

EDITORIAL: LATIN AMERICAN DIGITALITIES

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“Are digital practices and the scientific production about them actually challenging the historic insularity of Latin America?” we wondered, sitting in a garden on a warm Sunday afternoon in Lisbon. That question resonated even louder with our already latent will to dedicate a full issue of *Diffractions* to that part of the globe, often considered in regard to peripheral expressions or manifestations from the Global South. One particular concept within Culture Studies suddenly caught our interest as it carried the potential to serve as thematic criterion to our still embryonic dossier: identity – but in digital times.

The notion of identity in the young democracies of Latin America has been up for fruitful debates and agendas in and out of academia, much as it has become the main subject in the arts, mass communication, and popular culture. Those formerly colonized territories have always had to negotiate their cartographies, singularities, and the very idea of Latin America itself (Mignolo 2009) mostly with Europe and the United States, thereby facing the challenges proper to a certain cultural periphery (Richard 1992). Particularly after the 1980s, they likewise gave way to modes of consumption and urbanization that blend in what Argentine cultural and literary critic Beatriz Sarlo aptly describes as “abundance and poverty” (1994, 11). The 2020s, however, claim even more dramatically the

(re)consideration of Latin America as a region that manifests itself as a multifaceted, distinguished, profoundly diverse, and ever-regenerating cultural space *par excellence*, which thinks and develops itself through provoking technology, digital practices and cutting-edge art and expressions.

Latin American Digitalities features how identities are manifested particularly in Latin American digital cultures, communities, literatures, practices, and spaces. Digitalities is the term we refer to as the condition of living in a digital culture, a concept and a *modus operandi* that has been framed mainly within the arts (Lister et al. 2009, King 2015) but that is also apt to describe various techno-(dis)utopian contexts which render expressions in numeric, encoded, and computable form, including the very notion of identity. The fingerprint (*digital* in Portuguese, *huella* in Spanish) emerges, in this context, at the intersection of computer graphics, human communications, and interactive media, bearing the complexity of encoded processes and experiences construed by binary number, often removed from public knowledge (Boast 2017, 7).

In this fifth issue, we take the pun behind the term way beyond techy ridges and loops. *Digital*, referring both to the fingerprint (digitals) and the technology that generates, stores, and processes data (the digital), opens up to social intervention and cultural transformation that impact the (re)conceptualization, translation, materialization, and performance of identities of Latin American countries. *Digitalidade* is thus taken as an insight into a particular *digital*, i.e., a unique cultural mark that is made visible, turned into culture via technology. In that sense, collecting, describing, and comparing fingerprints that Latin American artists, educators, writers, and citizens produced (or have been dealing with) is not only a question of keeping up with our times and its encoded, numeric productions; it is rather recognizing that we are all collectively just in the beginning of broader cultural transformations impacted or shunned by the expansion of the fingerprint (Chanona Burguete 2017, 10).

Actualizing the fingerprint ourselves as the editors – and as editorial –, this issue is especially concerned with diversity (being trilingual is one reflection of this concern), free access and open, public knowledge (as further discussed in our interview with Chile-based researcher Carolina Gainza). *Latin American Digitalities* is a collection of cultural texts (academic articles, interviews in text and video, creative productions, translations) which materialize in the binary form but

transcend much of the conformist logic encountered in several connective, digitalized expressions in current times. Since the notion of sharing identities on the internet has been associated with, for example, social media, it is possible to reflect on digitalities on many other levels: how is traditional literature (in particular historical texts) being received and consumed through digital tools? Is digital literature allowing new forms of Latin American culture and resistance to emerge and materialize themselves? What are the possible epistemologies that Latin American visual and digital artists have been proposing to either reference or subvert Western canons in the arts? What are the creative solutions to denounce surveillance, vigilance, and violence in our digital times? How are social relationships affected by the constant growth of digitalized identities, in particular in the intersection of gender and sexuality?

With these guiding questions in mind, this issue engages with texts, writers, scholars, and artists who examine cultural artefacts or phenomena from recent times as to enlarge the discussion on Digitalities, often via heterodox case studies, objects or points of view, and experiences from the Global South. Their terrain is relatively vast: languages and literatures, visual arts, education, performative arts, and the digital text. In the first article, “Revitalização de línguas indígenas por meio de documentos coloniais digitalizados,” Leandro Durazzo (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil) describes the crucial role digital tools have recently played in the access and engagement to ancestral languages for the Tuxá, one of the indigenous peoples in Brazil. In “Inescapable Prints,” Olivia Holloway (West Point, the United States) writes about the creative devices used in a dystopian novel by Brazilian author João Paulo Cuenca that address surveillance violence and also the perpetuation of gender imbalance. In “Magdalena Fernandez and the Ethos of Digital Geometric Abstraction,” Sara Buoso (University of the Arts London, United Kingdom) investigates how Venezuelan Magdalena Fernandez’ pioneering digital and multimedia work has tackled modernist paradigms about geometric abstraction. “From Vigilance to Vigil,” by Matheus da Rocha Montanari and Gilberto Prado (Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil), depicts and reflects on particular artistic possibilities in Latin American and Indigenous works which make viable a caring, vigil relationship with data and technology. Finally, “An Exploration of the Motivations and Interactions of Grindr Users in Lima, Peru” (Sergio Plaza-Vidalón and Julio-César Mateus, Universidad de Lima, Peru) adds to our dossier a look into

the use of a specific dating app and how the interactions via smartphones unsurprisingly deal with gender identities and sexual stigmas.

The thematic section closes with an interview and an artistic contribution. The first, carried out with Carolina Gainza, researcher and Subsecretary of the Ministry of Science, Technology, Knowledge and Innovation of Chile, brings to the fore Latin American digital literature and its various forms of resistance. The artistic contribution, by Rio de Janeiro-based artist and designer Vítória Cribb, is two-fold: a video interview (carried out by the Editors, subtitled in English and QR-coded) and “Programmed Spontaneity,” a translated piece that brings vanguardist perspectives on Black and female digital identities in Brazil, and which are taking up both new spaces of exhibition and platforms such as *Snapchat*. *Diffractions* also has a non-thematic section, which in this issue features “A Sacrifice Must Be Made” (Amadea Kovič, Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal), an inquiry into the concept of sacrifice as manifested in two popular films in the light of the philosophical and conceptual propositions on the theme by Søren Kierkegaard.

The following contributions to this issue provoke, problematize, manifest, historicize, and provide new imaginaries and imaginations to the *Digital* of, in, and because of Latin America. They likewise consider unexplored fresh potentialities and foster epistemic novelties of Latin American artists’, actors’ and writers’ critical and creative engagement with the fingerprint. Returning to the question we asked ourselves while sitting in that Lisbon garden on a warm Sunday afternoon, we, for one, believe the nourishing texts you, reader, have in front of you, are a bold enough invitation to challenge the insularity of Latin America in-the-reading itself. They are, after all, an invitation to roll your thumb on another kind of ink, one that privileges the imprint of more responsible, gregarious, and encompassing research agendas, critical engagement, gate-keeping protocols, and epistemic novelties. All *Digital*, of course.

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