European Review, Vol. 22, No. 4, 543–545 © 2014 Academia Europæa
doi:10.1017/S1062798714000325

Focus: Transnational Memory in the Hispanic World

Preface

In May 2013, the University of Konstanz hosted an international workshop entitled 'Transnational Memories: Subjects, Practices and Places in Transit'. This issue represents the results of the discussions during this two-day workshop and contains the revised versions of some of the papers presented at the event. The workshop was the first major activity of the international research project TRANSIT, led by the KU Leuven and co-funded by the European Commission's Marie Curie Actions International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES) and the University of California, Los Angeles. TRANSIT is the shorthand title for 'Transnationality at Large: The Transnational Dimension of Hispanic Culture in the 20th and 21st centuries' (www.projecttransit.eu). The objective of this four-year project (2013–2017) is to reflect critically upon the new paradigm of transnationalism that currently bears significant impact on the Humanities in Europe and the United States.

Until now, the field of Hispanic Studies has occupied a rather peripheral position in the debate on transnationalism, despite the fact that it has an established tradition in transnational thinking. Publications dealing with Hispanic Studies and transnationalism tend to adopt a more sociological focus rather than a specifically cultural optic. Furthermore, they pay selective attention to this incredibly wide field, focusing mainly on Mexico and the Caribbean, with particular emphasis on the relationship with the United States as the privileged partner in questions of transnationality. In this respect, this issue of *European Review* draws attention to the importance of Europe as a transnational partner for Latin America, either within the context of (political and economic) migration, or one in which historical violence is at stake (the Holocaust, dictatorship). It also adds a cultural dimension to the heretofore predominantly sociological focus on transnationality, thus foregrounding interactions between social, economic, political, artistic and material realities.

The decision to dedicate the workshop to transnational memories was inspired by the fact that the University of Konstanz is home to an internationally renowned centre for the study of memory: the Max Planck research group entitled 'History & Memory'. One of its most prominent voices, Aleida Assmann, opens this issue – the first publication of its kind to appear on the topic of transnational memory in relation

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000325 Published online by Cambridge University Press

to the Hispanic World – with an illuminating survey of current debate on Memory Studies and the importance of the transnational turn therein. Her article, which lays down the basic theoretical framework to the volume, is complemented by the contribution of Philippe Mesnard, Director of the Auschwitz Foundation in Brussels and a pioneer in the area of literary memory of the Holocaust. He studies the way in which collective memories work together, with particular emphasis on the French context. What ensue are 10 case studies on the way in which transnational memory is articulated in Latin America and Spain. Several contributions centre on Argentina as a key interlocutor in transnational memory-alliances, either to show how Holocaust memory works as a global language for post-dictatorial traumas (Feierstein, Schindel), or conversely to indicate how concepts born within the context of Argentinean history (particularly the figure of *el desaparecido* – the victim of forced disappearance) travel to Spain, where they are employed to help think through another traumatic past: the Spanish Civil War (Mandolessi-Perez). The legacy of the Holocaust experience for the imagination of historical violence does, however, clearly transcend the borders of post-dictatorial societies such as Argentina and Spain: it also turns out to be much more present than has ever before been charted in Mexican literature (Van Delden), or intertwined with the memories of Jewish–Latin American migration to Brazil and Argentina (Lie). A final area of interest concerns the international legacy of the memory of the Spanish Civil War. Two contributions show how a dialogue is established between European memory (Stalinism, the Holocaust, diaspora) and local memories in Spain in recent literary and theatrical works (Vandebosch, Brizuela). Another scholar ponders how the traumatic experiences of the Spanish Civil War can be emotionally conveyed in works of art that are directed by filmmakers originating from cultural contexts other than that of Spain (Bergero). This part of our special edition also complements a previous issue of the *European Review*, dedicated to European Civil Wars (vol. 20, no. 4, 2012), by drawing attention to the dialogic nature of the Spanish Civil War with other historical experiences of violence. After this profound incursion into the Hispanic world, Gabriele Schwab returns us to a global perspective, by showing the resonance of concepts dealt with in the preceding texts (particularly those evoking the 'disappeared') in *Anil's Ghost,* a novel by Michael Ondaatje.

We close with an afterword by Michael Rothberg, whose concept of 'multidirectional memory' proved particularly inspiring to several contributors. Their insights show that the inclusion of the Hispanic world in the field of memory studies is not only a matter of broadening its scope, but also one of taking up the challenge of rethinking and/or adjusting basic concepts in relation to other cultural contexts. In implicit dialogue with some of the responses outlined above, Rothberg delineates the analytical potential of his concept of multidirectionality and situates the contribution of this issue as a whole within a wider debate on the locatedness of transnational memory, pointing to the relevance of each particular article, but also opening up the debate on transnationality to other theoretical meditations on locatedness. Together with Aleida Assmann's contribution, he provides the essential framework within which this monographic issue should be read.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000325 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Finally, we would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who contributed to this project: the eminent specialists on Memory Studies who liberated space in their hectic agendas to guide us through their ideas (Assmann, Mesnard, Rothberg), as well as the equally eminent scholars from Latin America, United States and Europe who participated in the workshop in Konstanz, superbly coordinated by our colleague and co-editor Dr Silvana Mandolessi. The European Union (both the European Research Council and Marie-Curie Actions Programme), the University of California, Los Angeles and the University of Leuven provided the necessary funding. Finally, this issue would not have seen the light without Dr Philippa Page, who during her time at the KU Leuven was the most efficient and skilled managing editor we could ever have hoped for. We extend our sincerest gratitude to them all.

Nadia Lie
Project Coordinator TRANSIT, KU Leuven

Kirsten Mahlke
Work Package Leader 'Transnational Memory', University of Konstanz
http://projecttransit.eu

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1062798714000325 Published online by Cambridge University Press