

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT AND THE VOLUME/ ENACTING A TRANSLOCAL FEMINIST POLITICS OF TRANSLATION

SONIA E. ALVAREZ

This book explores how feminist discourses and practices travel across a variety of sites and directionalities to become interpretive paradigms to read and write issues of class, gender, race, sexuality, migration, health, social movements, development, citizenship, politics, and the circulation of identities and texts. The notion of translation is deployed figuratively to emphasize the ways these travels are politically embedded within larger questions of globalization and involve exchanges across diverse localities, especially between and among women in Latin America and Latinas in the United States. The contributors—including authors from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, and Mexico, as well as East and West Coast-based Latinas of Cuban, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Chilean, Peruvian, and Dominican descent and other U.S. women of color and allies—enact a politics of translation by unabashedly trafficking in feminist theories and practices across geopolitical, disciplinary, and other borders, bringing insights from Latina/women of color/postcolonial feminisms in the North of the Américas to bear on our analyses of theories, practices, cultures, and politics in the South and vice versa.

Translation is politically and theoretically indispensable to forging feminist, prosocial justice, antiracist, postcolonial/decolonial, and anti-imperial political alliances and epistemologies because the Latin/a Américas—as a transborder cultural formation rather than a territorially delimited one—must be understood as translocal in a dual sense. The first sense we deploy—that of translocation—builds on but moves beyond U.S. Third World feminist conceptions of the “politics of location.” Because a feminist politics of location involves “a temporality of struggle, not a fixed position,” as Claudia de Lima Costa argues in the Introduction to *Debates about Translation*, we must be attentive to the social and power relations that “produce location and situated knowledges.”<sup>1</sup> Yet as Agustín Lao-Montes suggests, Latina/os, and Afro-Latina/

os in particular, are best conceptualized as “translocal subjects.” In his reading, the politics of location, as developed by U.S. women of color feminisms, “relates the ‘multiple mediations’ (gender, class, race, etc.) that constitute the self to diverse modes of domination (capitalism, patriarchy, racism, imperialism) and to distinct yet intertwined social struggles and movements” (2007, 122). The notion of translocation takes us a step further, linking “geographies of power at various scales (local, national, regional, global) with subject positions (gender/sexual, ethnoracial, class, etc.) that constitute the self” (see chapter 19 of this volume). Here we wish to extend this conception of translocation to encompass not just U.S. Latina/os but all of the Latin/a Américas.

A hemispheric politics of translocation would be attentive to the heterogeneity of Latinidades within the United States and within and among Latin American and Caribbean peoples, as well as to the diverse positionalities that shape Latina/o American lives across multiple borders. In the twenty-first century, “political borders cannot contain cultural ones, just as within political borders, different nations, cultures and languages cannot be suppressed in the name of national (understood) as monolithic unity,” as Norma Klahn argues pointedly in chapter 1. Many sorts of Latin/o-americanidades—Afro, queer, indigenous, feminist, and so on—are today constructed through processes of translocation. *Latinidad* in the South, North, and Caribbean “middle” of the Américas, then, is always already constituted out of the intersections of the intensified cross-border, transcultural, and translocal flows that characterize contemporary transmigration throughout the hemisphere—from La Paz to Buenos Aires to Chicago and back again. Many such crossings are emotionally, materially, and physically costly, often dangerous, and increasingly perilous. Yet cross-border passages also always reposition and transform subjectivities and worldviews.

Rather than immigrating and “assimilating,” moreover, many people in the Latin/a Américas increasingly move back and forth between localities, between historically situated and culturally specific (though increasingly porous) places, across multiple borders, and not just between nations (as implied in the phrase “transnational migration,” for instance). We therefore deploy the notion of translocal in a second sense, which we call translocalities/*translocalidades*, precisely to capture these multidirectional crossings and movements.

Many, if not all, of the contributors to this anthology regularly transit across an array of intimate, familial, personal, libidinal, consumer, financial, cultural, political, and labor circuits in and through different locales of the Latin/a Américas and beyond. Our feminism, as Margara Millan suggests in chapter 7, is a “multilocated practice.” Like “travelling theories” (Said 1983, cited in de Lima Costa, Introduction to Debates, this volume) and today’s transmigrants,

our own crossings—theoretical, political, personal, and intimate—are heavily patrolled and often constrained or obstructed by various kinds of (patriarchal, disciplinary, institutional, capitalist/neoliberal, geopolitical, sexual, and so on) gatekeepers.

Crucially for the politics of translation, our multiple locations or subject positions shift, often quite dramatically, as we move or travel across spatio-temporal localities. Our subjectivities are at once place-based and mis- or displaced.<sup>2</sup> Whereas I am an ethnicized Cuban American in south Florida and a racialized Latina in New England, for instance, whenever I deplane in São Paulo I instantly “become white.” But I necessarily embody my provisional whiteness uncomfortably, as I am all too painfully aware of the injuries inflicted by racism in both the North and South of the Américas. Though less flexible for the darkest bodies because of “the fact of blackness,” as Frantz Fanon rightly insisted, race can be a mobile signifier across borders. “Race is not a fixed marker of identity, but one that varies as people inhabit particular spaces,” as Brazilian anthropologist Suzana Maia makes clear in chapter 13. Indeed, as Chilean émigré Verónica Feliu reminds us (chapter 12), our translocalized understandings of race often force us to “deal with our own ghosts, our own repressed memories, and, finally, as Cherríe Moraga so poignantly said, with that racism we have internalized, the one we aimed at ourselves.” Challenging racisms within Latino/America means interrogating the “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz in Gómez-Barris, chapter 10 in this volume) that translates as *emblanquecimiento* and the related “possessive investment in colonialism,” which, as another Chilean contributor, Macarena Gómez-Barris, aptly puts it, has historically looked toward Europe “as a site of insatiable material consumption, as a way to devour a whiteness of being.”

Because our transit across multiple boundaries disrupts the prevailing common sense in many of the localities through which we move in ways that sometimes make us seem outright mad (in a double sense), we early on adopted the nickname *Translocas* for the cross-disciplinary, cross-border research group of Latina and Latin American(ist) feminists who brought this edited collection into being. Like the Afro-Chilean vocalist and composer Moyenei Valdés, whose work is analyzed here by Gómez-Barris, our politics and theorizing seek to interrupt “the hegemonic drone of economic neoliberalism,” heteronormative patriarchal racisms, and racist sexism across the Latin/a Américas. We deploy the metaphor *Translocas* to capture both the movements of bodies, texts, capital, and theories in between North/South and to reflect the mobile epistemologies they inspire in growing numbers of subjects in contemporary times. The metaphor is deployed with a double meaning—both women trans/dislocated in a physical sense, and the (resulting) conceptual madness linked to

attempts to understand unfamiliar scenarios with familiar categories: women and categories out of place. We embrace the transgressive, queer, transgendered sense of the term as well.<sup>3</sup> With this book, we wish to propose Translocas as both a political project and an episteme for apprehending and negotiating the globalized Américas, one that can potentially be embraced widely across the hemisphere and beyond.

“The increased mobility and displacement of peoples, their cultures and languages and the global interconnectedness made possible by technology,” as Norma Klahn insists, “are deconstructing conceptual mappings of North to South/South to North routes, let alone their translations and reception.” Indeed, with the intensification of transmigration, growing numbers of Latin@s and Latin Americans today embody similarly shifting registers, positionalities, and epistemes due to our intermittent movement in and across diverse localities in the North and South of the Américas. Growing numbers of folks are, in effect, “becoming Transloc@s.”<sup>4</sup> We are expanding exponentially.

Translocas in the Américas and other globalized places defy “the ‘us’ and ‘them’ paradigm that stems from modernist/[colonial] modes of description and representation” because we are simultaneously and intermittently self and other, if you will (Grewal and Kaplan 1994a, 7). As Karina Céspedes suggests, many in the Latin/a Américas are “world travelers” as “a matter of necessity and survival” (Céspedes 2007, 107; Lugones 1990). Translocas’ travels and translation efforts are also driven by affect, passion, solidarity, and interpersonal and political connectedness. What’s more, we travel across multiple worlds within ourselves. Rather than W. E. B. Du Bois’s “double consciousness,” our translocalities enable a multiple, intersectional, multisited consciousness—a translocated version of Chela Sandoval’s “differential” or “oppositional” consciousness (1991, 2000b). Many of us become “double insiders,” as Kiran Asher refers to her own “translocation” as a South Asian feminist researching and working with Afro-Colombian women (chapter 9).

As Simone Schmidt maintains, displacement is altogether too familiar to many subjects in late modern times, and the feeling of “dislocation,” or in this case translocality, often leaves Translocas and other diasporic subjects with the sensation that our communities of origin have become “unrecognizable” because “history, somehow intervened irrevocably” and we are not at home any place (Hall 2003, 27, cited in Schmidt, chapter 3 in this volume). She proposes that it may be more appropriate to “think of coming home as impossible, because home no longer exists. The road leaving home is one of no return.” Perhaps like Gloria Anzaldúa, who claimed she carried her home on her back like a turtle, Translocas bear our multiple localities on ours as well.

Our dislocations across a variety of “heres” and “theres,” our “travels to and from different contexts of knowledge production and reception,” as de Lima Costa suggests, afford Translocas “certain types of analytical baggage that can alter one’s perceptions of subalternity, privilege, intellectual work and feminism” (Costa 2000, 728). Our translocalities fuel endless epistemic traveling as well. Together with contributor Ester Shapiro (chapter 17), many of us “strive to learn from our shifting re-locations . . . as cultural outsiders in ethnocentric U.S. feminist organizations; as women in sexist Latino community-based organizations; as women of the ‘Third World’ whose Spanish is too Caribbean and primitive for European sensibilities; and as ‘Latina gringas’ whose Spanglish marks us as undereducated in our nation of origin language, culture and politics.”

Because of our manifold circuits, travels, and dis/mis-placements, Translocas are more than diasporic subjects; we are necessarily translators. For starters, we have to translate *ourselves* across our differing locales of attachment and commitment. Indeed, for those of us who are based in the United States, translation is “an untiring game,” a “way of life, a strategy for survival in the North” (Zavalia 2000, 199, in Espinal, chapter 4 in this volume). For many of us who were born in the United States or immigrated as children with parents who spoke no English, “translation starts practically in infancy,” as Isabel Espinal reminds us in her chapter. Translocas straddle and transform languages and cultures, as neither our “mother tongue” nor our “other” language(s) is either “really foreign” or our own, as Espinal further notes. Like Donna Kaye Ruskin, whose “The Bridge Poem” opens *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, we all do “more translating / Than the Gawdamn U.N.” Ruskin complained of being tired of translating:

I’ve had enough  
I’m sick of seeing and touching  
Both sides of things  
Sick of being the damn bridge for everybody

Nobody  
Can talk to anybody  
Without me

Right?

I explain my mother to my father my father to my little sister  
My little sister to my brother my brother to the white feminists  
The white feminists to the Black church folks the Black church folks

To the ex-hippies the ex-hippies to the Black separatists the  
Black separatists to the artists the artists to my friends' parents . . .

Then I have to explain myself  
To everybody.

I was drawn to revisit Ruskin's poem in the process of writing this introduction and readily came up with a "personalized Translocas adaptation":

I sometimes grow weary of seeing and touching  
Multiple sides of things

I explain the *Americanos* to the Cubans the Cubans to the Brazilians the  
Brazilians (and Cubans and other Latin Americans) to the U.S. Women  
of Color feminists the U.S. Women of Color feminists to Latino men  
the Latino men to the U.S. white feminists the U.S. white feminists  
to the Latin American Black feminists and to the Latin American  
white feminists who don't identify as white the Latin American white  
feminists to queer U.S. Latinas . . .

Then I try to explain myself  
To everybody.

As Espinal laments, this kind of multidirectional translating "can simply become tedious and we become *hartos* of this role." Translocas like Espinal and me cannot afford to tire of translation, however. In the face of the increasing entrapment of local cultures and knowledges in the global flows of capital and commodities, as many of our contributors insist, there is a growing need for feminists to engage in productive dialogue and negotiations across multiple geopolitical and theoretical borders. As Millie Thayer suggests in her contribution (chapter 20), the stakes in feminist translations are high; translations themselves, she maintains, are objects of struggle and "translation, or its refusal, is a strategic political act in the hands of social movements, whether it involves sharing knowledge to foster an alliance or interrupting a dominant discourse to defend autonomy."

If women's movements in the Latin/a Américas and elsewhere in the global South share a "common context of struggle" (Mohanty 1991a), as Thayer contends, then "their encounters with the 'scattered hegemonies' represented by states, development industries, global markets, and religious fundamentalisms create powerful (if only partially overlapping) interests and identities" that make the project of translation among them both possible and all the more pressing. Pascha Bueno-Hansen (chapter 16) argues that cultural translation

can facilitate dialogue between ostensibly incompatible political positions in different locations through a “dynamic and necessarily incomplete process of mediation across discursive, political, linguistic, and geographic borders and power asymmetries.” Theorizing the practice of what she dubs “translenguas,” Maylei Blackwell (chapter 15) further proposes that translocal translation is a “key step in coalition building,” especially critical for actors who are “multiply marginalized in their national contexts, creating linkages with social actors across locales to build new affiliations, solidarities, and movements.”

We all need to devise better “bridging epistemologies” (Lao-Montes 2007, 132) so as to confront the mistranslations or bad translations that have fueled misunderstandings and obstructed feminist alliances, even among women who share the same languages and cultures—like U.S.-based Latinas and Latin Americans. As Costa argues pointedly, “in the interactions between Latina and Latin American feminisms, the travels of discourses and practices encounter formidable roadblocks and migratory checkpoints.” She recounts our Translocas group’s incessant wrestling (and frustration) with, on the one hand, the untranslatability of the U.S. concept of “women of color”—whether as a political project or an identity category—when carried to other topographies and, on the other hand, with the obliteration of questions of sexuality, race, and class in the production of “a universal subject of [early] Latin American feminism,” “self-referential,” and exclusive of “perspectives that question the very notion of ‘women’ as a collective identity” (Feliu, chapter 12), until recent years—itself a product of the operations of what Millán, following Hernández Castillo (2001; cited in Millán, chapter 7 in this volume) calls “hegemonic feminism” in the North-within-the-South of the Américas.

As chapters that deal extensively with Afro-Latin American women’s movements and feminisms (Asher, Gómez-Barris, and Lao-Montes and Buggs), indigenous women (Belausteguigoitia, Millán, Bañales, Prada, Feliu, Hester, Blackwell), and Latina/U.S. women of color coalitional politics (Lao-Montes and Buggs, Blackwell, Bueno-Hansen, and Shapiro) make patently evident, Latin/a América is made up of multiple and multidirectional, and often overlapping, “intertwined diasporas” (Lao-Montes and Buggs, chapter 19 in this volume). Latin@ people of color theorists and activists, especially antiracist, feminist, indigenous, and Afro-Latino rights advocates, therefore are particularly well “translocated” to help foster the spread of bridging identities and epistemologies throughout the Américas. Lao-Montes and Mirangela Buggs maintain, for instance, that Afro-Latina difference can be a crucial component of a coalitional political community and a significant element within fields of intellectual production and critique. As Shapiro suggests, U.S. Latina immigrants also can make “distinctive contributions in translating feminist

activisms across U.S. divides of race, ethnicity, class, and educational status, while remaining associated with global Third World feminisms through nation of origin connections.”

Translocas also are more than world-traveling translators; we are cultural, political, theoretical mediators. We are agents of transculturation. As a counterpoint to assimilationist theories of “acculturation,” Fernando Ortiz’s notion of transculturation “necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as deculturation . . . [and] carries the idea of a consequent creation of a new cultural phenomena” (quoted in Renta 2007). As Costa suggests is the case with traveling theories and other cross-border flows, translocal feminism at least potentially “disfigures, deforms and transforms the culture and/or discipline that receives it” (see Introduction to Debates).

Translocas interrogate and thereby destabilize received meanings of race, class, sexualities, genders, and other “locational politics” on all sides of compound borders, as these meanings shift as we move across diverse localities. Bodies and desires are (re)produced and transformed through processes of translocal translation, as contributions by Hester, Maia, Bueno-Hansen, Schmidt, and Shapiro make clear. Like the Brazilian erotic dancers analyzed by Maia and the women of Fortaleza, Brazil, who engage with sex tourism, discussed in Adriana Piscitelli’s contribution (chapter 14), Translocas refashion new racial and sexual selves as we cross multiple borders.<sup>5</sup> Our “remittances”—of which women are the most faithful senders, as Teresa Carrillo notes in her chapter (chapter 11)—are sociocultural and political, as well as material (Duany 2008).

A Translocas conception of transculturation—understood as promoting intracultural as well as cross-cultural processes of multidirectional transformation and multilevel processes of “deculturation” and cultural refoundation—also aims to engage productively with contemporary theorizing on the coloniality of power and *interculturalidad*, or “interculturality” (Quijano 2000; Mignolo 2006; Lugones 2007; Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui 2008; Costa 2009).<sup>6</sup> As Norma Klahn proposes in chapter 1, to better understand the “coloniality of power” one must “comprehend the unequal traveling and translation of feminist practices, theories, and texts and their reception.” Citing Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002), Schmidt similarly insists that postcolonial/decolonial theory requires “a dense articulation with the question of sexual discrimination and feminism” to reveal the sexist norms of sexuality that “tend to lay a white man down on the bed with a black woman, rather than a white woman and a Black man.” Though a translocal translational politics arguably is crucial to the “decolonial turn,” the failure to engage feminist theory can result in homogenizing views of subaltern cultures that ignore or underplay sexual,

gendered, racialized, class, age, and other differences and power relations that sustain hierarchies even among decolonial subjects like indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

Lao-Montes and Buggs nonetheless insist that a “decolonial politics of translocation” is essential to dismantling “hierarchies of rule” and the “colonial legacies of race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation that have shaped the lives, structural predicaments, and identities of women of color” and of “Afro-America.” Blackwell shows, moreover, that an anti-imperial, decolonial Third World imaginary was at the core of early women of color organizing in the United States, as it is today among many indigenous and antiracist activists in the Latin American region. In her postcolonial reading of black women’s struggles in Colombia, Asher further notes that postcolonial/decolonial politics and epistemes are crucial to challenging the “binaries (theory versus practice, power versus resistance, discourse versus materiality, victims versus guardians, etc.) that plague and limit so much thinking in the field of Third World women, gender, and development,” arguing cogently that, like colonial discourses, such binaries “occlude the complex, contradictory, incomplete, and power-laden processes and practices against and within which women emerge and act.”

THE CHAPTERS ARE GROUPED into four parts. The Introduction to Debates about Translation is Costa’s essay, “Lost (and Found?) in Translation: Feminisms in Hemispheric Dialogue,” which served as the concept paper that provided the theoretical backdrop for our collective project, and provides an incisive overview of feminist and other translation theorists’ reflections on the travels and translations of feminist theories in the Américas. Drawing on our Translocas group’s collective theoretical and political ruminations, it explores issues concerning feminism, translation, and transnationalism/translocalities with the aim of building feminist alliances among different constituencies not only across the North–South axis but in other latitudinal and longitudinal directions as well.

Part I, “Mobilizations: Mobilizing Theories/Texts/Images,” presents essays centered on how actual texts, theories, authors, and theorists have traveled and been translated, and how the mobilization of such translations affects the translocal making of feminist meanings in the Américas. Chapters in this part further reveal the transgressive potential of translocated readings and pedagogies, proposing provocative strategies for reading across multiple borders.

In chapter 1, Chicana critic Norma Klahn offers an exacting analysis of women’s writing in Latin/a América since the 1970s, illustrating how it has

been a “site actively marked by gender, but where questions of class, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and generation have been inexorably present.” She insists that these writings—*testimonios*, autobiographical fictions, essays, and novels—constitute “poetic/political interventions,” that are at once “aesthetic/ethical ones linked to contestatory practices.”

Similarly concerned with mapping the travels of feminist writings in the Latin/a Américas, Bolivian literary theorist Ana Rebeca Prada explores the question of whether Anzaldúa is “translatable in Bolivia.” Effecting what we could call a transgressively “faithless appropriation” (Tsing 1997), Prada, like Klahn, seeks to open new “scenarios of conversation” and propose “new horizons for dialogue” across the Latin/a Américas by facilitating an unprecedented conversation between radical feminist queer mestizas and indigenous feminists across Texas and La Paz, Bolivia. Such translocal reappropriations of traveling theories, she argues, enable us to reimagine how feminist discourses and practices, as well as texts, might be able to travel North–South and South–North. Like the radical Bolivian feminist collective she discusses, *Mujeres Creando*, many translocal subjects “insist on staying on the border, living the body created by the colonial, racist divide, transgressing it, re-creating it, decolonizing it while staying *atravesado*, queer—therefore, *un-institutionable*.” Noting that the history of feminism in Brazil “often runs against the grain of postmodernity” and “was written in painful struggles” in which class and race were necessarily articulated with gender, “each putting its entire set of urgencies on the order of the day even before such elaborations come to figure on the agenda of metropolitan feminisms,” Brazilian literary critic Simone Schmidt’s contribution explores “the tense and poorly resolved legacy of slavocratic patriarchy” and its consequences in terms of racial, class, sexual, and gendered inequalities and violence. The fruit of that violence, she pointedly notes, is the *corpo mestiço*, the racially mixed body, which constitutes a veritable battleground on which the multiple, inherent contradictions of race and racism in the Lusophone postcolonial world unfold. Working to translate the postcolonial agenda into Portuguese, Schmidt’s chapter probes how the *mestiça* body is represented in several fictional texts by Brazilian women writers. Similarly seeking to interpret “Euro-centric translation theories” so as to better apprehend the position of an immigrant Dominican woman from New York translating the Spanish-language poems of Yrene Santos, another Dominican York woman, Espinal offers a poignant and insightful discussion of how and why translation for both her and Santos is “a matter of politics and an act of faith.”

Closing this part of the book, Mexican cultural critic Maritza Belausteguioitia argues for approaching feminist translation as a pedagogy, as “a way

of reading,” and reading as a recasting of distances and scales. Advocating a “pedagogy of the double” as a productive approach to reading transnationally, she pursues a paired reading of border-thinkers Gloria Anzaldúa and Subcomandante Marcos, placing “Chicanas and Zapatistas, face to face, mask to mask, ink to ink with one another,” Indians and migrants, “two subjects that the nation refuses to fully integrate,” as they represent “the untranslatable, due to an excessive difference in color, tongue, and culture.” Belaustegui-goitia’s essay, like the other chapters in this section, illustrates the powerful political and epistemological possibilities opened up when translocal readings disrupt the “process of transfer of the negative veil to the ‘other,’” inducing a “two-way” circulation of significance: Chicana and Mexican, United States and Mexico, Marcos and Anzaldúa, “recasting signification from one to another.”

The chapters in part II, “Mediations: National/Transnational Identities/Circuits,” turn to considerations of the venues, circuits, institutions, agents, and “theory brokers” that facilitate or obstruct the movements and mobilizations of specific feminist discourses and practices, privileging some, silencing others. Brazilian feminist theorist Costa’s contribution to this section explores how Brazil’s premier feminist studies journal, *Revista Estudos Feministas* (REF), has been a key component of the “material apparatus” that organizes the translation, publication, and circulation of feminist theories. She maintains that REF in fact had a constitutive role in the field it claims only to represent and that its editors and editorial committees, as well as the agendas of the journal’s funders, exert “the function of gatekeepers of the feminist academic community, policing the many local appropriations/translations” of metropolitan theories. The journal has produced a “gender studies canon” that affords easier transit and greater visibility to authors and theories “closest to the international circuits of academic prestige and situated at privileged racial, geographical (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo), and class sites.” To promote more symmetry in the global flows of feminist theories, she contends, academic feminist journals must work to establish “epistemological counter-canons” and “engage in practices of translation that ‘translate with a vengeance.’” Mexican anthropologist Margara Millan also focuses on three feminist magazines—*Fem*, *Debate Feminista*, and *La Correa Feminista*—as venues that control the flux of feminist discourses and practices, particularly those concerning race, ethnicity, and indigeneity. Closely examining the translational politics of those publications, the theories and authors they translate, and the ways they align with local political contexts, she argues that feminist journals are particularly relevant in shaping communication between different kinds of practices and are privileged places from which to understand the relationship between feminist theory, activism, and national politics.

The two chapters that follow, by political scientists Rebecca Hester and Kiran Asher, explore how the lives of indigenous Mexican immigrant women in the United States and Afro-Colombian women in the Chocó Valley are represented by “health promotion” and development discourses, respectively. Examining how Mixtec and Triqui women translate dominant medical and health care models and local patriarchies in caring for themselves and their families, Hester analyzes how indigenous migrant women’s bodies are “written by and through the forces they engage within their daily lives” (Price and Shildrick 1999, quoted in Hester, chapter 8 this volume), while showing how they also “become agents in that writing.” Although “health promotion” as a global discourse and practice is touted as particularly well suited to reaching and serving marginalized, “at-risk” populations, Hester cautions against its untranslated adoption as a strategy for promoting indigenous migrant women’s “empowerment.” Asher similarly warns that dominant discourses of “women and development” fail to appreciate the contradictions and complexities of Afro-Colombian women’s experiences. Analyzing the texts—interviews, statements, poetry, songs, stories—of Matamba y Gausa, a network of black women in the Cauca region of Colombia, she argues that “gender experts” mistranslate local women’s engagements with development and the environment. Asher suggests that postcolonial feminist approaches complicate our understanding of black women’s activism, highlighting how they are shaped differentially, unequally, and discursively and can thereby contribute to developing more nuanced readings of Afro-descendant women’s “texts in context.”

Sociologist Macarena Gómez-Barris, a second-generation Chilean American, examines how feminist and antiracist discourses and practices flow through music and performance. Exploring music as translation through the work of Afro-Chilean performer Moyeneí Valdés, she analyzes how this performer’s powerful enactments of cultural politics showcase African-descendant sensibilities and aesthetics. Analyzing how sound-break politics “are cultural efforts that rupture the hegemonic drone of economic neoliberalism that produce a visual and sound economy of commercialization, white noise, and an endless barrage of products,” Gómez-Barris offers a unique window onto how transnational political and musical histories, especially feminist and antiracist formations, can influence the terrain of cultural politics even in situations of neoliberal hegemony.

Part III, “Migrations: Disrupting (B)Orders,” draws attention to the trans-localities and translations enacted in the movement of/across gendered, sexualized, class-based, and racialized bodies and borders. Teresa Carrillo provides a richly detailed account of the growing “feminization of migration” and the increased reliance on migrant domestic service workers to meet the

“care deficit” of the global North (and as Verónica Feliu’s chapter shows, of the North within the South). Arguing that a globalized “regime of social reproduction” systematically devalues the care work largely supplied by immigrant and diasporic women, she mounts a trenchant critique of the patriarchal, racist, and nativist discourses that pervade immigration policy debates in the United States and documents how the policies of both sending and receiving countries systematically disadvantage and diminish migrant women. Translations occur daily “from within the employee–employer relationship of domestic service,” yet she, like Feliu, insists that that the “disempowering trends . . . rooted in a fundamental devaluation of domestic work (aka women’s work) have not translated into feminist discourse in the North or South.”

Feliu’s contribution (chapter 12) demonstrates that the racialized, patriarchal devaluation of domestic service workers respects no geopolitical boundaries and is amply evident in southern latitudes of the Américas as well. Struggling to translate Chilean feminist “silences” surrounding the “labor women perform for other women,” she undertakes a detailed (and largely unprecedented) analysis of Chilean domestic service work—principally performed by indigenous Chileans and Peruvian migrants. She maintains that despite (or perhaps because of) the feminist silences she documents, *empleadas* have played an “essential role” in the development of feminism by performing the care work from which middle-class feminists have been “liberated.”

Two chapters in this part of the book explore how women in the Latin/a Américas redefine and rearticulate their racial, class, and sexual subjectivities as they translate themselves in sexual/erotic encounters in/from new latitudes. Brazilian anthropologist Suzana Maia examines how women who work as erotic dancers in New York City “deploy racial categories such as *morena* to articulate the tensions in their shifting identity as they move across nation-states.” She argues that using a language of racial mixture and “mimetically incorporating icons of Brazilian sexuality and race” are central to the dancers’ “sense of self” and “ways of experiencing the body,” revealing “how racial configurations are defined transnationally.” In an equally rich ethnographic account of “sex travels” in Fortaleza, Brazil-based Argentine anthropologist Adriana Piscitelli shows that local residents who work in sex tourism “translate themselves to suit the sex travelers’ expectations.” In such translocal circuits, race and gender are crucial to the performance of national identity. Accommodating sex tourists’ desires for a “racialized, intense *tropical sexuality*,” local women seeking relationships with sex travelers embody and reconfigure sexualized notions about Brazil, “performing the racialized identity allocated to them by foreigners.”

“Movements: Feminist/Social/Political/Postcolonial, the fourth and final

part of the book, offers a set of essays analyzing how and why particular theories and discourses do or do not translate in the political and cultural practices of Latina and Latin American feminisms. This part opens with an analysis of transborder, multiscalar flows across three movement formations: the indigenous women's movement, the lesbian feminist movement in Mexico, and Chicana and U.S. women of color feminisms in the United States, by Native American/Thai cultural theorist Maylei Blackwell. She introduces "unaligned geographies of difference" as a theoretical framework for analyzing the possibilities and challenges implicated in forging feminist coalitions and movement-building across borders and theorizes a practice she dubs *translenguajes* (translanguages/tongues) "to identify the ways activists are translating, reworking, and contesting meaning in the transnational flow of discourses between social movement actors in three different cross-border formations." Analyzing how marginalized political actors have to navigate local entrapments of power to reach the transnational level, Blackwell demonstrates that local negotiations and configurations of power, especially those shaped by gender, race, and sexuality, necessarily mediate transborder exchanges among movements. Exploring the high stakes always implicated in the transnational politics of translation and mistranslation, she shows that translocal social movements often entail translating notions of identity that involve struggles over meaning, regional identities, and local autonomy. Like the other chapters in this section of the book, Blackwell's concludes that transnational organizing that recognizes "how power is structured in each [local] context, and negotiates rather than glosses over power differences, requires a critical practice of translation of everyday political meanings, practices, and organizing logics."

Peruvian American political scientist Pascha Bueno-Hansen at once explores and facilitates a "virtual dialogue" between *movimientos de lesbianas feministas* and queer women of color feminist movements in the Américas. Her analysis highlights how the meanings of terms like *lesbiana* and *queer* shift as they travel across borders and through distinct political-cultural contexts and different movement spaces, marked by power asymmetries that include accelerated transcultural flows, usage of international and regional forums and networks, and increased migration. Deploying a "friendship model for feminist solidarity," the virtual dialogue she develops explores how two distinct feminist activist formations "might negotiate the tension between essentialist and deconstructivist approaches to making identity claims, naming themselves, and struggling for visibility on their own terms."

Ester Shapiro's chapter turns to a consideration of how traveling texts can both facilitate and obstruct cross-border coalitional politics, analyzing her own and other U.S. Latinas' accomplishments and disillusionments in

“translocating” *Our Bodies, Ourselves* into *Nuestros Cuerpos, Nuestras Vidas* as a text “deliberately designed to be read, interpreted, and used differently as it traveled, engaging Spanish-speaking readers in multiple spaces and building empathy, recognition, and political connections across borders.” Applying concepts from U.S. border-crossing and Third World feminism, the chapter demonstrates how the inclusion of U.S. Latina perspectives “helped re-vision the text’s relationship to both local and transnational feminist movements, creating an empowering world-traveling text, ‘translocating’ knowledge while identifying opportunities for transformative political action.”

Through a translocal feminist reading of another widely circulated text, I, Rigoberta Menchú, Chicana literary critic Victoria Bañales examines how indigenous women’s revolutionary struggles “openly defy and challenge dominant racialized gender and sexuality discourses that represent indigenous women as essentially passive, penetrable, and apolitical.” Noting that most critical work on the text treats gender as secondary to other ethnic, cultural, or class dimensions of Menchú’s testimonio, Bañales’s examination of the representational possibility of indigenous “women with guns” in that testimonio “illuminates the ways power relations are never fixed and immutable but rather the historical, man-made (literally and figuratively) products of complex social institutions that can be ultimately challenged, resisted, and reconfigured.” Through a richly detailed analysis of the complex representations of gender in the text, Bañales helps “unearth and recuperate some of the text’s buried gender ‘truth effects,’ which have remained, for one reason or another, heavily lost in translation.”

Further advancing keen theorizations of “translocation” and “intertwined diasporas,” Afro-Puerto Rican sociologist Agustín Lao-Montes and U.S. African American feminist educator Mirangela Buggs explore similar questions through a discussion of U.S. women of color feminisms and Afro-Latin@ movements. They undertake a “gendering [and Latin/a Americanization] of African diaspora discourse,” analyzing the African diaspora as a black borderland, as a geohistorical field with multiple borders and complex layers. Lao-Montes and Buggs also engage black feminist and queer perspectives on the African diaspora that reveal the particularly profound forms of subalternization experienced by women of color and black queers.

Examining the complex politics of translation in what she dubs “transnational feminist publics,” Anglo-American feminist sociologist Millie Thayer caps off this final part of the book with a richly textured ethnographic analysis of the tortuous travels of feminist discourses and practices among women’s movements in Recife and their allies and donors beyond Brazil. Examining the discursive circuits and flows between differentially (trans)located

women in feminist counterpublics, Thayer argues that “local” movement politics always entails manifold and multidirectional translations among diverse women “linked to . . . publics organized around other markers, such as race, class, and local region, [who] speak distinctive ‘dialects’ or, sometimes, even ‘languages.’”

THIS COLLECTION ASPIRES to take its place in a tradition of collaborative writing and anthologizing practices among Latina and women of color feminists in the United States, documented in chapters by Bueno-Hansen, Shapiro, and Blackwell.<sup>7</sup> It also represents an exercise in translocal knowledge production and collective, collaborative framework building which, as Arturo Escobar rightly insists, always “pays off in terms of theoretical grounding, interpretive power, social relevance, and sense of politics” (2008, xii). We’ve learned a great deal from one another’s *translocuras*.

Our anthology transgresses disciplinary borders as shamelessly and energetically as it does geopolitical ones. The authors are based in a variety of disciplines, from media studies to literature to Chican@ studies to political science; most span a range of disciplinary knowledges and theoretical perspectives in a single chapter. Moreover, because our contributors have been engaged in sustained dialogue, readers should find that the essays collected here are in implicit or explicit conversation with one another. That conversation is intergenerational as well as interethnic, international, and interdisciplinary, requiring all of us to interrogate some of our most dearly and steadfastly held assumptions and inspiring many to learn to read and translate in new ways.

Whereas (too) many edited collections published nowadays are hastily cobbled together after a one- or two-day conference, this anthology is the carefully cultivated and matured fruit of a multiyear collaborative process stretching across a number of countries, institutions, disciplines, and generations and involving Latin American(ist) and Latina feminist scholars from the North and South of the Américas. The editors and many of the contributors formed part of a Greater San Francisco Bay Area research group that met at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) over a number of years, under the auspices of the Chicano/Latino Research Center. Most others also participated at some point in one of the several sessions on the travels and translations of feminist theories in the Américas we organized for the 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006, and 2007 Congresses of the Latin American Studies Association or in one of several conferences and seminars we’ve held on the topic at UCSC, the Federal University of Santa Catarina in Brazil, and at the University of Massachusetts–Amherst (May 5–6, 2006).

We originally emerged as a network of scholar-activists articulated across the particular locations of southern Brazil, northern California, and, later, New England. What brought us together initially and subsequently brought others (Prada, Maia, Millán, Piscitelli, and Belausteguigoitia among them) into our translocal circuit of theorizing feminisms was the urgency of seeking new epistemes for reading culture, politics, gender, race, and so on that were not based on binary markers such as North and South. Indeed, a major goal of the anthology was to destabilize the North–South dichotomy and highlight how translocal subjects and theories are constituted in the spaces in between. Some of the contributors are from the South speaking in the North about the South, in the South speaking about the North, in the South speaking about the South, or in the North speaking from a translocal position that is neither North nor South.

This book thereby provides unprecedented insights into the travels and translations of feminist theories, practices, and discourses in and across the Américas, offering fresh perspectives on questions typically framed in terms of transnationalism and new ways of thinking about translocal connections among feminisms in the global North and (within and across the) global South. Our project aims to foster a renewed feminist and antiracist episteme for reimagining and retheorizing a revitalized Latina/o American feminist studies *travestida* (cross-dressed) for the globalized, transmigrant Américas of the twenty-first century. It also signals the possibilities of a transformed “U.S. American studies” and a Latin American studies that would understand the Américas as a dynamic transborder, translocal cultural formation rather than a clearly delineated geopolitical space. We entreat activists, cultural workers, and knowledge producers inside and outside the academy to join us in translating and translocating hegemonic and subaltern discourses, policies, and practices and in building alliances to forge a genuinely inclusive, socially, sexually, racially, economically, environmentally just, and feminist Latin/a Américas.

### Notes

A partial, earlier version of this essay appeared in Portuguese as “Constituindo uma Política Feminista Translocal de Tradução” (Enacting a Translocal Feminist Politics of Translation), *Revista Estudos Feministas* (Brazil), 17, no. 3 (2009). I am especially indebted in this essay and this project as a whole to Claudia de Lima Costa. I am also grateful to my research assistants and faithful interlocutors, Cruz Caridad Bueno, Casey Stevens, Amy Fleig, Stephanie Gutierrez, Irem Kok, Alyssa Maraj-Grahame, Martha Balaguera, and especially Alper Yagci, for their indefatigable efforts to help us see this project through to publication.

1. For a succinct overview of feminist debates about the politics of location, see Davis (2007, 7–11).

2. On the feminist politics of place, see especially Harcourt and Escobar (2005).
3. Lionel Cantú was the first to call our group Translocas and was among the most enthusiastic and insightful founding members of our Transnational Feminist Politics of Translation research group, the “most *loca* of all,” as he liked to say. This book is dedicated to his memory. His untimely death in the early stages of this project was an inestimable emotional and intellectual loss for Translocas and all those who knew and loved him.
4. Other scholars have similarly emphasized the transnational/translocal constitution of subjectivities that is central to our own conception of Translocas. Lynn Stephen (2007) proposes the concept of “transborder lives,” for instance, to refer to subjects who migrate among multiple sites in the United States and Mexico, and Patricia Zavella (2011) advances the notion of “peripheral vision” to refer to subjectivities and imaginaries fashioned by migrants and Latina/os who do not migrate but reside in locales with migrants and links to “sending regions” in the Americas. Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes has used the term “translocas” to discuss Puerto Rican drag (2008, 2011).
5. As Ginetta Candelario (2007) finds in her compelling account of racialization processes among Dominicans in New York City, Washington, and Santo Domingo, nationally rooted racial self-perceptions and identities can also be quite resilient even as subjects move across localities.
6. For recent works by the various authors associated with the decolonial studies group, see the special issue of *Cultural Studies* on “The Coloniality of Power and De-colonial Thinking” (2007) and Moraña, Dussel, and Jáuregui (2008).
7. Among those most frequently cited in our contributors’ chapters are *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983 [1981]); *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave*; *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Hull, Bell-Scott, and Smith 1982); and *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (Latina Feminist Group 2001b). Our book also follows in the anthologizing tradition of Latina and Latin Americanist feminist scholars who produced collaborative texts about feminist thought and activism, such as *Women, Culture and Politics in Latin America* (Seminar on Feminism and Culture in Latin America 1990) and *Chicana Feminisms: A Critical Reader* (Arredondo et al. 2003).