



Vol. 13, No. 2, Winter 2016, 352-355

## **Review / Reseña**

Néstor García Canclini. *Imagined Globalization*. Trans. George Yúdice. Durham: Duke UP, 2014.

### **Translating the Global: On the New Edition of García Canclini's *Imagined Globalization***

**Sarah Booker**

University of North Carolina—Chapel Hill

The turn of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of studies on globalization as important scholars such as Fredric Jameson, James Clifford, and Ulrich Beck examined the global economic, political, social, and cultural shifts that result from an intensification of trans-national connections. All seemed to be in agreement that globalization certainly was not new to the twentieth century, there were—and still are—notable shifts worth discussing. Engaging with such discussions from a Latin American perspective, Néstor García Canclini published *Globalización imaginada* in 1999 not with the intention of glorifying or lamenting such phenomena, but “to describe the changes in culture in the age of globalization and to explore alternative ways of managing it” (116). Superbly translated by George Yúdice and published as part of the Latin America in Translation series with Duke University Press in 2014, this edition makes García Canclini’s

influential work on the impact of globalization on Latin America available in English. Acknowledging the diversity of ways that people understand globalization, García Canclini argues that globalization “improves transnational exchange” (3) and disrupts the stability of the isolated nation-state.

Based on ethnographic studies, personal experiences, cultural narratives, and artistic productions, as well as academic studies and a profound understanding of political and economic trends, García Canclini seeks to articulate global tendencies at the end of the twentieth century. His unique appreciation of art as an opportunity to grasp the way that individuals understand and imagine global networks is well balanced by his more empirical studies; this blend of disciplinary approaches only strengthens his argument. While this work is of utmost importance because of its unique Latin American perspective, García Canclini does privilege examples from the three largest countries—Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil—while ignoring smaller countries, such as those in Central America. This, of course, is indicative of the author’s own geographic experience, but an analysis of trends in the rest of Latin America would be a fruitful avenue for further work that addresses Latin America.

*Imagined Globalization* begins with the author’s definition of globalization: “Globalization is understood as an expansion of markets and hence as an increase in the economic potential of societies; yet it is also conceived as a narrowing of the capacity for action of nation-states, political parties, unions, and the classic political actors in general” (3). With such a definition in mind, then, the first part of the book, comprised of the first four chapters, examines the ways in which we have narrated—or imagined, as implied by the book’s title—societies and the connections between them. Keeping in mind the author’s other work on hybridization, it becomes clear that much of this work is meant to break down binary modes of thinking, such as the global/local debate that is so often central to discussions of globalization. Of particular interest here are discussions on sociological and anthropological theories of globalization and an explicit intent to examine the “*cultural* processes that either connect or alienate us” (xli).

In the second part, aptly designated as an interlude, García Canclini proposes a narrative based on characters and experiences with whom he has come into contact in order to imagine the interactions between a Latin American anthropologist, a European sociologist, and a U.S. cultural studies scholar. With the idea of better understanding the world of academia through narrative, the author highlights the various perspectives and experiences of globalization within current research practices.

The final part of the book takes into consideration conceptualizations of interculturality and related policies. With a consideration of ways to move away from Western hegemony, he first looks at cultural and artistic imaginaries of globalization and our individual place in it through an examination of visual art, the publishing industry, and the audiovisual industries. The author then turns to what he calls global cities, or big cities, that are socially and politically diverse, as it is in these geographic places that it is possible to see the often-conflicting intersections of the local, national, and global. The final chapter in this new edition, which originally served as the epilogue, considers policy making and its relationship to the tendencies outlined in the book.

The epilogue added in this edition of the text consists of a conversation that took place between García Canclini and the social scientist Toby Miller in 2011, in which the two academics discuss some of the shifts seen since the book was first published. September 11 and its ripples, new trends in migration patterns, technological advances, and youth culture are central to this discussion. The addition of this epilogue, along with the translator's introduction, smooth out the chronological disjunction that arises with the publication of a new edition of a book that analyzes a specific historic moment that took place fifteen years ago.

While the translator maintains invisibility in the body of the text, he does visibly contribute to the work in his introduction, which functions as a reader's guide. Yúdice expertly summarizes the book while also contextualizing it within García Canclini's other academic work, in particular his research on hybrid cultures, such as *Culturas híbridas* (1990). Furthermore, he engages in dialog with the original text as well as expands on ideas suggested in the newly added epilogue. Considering the ideas of

parallel culture and youth cultural networks, Yúdice suggests thoughtful examples that might lead to new avenues of research, such as Nollywood, *huayno pop*, or the #YoSoy132 movement.

A canonical work in the understanding of globalization explored from the perspective of Latin America, this newly translated version is a significant contribution to contemporary scholarship. Whereas major shifts in technology, politics, and social dynamics might make this book less relevant in 2015, the additional translator's introduction and epilogue highlight its contemporary relevance. Thinking about these shifts, however, the book is of most use as a way of understanding the global landscape at the turn of the century, and as a way of rethinking our western perspective of global tendencies.