

#### **EDITORIAL**

# Introduction to Latin American Studies and the Humanities: One Year Later

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This essay introduces the three essays in this collection, "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: One Year Later." This collection follows our first dossier, "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future," which was published in September 2018 (https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.521). The essays here—all written by historians—address current questions in humanistic research in Latin American and ethnic/area studies, including object-centered analysis, comparative methodologies, and archival formation and practices. Our introduction situates the essays in the dossier within three critical contexts, suggesting how new work in Latin American studies can engage with diverse scholarly paradigms, frameworks, and methodological approaches, specifically oceanic worlds and science studies, ethnic and area studies, and Latinx studies.

El presente ensayo proporciona un panorama de los tres artículos históricos que forman este dossier, "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: One Year Later" (Estudios latinoamericanos y las humanidades: Un año después). Los trabajos de la presente colección contestan en cierta manera el dossier que publicamos en septiembre del año pasado bajo el título "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future" (Estudios latinoamericanos y las humanidades: Pasado, presente, futuro, disponible en https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.521). Los ensayos del presente dossier, a igual que los de la colección anterior, contribuyen a varios temas actuales en los estudios latinoamericanos, entre ellos el análisis de los objetos, metodologías comparadas y prácticas de archivo. Nuestro ensayo introductorio pretende situar los ensayos dentro de tres contextos críticos, así mostrando cómo diversos abordajes humanísticos y marcos teóricos nos ayudarán entender los vínculos entre los estudios latinoamericanos y tres campos particulares: los paradigmas océanos y los estudios de la historia de la ciencia y tecnología; los estudios de área y etnicidades; los estudios Latinx.

The three essays in this dossier were originally presented at a conference held at the University of Virginia in October 2016. They form the second installment of critical conversations on the history and future of area and ethnic studies that emerged during the conference. The first part of those conversations was published in fall 2018 in a *LARR* special collection entitled "Latin American Studies and the Humanities: Past, Present, Future" (https://doi.org/10.25222/larr.521; Bigelow and Klubock 2018). We encourage readers to revisit that dossier before considering the essays in this volume.

In this introduction, as with our first edited collection, we situate the three essays—by Hugh Cagle, Jason Oliver Chang, and Eileen Findlay—within larger debates in Latin American studies. The first dossier analyzed the history of area and ethnic studies with essays by Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, Jafte Dilean Robles Lomeli and Joanne Rappaport, and Arturo Arias. Their studies of the history of anthropology and social science in Mexico and the United States (Rosemblatt), popular histories and graphic media in Colombia (Robles Lomeli and Rappaport), and contemporary Indigenous literary and cultural production throughout the hemisphere (Arias) raised important questions about multidisciplinary methodologies, the origins of Latin American studies, and the future of decolonial scholarship. The current issue takes up three related themes: oceanic paradigms and science studies, ethnic studies and Latin American studies, and the relationship between Latinx and Latin American studies.

#### Oceanic Worlds and Science Studies

One paradigm that animates current research in Latin American studies and related fields of ethnic and area studies is the oceanic turn. In the quarter century that followed the publication of Paul Gilroy's *Black Atlantic* (1993), scholars of African diasporic communities used Atlantic world frameworks to connect their studies of Africa and the Americas. Gilroy's foundational work inspired similar methodological approaches in Native studies, evidenced by Jace Weaver's *Red Atlantic* (2017). As recent scholarship on the Indian, Pacific, and Atlantic worlds makes clear, interconnected world regions at critical historical moments have been defined not by earthly territory but by oceans. Taken collectively, although they are often read by scholars in different fields, the work of scholars like James Sweet (2011, 2017), Roquinaldo Ferreira (2012), Camila Fojas and Rudy P. Guevara (2012), David Chang (2016), and Fahad Bishara (2017) illuminates the linkages and fissures created by migration, trade, and the circulation of particular cultural forms, intellectual movements, and political projects beyond traditional periodizations and Atlantic World paradigms.

This transnational turn, extending beyond the Atlantic World to the Pacific and Indian Oceans, has also influenced work in the history of science, technology, and medicine in Latin America, especially within the colonial period (Aranda et al. 2010). In 2004, Jorge Cañizares Esguerra asked "how much longer" Iberian science would be ignored within the larger field of history of science in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The answer seems to have been "not much longer." In the past fifteen years, critical studies of colonial Iberian science have expanded and enriched core definitions of experience and expertise (Barrera Osorio 2006, 2010; Gómez 2017), empiricism and empire (Furtado 2008; Padrón 2009; Bleichmar 2012), and subaltern technologies and epistemologies (Norton 2017; Warsh 2018; Cagle 2018), changing the ways in which we understand science, imperial power, and the nature of knowledge production in South Asia and the Americas. Hugh Cagle's paper for this dossier, "On Agency and Objects: Science and Technology Studies, Latin American Studies, and Global Histories of Knowledge in the Early Modern World," responds to this recent work by analyzing the productive tensions between colonial Latin American studies and the history of science, technology, and medicine.

As Cagle argues here, both fields have begun to take seriously the agencies of historically marginalized actors and the asymmetrical power relations that underwrote violent colonial scientific enterprises. The fields confront different challenges: the history of science, technology, and medicine has not done enough to recognize the nuances of imperial power in defining knowledge production, while colonial Latin American studies has perhaps done too much, as scholars who seek to move the field "beyond alterity" have recently suggested (López Caballero and Acevedo Rodrigo 2018). Cagle's paper proposes an innovative methodological solution to these disciplinary divides. By focusing on the raw materials of scientific debate, illustrated by letters about unicorn horns exchanged between two sixteenth-century sovereigns, Don Afonso I (Mvemba a Nzinga) of Kongo, and Don João III, of Portugal, Cagle shows how natural scientific goods and material cultures were central to the making of early modern empires. Because such exchanges relied upon the agencies of Indigenous intellectuals and local actors, object-centered analysis has the potential to complicate traditional understandings of imperial power relations and reveal more nuanced histories of scientific knowledge production. Cagle's article concludes by suggesting new possibilities for research on objects, expertise, and circulation in colonial Latin American science studies and the diverse, interconnected worlds of the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans.

### **Ethnic Studies and Latin American Studies**

The second essay in the dossier brings together critical perspectives and archival research agendas in Asian/Pacific studies and Latin American studies. Jason Oliver Chang's essay, "Comparative Orientalism in Latin American Revolutions: Antichinismo of Mexico and El Salvador," combines a Latin American studies approach that focuses on nationalism, state formation, and popular politics with an ethnic studies/Asian American studies approach that attends to ethnonationalism, citizenship, and racial exclusion. Chang's article builds on a growing literature produced by scholars in Asian American, American, and ethnic studies, as well as traditional disciplines like history and anthropology, who analyze Asian migration to the America both comparatively and transnationally (Hu-Dehart 2012, 2009, 1989; López 2013; Siu 2005; Tinsman 2018; Young 2014; Ngai 2004). His comparative methodologies and archival research allow him to address a central theme in Latin American studies: the legacies of cultural, linguistic, and racial mixing that are classified as artistic, social, and communal forms of hybridity, syncretism, or *mestizaje*.

The many meanings of hybrid or mixed cultural productions have been taken up by anthropologists, art historians, historians, literary scholars, and religious studies scholars, among others, working in the colonial

era to the present day. Writing some fifteen years ago, art historians Carolyn Dean and Dana Leibsohn (2003) argued for a critical understanding of hybridity in colonial Latin America as a set of conditions in which ideas and practices collide to produce something new—something that challenges the norms of the dominant culture. Recent work underscores the role of colonial violence, and its iterations by modern nation-states, in creating the necessary conditions for hybridity and mestizaje to unfold across social spaces. As art historian Ananda Cohen Aponte (2017, 73) argues, we cannot fully understand the nature of hybridity or mestizaje without first accounting for their "grounding in epistemic violence." Historian Ben Vinson III's new work, *Before Mestizaje*, likewise shows the ideological underpinnings of modern-day mestizaje as it emerged, slowly and unevenly, from the colonial *sistema de castas* (caste system). As Vinson (2017, 17) suggests, the methods used to write a social history of *castas* and mestizaje in colonial Mexico can be productively applied to other fields, "leading to similar conclusions or altogether different answers."

Building from his recent book *Chino: Anti-Chinese Racism in Mexico, 1880–1940* (2017), Chang's essay takes a critical comparative turn and juxtaposes the political and social deployments of anti-Chinese racism in postrevolutionary Mexico and El Salvador. By comparing the role of mestizo mythology after acts of state violence against Yaquis and Mayas in Mexico and Mayas and Pipiles in El Salvador, Chang provides new insight into the imaginative functions of mestizo identities and their consequences on the ground in these different geopolitical contexts, both for party leaders and grassroots activists. This framework of similarity and difference is made possible by Chang's methodological approach to diverse forms of Latin American Orientalisms that are documented in twentieth-century archives, periodicals, and revolutionary writings. As he argues, anti-Chinese racism functioned as a discourse that circulated independently of the presence or absence of Chinese communities. In this way, Chang shows how officials in Mexico and El Salvador deployed a shared rhetoric of Sinophobia to shape different ideas about mestizo nation-statehood.

Within this hemispheric history, Chang argues that we must examine the ways in which individual realities of state formation and popular politics in different countries across the Americas have shaped anti-Asian politics and policies. For example, he shows that in Mexico *antichinismo* was a crucial force shaping the incorporation of the indigenous peasantry into the revolutionary state-building project, while in El Salvador, antichinismo served as a tool of oligarchic elites and drove Chinese and indigenous communities together in shared opposition to an increasingly repressive and violent state. During the 1931 peasant rebellion that would result in the infamous 1932 *matanza*, Communist militants strove to mobilize indigenous campesinos and build alliances with Asians in El Salvador and across the Pacific in Asia. In other words, in El Salvador, anti-Chinese politics accompanied efforts to build a national mestizo identity that erased the presence of indigenous communities. Unlike in Mexico, anti-Asian racism did not become a part of popular politics in the Central American nation. Chang notes that in part this was because the Salvadoran state never pretended to incorporate rural and indigenous populations into the state or national imaginary but rather ruled through violence and terror, while state builders in Mexico employed antichinismo both as a tool for incorporating popular sectors and a predicate of a mestizo national identity that drew heavily on indigenous contributions but excluded Asian immigrants.

#### **Latinx and Latin American Studies**

The third essay in this dossier, "Cien por Ciento Cubanos: Master Narratives and Silencing Moves in a Transnational Caribbean Family History," by Eileen Findlay, raises questions about the often fraught and contentious relationship between Latinx and Latin American studies. Bringing these two very different disciplines together offers one way to consider the Americas as a region. This approach enables scholars to examine Latin America and the United States relationally, enmeshed both by long histories of imperial expansion and movements of people, goods, and ideas. In this vein, for example, Eduardo Mendieta (2005, 182) argues that Latin American migrations have produced a "Latino Latinamericanism," a new disciplinary production of knowledge about Latin America that came out of the Chicano and Puerto Rican civil rights movements in the United States. Findlay's essay provides another fruitful approach to bridging the disciplinary divide that separates Latinx and Latin American studies. Specifically, Findlay examines what might be termed the "microhistory" of one extended Caribbean family, tracing its routes of migration from Spain to Cuba, back and forth between Cuba and the United States and between Puerto Rico and the United States. She builds on a strong feminist oral history tradition in Latin American studies that includes scholars like Daniel James (2001) and Florencia Mallon (Reuque Paillalef 2002) to construct what Carmen Lamas (2016) terms a "Latin American archive" on the "Latina/o continuum."

In this rich history of a family whose youngest generation now identifies as Latinx and whose older generations migrated to the United States at different moments during the course of the twentieth century,

Findlay expands the boundaries of both Latinx and Latin American studies, producing a truly transnational history of migration. In so doing, she makes a number of contributions that might provide a map for future efforts to bring area and ethnic studies disciplines into conversation. For example, she demonstrates how important national identity remained to immigrant Cuban families even as they settled and laid down roots in the United States. Findlay's is a history not of assimilation or even multicultural belonging but of a Latinx identity rooted in national imaginaries and transnational nationalist politics in which Cuba remains as important to these Latinx immigrant lives as the United States. To understand these lives and the global structures that shape migration flows and experiences requires that we locate our scholarship in both the United States and Cuba, not to mention Spain and Puerto Rico, as Findlay does, to produce multisited transnational research.

This Latin American migration, like many contemporary Latin American migrations, was not unidirectional. Defying common wisdom about both Cuban and Latin American immigration, more generally, to the United States, Findlay narrates how the family returned to Cuba and rebuilt lives there following the 1959 revolution. Her family's history shifts from a migration narrative of a Cuban family in the Bronx to a history built in Cuba during following the revolution until 1990 and "the special period." Findlay shows that this transnational history is shaped by empire and imperialism. The strong Cuban identity nurtured by the family is rooted in opposition first to Spanish colonial rule and then to United States intervention. The family defines its *cubanidad* or *cubanía* in explicit opposition to feminized and colonized Puerto Rico, even when absorbing Puerto Rican members through marriage and remaking them as Cuban. Such a process involves nurturing their Cuban nationalism, even in the Bronx, in contradistinction to their solidarity with Puerto Rico and Puerto Rican immigrants. In this way, Findlay brings the interdisciplinary approach and critical tools of feminist studies to analyze her story of migration, first by uncovering the highly masculinized nature of the family's identification with Cuba, and then by revealing the gendered organization of social roles, founded on a male artisan identity rooted in work and a female identity rooted in domesticity and reproductive labor, which shaped the family's history, whether in Cuba or the United States.

Findlay's family history of migration indicates one approach to breaking down barriers between Latinx and Latin American studies, while complicating histories of both Cuban and Puerto Rican national identities both at home and in the diaspora. In other words, her essay employs a feminist critical perspective to compare and contrast ideologies of national belonging and nationalism within Puerto Rican and Cuban immigrant communities, much as Chang uses approaches from ethnic studies to complicate histories of mestizo national belonging and nationalism in El Salvador and Mexico and Cagle develops an oceanic framework to study new questions of scientific transmissions and material exchanges in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean worlds. Taken together, and especially when read alongside the essays in our first dossier, these three different historical approaches to Latin American studies suggest exciting possibilities for further humanistic research. We look forward to seeing essays that adopt these approaches and apply them to different media ecologies, historical contexts, and aesthetic domains, in future issues of *LARR*.

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