

Infante, Ignacio. *After Translation: The Transfer and Circulation of Modern Poetics across the Atlantic*. New York: Fordham UP, 2013. Print.

For most academics of our generation in departments of languages and literatures the limits imposed by disciplinary and departmental structures are the central problem to overcome. While inquiries on formal matters are generally under-represented in departments of foreign languages, issues of a cultural or political scope tend to be favored as more suited to curricula and research, as they allow for a more immediate presence of the foreign language/literature they represent. Ignacio Infante's *After Translation* is a milestone in the process of overcoming longstanding and hardly justifiable boundaries, not only in so-called Latin American and Iberian Studies, but also in the wider context of the relationships between Spanish and Portuguese Studies and Cultural Studies/Theory at large.

The book opens with an introduction dealing with the structural problems of circulation and influence, and posing the seminal question that lies at the core of the book: how can transcultural literary practices be tracked in a given space in order to map the transference of literary forms across different languages and cultures? The answer, setting the tone for the essays, conveys a whole theoretical program: poetics, or, more specifically, *poetic transfer*, understood here as “the series of recurring mechanisms of translation, displacement, and substitution determined by the productive difference and spatiotemporal difference that connects the forms, concepts, and traditions involved in the circulation of modern poetry” (15), shall serve as the platform of inquiry, aiming at a better understanding of the “dynamic transfiguration” of forms.

In Chapter 1, “Heteronymies of Lusophone Englishness: Colonial Empire, Fetishism, and Simulacrum in Fernando Pessoa's English Poems I-III”, the English education of Fernando Pessoa in Durban and the sharp contrast between that early stage of his life in Lisbon, where he spent most of his years, is used to interpret the “extremely paradoxical heteronymic relationship with Englishness he assimilated while living in South Africa” (26). It manifested throughout all of his works as an essential anachronism toward the official system of English values favored by the British colonial ideology. Infante performs a very careful reading of “Antinous” and “Epithalamium,” emphasizing the vicinity of Pessoa's

“poetic logic of obscenity” (37) in light of the Freudian and the Marxist definitions of *fetishism*. Particularly worth noting are the sections concerning the modes of relationship connecting these poems to Edmund Spenser’s “Epithalamium” and T. S. Eliot’s notions of *tradition* and *national identity*, summoning concepts such as “simulacrum” (Deleuze), “fetish object” (Agamben), “colonial failure” (Gikandi), or the “borrowed codes” delivered in the linguistic game (Badiou). Chapter 2 focuses primarily on the idea of displacement and replacement in Vicente Huidobro’s poetry, and how that relates to an actual experience of traveling. Here, the use of Spanish and French is linked to the emergence of a poetics of *creacionismo*, on the premises of the creative tension rising from the (real) circulation of Huidobro across South America, Madrid, and Paris. The specific way in which this crossroads of cultures and languages are activated by Huidobro appears to contribute to the configuration of an avant-garde posture, thus leading Infante to conclude that the Chilean poet “offers a radically avant-garde response to an essentially romantic (and modern) problem, that is, the drama precisely enacted in the poem of a poetic subjectivity struggling to articulate the relation between mind and nature, reality and representation through the power of creative imagination” (77-78). The third chapter offers a comprehensive overview on the literary scenes of the San Francisco Renaissance, and how it dialogued with preexisting literary traditions, from Dante to Stefan George and Federico García Lorca, underlining the role of Ernst Kantorowicz and his focus on the medieval concept of ethics as *dignitas*, as a possible foundation for contemporary communities of interpretation. The results of operating on a dynamic web of mutual readers trying to accommodate their literary and behavioral models of reference to their actual contexts, instead of a simple binary logic of influence, produces here particularly interesting results, opening new perspectives on the means by which the authors “transcend the particular homosocial framework that determined locally their work by connecting to various foreign queer literary traditions and poetic practices that could legitimize the universality of their own creative and ethic plight” (85). Chapter 4 deals with the tradition of transgression inaugurated by Sousândrade’s *O Guesa* and revised by Haroldo and Augusto de Campos to serve as the cornerstone of their project of concrete poetry, detailing

the transference of themes between the Brazilian brothers and Ezra Pound's imagist project. Translation is regarded here as a matter of circulation mediated through the concept of *anthropophagy*, and ultimately leading to the (re) creation of a literary history. Finally, in Chapter 5, "The Digital Vernacular: "Groundation" and the Temporality of Translation in the Postcolonial Caribbean Poetics of Kamau Brathwaite," Infante departs from the "historical and spiritual" (147) African heritage on the Caribbean, reflecting the processes of transference and adaptation, to argue that moving from a dialectical toward a *tidialectical* logic ("a kind of cyclic ... motion, rather than linear" (151)) enables Caribbean authors to accommodate the problematic relation between vernacular and cosmopolitan languages in the Caribbean.

*After Translation* is, overall, a very substantial contribution to the fields of comparative poetics in the Atlantic space. The research design is innovative and challenging, and the architecture of the book suggests new and enriched approaches to the authors and texts in focus. The chosen model is far from being exempt of risks. But, with *After Translation*, Infante manages to open a new conceptual space. Rather than an exhaustive work of scholarship, the book is a thoughtful collection of essays, brought together by very specific leitmotifs. The novelty of this volume lies probably in the criteria unifying these essays. Any of the chapters here could easily become an autonomous monographic work. Assembled here, though, they cast some light on the scarcely explored modalities of relationship across authors trying to overcome the limits of their spatiotemporal constraints, as they embrace their tasks as readers and translators of different traditions. And if we cannot help but feel that we are still picking the low-hanging fruit, that is, perhaps, the price to pay to get over the parochialism of literary disciplines.

**Pedro Lopes de Almeida**

*University of California, Santa Barbara*