

## Rethinking Intellectuals in Latin America

Mabel Moraña and Bret Gustafson (eds.)

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## Introduction

## RETHINKING INTELLECTUALS IN LATIN AMERICA: QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

Mabel Moraña

The first *South by Midwest* International Conference on Latin America, which took place in St. Louis in November 2006, was planned as an introduction to the study of Latin American societies as they appear at the beginning of the 21st-century: as a complex and heterogeneous arrangement of social actors and political projects severely impacted by the effects of neoliberalism and globalization. By the turn of the 20th century, the emergence of the so-called “Latin American pink tide,” the conflictive encounter of social movements and traditional politics, the increase of urban and border violence and the surfacing of new forms of hegemony and marginalization became some of the most notorious phenomena in the rapidly changing Latin American scenery. For many, this panorama triggered a wave of uncertainty and cynicism about the region while it inspired in others a theoretical and epistemological search for new models of social and political analysis. During the discussions that took place in 2006, now compiled in the book *Cultura y cambio social en América Latina* (Iberoamericana/Vervuert, 2008), it soon became apparent that while current realities surpass the parameters of “modern” concepts such as nation, identity, citizenship, governability, consensus, and the like, it is part of the paradoxical nature of our time that “old categories do not die; instead they stick around, generating influence anxiety” (Moulthrop 269).

It is perhaps emerging from these feelings of concern and uneasiness regarding the real nature and challenges of our work that the theme selected for the second *South by Midwest* international conference in November 2008 focused on a topic that complements the first (*culture and social change*) and is crucial to the social sciences and, in a more general sense, to the configuration of social consciousness and the interdisciplinary analysis of collective imaginaries: the *role of intellectuals* and the definition of *intellectual practices* in peripheral societies.

Both the conference and the resulting book which is now offered to the reader constitute an attempt to reflect on a variety of intertwined notions and practices relating to the processes of production and dissemination of knowledge in the Latin American region. One of the premises of this reflection is the need to define the *locus of enunciation* of intellectual discourses as a primarily *ideological* – and not only *geocultural* – location, but also as a strategic position for the elaboration of cultural policies and political projects. It also entails a reflection on the significance and transformation of cultural and political institutions as well as on the increasing role that the media and virtual technologies play in our contemporary world.

Without a doubt, the first challenge in approaching these issues is the demarcation and definition of the elusive and ambivalent *intellectual* function, which assumes distinct and specific modalities in Latin American society since the emergence of the Creole *letrado* until today.<sup>1</sup> The relationship between power / knowledge and in particular the degree of autonomy or *organic* association between intellectual

1. For different attempts to define intellectual practices see, in addition to the classical studies by Weber, Gramsci, and Said, Buci-Glucksmann, Fischer, and Maldonado. For illuminating studies on the history and role of intellectuals in Latin American history see, among many others, Rama, Ramos, Miller and Altamirano. About intellectual work in present (Latin American) scenarios, see Ardití, García Canclini, Lechner, Brunner, and Mansilla. Miller recalls Bauman's useful distinction between intellectuals as "legislators" of opinion (a term used by Rousseau and mainly applicable to European civil societies) and intellectuals as "interpreters." As Miller explains, "the interpreter role is dependent on the recognition of equality between different traditions [...] it is an active intervention in the sense of an act of constructing meaning." For Miller, in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish America intellectuals have rather adopted a "strategy of mediation": "They tried to act as 'go-betweens' in multiple ways, mediating between elites and masses, nations and peoples, and Latin America and the developed world" (133). Miller elaborates on these functions and

work and State institutions has always constituted a key element in the development of critical thought from colonial times to the present. Nowadays, the articulation of intellectual work to the cultural market and to academia, as well as the connections between "high" culture, mass media and popular culture, adds new facets to the development of critical thinking and to the production and dissemination of knowledge, particularly in peripheral societies.

How do we define, then, within the current conditions of cultural production, "intellectual work"? How does this category adapt to the accelerated process of transformation of our world, deeply impacted not only by the influence of technology but also by the emergence of new sensibilities and new forms of social and political agency? What are the elements that the notion of "intellectual work" still mobilizes in cultural and political debates, and which are the connotations that can be considered obsolete under current circumstances? Even more importantly, what role do intellectual practices play in the social transformations of postcolonial societies, where vast sectors of the population still suffer social marginalization, racial discrimination and political exclusion? Let's examine some of the basic issues related to this topic.

Traditionally, the work of scholars, pedagogues, political activists, community leaders, cultural advisors, artists, writers, filmmakers and even scientists and religious leaders has been identified as *intellectual labor*. In spite of their different approaches to society and culture these activities have in common the predominant exercise of critical analysis, educational attitudes, creativity, philosophical speculation and ideological inquiry.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, it is commonly assumed that

on the particular role intellectuals have been able to adopt in Latin America, given the specific form that modernity has assumed in the region.

2. There is an extensive bibliography on the definition of intellectuals and the historical transformation of intellectual functions. One of the most influential works published on this topic in the last 15 years is Edward Said's *Representation of the Intellectual*, in which the author discusses many classical approaches to this topic (Benda, Shils, Gellner, et al.). In Latin America, Ángel Rama's elaboration on transculturation, and his book *The Lettered City*, have been highly influential in the field and have triggered multiple debates on the role of Latin American intelligentsia in relation to modernization processes, to what Rama defines as the "real city," to the place of writing in contemporary culture, and to the connections between high and popular culture in peripheral societies.

diverse forms and degrees of *intellectuality* are present in every manifestation of human / rational behavior.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, it is obvious that the intellectual function is not only the privilege of a selected elite but it is disseminated at all levels in contemporary society. Our topic covers, then, an ample spectrum, from the general human faculty to analyze, interpret, and critique the world, to the specialized and often professionalized forms of social, cultural and political *intervention*.

I believe it is particularly this idea of *intervention* (of *involvement*, *interference* and *disruption*, and also the notion of intellectual work as a *critical interruption of dominant discourses*) that we would like to emphasize and explore in this book. In other words, the ways in which intellectual practices register, organize and challenge knowledge and experience, as well as the manner in which intellectual work produces an effect of ideological (conceptual, ethical, philosophical) *interpellation*. Intellectual work, then, is here understood as a practice that has as much to do with reflection and analysis as with mobilization, activism, and the articulation of political actors and public resources. At the same time, it must be recognized that if the work of intellectuals is often identified as being tightly connected to the interpretation of traditions and the exploration of *the real* (historical circumstances, concepts, and events), it is also undoubtedly related to the exercise of imagination and the production of innovative thought. The role of myth, the invention of ideological (philosophical and political) systems, and the elaboration of utopia all result from the direct application of intellectual energy to our understanding of the world.

#### INTELLECTUAL AFFAIRES

In order to initiate our reflection about modern and postmodern intellectuals, we could start by suggesting that the history of intellectual work could be traced as the route that connects two or three significant cultural *affaires* that took place, in turn, in France, the United

3. Gramsci is just one of the many authors that recognize that while all human beings are intellectuals, not all of them have the function of intellectuals in society. So, while it is possible to speak of "intellectuals" it would be a mistake to speak of "non-intellectuals" since this kind of individual does not exist.

States, and Latin America. Although these affairs emerge from very different cultural and political circumstances, they connect, in different but representative manners, political, ethical and social issues that are crucial for the understanding of intellectual practices.

The first event would be the well-known *Dreyfus Affair*, initiated with the letter that Emile Zola wrote to the president of France in 1898 denouncing the anti-Semitic persecution of Captain Alfred Dreyfus. This letter triggered a chain of public reactions and declarations, in which the word "intellectual" became popularized as the term that served to identify a distinctly critical and belligerent group that came together to confront official policies in which culture, ethics, and ideology clearly intertwined.

This *affaire*, which exemplifies the involvement of intellectuals in political matters, initiates "*la trahison des clercs*" analyzed by Julien Benda in his classic and controversial book of the same title which, published in 1928, included a visionary study of the values and behavior of French and German *intelligentsia* during World War II.<sup>4</sup> From its opening lines, this book, considered to this day as a pivotal work for the study of the relations between power, culture, race, and nationalism, sets the tone for the long and convoluted debate that has been taking place around the role of intellectuals in modern times:

We are to consider those passions termed political, owing to which men rise up against other men, the chief of which are racial passions, class passions and national passions (Benda 3).

4. As it is well known, the Dreyfus Affair was initiated with Emile Zola's letter addressed to Félix Faure, President of France, and published in *L'Aurore littéraire* on January 13, 1898. The letter was given the title "J'accuse" by George Clemenceau, director of the newspaper. It constituted a protest against the violation of legal procedures against Dreyfus, a French Jewish military officer, and was followed by a declaration signed by a number of writers, scholars, and scientists. Some of these figures were the writers Anatole France and Marcel Proust, historians like Lanson and Seignobos, classicists such as Victor Bérard, etc. This declaration, titled "Un protestation," is referred to by Clemenceau as the expression of a group of "intellectuals," thus giving the term a specific and at the same time very comprehensive meaning. However, critics agree that the word "intellectual" had been already in use as a noun in the English language since the XVIth century. According to Maldonado, in Spanish, A. Ayala seems to be considered the first in using this term in 1848 (Maldonado 13). For more information about the Dreyfus Affair, see Reinach. On intellectual history and its connections with Latin American culture see, among others, Gutiérrez Girardot.

At the end of the 20th-century although in a very different cultural and ideological environment, during the *Sokal Affair*, the concept of intellectuality touched one of its possible limits: one that has to do with the processes of professionalization and the compartmentalization of knowledge at the centers of intellectual and academic production in Western societies.<sup>5</sup> Alan Sokal, professor of Physics at New York University, submitted in 1996 an article titled "Transgressing the Boundaries: Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity" to *Social Text*, a specialized journal published by Duke UP, which did not have at the time a peer review process in place. The article, purposely plagued with false data and superficial ideological concepts, was published in May of 1996 in a special issue of the journal titled "Science Wars." The article, defined as "a hodgepodge of unsupported arguments, outright mistakes and impenetrable jargon, designed to 'test' its host journal's intellectual integrity" (Sokal, *The Sokal Hoax* 1) exposed the weakness of the academic establishment at least in some of its most reputed mechanisms: the production and reproduction of intellectual knowledge.

If in the *Dreyfus Affair* what we see at play is the Enlightened tradition in which Reason functions as the honorable tribune from which social justice and critical judgment should be exercised, the *Sokal Affair* exemplifies the misleading seductions of "arrogant reason" which is often considered a characteristic feature of postmodern times. Within this context, the boundaries between fiction and scholarship have been blurred: the coherence of discourse distracts from its connectedness with truth and reality, and intellectual production escapes every possible system of quality control, as if scholarship constituted a self-preserved and self-legitimized commodity that circulates freely within the limits of the cultural and intellectual markets.

In the space / time of our own field of study, no reflection on intellectual practices could leave aside the *Padilla Affair*, one of the thorns in the side of leftist ethics in Latin America. This affair, in which ideological issues and intellectual freedom collided with particular vigor in

5. At the time of the publication, Professor Sokal announced in *Lingua Franca* the nature of this paper, which was intended as a way of testing the academic standards of scholarly publications. On the impressive amount of articles and debates generated by the Sokal Affair see: <http://www.physics.nyu.edu/faculty/sokal/>.

post-revolutionary Cuba, confronted intellectuals around the world with a moral dilemma that polarized the effervescent cultural and political scene of the '70s – the conflict between power and intellectual production – and, for that reason, it has remained as an iconic moment of Latin America's contemporary history.<sup>6</sup>

In reference to the influence of State politics on cultural institutions, twenty years after the circumstances that surrounded the *Caso Padilla*, the American sociologist James Petras offered in 1990 a strong criticism of the work and orientation of Latin American intellectuals. According to Petras, both the dictatorships that devastated Latin America in the '70s and part of the 80s and U.S.-based cultural and political agencies had managed to inhibit and domesticate Latin American intellectuals, who had succumbed, since the 1980s, to the defeat of leftist movements in the region and the effects of neoliberalism.<sup>7</sup> Petras' position, which reopened the topic of the intellectual's political engagement and the conflict between national politics and freedom of expression, also gave evidence of the transformation of Latin America's cultural and ideological scene toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and of the advent of a new era in which most of the philosophical and professional configurations of the Latin American intellectual field were rapidly acquiring a new face.

#### NEW SCENARIOS / NEW PROBLEMS

Although the above-mentioned intellectual *affaires* are, in many ways, paradigmatic moments in the cultural history of Western intellectuals and expose most of the ethical and ideological tensions that traverse this field, they are obviously representative of the privileged and protected space of the *lettered city*. They leave aside other manifestations of intellectual work, particularly those that challenge the

6. Heberto Padilla (1932-2000) was a Cuban poet and writer. Though an early supporter of the Cuban revolution, he was imprisoned by the Castro regime in 1971 – an event which sparked international outrage – and later emigrated to the U.S. after his release in 1980.

7. James Petras' opinions were answered by Carlos Vilas, Benjamin Arditti, F. J. Hinkelammert, among others. In this respect see also Mansilla.

values, traditions and forms of intervention that are characteristic of modernity and were institutionalized during that time.

In addition to the well-known power struggles that are inherent to the *lettered* intellectual field, we must recognize that today, both in academia and in more informal cultural environments, we face unseen cultural challenges and social transformations which are closely connected to the pluralization of cultural markets, the impact of globalization on regional cultures, and the advancement of communications since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. These challenges derive, to a great extent, from the activation of social sectors whose cultures were suppressed or marginalized for centuries as a result of external or internal colonialism and have now acquired political cohesiveness and worldwide visibility.

For this reason, more than a historiographical purpose, what guides our reflections in this book is the attempt to focus on the transformations that impact both the production of knowledge and the exercise of critical thought in peripheral societies at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are particularly concerned with the processes of recognition, development, and dissemination of alternative models of knowledge in Latin America, where vast sectors of the population still exist at the margins of dominant cultures and occupy a disadvantaged position with respect to hegemonic epistemologies and the corresponding institutional establishment. Our purpose is to explore how social change translates into cultural, intellectual, and educational languages, and how the desires, needs and expectations of heterogeneous constituencies find representation in intellectual practices.

A number of factors have impacted Latin American societies since the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and have considerably modified the relations between intellectuals and political power and the production of critical thought in the region.

One of these factors is the activation of the *public sphere*, both in connection to the re-emergence of populist movements and as a consequence of the action developed in the region by social movements, NGOs, etc. At this level, one of the most conspicuous facts is the utilization of non-traditional channels of organization and communication by communities and political groups whose actions have been taking place outside of the parameters of modern institutions and political parties. In many cases, even the language used by these new

subjects has also been substantially modified. Their discursive strategies have ceased to reproduce in a mechanical and predictable way the concepts that characterized the political language of modernity (*nation, identity, citizenship, progress, consensus*) and have instead started to mobilize new values, goals and epistemic categories that were displaced for centuries from the public arena.

Another important element in current scenarios is the modification of the political and ideological composition of national governments, particularly in the countries in which new leftist movements have gained access to power. I am referring for instance to the leadership of women and ethnic minorities in central government, and the presence of militants of leftist movements that were declared illegal by repressive regimes a few decades ago and who now hold official political and diplomatic positions. These changes give evidence of the exhaustion of traditional politics and at the same time, of an obvious degree of domestication of the left, that has unwound its political *ethos* within the limits of electoral democracy. This situation has also modified public expectations, methods of communication and political interactions, all of which have a notorious impact on the work and positioning of public intellectuals, scholars, educators, journalists, and the like.

A third point involves the emergence of what we could call post-national scenarios, such as those created by the flux of migration, the importance of ecological issues, the application of flexible regimes of labor, the transnationalization of markets, the accelerated relocation of material and symbolic commodities, and the proliferation of virtual and provisional forms of social *affiliation*, that defy the *modern* conceptual and ideological parameters of representation and interpretation of social processes particularly in peripheral societies, and call for the elaboration of new approaches to these changing realities.

Fourth, as a result of the dynamics that have been outlined thus far, it is obvious that intellectual work functions at the intersection of a series of ideological positions, cultural backgrounds and transdisciplinary orientations that often translate into oppositional categories: humanism vs. technocracy, academicism vs. deformatization of knowledge, preeminence of the *lettered city* vs. audio-visual communication, etc. As diverse and conflictive as these alternatives are, they combine in hybrid intellectual practices which are defined across cultural and disciplinary boundaries.

Finally, with the substantial modification of national cultures, the work of intellectuals has also diversified. While some of them still hold an organic role as members of the *lettered city*, others function in the public arena with a higher degree of autonomy from State institutions. The definition of local or regional agendas as well as the awareness about issues such as global integration, cultural homogenization, etc., often counterbalances the unified and centralized notion of national culture and allows for the elaboration of specific agendas that represent a variety of interest groups that otherwise would not have been sufficiently visible at a national level. More often than not, new forms of intellectual work coexist with traditional roles due to the impact of the market in the production and dissemination of cultural production, the competitive nature of higher education increasingly configured as an entrepreneurial enterprise, and also as a result of globalization and the transnationalization of symbolic commodities. In many cases, the State continues to exist as an “empty signifier” whose former power and prestige has been transferred to the realm of non-official institutions. However, the State often retains control over education and communications as well as over the configuration and implementation of cultural politics.

Under these circumstances, and within the framework of neoliberal politics, it would be naïve to assume that the State can still function according to the paternalist and protectionist model it held during modernity, when, among its many functions, it constituted the nucleus for the production and administration of *national identity* and the warranty of social welfare. But it would be equally wrong to disregard the variable degrees in which those functions, although undoubtedly diminished, still influence the daily life of Latin American societies and their collective imaginaries. Although intellectual practices exist today more than ever, disseminated in civil society, and the intellectual, as an enlightened elite defined by humanistic and universal values is a species that faces the risk of a rapid extinction, it would be excessive to consider that intellectual work is now a direct emanation of society. In some domains more than others, intellectual mediation is still the instance in which the formalization and distribution of knowledge is implemented, although this process is often subsumed in the vast domain of market relations, thus giving the illusion of a wide cultural democratization and total and “naturalized” access to cultural commodities.

## ISSUES AT PLAY

Taking into consideration this complex scenario in which the continuity of modern categories and models of intellectual intervention combine with the new factors at play in Latin American societies, we identified a series of issues that deserve particular attention and could be instrumental in the reinterpretation of the role intellectual practices can play in the following decades. These problems were elaborated, in part, both at the *South by Midwest* international symposium that took place in St. Louis in 2008 and at the sessions organized under the title “*Intelectuales latinoamericanos y la aldea global [I and II]*” held in Rio de Janeiro at the LASA conference in June 2009. Other aspects have been addressed in articles requested from scholars for inclusion in this book. Some of these issues are:

- The definition of intellectual practices in connection with academia (research and pedagogical activities), with political action within or outside of State institutions and also in connection to the creation of specific spaces of community mobilization. In this sense, and in addition to the configuration of intellectual fields *à la Bourdieu*, we would like to understand the common *processes of popular intellectualization* in society. In other words, we are particularly concerned with the discursive and rhetorical strategies that contribute to the construction of meaning and connect, at this level, with discourses of power and resistance. This includes the linguistic machinery that propels populism and feeds democracy, and the textuality that supports demagoguery and “legitimizes” authoritarianism. How do these processes contribute to the construction of leadership and general constituencies, to the legitimization of State policies, and to the elaboration of national- popular subjectivities?
- What is the articulation between national cultures and intellectual practices?<sup>8</sup> How can the action of intellectuals contribute

8. Regarding the ties of intellectuals with national institutions, Said considers that intellectuals’ position has shifted all over the world, from an attitude of loyalty and patriotic consensus to a more skeptical and even belligerent posture. Also in

to the understanding of the debated relation between *globality* and *locality*, and to the design of regional, local and sectorial agendas that could complement or counterbalance transnational fluxes of economic, financial, political, and cultural power?

- In this direction, what are the tensions between *immanence* and *transcendence* in the configuration of *the political*, between universalism and particularism, between contingency and totalization, and how do these polarizations affect intellectual production?

It is obvious that any evaluation of intellectual practices today entails a critique of the universalist and at the same time exclusionary premises that provided a basis for both the project of modernization and the implementation of (neo)liberalism in peripheral societies. Only through this critique would it be possible to recognize the place that alternative models of knowledge and intellectual practices could have within new social and political scenarios. And it is obvious that this recognition should emerge not from multiculturalist claims related to fashionable – politically correct or populist – ideological perspectives that leave intact the Occidental basis of society, but from the understanding that the political should not get diluted in the diversified offering of postmodern cultural marketing and that, as Žižek has warned, the urgency of the economic is replaced by the seduction of the symbolic. In other words, intellectual work should refine its ideological and theoretical approaches in order to assure that a focus on *inequality* does not disappear in the vain and superficial celebration of *difference*. But these problems also imply a reflection on *postmodern* conditions of intellectual production. In this sense,

connection to the national question, in an interview conducted by Silvia Sigal, Alain Touraine indicates that one of the main roles of both Latin American and European intellectuals has been the creation of a myth of integration of three themes that are key in contemporary societies: modernization, nationalism, and class. His opinion that most themes and approaches in the Latin American intellectual field remain almost invariable between the 50s and the 80s should be qualified, I believe, in current scenarios. However, he recognizes that the myths of unification and the references to totalizing categories have disappeared from intellectual debates in the region.

- Is Latin America's subordinate position altered in any way in the "wired" world? Does virtual integration as well as spatial and temporal simultaneity necessarily imply communicative democratization, universal access to information and knowledge, equal resources and equal opportunities, or do these conditions just instate new forms of hegemony and marginalization across the world and with them, new modalities of expertise, exclusion and illiteracy?<sup>9</sup>
- How do these new forms of technological prevalence connect to the realms of passion, affect and desire, so often invoked in relation to the configuration of the market, the increase of violence and the emergence of new (postmodern) subjectivities, which are not necessarily determined by rigid categories of nationhood, religion, ethnic, class, or gender identity?
- How does intellectual work illuminate the processes of social and self-recognition in relation to the dynamics of migration, exile, economic diaspora and other forms of nomadic existence and reterritorialization that characterize contemporary societies?
- What are the connections between aesthetic / symbolic *representation* and political / ideological *representativity*? This problem, extensively discussed in the 80s and 90s as a result of the preeminence of testimonial discourse, is still current during the decline of this genre. Whose voice speaks for the dispossessed, the victims, the marginalized, the subaltern? How is this ventriloquism legitimized? Is it part of the intellectuals' mission to constitute a public voice, to administer the community's collective memory, to decode societies' political unconscious? Does political *representativity* strengthen, limit or condition in any way the autonomy and vigor of intellectuals' critical judgment?<sup>10</sup>

9. On the connections between technocracy and intellectual work see Fischer.

10. Regarding the interconnections of politics and intellectual work in Latin America see Hofmeister and Mansilla.

- Is it possible to generate emancipated knowledge in spite of the existence of hegemonic models of thought and social action that have systematically excluded dominated cultures? How can subaltern epistemological and political paradigms surpass their passive role of primarily constituting repositories of archaic memories and cultural archives? Is it possible to produce decolonized knowledge within Western societies where most intellectuals have an organic mission or have been, in variable degrees, co-opted by the ideological apparatus of the State?<sup>11</sup> And, in this process, how can “new” and “old,” central and peripheral, hegemonic and subaltern forms of knowledge be productively articulated? Or is a universal, relativistic and all-encompassing conception of knowledge in order here, in which all categories could be absorbed and all positions negotiated?
- How can the crisis and decentering of writing (a crisis that is well-known in the field of Anthropology) be incorporated in this panorama? How does the predominance of audio-visual cultures, the eloquence of oral histories, and the ephemeral forms of virtual representation destabilize the predominance of the *lettered city*?<sup>12</sup>
- What space is occupied nowadays by non-traditional intellectuals whose epistemological paradigms collide with dominant models of knowledge and representation (indigenous or Afro-Hispanic intellectuals, for instance, who question the dominant “Latino” component in “*Latinoamérica*,” as suggested by Walter Mignolo in *The Idea of Latin America*, for instance)? Today, what is the place and function of *Creole intellectuals* who have incorporated and disseminated European and Anglo-Saxon cultures within and about Latin American societies since the “discovery”? From new perspectives, how can we elaborate the legacy and “the burdens of modernity”? How do we articulate global and local knowledge? How can local and regional wis-

11. See, for instance, Vilas, Ardití, and Hinkelammert.

12. On the significance of oral history in Latin America see Mignolo, “El potencial epistemológico.”

dom be secured and defended without falling into the traps of fundamentalism, thus replicating the same excesses and exclusionary strategies we are trying to combat?

In addition to these problems and questions, many of the articles included in this book also focus on the key role racial factors play in the construction and dissemination of knowledge, and on the importance of ethnicity in the construction of modern and postmodern concepts of citizenship and in the definition of political agency. All forms of discrimination as well as all modalities of ethnic and cultural miscegenation undoubtedly connect with colonialism, and with the perpetuation of *coloniality* in modern times, so this continues to be a crucial problem that still needs historical and philosophical elaboration.<sup>13</sup>

The issues mentioned above are also connected to one of the most persistent concerns of Latin American intellectuals: the need to understand the politics of culture – the politics *in* culture – and the urgency to produce emancipated knowledge in peripheral, neocolonial societies. These issues are present in the uses of language and discourse, in the universalist ethics of Human Rights, in the intricacies of power and resistance, in the voices of organic, public and “informal” intellectuals, in populism, community organizations and social movements. The studies included in this book elaborate on these topics across the boundaries of disciplinary fields to interrogate social and political scenarios where traditions remain deeply rooted in collective imaginaries, while new social behaviors work toward the transformation of political and economic structures. Without a doubt, due to the changing nature of our cultures and the deep changes we are witnessing both at social and political levels in Latin America, all the answers that we seem to find to our questions today are necessarily provisional and subject to reconsideration. This book is intended as a modest but passionate contribution to this process of recognition and understanding.

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13. A contribution to the elaboration of (post)colonial issues in Latin America is the collection of essays included in *Coloniality at Large: Latin America and the Postcolonial Debate*, Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel and Carlos A. Jáuregui, eds.

2008), for the organization of the LASA sessions (Rio de Janeiro, June 2009) and for the publication of this book: The Dean of Humanities, the International and Area Studies Program, the Center for the Humanities, the Department of Anthropology and the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at Washington University, St. Louis. We thank them all for their generous contributions to this project. We are very grateful to the scholars who participated in this book for their generous intellectual contributions and for their patient cooperation with all aspects related to the preparation of this work. Finally, we would like to express our gratitude to the translators of the articles, Barbara Corbett, Rosalía Bermúdez, and Gonzalo Aguiar, and to those who contributed to the preparation of the manuscript, particularly Gonzalo Aguiar and Alejandra Aguilar.

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## I. Intellectual Roots in Latin America