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978-1-107-04492-0 - The Cambridge Companion to Latin A/O American Literature

Edited by John Morán González

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THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO
LATINA/O AMERICAN LITERATURE

The Cambridge Companion to Latina/o American Literature provides a thorough yet accessible overview of a literary phenomenon that has been rapidly globalizing over the past two decades. It takes an innovative approach that underscores the importance of understanding Latina/o literature not merely as an ethnic phenomenon in the United States, but more broadly as a crucial element of a trans-American literary imagination. Leading scholars in the field present critical analyses of key texts, authors, themes, and contexts, from the early nineteenth century to the present. They engage with the dynamics of migration, linguistic and cultural translation, and the uneven distribution of resources across the Americas that characterize the imaginative spaces of Latina/o literature. This *Companion* is an invaluable resource for understanding the complexities of the field.

John Morán González is Associate Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, where he holds courtesy appointments with the Department of Mexican American and Latino Studies and the Department of American Studies. He is also a Faculty Affiliate of the Center for Mexican American Studies. His publications include *The Troubled Union: Expansionist Imperatives in Post-Reconstruction American Novels* and *Border Renaissance: The Texas Centennial and the Emergence of Mexican American Literature*.

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EDITED BY

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ

University of Texas, Austin



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For m'ijo Santiago, and all who dwell in latinid@des

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JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ is Associate Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin, where he holds courtesy appointments with the Department of Mexican American and Latino Studies and the Department of American Studies. He is also a Faculty Affiliate of the Center for Mexican American Studies. He is author of *Border Renaissance: The Texas Centennial and the Emergence of Mexican American Literature* (University of Texas Press, 2009) and *The Troubled Union: Expansionist Imperatives in Post-Reconstruction American Novels* (Ohio State University Press, 2010). His articles and reviews have appeared in *American Literature*, *American Literary History*, *Aztlán*, *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, *Symbolism*, and *Western American Literature*. In addition to editing *The Cambridge Companion to Latino American Literature*, he is coediting (with Laura Lomas) *The Cambridge History of Latino Literature*.

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LAURA LOMAS teaches Latina/o and U.S. Literature at Rutgers University-Newark. Her first book, *Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects and American Modernities* (Duke University Press, 2008), won the Modern Languages Association Prize for Latina/o and Chicana/o literature and an honorable mention from Latin American Studies Association Latina/o Section; it analyses Cuban José Martí's role as critical interpreter of American literature, politics, and culture from the perspective of a Latino migrant during the Gilded Age. Coeditor of the forthcoming *The Cambridge History of Latino Literature*, Lomas has published numerous essays and book chapters, most recently in *Review: Literature and Arts in the Americas*.

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CLAUDIA MILIAN is Associate Professor of Romance Studies at Duke University and the author of *Latinizing America: Black-Brown Passages and the Coloring of Latino/a Studies* (University of Georgia Press, 2013).

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in the World (coedited with Ruth Behar, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). Her interdisciplinary work has received generous support from the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Mellon Foundation. She was a Visiting Scholar at The David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS), Harvard University. She is working on a new book, *Framing Cuba: Literary and Film Castings of a Nation and Its Diasporas*.

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As this critical anthology would be nothing without the essays that comprise it, I would like to thank the contributors for their wonderful efforts in creating this collaborative overview of Latina/o literary studies and making it accessible to a wide audience.

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CHRONOLOGY

1791–1804	Slave revolt in Saint-Domingue creates the Republic of Haiti
1810–29	Wars of Independence across Latin America
1823	Proclamation of the Monroe Doctrine by the United States
1826	The Spanish-language historical novel <i>Jicoténcal</i> is published anonymously in Philadelphia
1836	Texas Revolt and formation of the Republic of Texas
1845	United States annexes the Republic of Texas as the 28th state
1846–48	U.S.-Mexican War begins as a border dispute; the United States claims the Rio Grande is the border while Mexico claims the Nueces River is
1848	Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends U.S.-Mexican War, resulting in the transfer of Mexico's northern provinces to the United States
1854	Ostend Manifesto calls for the United States to annex Cuba either by purchase or force
1855–57	Filibuster by William Walker in Nicaragua
1858	Exiled Cuban poets in the United States publish <i>El laúd del desterrado</i> in New York City
1861–64	U.S. Civil War
1861–67	French military occupies Mexico until driven out by Republican forces under Benito Juárez
1872	María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, <i>Who Would Have Thought It?</i>
1885	María Amparo Ruiz de Burton, <i>The Squatter and the Don</i>
1891	José Martí, "Nuestra América"
1894	Manuel Zeno Gandía, <i>La charca</i>

CHRONOLOGY

1898	U.S.-Spanish War results in the transfer of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to U.S. control
1901	The Platt Amendment reserves the right of the United States to intervene in the affairs of a nominally independent Cuba
1910–20	The Mexican Revolution forces up to a million Mexicans to migrate to the United States
1910s	María Cristina Mena’s short stories are published in U.S. magazines.
1912–33	U.S. military occupies Nicaragua
1914	Alirio Díaz Guerra, <i>Lucas Guevara</i>
1914–18	World War I
1915–1919	Armed uprising of <i>los sediciosos</i> in South Texas, followed by violent reprisals by the Texas Rangers and vigilante groups
1915–34	U.S. military occupies Haiti
1916–22	U.S. military occupies the Dominican Republic
1917	U.S. citizenship is imposed upon Puerto Ricans by the Jones-Shafroth Act
1918	Salomón de la Selva, <i>Tropical Town</i>
1925	William Carlos Williams, <i>In the American Grain</i>
1926–29	Cristero Rebellion in Mexico sends a new wave of migrants to the United States
1928	Daniel Venegas, <i>Las aventuras de Don Chipote</i>
1929–39	The Great Depression; tens of thousands of Mexican nationals and Mexican American citizens alike are deported by the U.S. government
1933	U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt announces the “Good Neighbor Policy”
1933–43	Most active decade of Julia de Burgos’s poetic production
1936	Texas Centennial of Independence from Mexico
1936–40	Américo Paredes writes <i>George Washington Gómez</i>
1937	Massacre of nationalists by state authorities in Ponce, Puerto Rico
1937	The “Parsley Massacre” of some 10,000 Haitians in the Dominican Republic at the order of dictator Rafael Leonides Trujillo
1937–41	Jovita González and Margaret Eimer coauthor <i>Caballero</i>
1938–45	World War II
1942–64	The bracero program admits tens of thousands of Mexican agricultural workers into the United States

CHRONOLOGY

- 1948 Operation Bootstrap initiated in Puerto Rico
- 1950–53 War on the Korean Peninsula
- 1952 Puerto Rico becomes a U.S. Commonwealth
- 1954 Puerto Rican nationalists open fire in the U.S. House of Representatives; Operation Wetback implemented to deport undocumented Mexican migrants in the United States; René Marqués, *La carreta*
- 1956 Pedro Juan Soto, *Spiks*
- 1959 The Cuban Revolution overthrows U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista, initiating the Cuban diaspora to the United States; José Antonio Villarreal, *Pocho*
- 1960 The United States imposes trade and travel embargos on Cuba
- 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis
- 1963 John Rechy, *City of Night*
- 1965 U.S. military occupies the Dominican Republic after a period of civil unrest following Trujillo's assassination in 1961; Immigration and Nationality Reform Act shifts future immigration to the United States away from Europe and to Asia and Latin America
- 1965–75 U.S.-Vietnam War
- 1966–78 Repression during Joaquín Balaguer's "Twelve Years" initiates mass migration from the Dominican Republic to the United States
- 1967 Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, *I Am Joaquín*; Piri Thomas, *Down These Mean Streets*; Luis Valdez, *Los Vendidos*
- 1969 Pedro Pietri, "Puerto Rican Obituary"
- 1970 José Montoya, *El Louie*
- 1971 Tomás Rivera, ... y no se lo tragó la tierra
- 1972 Oscar Zeta Acosta, *Autobiography of a Brown Buffalo*; Rodolfo Anaya, *Bless Me, Ultima*
- 1972–87 ASCO art performance collective active
- 1973 Oscar Zeta Acosta, *Revolt of the Cockroach People*; Rolando Hinojosa, *Estampas del Valle y otras obras*; Nicholasa Mohr, *Nilda*
- 1974 Miguel Piñero, *Short Eyes*
- 1977 María Irene Fornés, *Fefu and Her Friends*; Gary Soto, *The Elements of San Joaquín*
- 1978 Luis Valdez, *Zoot Suit*
- 1980s Endemic poverty, a socialist revolution in Nicaragua, civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador, and death squads in

CHRONOLOGY

- Honduras initiate the great Central American diaspora to the United States
- 1980 Mariel boatlift brings 125,000 Cubans to U.S. soil; Raúl Salinas, *Un trip through the mind jail*
- 1981 Landmark anthology of women of color feminism, *This Bridge Called My Back*, published; Alurista, *Spik in Glyph?*; Lorna Dee Cervantes, *Emplumada*; Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*
- 1982 Edward Rivera, *Family Installments*
- 1983 Cherrie Moraga, *Loving in the War Years/ lo que nunca pasó por sus labios*
- 1984 Sandra Cisneros, *The House on Mango Street*; Arturo Islas, *The Rain God*; Tato Laviera, *La Carreta Made a U-Turn*
- 1985 Miguel Algarín, *Time's Now*; Helena María Viramontes, *The Moths and Other Stories*
- 1986 Immigration and Control Reform Act provides path to citizenship for 2.7 million undocumented workers in the United States while enacting more stringent border controls; Ana Castillo, *The Mixquiahuala Letters*; Denise Chávez, *The Last of the Menu Girls*; Cherrie Moraga, *Giving Up the Ghost*
- 1987 Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/ La Frontera*; Sandra Cisneros, *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*; Martín Espada, *Trumpets from the Islands of Their Eviction*; Luz María Umpierre, *The Margarita Poems*
- 1988 Ana Castillo, *My Father Was a Toltec*
- 1989 U.S. military invades Panama; Lucha Corpi, *Delia's Song*; Virgil Suárez, *Latin Jazz*
- 1990 Oscar Hijuelos's *The Mambo Kings Play Songs of Love* awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction; Judith Ortiz Cofer, *Silent Dancing*
- 1990–91 First U.S.-Iraq War
- 1991 Julia Alvarez, *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*; Sandra Cisneros, *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories*
- 1992 Los Angeles Uprisings; Cristina García, *Dreaming in Cuban*; Alejandro Morales, *The Rag Doll Plagues*
- 1992–94 Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña perform *The Year of the White Bear and Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit the West*

CHRONOLOGY

- 1993 Reinaldo Arenas, *Before Night Falls*; Dagoberto Gilb, *The Magic of Blood*; Graciela Limón, *In Search of Bernabé*; Luis Rodríguez, *Always Running*; Tino Villanueva, *Scenes from the Movie GIANT*
- 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) Treaty in force, causing Zapatista rebellion in Mexico; Rafael Campo, *The Other Man Was Me*; Edwidge Danticat, *Breath, Eyes, Memory*; Demetria Martínez, *Mother Tongue*; Esmeralda Santiago, *When I Was Puerto Rican*
- 1995 Norma E. Cantú, *Canícula: Snapshots of a Girlhood en la Frontera*; Helena María Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus*
- 1996 Junot Díaz, *Drown*; Achy Obejas, *Memory Mambo*
- 1997 Francisco Goldman, *The Ordinary Seaman*; Esmeralda Santiago, *América's Dream*
- 1998 Mario Bencastro, *Odyssey to the North*; Giannina Braschi, *Yo-yo Boing!*; Héctor Tobar, *The Tattooed Soldier*
- 1998–2000 Guillermo Gómez-Peña and La Pocha Nostra, “Ethno-Techno: A Virtual Museum of Radical Latino Imagery and Fetishized Identities,” active on the Internet.
- 1999 Loida Maritza Pérez, *Geographies of Home*
- 2000 Ernesto Quiñonez, *Bodega Dreams*; Alina Troyano, *I, Carmelita Tropicana*
- 2001 9/11 attacks; U.S. military operations commence in Afghanistan; Ana Menendez, *In Cuba I Was a German Shepherd*
- 2001–07 Los Cybrids active on the Internet
- 2002 Sandra Cisneros, *Caramelo*
- 2003 Nilo Cruz’s *Anna in the Tropics* is awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Drama; Oscar Casares, *Brownsville*; Manuel Muñoz, *Zigzagger*; Alisa Valdes-Rodríguez, *The Dirty Girls Social Club*
- 2004 Nina Marie Martínez, *¡Caramba!*
- 2005 Sesshu Foster, *Atomik Aztex*; Salvador Plascencia, *The People of Paper*
- 2006 Millions protest proposed anti-immigrant federal legislation; Angie Cruz, *Let It Rain Coffee*; Reyna Grande, *Across a Hundred Mountains*
- 2008 Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction

CHRONOLOGY

2009	Oscar Casares, <i>Amigoland</i>
2010	Josefina López, <i>Detained in the Desert</i> ; Luis Negrón, <i>Mundo Cruel</i>
2012	Justin Torres, <i>We the Animals</i>
2013	Richard Blanco, <i>One Today</i> ; Raquel Cepeda, <i>Bird of Paradise: How I Became Latina</i>
2015	Thawing of U.S.-Cuban relations

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INTRODUCTION

JOHN MORÁN GONZÁLEZ

During the past two decades, Latina/o literature has become increasingly recognized as part of world literature, taught not only in the United States and throughout the Americas but also in classrooms from Europe to Asia. This remarkable worlding of Latina/o literature is a testament to its imaginative capacity to artfully depict and theorize the experiences of people of Latin American descent whose migratory journeys have led to the formation of Latina/o communities physically situated within the United States but cognitively situated as a transnational multiplicity of cultural and linguistic practices. Latina/o literature renders in aesthetically powerful ways the dynamics of life-in-diaspora that has become characteristic of the contemporary world, in which migrant flows continuously disturb the boundaries of the nationalisms they exceed, whether that of the sending nation or that of the receiving one. Simultaneously, Latina/o literature indexes the historical development of life-in-diaspora through the specific stages of its unfolding in the Americas over more than two centuries.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, the first iteration of this process developed in the encounter of British American and Spanish American intellectuals attempting to envision the social, political, and imaginative dimensions of everyday life after the end of European colonialism. Yet over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this initial sense of republican unity among American nations gave way to U.S. imperial ambitions and Latin American fears of those ambitions, fears that were realized as the United States continually sought to establish a cultural and political hegemony over Latin America and the Caribbean through its economic and military might. Some of these U.S. interventions in Latin America directly or indirectly created the deterritorialized communities within the United States and the diasporic migrations to the United States that are the basis of contemporary *latinidades*, or the multiple ways Latinas/os enact their trans-American existences.

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Thus tracing the complex relationships between the peoples of the United States and Latin America since at least the early nineteenth century, Latina/o literature provides an invaluable account of the changing nature of trans-American interactions between North and South as the Americas unevenly emerged from European colonialism. Given this history, Latina/o literature is neither a recent development stemming from the large migrant flows from Latin America and the Caribbean over the last three decades nor solely the product of the Latina/o social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, although clearly both have heavily influenced the contemporary literature's thematic content as well as greatly accelerated its sheer production. Reflecting its trans-American situation, Latina/o literature is fundamentally a bilingual tradition, whose relative output in Spanish, English, Spanglish, and sometimes indigenous languages reflects the specific social conditions and aesthetic choices available at any given historical moment and context.

The Cambridge Companion to Latina/o American Literature is designed to reach a wide audience that would come to it from general literary anthologies of Latina/o literature such as *The Norton Anthology of Latino Literature*. The first principle to acknowledge, in conceptualizing the contours of *The Companion*, is the fundamental recasting of what *latinidades* means within the field of Latina/o literary studies. Like Latina/o literature, Latina/o literary studies is on the cusp of becoming similarly globalized as transnational methodologies make for new conceptual possibilities. While the field has grown substantially over the past two decades as an institutional presence and in methodological sophistication, the direction and force of the change has yet to be fully charted. Most obviously, the demographic changes in the nature and intensity of migrant flows to the United States from Latin America and the Hispanophone Caribbean during the Cold War and its aftermath have enlarged the number of communities from which Latina/o writing emerges, thereby altering the field's imagined subjects of inquiry. Initially starting as disparate community-supported literary history fields during the 1960s (i.e., as Chicano studies and Puerto Rican studies), Latina/o literary studies has expanded since the 1990s to include the literature of other Latino groups such as Cuban Americans, Dominican Americans, and U.S. Central Americans. While Cuban American literature often benefited institutionally for its perceived anticommunism, Dominican American and especially U.S. Central American literature have had to fight against an invisibility propagated by normative field definitions of *latinidades*.

In addition, Latina/o studies has changed via its encounters with other academic fields, emerging from its original focus as the university arm of community empowerment into a semiautonomous scholarly field. At least since the great mobilizations of indigenous communities against the

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1992 Columbian Quincentenary, Latina/o literary studies has entered into critical conversations with American Studies, Latin American Studies, and other literary fields. The scholarly conversations across these fields over the past quarter-century have been mutually transformative. In large measure, the “transnational turn” in American Studies can be attributed to the focus upon trans-migrant, cross-border analyses central to Latina/o studies. Likewise, Latin American Studies has increasingly turned to Latina/o studies to understand the flow of people, capital, and culture across national borders, with particular attention to how migrants negotiate competing nationalist, economic, political, and cultural transitions in a post-Cold War environment. In turn, interaction with American Studies and Latin American Studies has worlded Latina/o literary studies, bringing the study of Latina/o literature into closer comparative contact with oral traditions and literature of the Americas, whether in English, Spanish, or indigenous languages. Much the same can be said for the proliferation of theoretical and methodological approaches that have lead Latina/o studies away from concerns about cultural authenticity and identity to those of coloniality, sexuality, and racialization as operations of power, drawn not only from Continental theory but also from indigenous, black, feminist, queer, and other subaltern knowledges.

Complimenting the new spatial dimensions of Latina/o literary studies has been the deepening of its temporal dimensions. When the field was first founded, scholars of Chicano and Puerto Rican literature were hard-pressed to identify many literary texts written or published prior to the 1950s. Thanks to the archival research and methodological insights about the archive made possible by the Recovering the U.S. Hispanic Literary Heritage Project (itself an outgrowth of the movement against the Eurocentric triumphalism of the Columbian Quincentenary), scholars have convincingly demonstrated how Spanish colonial-era texts dating to the sixteenth century should be considered as key antecedents to Latina/o literature with regards to its origins in hemispheric coloniality. In addition, recent research into the nineteenth century has greatly expanded the number and scope of Latina/o literary texts, and, furthermore, the Recovery Project has made many of these texts widely available for classroom use either through literary anthologies or reprints, providing widespread accessibility for adoption in university courses.

Periodization has historically been a key manner by which literature has been contextualized, with the original Romantic sense that the finest literature of a given moment somehow best captured the *Zeitgeist* or “Spirit of the Age.” At later moments, periodization offered the comfort of a quasi-scientific categorization of literature into qualitatively identifiable moments or movements. What periodization tenders is basically a

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large-scale way of understanding groups of literary works in relation to each other across a specific “era,” but in a way that necessarily excludes texts that fit neither the temporal markers assigned to a particular grouping, nor the formal qualities supposedly characteristic of that grouping, nor the cultural values subsequently assigned to it by the field. In some sense, the periodization of literary history says less about the “era” that produced certain texts than about the schema by which literary historians study said texts. Nonetheless, periodization remains a useful organizational tool for literary and critical anthologies as long as the developmental teleology implied by periodization is checked by an acknowledgment that discontinuity and multiple pathways are as important, and sometimes more so, for a field with such heterogeneous origins and trajectories. For the *Companion*, I indicated the presence of related but not continuous or teleological developments for Latina/o literature in two ways. First, only two of the three major divisions are “historical”; the third is methodological. Second, individual chapters within the historical divisions, when limned by exact years, have overlapping beginning and end dates to indicate the messiness of their contextual existences. The year 1960 remains a significant transitional date for the *Companion*, in large measure following the periodization set forth by the Recovery Project.¹

However considered, the spatial and temporal elaboration of Latina/o literature and its study have transformed what had been previously been taken by the dominant academy as a minor, late twentieth-century phenomenon into a multilingual, poly-temporal expression of trans-American contestation and cooperation. It is precisely these dimensions of Latina/o literature that have lead to its increasingly globalized study, as the movements of migrants, capital, commodities, and cultures from the global South to the global North and sometimes back again necessitates not only transnational frameworks of interpretation but comparative ones as well. This principle guided both the historical sections and the methodological ones, such that the emphasis is on underscoring the transnational dimensions of Latina/o literature. While this is by now a familiar move with deep and convincing justifications, the task of the *Companion* is to make this aspect central to the way the field is presented from the start. Hence, in the historical sections, the trans-American connections, especially as wonderfully elaborated by Recovery Project scholars for the nineteenth century, are stressed in the colonial and early republican phases. Contemporary Latina/o literary studies has rightly rejected national borders as the limits of knowledge, following the increasing insistence of Latina/o communities on maintaining and celebrating transnational ties. To that end, and to highlight the historical arc of reciprocity put into motion by U.S. colonial and neocolonial policies

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in Latin America, the refugee, exile, and migrant streams associated with such U.S. interventions take center stage. But rather than focus specifically on 1848 or 1898, the idea is to imagine the consequences of conquest for Latina/o literature over the course of decades; in the same way, the global Cold War serves as a key framework for the post-1960 chapters, especially as not only Cuban migration but also Dominican and Central American migrations can be traced in large measure to U.S. Cold War policies and interventions in those regions. The chapters on more recent Latina/o literature extends this focus on the transnational by taking neoliberalism and the rise of the Internet as points of departure.

Besides disrupting any notion of historical periodization being able to tell the “complete” story of Latina/o literature, the *Companion*’s closing section on critical methodologies foregrounds just how these shape not only which questions get asked about Latina/o literature but also how they influence the status of particular authors, texts, and genres. For instance, the critical focus on normative systems of gender and sexuality by Latina feminism and queer studies has brought genres that focus on the social negotiations of gendered and queer subjects within hostile social environments, such as poetry and life writing, into the forefront of Latina/o critical inquiry. Likewise, the centrality of migrants to the present articulation of *latinidades* has brought narratives of migration to the fore, not only as a present reality but as a long-standing phenomenon.

Organization of the *Companion*

Part I examines these developments within Latina/o literature from the early, heady days of trans-American exchanges to the grim reality of Latina/o abjection during the first half of the twentieth century. As Rodrigo Lazo demonstrates, the trans-American literary encounters of the early nineteenth century, as portrayed within poetry and travel narratives, map out the hopeful possibilities of a Western hemisphere of sister republics united against the tyranny and corruption of European colonization. This alliance of hope was not to last, as the United States would, by the 1820s, begin to imagine itself as an “Empire for Liberty,” and the rest of the Americas as its protectorate under the Monroe Doctrine. By the 1840s, Manifest Destiny, or the self-granted providential right of the United States to spread across the North American continent, made possible the taking of Mexico’s northern half in a war of conquest (the U.S.-Mexican War of 1846–48).²

As a result, the early nineteenth-century dream of sister republics gave way by mid-century to an increasing fear and wariness of the United States throughout Latin America. The invasion and conquest of a sister republic,

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followed by the increasingly harsh racialization of those Mexicans in the annexed territories who chose to become U.S. citizens, fostered a deep and abiding distrust of the imperial ambitions of the United States to dominate the Americas. As Laura Lomas shows, Cuban expatriate José Martí articulated in the 1880s and 1890s what we may now recognize as a working-class migrant Latina/o subjectivity, critical not only of local inequalities of race and class within the Gilded Age United States but also of major differences in power between American nation-states as well. Even while he organized fellow exiles against the Spanish colonialism still ruling Cuba, Martí criticized the retention of colonial epistemologies and institutions in Latin American republics, warning that social hierarchies of race would invariably weaken the ability of Latin America to fend off the incursions of the United States, “the giant with seven-league boots.” Martí died fighting for Cuban independence in 1895, four years before his worst fears would be realized by the U.S. seizure of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines as a result of the U.S.-Spanish War of 1898. Cuba would gain nominal independence in 1902, albeit under U.S.-imposed conditions, while the Philippines would remain under direct U.S. rule until 1946. The colonial status of Puerto Rico and Guam has only nominally changed since 1898.³

During the first half of the twentieth century, the terms of U.S. national inclusion for Latinas/os, whether citizens or not, became the central subject of the first substantial body of Latina/o literature to be written in English, as I discuss in my contribution. Coming from the first generation of *Mexico-tejanos* [people of Mexican descent in Texas] to have fully encountered the English-only public educational system, writers such as Jovita González and Américo Paredes engaged the novelistic tradition in English in their examinations of race, class, gender, and power in the South Texas borderlands during the 1930s. Spurred into writing by the Anglo-Texan discourses of racial triumphalism during the Texas Centennial of 1936, these authors provided socially symbolic responses to the pressures of modernity upon Mexican descent communities. As I discuss in my essay, José Antonio Villarreal’s 1959 novel *Pocho*, once considered the “first” Chicano novel, highlights what appeared to be the key ideological impasse for “the Mexican American generation”: how to imagine social agency in something other than the individualist terms allowed by U.S. nationalist discourses.⁴

In contrast, the Puerto Rican literature of the 1950s directly engages the impact of U.S. administrative colonialism of the Island and the resulting diaspora of Puerto Ricans, particularly to New York City. René Marqués’s play *La carreta* [*The Oxcart*] traces the forced migration of a poor *jibaro* [peasant] family from the hardscrabble but dignified life on the Island’s central mountains, to the crowded and vice-ridden slums of San Juan, and

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finally to the cold mean streets of New York. In modernist, fragmented fashion, Pedro Juan Soto's *Spiks* picks up where *The Oxcart* leaves off, tracing the deprived and dehumanized experiences of Nuyoricans as they attempt to navigate an economic and racial system that exploits them economically while stripping them of dignity and culture. Significantly, these bilingual authors chose to write their works in Spanish rather than English, reflecting the highly charged politics of language associated with the Island's colonial status; while English was the linguistic medium of hopeful incorporation into the United States for many Mexican American writers of this period, Spanish was the preferred language of national independence for Puerto Rican authors.⁵

Part II of the *Companion* examines the contemporary production of Latina/o literature, starting with the Chicano and Boricua social movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s until the dawn of the present millennium. In this period, the sheer quantity of Latina/o literature increases dramatically, as changes in U.S. immigration policy after 1965, the impact of the Cold War on Latin America, the global decolonization movement, and the intensification of neoliberal economic policies created not only new transnational migrant communities but also the critical political consciousness among those communities to oppose their further exploitation and marginalization. As Richard T. Rodríguez demonstrates, the cultural and political nationalisms of the Chicano and Boricua movements formed a key moment in mass mobilization and the proliferation of poetry, novels, and drama, even if the cultural nationalist imaginaries expressed within these works were limited by sexist and heteronormative assumptions.⁶

The trans-American nature of Latina/o literature in the twentieth century becomes immediately clear when the huge impact of the Cold War (1945–91) is taken into consideration. As Ricardo Ortíz shows, the twin pillars of U.S. foreign policy for Latin America in this period – the protection of U.S. economic interests and the containment of Soviet-influenced communism – lead to interventionist policies throughout the region. These included CIA-sponsored coups (Guatemala, 1954; Cuba, 1961; Chile, 1973), covert proxy wars (Nicaragua, 1980s), military invasion and occupation (Dominican Republic, 1965–66; Panama, 1989), and support for numerous repressive dictatorships, including those of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic (1930–61), Fulgencio Batista in Cuba (1933–44, 1952–59), the Duvaliers in Haiti (1957–86), and the Somozas in Nicaragua (1936–79). U.S. support for repressive governments in Guatemala and El Salvador, especially during the civil wars in those nations during the 1980s, lead to near-genocidal campaigns against indigenous communities. All told, these interventions created the political and economic circumstances that

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led to mass migrations from Latin America to the United States, thereby shifting the nature of *latinidades* as imagined within the United States from a Chicano-Puertorriqueño axis to a multivalent nexus that predominantly featured diasporic communities from Cuba, Central America (especially Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras), and Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) as well as Mexico and Puerto Rico.⁷

Widely proclaimed at its onset to be “The Decade of the Hispanic,” the 1980s proved to be less about the dawn of widespread Latina/o influence in the United States and more about the uneven incorporation of Latinas/os into national institutions. As Tiffany Ana López illustrates, Latina feminist writers and theorists such as Gloria Anzaldúa, often in conversation with African American women and other feminists of color, created increasingly complex writings not only about economic exploitation and racist marginalization but also about the sexism and homophobia of the previous decade’s cultural nationalist movements. Simultaneously, the relative opening of U.S. institutions of higher education and the arts to Latinas/os during the late 1960s and early 1970s allowed for the increasing professionalization of Latina/o literary production by the early 1980s. Authors such as Sandra Cisneros and Oscar Hijuelos received advanced degrees in creative writing, while the Hispanic Playwright Laboratory at INTAR, cofounded by dramatist María Irene Fornes, directly or indirectly trained a number of important Latina/o dramatists such as Cherrie Moraga and Nilo Cruz. Other Latina/o poets and playwrights, notably Nuyoricans Miguel Piñero and Tato Laviera and Chicanas/os Lorna Dee Cervantes and Luis Valdez, continued the critical legacies of the *movimientos*. Even as relative access to U.S. institutions opened new avenues of expression, Latina/o writers still confronted the numerous crises facing the Latina/o community, including the AIDS epidemic, the demonization of poor communities by Reaganomics, and the influx of Central American and Dominican refugees caused by U.S. Cold War policies in Latin America.

Two trends during the 1990s defined the trans-American dimensions of that decade for Latina/o literature. As Lucía Suárez outlines, the first of these is best exemplified by the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, which further integrated the economies of the United States, Mexico, and Canada into a common market. Neoliberalism, or the set of economic theories behind NAFTA and other so-called free-trade agreements, favored the privatization of corporate gain while socializing corporate risk. This arrangement placed Mexico’s weaker economic sectors at a major disadvantage relative to the stronger economic sectors of the United States, and while certain sectors of the Mexican economy prospered under NAFTA, the vast majority of small-scale agricultural

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