a falsified banknote that Meireles created with a denoted value of "0" that represented both the actual phenomenon of currency devaluation that accompanied Brazil's rapid economic expansion from 1969 to 1974 and served as a metaphor of the state's moral bankruptcy—to the *Zero Dollar*—a similarly counterfeit "0" dollar bill illustrated with a leering Uncle Sam—Shtromberg shows how Meireles's critique of state corruption extended into a protest of American imperialism (17, 25). These artworks were famously incorporated into Kynaston McShines's groundbreaking 1970 exhibition *Information* at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, demonstrating their cultural relevance across multiple American domains.

Appropriate to a cross-cultural reading of Brazilian art, Shtromberg's text challenges the sovereignty of individual nation states through her discussion of maps in the fourth chapter of her book. As with each of her other chapters, she demonstrates how artworks centered around a practice of mapping were especially relevant to the experience of contemporary Brazilians because they reflected concurrently unfolding events spurred by national and international political actions: in the Brazilian context this included the formation of new spatial "orientations" through the construction of Brasília (1957–1960), the US moon landing (1969), and the development of the Trans-Amazonian Highway (1972) with its accompanying displacement of native Brazilians (123). Through a discussion of both historical and contemporary maps, Shtromberg demonstrates how the form has been used to delimit territory and impose civilizing violence (128–129). Her subsequent analysis of Sonia Andrade's *A obra / O espetáculo / Os caminhos / Os habitantes* (1977) resonates not only with Meireles's *Insertions into Ideological Circuits* discussed in her first chapter, but also with American geographic and cartographic projects like the Four Great Surveys of the American West and the *Rephotographic Survey Project*, which Andrade's work anticipated by seven years (148).¹⁰ Furthermore, Andrade's project shows her artistic versatility and ability to dialogue with international artistic trends like the development of mail and Xerox art. Shtromberg's conclusion to this chapter (and to the book as a whole) is especially strong, imbuing her artists' work with an unironic heroism that subtly animates her entire volume. She asserts, "Artistic production engaging mapping procedures did so to challenge circumscribed boundaries by exploring the ways which maps, both historically and during the 1970s, were incapable of representing lived reality" (154). Her statement anchors the book's argument firmly within a phenomenological and hemispheric understanding of Brazilian art under dictatorship that imbues her analysis with integrity and relevance.

¹⁰ Shtromberg does not make this link to the *Rephotographic Survey Project*, but it seems an appropriate comparison in the context of this transnationally oriented review.

Inter-Latin-American Exchanges in the Contemporary Period

In the introduction to *Tropical Travels*, Shaw reminds us that connections between Latin American countries constitute a form of South-South exchange (19). While it can be easy to lump Latin American cultural production into a subsuming category that emphasizes regional similarities over national distinctiveness, Shaw's recognition of entertainers' peregrinations between Rio and Buenos Aires as cross-cultural movements reminds her readers that connections between Latin American nations are just as vital to the development of national traditions as transatlantic or North-South encounters.

Indicative of this blind spot within transnational scholarship, the only book in this study to substantively engage South-South relationships within Latin America is Mónica Amor's *Theories of the Nonobject: Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela, 1944–1969*. Amor's volume illustrates how artists across these three countries dialogued with each other and with their European contemporaries to generate artworks that rejected categorization as either painting or sculpture, instead taking the form of "nonobjects"—a term coined by Rio-based Brazilian poet-theorist Ferreira Gullar. Rejecting European constructivism and the ready-made, Gullar preferred Soviet reformulations of art that abandoned representation and approached the status of objects (5). Although Amor writes about artists spread throughout the Americas, the schools she investigates do not enter into close contact with each other so much as they reach similar conclusions about the status of art at mid-century via independent engagements with the work of the European avant-garde. The primary weakness in Amor's text is the way she glosses over exchanges between Brazilian and Argentinian artists (66) while delving so deeply into the theoretical frameworks proposed by their French, Swiss, and German peers.

Nevertheless, Amor's analysis demonstrates just how profound and thoughtful mid-century transnational engagements could be. If there is a central theme across the three case studies she proposes, it is that Latin American artists often found aesthetic solutions proffered by European artists unappealing or insufficient. As she states in her introduction, "'Normative' Western art identified with the Anglo-European tradition, was not perceived by the Brazilian artists and critics who concern us here as some inviolable, immutable, hegemonic paradigm that was foreign to them. Rather, they considered these various modernist legacies as rich raw material that might be employed to shape Brazil's culture" (15).¹¹ While this quotation specifically cites Brazilian artists, the Argentinian members of the Asociación Arte Concreto Invención (AACI), who form the subject of her first chapter, also found Van Doesburgian ideas about painting's self-referentiality stifling and unfulfilling within the socially and politically precarious context of dictatorship-era Argentina (43). Instead, they developed a theory of *invención*, which located artistic creation in "human action upon the material world" and "implied an emancipatory process in which making . . . was history itself" (48).

By illustrating how Latin American artists liberally reworked and even rejected European trends, Amor reverses the colonial discourse that places Latin America always in the position of object. Although she does not state it outright, there are suggestions throughout her text that Latin American artists' rejection of the frame was more than an aesthetic conceit—it was metaphor for their own newly found freedom in breaking the bonds of European artistic discourses. At the same time, Amor is not afraid to critique what she perceives to be paradoxes or logical inconsistencies. For example, she criticizes the AACI artists for asserting Marxist theoretical commitments but being unable to engage with the urban working-class among whom they lived (63). Unfortunately, Amor's explication of the political, cultural, economic, social, and theoretical contexts under which concrete art developed in Argentina feels truncated—perhaps because the concrete artists themselves rejected concretism shortly after taking it up, but perhaps because there is still room for further investigation of these artist's international (and inter-Latin American) interactions.

Final Thoughts

The books reviewed in this essay demonstrate the vital role Latin American cultural producers have played in the global development of artistic styles and literary genres. They further reveal the prejudicial circumstances under which these contributions were made and the racial roots of European discrimination. Latin Americans employed multiple strategies, from mimicry to mockery and from transculturation to rejection, to cope with the hegemonic pressure they felt to conform to European ideas of the primitive

¹¹ Amor's book was released in 2016 amid a flurry of texts and exhibitions focusing on Brazilian neoconcrete artists, including Irene Small, *Hélio Oiticica: Folding the Frame* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); *Hélio Oiticica: To Organize Delirium* organized by Carnegie Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Art Institute of Chicago (October 2016–October 2017); *Lygia Pape: A Multitude of Forms* at the Met Breuer (March 21–July 23, 2017); *Lygia Clark: The Abandonment of Art, 1948–1988* at MoMA (May 10–August 24, 2014). Amor's volume distinguishes itself through its especially complex discussion of Brazilian and Continental European theory and the connections she draws between "organic" artworks and contemporaneous architectural forms.

exotic. The authors suggest that the actors in their studies performed their cultural renegotiations with herculean courage, but as a whole the texts subtly reinforce a center-periphery dynamic by constantly referring back to the primacy of European (specifically Parisian) cultural arbiters. Of course, no amount of recontextualization can overturn the fact that Paris was the “capital of the nineteenth century” (to quote Walter Benjamin) and the “capital of modernity” (to quote David Harvey). However, it seems that within the trajectory of transnational studies, the time has come to focus increasingly on Pan-American and South-South cultural transactions if we are ever to escape Europe’s gravitational pull. Within the field of Latin American studies more can be done to focus on less common axes of exchange and deconstruct progressionist narratives of stylistic change. Perhaps, in doing so, finding the Latin American parallel to orientalism will become irrelevant, as the need for such a term is upended by increasingly decentralized histories.

Author Information

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