

Introduction

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Having grown substantially over the past two decades as an institutional presence and in methodological sophistication, the field of Latina/o American literature has coalesced sufficiently to require its own literary history. By this adjective “Latina/o” American, we refer to literature by writers of Latin American and Caribbean origin who find themselves annexed or incorporated into the United States (as in the case of Puerto Rico and the formerly northern half of Mexico), or who have migrated or descended from exiled or immigrant Hispanic, Latin American, and/or Caribbean peoples residing outside their place of origin. Initially starting as disparate community-supported research staking claims to institutional resources through literary manifestoes during the 1960s (e.g., Chicano studies and Puerto Rican studies), what now circulates as Latina/o American literary history has not only expanded to include the writing of numerous and influential Latina/o groups such as Cuban Americans, Dominican Americans, and U.S.-based Central and South Americans, but has also shifted from its originally narrow national foci into new critical conversations with American, Latin American, and other interdisciplinary and diasporic literary histories. The scholarly conversations across these fields have raised questions about the “when” and “where” of any ethno-racial literary history and the nationalist or idealist narratives that have tended to organize them.

The long-awaited chicken to the egg of Latina/o literary anthologies that began to circulate in the last two decades (*Herencia*, published by Oxford University Press in 2002 and the *Norton Anthology of Latino Literature* (2011)), this first major Latina/o literary history of its kind has a sustained focus on the categories of race, class, gender, and sexuality that came to the fore in struggles for representation, and that remain urgent for this field. Their intersections generate a significant imperative for inquiry as bodies classified as “Hispanic or Latina/o” now constitute the largest, economically, and politically disenfranchised “minority” in the United States. This rapidly

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ AND LAURA LOMAS

growing U.S. demographic is set to displace a longstanding “non-Hispanic white” majority in the pecking order of ethno-racial groups by the mid-twenty-first century. “Hispanic or Latina/o” remains the problematic label for a multilingual, multiracial, and mobile force with a long history in the Americas that has required the development of distinct analytics and methodologies for bringing into focus a new literary history.

What is in a name? Like historical circumstances transmitted from the past, and not of our choosing, names form part of the inherited conditions with which we make literary histories such as this one. Given that counting “Spanish surnamed” individuals functioned in the 1970s as one method of assembling a disparate group that has historically included descendants of the colonizers and of the colonized, of the enslavers and the enslaved, of those who write history and those whose history is unwritten, of those who do not remember and those who do or are in the process of remembering and redefining, we recognize that a variety of terms have emerged to refer to the changing object of study that necessitates this volume. As editors, we have permitted different labels to coexist and circulate according to the interpretive commitments of each contributor. If “Latina/o” represents a gender-inclusive adjective that refers to the persistence of Latin-ness or *latinidad* as it moves outside its place of origin, the “Latina/o American” of our title should not be confused with the “Latin American” that refers to the region proper, which another multivolume literary history published by Cambridge over a decade ago has already addressed. Nonetheless, these fields intersect and overlap in crucial ways, as we discuss below. Breaking the rule of Spanish grammar that makes the collective masculine-ending term speak as the natural universal, the term we use in this Introduction – “Latina/o” – calls attention to the persistent material effects of a male/female gender binary, and acknowledges long-standing feminist transgression of breaking grammatical rules to inscribe difference within the tradition. The limits of the binary form have given rise to the newer term “Latinx,” which conveys both gender neutrality and creates another ending to stand in for polymorphous forms of sexual and gender presentation in excess of a male/female and normalized-as-straight binary. By abandoning an inherited patronymic as Malcolm X did, and by making the last syllable of the non-Anglicized term an “x” (or *equis*), this still-novel term might suggest a post-feminist *latinidad*. All these terms emphasize a mobile and displaced *latinidad*, a term that itself evokes the violence of the Iberian Peninsula’s colonial projects while coming to represent a more inclusive descriptor. Rather than the term “Hispanic,” which fetishizes linguistic purity and tends to lump together Spain with its former

Introduction

colonies, often further subordinating non-European cultural forms, Latina/o calls attention to Francophone, Lusophone, and other intermingling among variegated migrant communities outside Latin America and the Caribbean.

The field's methods and heterogeneous object of study render both a nation-based, monolingual or mono-ethno-racial framework insufficient. While this literary history does not offer a single, overarching, developmental narrative, it articulates how this emergent literary field has begun to periodize – drawing on distinct interrelated regional conjunctures – and to theorize the relationships among texts across space and time. In four parts that reach from the colonial period to the twenty-first century, this volume demonstrates how the fixed space of what is now the United States does not offer the geographic criteria for inclusion in this history. These chapters acknowledge cultural *herencias* or persistent colonial deformations deriving from Latin America, the Caribbean, the United States and beyond, all of which continue to shape Latina/o literary imagination and aesthetic form.

In large measure, the “transnational turn” in American Studies can be attributed to the introduction of the “border” as a key concept through scholarship in Latina/o literature, history, and criticism. This multivalent term refers to more than geographic borders, and includes the zones of contact among languages, cultures, and differently racialized or gendered groups. Likewise, Latin American Studies has benefited from a Latina/o studies interpretation of the cultural and political effects of people, capital, and culture moving across national borders from the Global South to the Global North and back again, with particular attention to how migrants negotiate competing national, economic, political, and cultural transitions, from the nineteenth century to a post-Cold War moment. In turn, interaction with American and Latin American studies has “worlded” Latina/o literary history. This volume foregrounds literary comparison, contact with multiple languages and cultures, the effects of shifting political borders and contexts, in and beyond this hemisphere, all of which have pushed the field to recognize its broader implications.

The methodological turn to comparative frameworks in Latina/o literary history has remained grounded in specific cultural expressions, practices, and relationships, thus countering the trend among transnational approaches to globalize everything and thus decontextualize, in an uncritically celebratory fashion, the dynamics of power that operate locally and globally, below, through, and above nation-states. The essays of *The Cambridge History of Latina/o American Literature* situate trans-American articulations within texts, writers, communities, and historical moments. Rather than seek a

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ AND LAURA LOMAS

continuous, unbroken literary genealogy, this history rehearses particular scenes of struggle, the changing significance of central terms (such as “Latina/o” itself), disparate and discontinuous literary genres, variably structured by the institutions of governmentality, the flow of transmigrant communities and cultural forms, mobilized largely by the dominant systems of colonization and capitalism.

The deepening of temporal dimensions complements the new spatial and linguistic dimensions of Latina/o literary studies. When first founded in the 1960s and 1970s, Chicano and Puerto Rican studies were hard-pressed to locate literary texts written or published prior to 1959. Thanks to the archival research and methodological insights about the archive made possible by the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, scholars have convincingly demonstrated how Spanish colonial-era texts dating to the sixteenth century may be considered as antecedents to Latina/o literature with regard to its origins in hemispheric coloniality, and Spanish-language texts previously read as only part of a Latin American literary history have acquired new significance in representing or informing the perspectives, narratives, and literary forms that have emerged. The constellation of texts that figure in these chapters thus mediate the displacement and transculturation, or two-directional influence, due to asymmetrical contact in the border zones created by colonization, annexation, and migration. In particular, research into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has greatly expanded the number and scope of Latina/o literary texts, the majority of which were written in Spanish.

In effect, what had been previously considered to be a minor, late twentieth-century subset of U.S. ethnic literature has become a literature that predates and unseats monolingual and Anglo-cultural origin narratives. Latina/o literary history reconceptualizes U.S. literature and extends beyond it as a multilingual, multiple assemblage that often emerges from spaces in between nations, through creative remaking of official languages and dissenting from dominant national cultural discourses. Without the ostensible unity of a single racial category, this extensive and variegated Latina/o American literary history is marked by the minor use of globally dominant languages (predominantly Spanish, English, and Portuguese), as enriched by hundreds of suppressed or surviving indigenous Amerindian, African, and Asian languages, by the stubborn adherence to a reworked or hybridized mother tongue, or even by an untranslatable bilingualism in the face of pressures to assimilate and standardize. Different languages imply widely dispersed readerships, punctilious wit aimed specifically at bilinguals and transnational print-communities constantly engaged in translation.

Introduction

The Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project, a multidisciplinary initiative directed by Nicolás Kanellos since 1991, has made many of these texts and much of the criticism about them available to a wide range of readers either through literary anthologies or reprints through Arte Público Press, providing a critical apparatus and widespread accessibility for adoption in college and university courses. International scholarly initiatives (such as Casa de las Américas in Cuba where Rolando Hinojosa's narratives and Juan Flores's critical work on Puerto Rican literature and the Nuyorican diaspora have each received international recognition, or the teaching of these texts in British, European, Latin American, and other universities) have launched research and scholarly inquiry that opens the conversations around Latina/o literary and cultural history far beyond the United States.

The Cambridge History of Latina/o American Literature makes this cutting-edge research accessible to a wide scholarly audience interested in the global emergence of this field of study. Written by eminent scholars from the Americas and Europe, the essays in this volume highlight key texts and contexts for a wide range of literary genres, especially narrative prose, poetry, and performance. The chapters are arranged to orient researchers to the most current developments in the field, with close readings, intertextual connections, and case studies giving sense to historical and methodological debates. As such, *The Cambridge History of Latina/o American Literature* complements other titles in Cambridge University Press's History series such as *The Cambridge History of African American Literature*, *The Cambridge History of Asian American Literature*, *The Cambridge History of American Women's Literature*, and the multivolume histories of *American* and *Latin American Literature*.

This very complementarity raises the question: what points of tension distinguish Latina/o American literature from what we may think of as the parent fields of Latin American and (U.S.) American literary histories? If Latin American literary history focuses on the relationships among literary works by people who share a language and conceive of themselves in relation to a shared geographic space, Latina/o American literary history refers to works by and relating to minor groupings, geographically dispersed, which share neither a single language nor a single territorial, regional, or cultural reference point. Much more than a cultural origin or single region, movements and forms in response to historical processes of displacement and transculturation define this literature. Rather than a narrative or epic recounting of a singular origin or cumulative national project, this field is marked by disjointed processes of European colonization, the genocide of indigenous

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ AND LAURA LOMAS

peoples, the uprooting of slavery, the exploitation of migrant labor, and the violent *mestizaje* introduced by rape and border-crossing, all of which shatter any narrative of incorporation, belonging, or wholeness.

Diverging from Latin American and U.S. interpretive frameworks, this literary history emerges from its activist origins in the 1960s to name the experience of a mainly working-class, minoritized group that must necessarily creatively engage displacement. As the history of a minor perspective from within the bowels of a still aggressive empire, and yet nevertheless still in contact and communication with distant *patrias*, Latina/o American literature bears an oblique subaltern relation to the unmarked “American” or U.S. literature that, until the mid-twentieth century, considered itself a branch of British literature. Betraying the trenchant residue of the colonial conditions from which it emerges, Latina/o American literature plays a crucial role in pressing dominant forms of North American literary studies to recognize its complicity with empire and to define itself more precisely as a literature of the United States and/or Canada. Latina/o American literary history similarly challenges its Latin American counterpart to acknowledge the extent to which the area studies framework through which it entered the academy originally did not fully consider the cultural politics of representation – especially persistent problematics of race, gender, sexuality, language, class, and coloniality – within light-skinned, Creole-dominant, masculinist Latin American, North American, and indeed, even Latina/o forms of nationalism or regionalism.

Latina/o American literary history is in dialogue with and intersects with African, Asian, and indigenous or Amerindian diaspora literary histories, which afford it indispensable theoretical resources, many of which are on display in this volume. The notion of diaspora as a heterogeneous field of entanglement without the possibility of return to a single origin, relevant especially to Afro-Latina/o but also to other diasporic writing, and the concept of intersectionality, are directly indebted to scholars of African American literature and culture, even as queer, Chicana and Caribbean feminism have also contributed to the groundwork of thinking through multiple, intersecting categories. At the edges of these fields, we glimpse the future work not included in this volume, such as, for example, an Asian and or Muslim Latina/o literary history, which will become increasingly relevant in light of expanding U.S. empire and ongoing historical research on Asians and Islam in the Americas. From Boukman Dutty and Cécile Fatima’s role in presiding over a syncretized Islamic and Afro-Caribbean religious ceremony in Bois Caiman to launch the Haitian revolution to discussions of the

Introduction

misrecognition and solidarity among Arabs or Muslims and Latinas/os in the context of U.S. global imperial engagements as documented by Moustafa Bayoumi, these avenues of inquiry will only grow alongside examinations of Filipina/o and other forms of Asian-latinidad). Similarly, we expect this research to expand in the direction of international literatures of latinidades in the sites where Latina/o migrants move, including Canada, Europe, Asia, Africa, and even Latin America and the Caribbean, which have become sites of return migration and landing points post-deportation.

Part and Chapter Descriptions

The Cambridge History of Latina/o American Literature is structured into four parts and an epilogue. The four parts offer a comprehensive overview of the development of Latina/o American literature from the Spanish colonial era to the contemporary moment, with particular care to move beyond stale debates over identity politics and thematic concerns to more productive ones over periodization, the impact of coloniality and authoritarian regimes, and the complexities of multidirectional transculturation at moments of unequal exchange.

Part I revisits the relationship between colonial-era expressive practices throughout the Americas and the Latina/o American texts they inform. Starting with the long colonial era between Columbus's arrival to Hispaniola and the historical events that prompted a rethinking of sovereignty, and subsequent independence movements in the Spanish American colonies Latina/o literary history works to initiate a process of decolonization in its very methodology. Previous theoretical frameworks of Latina/o literature focused upon finding genealogies of resistance in Spanish colonial texts in those parts of the Spanish Empire that would later become the United States, but this section departs from those models by offering not a literary lineage, traceable by unbroken links deep into a specific territory's colonial past, but rather a proleptic and contingent articulation of specific cultural productions, emergent literary genres, and singular authors whose influence extends from the colonial period to the present. At the literary level, towering intellectuals such as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, indigenous texts such as Aztec codices, and performative practices such as the *Requerimiento* or *Las Pastorelas*, continue to inform the imaginary of subsequent Latina/o American literature.

As in all American literatures, Latina/o literary history begins with the texts of the original inhabitants of this hemisphere. Indigenous texts – such as the *Popul Vuj*, transcribed from an oral recitation in 1524 – languages, woven forms, and signs inscribed upon other material objects besides books have

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ AND LAURA LOMAS

survived despite distortion, misunderstanding, and misinterpretation. Arturo Arias underscores the often disavowed or underestimated significance of the relations of power between the *ego conquiro* (Dussel and Mignolo) and the indigenous women and men who bore the brunt of this violence. These relations of power take shape in the context of a genocide (killing some 86 percent of the indigenous inhabitants during the colonial period) that peaked between the fifteenth century and the twentieth. Late into the latter century, migrants from South and Central America of indigenous background have continued to be affected as a result of colonialism and anti-indigenous racialization; the film *El Norte* (1983), on which Arias collaborated as a screen writer, depicts the dangerous border-crossing journey of two Guatemalan migrants to the United States after they flee the Guatemalan government's persecution during that nation's civil war. Arias's chapter calls for the acknowledgement of this history of colonial violence, including sexual violence affecting male- and female-gendered bodies, as a point of departure for interpreting the literature of the descendants of the colonizers and of the colonized in Latina/o literary history. Gloria Anzaldúa pioneered decolonial research that led her to coin the concept of *nepantla* from a Nahuatl word that articulated the subjective experience of invasion from the perspective of Mexicas (Aztecs). Arias suggests that Latina/o criticism might also usefully bring the tools of European theory to bear on the "phantasmic presence of indigeneity," in order to consider representations of the repercussions of this psychic and physical violence.

Pedro García-Caro follows the clues of a previous generation of "recovery" scholarship to uncover a new archive of the colonial period that includes secular and religious theater and spectacle among many other performance genres that circulated in Hispanic colonial territories of what is now the United States. García-Caro's research drives home the point that the indigenous audience of this performative tradition is "captive," i.e., imprisoned, within a colonial matrix and subject to performances that celebrate the extirpation and banishing of that audience's pre-Columbian practices and beliefs. This chapter reveals how this literary tradition emerges out of, and has long been fully complicit with, a project of violent incorporation of this captive indigenous audience into a Latina/o sphere.

At the methodological level, the insights into "the colonality of power" developed within Latin American literary and cultural theory have provided a crucial vocabulary through which to examine gendered subject formation under conditions of colonality, thus vexing dominant narratives about how literary theory "travels" in Latina/o literary scholarship. While the dominant

Introduction

narrative posits a trickling down of Continental philosophy, filtered by the mainstream U.S. academy into a pre-theoretical, identitarian academic backwater, this volume's reimagining of colonization indicates that Latina/o literature is itself a creative point of departure. Elsa Sampson Vera Tudela shows how a wide range of creative and interpretive representations of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz reveal a long-standing tradition of Latina feminist readings that claim the erudite Mexican nun as a theoretical and performative precursor and influence. Notable elements of sorjuanian tricks of the weak and performative practice include material and gendered embodiment as a foundational contingency of all intellectual and creative work. Sor Juana writes as a gendered subaltern subject with canny insight about how coloniality is also always gendered. Early twentieth-century Chicana feminist Jovita González and contemporary Latina performance artists and writers alike acknowledge and celebrate Sor Juana's revolutionary sexual difference, and as a woman with no husband to "tuck in." She critically engages the gatekeepers of the patriarchal Roman Catholic Church, from within spaces such as the convent, where women enjoyed opportunities to practice alternatives to maternal, heterosexual reproduction. Above all, Sor Juana's powerful, unfinished posthumous lyric "Romance 51" affirms her writings' irreducible difference from existing colonial knowledge, and illegibility through any of the limiting labels or interpretive systems derivative therefrom.

Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel's chapter acknowledges the significance of the colonial period, which does not end in the nineteenth century, but continues, in some cases, into the present. With caveats about how narratives of the colonial period in Latina/o literary history often problematically elide thousands of years of indigenous civilizations or ignore the significance of black struggles for self-emancipation and self-government, Martínez-San Miguel interrogates how the emphasis on a Spanish "antecedence" to English colonizers problematically recenters European-descended Creole settler protagonists. Through a generative reading of foundational anthologies and histories of Latina/o literature, she notes the relevance of colonial period texts for understanding the matrix that forged contemporary Latina/o identities, especially for an increasingly heterogeneous Latina/o population that includes South, Central, and Caribbean migrants in the United States. This reading observes the persistent effects of coloniality that continue to isolate Latina/o literary studies from relevant theoretical work in Native American, colonial Latin American, Caribbean, or decolonial U.S. American studies. Martínez-San Miguel's comparative and decolonial approach reads against

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ AND LAURA LOMAS

the grain of the colonial archive in order to perceive the limits of what we know of this period, and emphasizes the need to listen for the multiple and often conflicting voices in the archive. She calls our attention to asymmetrical relationships of power within and among the intersecting fields of Latina/o, Latin American, Caribbean, Native, and U.S. American studies, and calls for vigilance about the persistent blind spots of Latina/o studies. Drawing on Edward Said, Martínez-San Miguel suggests that we read for secular affiliations rather than organicist and triumphalist assumptions of genealogical descent from the colonizers to the present day.

José Antonio Mazzotti documents the circulation of Spanish-language terms dating to the seventeenth century – such as “criollo,” “mestizo,” and “Latino” – that are fundamental to Latina/o literature and likewise inform a Latina/o American literary imaginary. He sets them in contrast to terms that have emerged in subaltern writings and social protest texts as alternatives to such European-derived terms. These counter-terms, such as “Anahuac,” “Abya-Yala,” and “Aztlán,” also circulated contemporaneously within subaltern communities. Even a seemingly neutral term like “mestizo,” carried a derogatory meaning in most written texts through the mid-nineteenth century despite being revindicated as early as 1609 by the Andean writer Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, himself a mestizo. According to Mazzotti, the term “Latina/o” cannot pretend to designate an oppositional group within the United States or other contexts where migrants from Latin America create minor oppositional cultures, without full acknowledgment of how it is always also marked by the trauma of colonial violence and by the internal exclusions of Creole-led nationalisms that formed in the wake of colonization. Mazzotti offers us a deep historical sense of “Latina/o” and “latinidad,” noting their loaded, Eurocentric significance. Indeed, all these chapters excavate aspects of a long, incomplete Latina/o literary history in which the struggle over the meaning of a discontinuous past informs contemporary definition of the field’s scope, key terms, and its relation to subjugated or submerged knowledges, often available only through the filter of the colonial archive.

Part II focuses on the hemispheric aspects of Latina/o literature as it mapped out the possibilities of republican interactions between and coalitions among the nations of the Americas. Already in this period it is possible to see the limits of these visions once the United States turned increasingly imperialistic. This section covers the period from the late eighteenth century until the early twentieth century, and includes key historical moments, such as the dismembering aftermath of the Tupac Amaru II and Micaela Bastidas