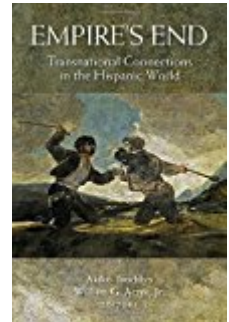


Akiko Tsuchiya, William G. Acree Jr., eds.. *Empire's End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2016. 240 pp. \$69.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8265-2076-0.



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Transnational and global histories are continuously evolving fields. In this line of historical inquiry, interconnections and networks are highlighted, and porous boundaries are crossed. Although truly enriching, the task of weaving transnational histories is still daunting especially when nations and identities are still projects being pursued (in varying degrees of vigor)—even more pronounced in postcolonial conditions and locations. Moreover, challenges of representation, power, and authority also come into play.

The essays in the collection *Empire's End: Transnational Connections in the Hispanic World* confront these challenges by teasing out the notions of transnational flows of knowledge, people, and discourse in the Hispanic world during the long nineteenth century and beyond. With eleven essays including the introduction, *Empire's End* is divided thematically into four parts: “Atlantic Cartographies,” “Racial Theory: From Imperial Formations to Nostalgic Celebrations,” “Slavery, Empire, and the Problems of Freedom,” and “Part Four: Cultural Legacies of Empire.” Proceeding

from a workshop of the same theme, the essays look into the transnational connections in the Spanish Empire giving particular focus to the context of the “empire’s end” in the nineteenth century and beyond. As the book argues, the nineteenth century is to be understood as a complex period and not just as a watershed century signaling the political demise of the once-encompassing Spanish colonial enterprise. Moreover, the book maintains that to characterize the nineteenth century as the “empire’s end” is a tenuous claim given that the ripples of the imperial network were felt well into the twentieth (and even into the twenty-first) century.

One of the editors, Akiko Tsuchiya, lays out the aims of the book quite straightforwardly in the introduction. The collection endeavors to reflect on transnational connections in the Hispanic world and “break[s] new ground in nineteenth-century Hispanic literary and cultural studies.” The book also highlights the “ramifications of Spain’s imperial project in relation to its (former) colonies, not only in Spanish America but also in

North Africa and the Philippines ... [and in effect] generat[es] new insights into the circuits of cultural exchange that link these four geographical areas.” Lastly, the authors attempt to widen the conversation through an interdisciplinary stance and invitation to other scholars interested in the field. Ultimately the book contributes to an understanding of the making and remaking of the Hispanic world. Toward these ends, the collection also “emphasizes the *cultural* impact of the [end of empire], with ‘culture’ encompassing a wide range of symbolic and discursive representations that often form the basis of transnational connections and exchange.” Thus, as the essays focus on the exigencies of the transnational approach, they utilize as sources the many imprints of the period from “literary fiction, literary histories, periodical publications, scientific and anthropological texts, national symbols, museums, and tourist routes” (p. 5).

The book caters to beginners and specialists alike. The essays in the first and second parts are comprehensive pieces that show the potential of transnational approaches in the study of the Hispanic world. In an engaging essay, “Hispanism, Transatlantic Studies and the Problem of Cultural History,” Sebastiaan Faber charts the contingencies of the debate on the transnational history of the Hispanic world and notes how it figures in the peninsula as well as in the Americas. Particularly interesting is Kirsty Hooper’s “Liverpool and the Luso-Hispanic World: Negotiating Global Histories at Empire’s End” as it shows refreshing takes on sources and methodology to flesh out the transnational connections within the era of imperialism. The three essays in the second part take into consideration the discourse on race in the Hispanic world as it was shaped by changing political, cultural, economic, and scientific landscapes of the colonial condition.

Compared to the first two parts, the third and fourth parts prove to be harder to digest and cater more to the specialist in literary history as the es-

says unpack the intricacies of knowledge and discourse from the various literary works produced in the nineteenth-century Hispanic world. As most of these essays fulfill the book’s promise of interrogating literary history and cultural studies within a transnational frame, reading through them would almost compel one to know the works being discussed, otherwise there is the risk of being lost in the narratives. For literary historians and cultural studies experts, however, these pieces will prove to be stimulating and engaging.

Most of the contributors to this collection were educated in the United States and all hold posts in universities either in the United States or the United Kingdom. A question may be worth asking: how does the location of academics affect the debates on the transnational history of the Spanish Empire? Although this can run counter to the spirit of transnational approaches to history, a more sustained reflection on positionalities can also enrich the discussion, especially when the politics of assertion and denial, mention and silence, presence and absence are brought to the fore. While it can be seen as a passionate, interlocutor weighing in on the debate, the book especially its passages critiquing the direction of the scholarship in this field, at times may come across as a jab in an epistemic competition for representation and relevance.

In another light, as I am writing from the Philippines, what the book also reveals to me is the relative underrepresentation of the Philippines in the conversation about the transnational history of the Spanish Empire, especially in the themes covered by the authors. The single chapter in the volume touching on the Philippines written by Joyce Tolliver is commendable and opens lines for further inquiry and future projects that would include the Philippines in the discussion. Transnational approaches to history are yet to take a more pronounced presence in Philippine academia and this book can also serve as a call to Filipino historians to reflect more on this field.

With the right balance of rigor and erudition, the essays in the collection successfully demonstrate the continuing relevance and potential of adopting a transnational approach in understanding the complexities of the Hispanic world. In the end, this compendium deserves to be on the shelves of anyone interested in the fields of literary history, Spanish Empire and the Hispanic world, cultural studies, and transnational history and historiography.

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