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LATIN AMERICAN STUDIES AT WASH. U

Mabel Moraña, William H. Gass Professor in Arts and Sciences.
Director of the Latin American Studies Program.

Since the publication of our first Latin American Newsletter in the Spring 2006, a number of academic and cultural activities have taken place at Washington University, St. Louis, within the framework of the Latin American Studies Program. The most noteworthy one has been the International Conference titled "Latin America: Local / Global Agendas for the XXIst-century," which was held on November 28-30, 2006 and inaugurated the South by Midwest series at this university. The event included the participation of well-recognized scholars which covered an ample scope of problems related to the current political situation in Latin America as well as to its colonial and postcolonial history. Scholars working at American, Latin American and European universities discussed, among other things, issues such as the transformation of national cultures and the preeminence of transnational connections, the effects of neoliberalism and globalization in the region, the impact of violence in contemporary societies and its symbolic representation in literature and film, the emergence of a "new left" in several countries during the last decade, the consolidation and influence of social movements in different areas and the importance of some literary genres such as autobiography in the exploration of postmodern subjectivities. The combination of comparative and transdisciplinary approaches utilized in these presentations, as well as the use of visual materials in the illustration of a variety of topics made discussions attractive and accessible to graduate and undergraduate students, and allowed for a very productive exchange of ideas. More importantly, the event provided an excellent opportunity to strengthen institutional links and to coordinate collective work. In addition to this conference, whose proceedings will be published soon, the Latin American Film Series and the Latin American Colloquium also provided opportunities in which students and faculty came together to enjoy some movies which are representative of "The Other Latin American Film", and to become more familiar with faculty and graduate students' research projects. Last but not least, two distinguished visitors lectured at WashU on Latin American topics: Argentine critic and writer Sylvia Molloy, and Uruguayan poet and novelist Rafael Courtoisie. As the Latin American Studies Program continues to grow and consolidate both at the graduate and at the undergraduate level, our connections with Latin America also become stronger and more diversified. In addition to our Summer Programs in Quito and in Puebla, and our semester study program in Chile, we are currently working on a pilot Summer Program in Brazil, which we hope to initiate in the Summer of 2008. We anticipate that a good number of graduate students and hopefully some new faculty members will join us next Fall, and in the meantime, continue planning for our second international conference in 2008 and for the continuation of our current cultural activities. Washington University, St. Louis is firm in its commitment to increase and enhance international connections and to consolidate its position as one of the most exciting and challenging centers for the study of Latin American cultures and societies ■

South by Midwest: After the Storm by Tabea Alexa Linhard

This past November the first of an International Conference Series on Latin America was held at Washington University. During the conference, we discussed and re-thought the new meanings attached to the nation and the interstitial spaces between nations, traveling and displacement, or hospitality and its meaning, so the fact that a massive ice storm left most conference participants unexpectedly stranded in St. Louis leads me to think of a number of suggestive analogies.

The conference, of course, began long before the storm hit, and neither these analogies, nor the few paragraphs that will follow could do justice to the complexity of the debates that took place in those November days. The different presentations came from anthropology, art history, literary and cultural studies, film, philosophy and sociology; they were the work of rising young scholars and their well-established colleagues, who work in research institutions and liberal arts colleges, in Latin America, the US, and Europe.

While many of the issues at stake in the presentations and during the discussions that ensued had been debated in the foundational texts of the field of Latin American cultural studies, our exchanges during the conference revealed that discussions of hegemony and subalternity, of modernity and coloniality, of borders and borderlands, of the production of knowledge and the production of truth, of the processes of identification and the reification of identity, of culture and the state, of affects and its effects, of the margin and the periphery, of empire and its ghosts, among other crucial issues, might be more prevalent than ever. The reasons that justify the need to continue discussing these topics are plentiful and include, to only mention a few, the popular forms of resistance witnessed in Mexico City after the 2006 elections, the redefinitions of indigenous identity in Evo Morales's Bolivia, the hopes and fears that have been raised in relation to the so-called "pink tide" in Latin America, the ongoing assassinations of young women in Ciudad Juárez, or even speculations over Fidel Castro's health and its consequences for the exile community in Miami.

This list is far from exhaustive. Here, I would like to discuss the intersections among three issues that were raised during the meeting, and which will be crucial in the local/global agendas for the twenty-first century: the role of youth culture, visual culture, and the different forms of violence that have marked Latin America's present and past. While these three issues were directly addressed in those papers focusing on hip hop culture, performance art produced in the borderlands, representations of slavery in Cuba, Brazilian film, or Álvaro Uribe's presidency, those papers and panels that addressed the role of the nation state, coloniality and its ghosts, indigenous insurrections, or the nature of transatlantic studies proved their relevance.

Only an engagement with youth cultures will make it possible to understand the warranted and unwarranted consequences of the hopes and aspirations of the last decades of democratization and political turmoil in Latin America and the US borderland. In strict relation to this, a sort of "visual literacy" is an important skill in our local and global agendas in the years to come. Even though many of us have come to the field of Latin American

cultural studies through our knowledge and passion for words, images have played and will play crucial roles in authoritarian displays of power and popular forms of resistance. Finally, a brief look at current events as well as our work as scholars, as researchers, as writers, as students shows the pervasiveness of different forms of violence that have marked recent and not so recent history.

Allow me to mention three brief examples where the intersections among youth culture, visual culture, and violence should become clear. In a recent confrontation between two gangs in the city of Alcorcón, on the outskirts of Madrid, a young man was killed. Even though this may not have been the case, quickly the “Latin Kings,” a gang whose members are for the most part Ecuadorian immigrants, were blamed for the killing. Almost immediately, the specter of racial violence reared its ugly head.



In the recent elections in Nicaragua the Sandinistas, in alliance with the most conservative sectors, supported the complete illegalization of abortion, joining El Salvador in a worrisome brotherhood, ready to sacrifice women’s rights for electoral gains.

And on a lighter note, both Mexican films and Mexican directors have been nominated for Academy Awards in an era when international co-production may have erased the nation-state from the film industry.

So, after the storm, there is a young Ecuadorian immigrant, who needs to forge alliances and establish a sense of community in an environment where gang violence and violence against immigrants are a reality; there is a woman imprisoned in El Salvador, guilty of having terminated her pregnancy; and there is a young filmmaker, who with precarious means years to tell a different story than one international film producers are interested in supporting. Opening up a space for their stories will be a productive agenda for the next time South and Midwest meet ■

Young Hispanic Immigrants in St. Louis

Virginia Brax Talks About Outreach Programs

by José Galindo

Social services devoted to the needs of Hispanics in St. Louis date back to 1992. A tiny room in the basement of a Methodist Church was the first setting of the medical agency now known as La Clínica. The beginnings of La Clínica coincide with Virginia Brax's first involvement in social work. It would be no stretch to say that social action has changed her life, for it has channeled Virginia's creative energies and leadership talents.

Virginia majored in Modern Literatures at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba, Argentina. She taught for five years before coming to Washington University in 1988, where she obtained her M.A. in Spanish Literature. She decided to stay in St. Louis and eventually became a decisive force in the planning and growth of social services oriented to "latinos". In 2007 she received the Esperanza Award, a recognition granted annually by the organization called Hispanic Leaders of Greater St. Louis. The influx of patients in La Clínica has increased tremendously. In 1992 the agency opened twice a week for a few hours. Nowadays it provides medical attention to one thousand people every month. Virginia's initiatives also multiplied: in 1997 she led the creation of three after school programs (Niños, Cambios and Puertas), intended to help young Hispanic immigrants stay at school and to link Washington University students with the community.

According to the year 2000 census, there are close to 30 thousand Hispanics living in St. Louis. This number increases to 100 thousand when you include illegal immigrants living in the St. Louis metropolitan area and East St. Louis. "This figure is an estimate. There aren't official numbers, but I have seen the Hispanic population of St. Louis grow very fast in the past 10 years," says Virginia, senior lecturer at the Romance Languages and Literatures Department of Washington University and vice president of the Hispanic Arts Council.

Resources to attend to the social needs of this population are very scarce. Virginia laments that recent government cuts in education spending have caused, among other effects, the cease of English as a Second Language courses in public schools. Hispanic children and other immigrants struggle to integrate into the academic system.

"Public schools in St. Louis face a huge problem right now. There are a lot of children, not only Hispanic but from Afghanistan, Bosnia, Serbia, Kenya, some of them legal refugees, others illegal immigrants, who don't find the attention they need at school. There are classrooms in which students from seven different cultures and languages meet, and teachers don't know how to handle this", says Virginia.

"Sometimes Hispanic children vegetate during their first year at school because they speak no English at all. A lot of them fail to pass to the next grade. When they repeat in the same grade more than once, then we have pretty much lost them for the academic system—they never return to school".

Undocumented Hispanic teenagers have it pretty tough for many reasons, adds Virginia. They are developing their identities and they need a group to find a sense of belonging. Being illegal, however, they must remain as invisible as possible, which makes it harder for them to have a group of peers to identify with.

When these teens are performing poorly at school, they might attempt to join a gang (or a "ganga", as Hispanics call them). "Gangs provide them not only with identity but also with protection from other gangs", says Virginia. "The kids start drinking, carrying weapons, there's a problem of rape, and there's the risk of drug traffic—an easy way to get money and recognition". The temptations are endless for these youngsters, especially when they are not properly integrated into the school system. Gangs become a way to fight against discrimination and marginality. Only the school system, concludes Virginia, gives them a means to find a trade or a career through which they can feel part of society.

For all these reasons, when Virginia explains the purpose of the outreach programs to the new tutors, she stresses that the main goal is to encourage the children to stay at school ■

Honoring Professor John Garganigo

More than 40 years devoted to literary research and teaching are a perfect occasion to celebrate. Next September the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures will organize a Symposium in Honor of Professor John Garganigo.

Born in Italy in 1937, professor Garganigo arrived in New York when he was 11. He had already decided to pursue an academic career in Latin American Literature when he found out that part of his family had settled in Uruguay in 1903. He has visited Uruguay regularly ever since, just like he travels yearly to Nesso, the birthplace of his father.

After finishing his dissertation at the University of Illinois, Garganigo began his teaching career at Washington University in 1964. In Montevideo he published his doctoral thesis, *El perfil del gaucho en algunas novelas de Argentina y Uruguay*, in 1966. Garganigo has mentored several generations of students, published numerous scholarly articles and edited various anthologies.

In this issue of the Latin American Newsletter, as a small homage to professor Garganigo, we reproduce a text that he wrote for an exhibit in Olin Library in 1987. Plato's Republic, Montaigne's Essays, Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions were among the books chosen by distinguished members of the Washington University community, asked to pick a book that had greatly influenced their lives. Professor Garganigo chose Pedro Páramo, by Juan Rulfo. In this text he explains his choice ■

Pedro Páramo by John F. Garganigo

It is a difficult task to select a single book that has had a great influence in my life. As I pondered my choice I could have easily chosen one of the many Italian masterpieces that form an integral part of my early education. The works of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio were as much a part of my upbringing as Pascoli, Manzoni, Leopardi, and Svevo.

Establishing roots in New York City in 1948 was an opening to a new language and a new culture. I was fortunate enough to have a personal tutor who led me with care throughout those difficult first steps as I struggled with the English language. My first book was The adventures of Tom Sawyer, which I read cover to cover with the aid of an Italian-English dictionary. It did not take too long for me to become immersed in the works of Poe, Cooper and Stevenson. These were joined by the writers who expressed themselves in Spanish, a language I began studying shortly afterwards during my high school years. My interests in college and graduate school focused on Latin American Literature, a field that in the early 1960's was beginning to draw considerable attention.

The one book that continues to have a special place in my life is *Pedro Páramo*, considered the first modern Latin American novel. It is a book that I have read perhaps fifty times, and each time I am astounded by the richness of the work. It is a book that has deep philosophical implications about man's place in life. Tied to the past, this is also a forward looking book that captures, perhaps more than any other, a tragic, static, fragmented contemporary world. Rulfo's lyrical evocations and his experimental narrative techniques contribute to the work's enormous complexity. It is a book that uncovers the open wounds of Mexican society with an impact not readily forgotten. Its salient point, however, is its mistrust and denunciation of accepted traditional values which have somehow managed to lose their efficacy in a sterile environment. This is not only a book about Mexico, or the story of one man; it is a poetic vision of a living hell, experienced by mankind in general ■

Symposium in Honor of Professor John Garganigo

September 14 & 15
Women's Building
Washington University in St. Louis

PARTICIPANTS

Laura Demaria, University of Maryland
Fernando Reati, Georgia State University
Rafael Saumell, Sam Houston State University
Ben Heller, University of Notre Dame
Angel Tuninetti, Lebanon Valley College
Eduardo Espina, Texas A&M

At the Crossroad of English and Spanish, books and films

Interview with Rafael Courtoisie

by José Galindo

One of Uruguay's leading writers, Rafael Courtoisie visited Washington University in October 26 and 27, 2006. He offered a lecture and a bilingual reading of his poetry and prose. Author of narrative works like *Vida de perro* (1997) and *Tajos* (2000), and award-winning poetry books like *Estado sólido* (1995) and *Umbría* (1999), Courtoisie teaches screenwriting at the Escuela de Cine de Uruguay. His latest novel, *Santo remedio* (2006), has been short-listed as best novel of the year by the Fundación José Manuel Lara in Spain.



Fernando Pessoa and Rafael Courtoisie

Q. Last fall you were part of the Iowa Writers Program, along with 29 writers from 22 countries. What is the result of your stay in the US? What project were you working on during that time?

A. It was a very fruitful period. I gathered abundant material for a project about the “nueva narrativa latinoamericana”. I worked on a very challenging experiment: I wrote a poetry book in English, which from the point of view of the phenomenology of creation is a fantastic experience. I wrote the first draft of a new novel, and I exchanged opinions and experiences with writers from all over the world. It was such an intense work rhythm, unthinkable in the good old “cruel provinces” of the South were we wish each day could have one thousand and one hours.

Q. The most authentic act of poetic creation is writing in a language that is not your own, according to Vicente Huidobro. How would you describe your experience writing poetry in English?

A. A different language is a different system of thought. Facing that system, taking over certain inflections of discourse in that system—it was both a deep poetic experience and a practice that made me reflect upon “conquerors and subjects of conquest”, that is, upon the implicit power of discourse. Luckily it wasn't a “lab” experiment because I was able to read many poems to a public of very smart native speakers; it was a sort of rigorous exchange that even led me to rethink ways of writing in my own language. Poets in general are always in a situation of foreignness, even within their native language. This foreignness became very clear to me: it is a distance from the collective language phenomenon, a distance that turns into a creative occasion. I felt in my own flesh the authenticity Huidobro was talking about, in the flesh of verbal production: a muteness striving for signifying power, an impossibility that you try to overcome, a defeat that you attempt to turn into an ethical and aesthetical victory.

Q. In your novel *Tajos* (*Slashes*) cadence is an essential part of your storytelling, perhaps even more instrumental than the storyline itself. Short, slashing sentences. Would you comment on two key elements in your narrative: formally, cadence; thematically, violence?

A. Particularly in *Tajos* and *Santo remedio* I resort to the aesthetic of blinking. Fast-paced montage of scenes and concepts: in a sense, it is a parody and re-signification of some strategies of mass media, but only to filter among those short sentences a different type of reflection within the narrative. Rhythm and vertigo are essential in both novels. Violence applied to language parallels thematic violence: it is the expression of this violence. They are two very different novels, but quick cadence, the rule of swiftness is probably linked to what Italo Calvino pushed for in his formidable *Sei proposti per il prossimo milenio*.

Q. Even though the “boom latinoamericano” is a thing of the past, Latin American Literature still has Spain as its publishing center. It is almost exclusively through peninsular publishing houses that a reader in Argentina, in Peru or in Mexico has access to the works of Latin American writers. What do you think about this cultural dynamic?

A. It is a paradox and a Cartesian evidence: in the sixties there was less fragmentation, less balkanization of Latin American countries regarding cultural products. In the beginnings of the 21st century it is clear that centers (in plural), semi-peripheries and peripheries are marked out by borders, material and immaterial. Centers regulate the circulation of cultural products. If my books are read in Mexico, Colombia or Venezuela it’s because I publish in Spain and my books are read in Spain: regulation from the “metropolis” is crystal clear. The books I publish exclusively in Uruguay seem to melt, just like all that is solid, into air.

Q. Film is one of your passions. Recently Guillermo Arriaga (screenwriter of *Babel*, *21 Grams* and *Amores Perros*) has tried to rekindle the controversial matter of screenwriters as true authors of the film, at least as co-authors along with directors. What is your opinion about it?

A. I have more than one opinion, some of them contradictory, because there is more than one type of movie. Sometimes the screenwriter is the true maker, but this is the exception. In general it is the director who manages the construction of the work in the audiovisual semiotic system. The screenwriter lays out the written element, the map, the design used by the director as his or her basic supply—a supply that belongs to a different semiotic system. I think that the director is closer to the role of “author-interpret-er”, whereas the screenwriter is the composer of the film’s chart.

Q. What recent examples of Latin American cinema have drawn your interest and enthusiasm?

A. For many a reason, *Whisky* (by former students of mine, Uruguayan filmmakers Rebella and Stoll) seems to me a fundamental point in the evolution of a mature cinema: a non-folkloric Latin American cinema with clear goals and results. On the other hand I would mention *Amores Perros*, on two different grounds: first, the unusual controversy it caused, even in terms of ideological debate in Mexico, and second, the basic role of disruptive narrative structures in contemporary fiction, an element traceable in some recent Spanish American novels ■



Faculty Updates

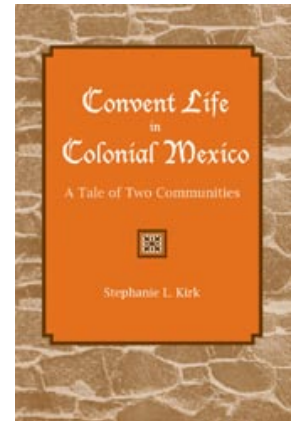
Department of Romance Languages and Literatures

Andrew Brown is working on a book-length project, tentatively titled *Southern Cyborgs: Posthuman Identity in Latin America*. Among other articles he has recently written: "Identidad posthumana en Lóbulo de Eugenia Prado". Forthcoming in *Revista Iberoamericana* 73.220 (July-Sept. 2007). "Sobrevivientes y cyborgs: Cine argentino al final de la dictadura". Forthcoming in *Cine, Historia, Sociedad: Tres décadas de cine en Argentina y Brasil*. Ed. Gaston Lillo and William Moser. Ottawa: Ottawa UP, 2007. "Life Signs: Ricardo Piglia's Cyborgs". *Science, Literature, and Film in the Hispanic World*. Ed. Jerry Hoeg and Kevin Larsen. New York: Palgrave, 2006. 87-107.

John Garganigo has been acting Chair of the Department during the Fall of 2006 and the Spring of 2007. The third edition of *Huellas de las literaturas hispanoamericanas* (co-edited with René de Costa, Elzbieta Sklodowska, et al) was released recently. A symposium in his honor will be held at Washington University next September.

Stephanie Kirk published *Convent Life in Colonial Mexico: A Tale of Two Communities*. Gainesville, FL: UP of Florida, 2007. Forthcoming is "Power and Resistance: Teaching Convent Culture": Approaches to Teaching Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, edited by Emilie Bergmann and Stacey Schlauf. New York: MLA Approaches to Teaching World Literature (December 2007). She is working on the book *Bodies of Knowledge: Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and the Search for Knowledge in Colonial Mexico*.

Joseph Schraibman is responsible for the FOCUS Program in Cuba. As part of this program, he teaches a two-term course on Cuban history and culture. He will be part of the Center for the Humanities Fellowship Program in order to write his book tentatively titled *Literatura e inquisición*



Tabea Alexa Linhard research centers on the intersections among Latin American Studies, Transatlantic Studies and Mediterranean Studies, with a particular emphasis on Jewish culture in Latin America and Spain. Her forthcoming articles "Ishica, ¿de quién sos?: Nostalgia for a Mother Tongue in Rosa Nissán's novels" (*Hispania*) and "Hacia una poética del naufragio: melancolía y estudios transatlánticos" (*Revista Iberoamericana*) emerge from this project. She is currently finishing an article on the creation of a transatlantic visual space in recent Mexican and Spanish Cinema, and working on longer project on the representation of memory and diaspora in the work of Mexican authors Angelina Muñiz-Huberman, Rosa Nissán and Myriam Moscona.

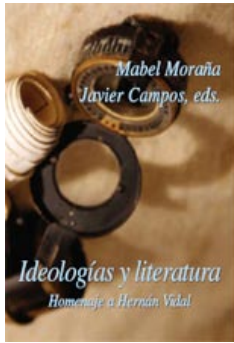
Elzbieta Sklodowska spent part of her sabbatical leave doing research in Havana on her latest book on contemporary Cuban narrative. She will present portions of her work in progress in July at the International Association of Hispanists Congress in Paris ("Fuera de lugar: la presencia de Haití en la literatura"). Her article, "Viajes sin salvoconducto: imágenes de Haití en la narrativa de Alejo Carpentier y Antonio Benítez Rojo," appeared in *Modernism and Modernities: Studies in Honor of Donald Shaw*. Edited and Introduction by Susan Carvalho. Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 2006. 223-62. Her recent invited lectures focused on "Haiti in Cuban Literary Imaginary," Florida State University.

History

Richard Walter is currently working on U.S./ Peruvian relations between 1960 and 1975.



RLL and International and Area Studies



Mabel Moraña published *Ideologías y literatura: Homenaje a Hernán Vidal* (w/ Javier Campos), and the following articles: "Territorialidad y forasterismo: la polémica Arguedas/ Cortázar revisitada" (in *José María Arguedas: Hacia una poética migrante*, (Sergio R. Franco, ed.); "Violencia en el deshielo: imaginarios postnacionales después de la Guerra Fría" (Caravelle); "A río revuelto ganancia de pescadores. América Latina y el *deja vu* de la literatura mundial" (in *América Latina y la literatura mundial*, Ignacio Sanchez-Prado, ed.), among others. She was a keynote speaker at CALACS, University of Calgary, Canada, and participated with Larry Byrns and Fernando Coronil in the *Latin American Briefings* at University of Chicago. On November 7, 2006, she was installed as William H. Gass Professor of Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis.

Ignacio Sánchez-Prado published the reader *América Latina: giro óptico. Nuevas perspectivas desde los estudios literarios y culturales* (University of the Americas Press), which compiles a series of classic and previously unpublished articles on Latin American literary and cultural studies. He was a guest speaker at the University of California Davis, where he presented the paper "La mirada neoliberal: el cine mexicano después del NAFTA". He is currently finishing a book on the institutional foundations of Mexican literature and engaged in a research project of Mexican film in the age of neoliberalism.



Department of Political Science

Brian F. Crisp will publish "Incentives in Mixed Member Electoral Systems: General Election Laws, Candidate Selection Procedures, and Cameral Rules". *Comparative Political Studies* 41(8). Also forthcoming is the book chapter of which he is coauthor (Taylor, Botero and Crisp): "Pre-Candidates, Candidates, and Presidents: Paths to the Colombian Presidency." In *Pathways to Power: Candidate Selection and Political Recruitment in Latin America*, ed. Scott Morgenstern and Peter Siavelis. University Park, PA: Penn State University Press.

Guillermo Rosas is writing about how governments allocate goods and services in order to win elections, with special emphasis in the Venezuela of Hugo Chávez. He is also working on the political determinants of banking and financial policies, the electoral consequences of income inequality and the political effects of alternative institutional configurations of electoral management bodies. He published "Bagehot or Bailout? A Bayesian Analysis of Government Responses to Banking Crises". *American Journal of Political Science*, 50, 2006).

Anthropology

David L. Browman received a NSF grant to work on the project "Late Epiclassic Transitional Dynamics at La Quemada, Zacatecas, Mexico". Another line of his research concerns the analysis of ancient DNA (aDNA) to see if it is possible to differentiate prehistoric camelids in Bolivia.

Bret Gustafson published "Spectacles of Autonomy and Crisis: Or, What Bulls and Beauty Queens have to do With Regionalism in Bolivia." *Journal of Latin American Anthropology* 11(2):351-379. He presented "Decolonization and Recolonization: Bolivia after Neoliberalism" at the Duke-UNC Latin American Consortium Conference, February 9-10, 2007. Part of his research focuses on the effects of natural gas development in Bolivia, with an emphasis on the tensions between regionalist movements and the nationalist and indigenist project led by Evo Morales.

Derek Pardue's book *Hip-Hop as Cultural Design: A Retelling of Marginality in São Paulo, Brazil* is forthcoming (Wesleyan UP). He has also edited *Ruminations on Violence* (Waveland Press, forthcoming).

Mexicans Gone Global: The New Cinema of Mexico

by Ignacio Sánchez Prado

In a rare glimpse of a Mexican landmark, viewers of the Charlie Rose show were able to watch a historical moment. Around the proverbial oak table, Alejandro González Iñárritu, Alfonso Cuarón and Guillermo del Toro each sat with the confidence of having a critically praised movie on the market. At the writing of these lines, the three movies had made history. González Iñárritu's *Babel* won the Golden Globe for best dramatic picture and was disputing the top honor at the Oscars with none other than Martin Scorsese. Cuarón's *Children of Men* captivated critics and audiences with its dystopian charm and the virtuosity of a director able to move from Mexican teenagers to Harry Potter to the end of times in less than a decade. Del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth* became the highest grossing Spanish language movie in U.S. history, while being considered the best film of the year by some of the most reputed critics in the American media. And yet, in Charlie Rose's domain, we were presented with the story of three friends who overcame a history of mediocrity and bureaucracy not only to lead an ever more productive Mexican cinema, but also to be recognized as three of the leading figures of contemporary film.

The question that has been concealed by the glossy lights of Hollywood glory is the complex nature of the process of transformation of Mexican cinema that led to this iconic moment. The Charlie Rose interview may be seen as the final point in a process that began in the early 1990s, at the dawn of the neoliberal era in Mexico. Historically, Mexican film had been closely linked to the processes of construction of national identity. The audience was mostly from urban popular sectors, which were recruited to the new genre when some stars of itinerant spectacles called *carpas* (such as *Cantinflas* or *Tin Tan*) leaped to the screen. This audience then became the target of a second kind of cinema, predicated on the ideals of post-revolutionary nationalism, giving birth to the cinema of *charros* and to stars such as Jorge Negrete and Pedro Infante. This cinema flourished in the late 1930s, all the way to the early 1950s, when it began to be gradually overshadowed by Hollywood. For decades, Mexican cinema was divided into two forms of production: a low-budget commercial cinema to be consumed by the decreasing urban popular audiences and a state-sponsored "art" cinema circulated mostly on international circuits and with barely any national audience.

In the early 1990s, three events marked the first substantial changes to this process of demise. First, Alfonso Arau's *Like Water for Chocolate* had an unexpected commercial success nationally and internationally, creating a space of expectations for other Mexican movies that would have otherwise gone unnoticed. Second, three movies, released in 1991, became the starting point of the film generation that ruled the decade: Carlos Carrera's *La mujer de Benjamin*, a film that rewrote the standards of Mexican art cinema by making it more accessible to national audiences; María Novaro's *Danzón* opened a whole avenue for women in film in a country where the genre had been largely constructed around icons of masculinity and Alfonso Cuarón's *Sólo con tu pareja* established the rules of the Mexican highly stylized genre of romantic comedies, which, in the latter part of the decade, would become the predominant form of Mexican film. Finally, in 1994 the monopoly of state-owned, nearly ruined movie theatres was ended with the opening of a Cinemark in Mexico City, a chain that, with high prices and advanced technology, brought the middle class back to the theaters.

These transformations, I would argue, were closely related to the emergence of neoliberalism as a political discourse and to the need of producing a new form of cultural subjectivity for the post-nationalist times. Cinema evicted the urban popular inhabitants of its screen, thereby opening the space for a new Mexican, formed under the aegis of NAFTA, ready to become part of the First-World. Alejandro González Iñárritu's *Amores Perros*, at the very end of the decade, clearly exemplified what this process meant: a cinema where the daily perils of the new middle class professionals (advertisers, a profession of choice for the new cinema's characters) interacted with a new perspective on the urban popular subject, who were no longer endearing tricksters but failed human beings who latently threatened the new social order. A cinema that was applauded both by the new middle class audience that for the first time saw its views and values presented on the silver screen and the metropolitan audience that saw in the new Mexican filmmakers a promise that would substitute the demise of its own independent cinema. Paradoxically, the old Latin American dream of being full cultural citizens of the world was finally fulfilled by a generation of hipsters that understood the craft and the market. This history is still full of unanswered questions and full of cinematic voices whose place in it has yet to be understood. In the meantime, while we face the task of understanding the implications and pertinence of this history to the understanding of Mexico, we can sit back and be seduced by the fauns, apocalypses and intertwined lives imagined by the children of NAFTA ■



Latin American Colloquium

Politics, Hip-Hop, Volunteering and More The first five sessions of the Latin American Colloquium

The interdisciplinary approach of this colloquium has allowed faculty and students of Washington University to get a first hand look at the work-in-progress conducted by fellow researchers from different departments.

The new "brasilerista" of Romance Languages and Literatures, Selma Vital, inaugurated the colloquium last October with the talk entitled "Brazil, Portugal and the *fin de siècle's* paradigms: a study of race and gender as 'passports' to modernity". Vital offered an overview of the intellectual panorama of Brazil and Portugal in the early 20th century and showed how key literary figures approached the concept of nation-state. She was followed by Derek Pardue, assistant professor in the Department of Anthropology, who dealt with "Hip-Hop as Cultural Design: A Retelling of Marginality in São Paulo, Brazil".

In February of 2007 the colloquium resumed with a talk by Francisco Leal. A doctoral candidate in the Romance Languages and Literatures Department, Leal talked about his doctoral dissertation, "Literaturas en el fin de la política: ficción de la posdictadura chilena". Next was Guillermo Rosas, assistant professor in the Department of Political Science, who explained the main hypotheses of the project he is developing as coauthor, "El uso político de programas de gasto social en la administración de Hugo Chávez". Rosas is attempting to lay out a model to explain how governments in Latin America and elsewhere allocate public and private goods in order to win elections. Finally, René Olate, a doctoral candidate of the George Warren Brown School of Social Work, presented the talk, "Voluntariado juvenil en América Latina", in which he addressed the core of his dissertation.

As we plan the sessions of the fall semester, we hope the colloquium will continue to be a venue to promote interdisciplinary discussion, to exchange ideas, and to share perspectives on debates relevant to the study of Latin America ■

Latin American Courses (Fall 2007)

AZTECS, MAYAS AND INCAS: ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS OF THE NEW WORLD

David Browman

TEST TUBE ENVY: SCIENCE AND LITERATURE IN ARGENTINA

Andrew Brown

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Brian Crisp

BODY, GENDER AND POWER IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA

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A VIEW FROM THE SOUTHERN CONE: PERSPECTIVES ON ART, LITERATURE AND CULTURE

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Mabel Moraña

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Ignacio Sánchez-Prado

SURVEY OF LATIN AMERICAN CULTURE

Ignacio Sánchez-Prado

SPANISH AMERICAN LITERATURE I

Stephanie Kirk

SPANISH AMERICAN LITERATURE II

Andrew Brown



New The Cinema Commercial

Professor
Ignacio M. Sánchez-Prado
Coordinator



March 6th
8:30 pm | *Amarte Duele*
Fernando Sanfina | México | 2002

March 27th
4:00 pm | *O Homen que copieva*
Jorge Furtado | Brazil | 2003

April 10th
4:00 pm | *Guantanamo*
Tomás Gutiérrez Alea & Juan Carlos Tabío | Cuba | 1998

April 24th
4:00 pm | *Secuestro Expreso*
Román Jakubowicz | Venezuela | 2003

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