

Introduction

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Cultural critics and historians have long considered the decades between 1870 and 1930 Latin America's paradigmatic transitional period. The consolidation of oligarchic nation-states after years of civil wars unleashed multiple and unexpected forces in the economic, political, and cultural realms in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The continent witnessed the complex transformation of pastoral and rural societies into modernized and market-oriented states with strong agroexport sectors. In the first decades of the twentieth century, oligarchic rule gradually gave way to novel experiments in representative democracy and activism by groups who fought against established powers. The discourses of nationalism and national identity that accompanied projects of state building through military conflict, electoral reform, and cultural and political centralization were immediately challenged by the emergence of transnational forms of engagement. The rise of Latin Americanism as a project of continental integration, together with that of other internationalist alliances, sought to disrupt long-established elite systems of state control. Latin America's increased participation in transnational economic and cultural networks is a defining factor in the complex changes occurring in these decades. An explosion of diverse literary and artistic currents (realism, naturalism, *Modernismo*, and the many "isms" of the avant-gardes) and literary forms (from the serial novel to travel narratives to the *crónica*) expressed the contradictions of the continent's incorporation into print capitalism and metropolitan aesthetic modernity; artistic and cinematic experimentation in turn-of-the-century Latin America was the consequence of technological transformations that affected sensorial perception and altered the materiality of literary practices.

The transitional character of this period is also reflected in the ambiguous and alternative names given to it by its contemporaries and by scholars who, over the years, tried to convey the sense of the passing of time and the cultural reconversion it represents. Some have plainly referred to it as the

“turn of the century,” the expression we will more commonly use in this introduction. Others speak of the “export age” in order to emphasize the increasing Latin American economic dependency with respect to metropolitan economic centers, particularly Britain and the United States. Some others prefer the French denominations *fin de siècle* or *belle époque*, depending on whether they focus on specific cultural features of the period or the boundless prosperity of the upper classes, for whom Paris constituted the ultimate symbolic reference. The growing need for raw materials in countries with a long history of industrialization and broad colonial outreach such as Britain, as well as in emerging superpowers with burgeoning financial and manufacturing sectors such as the United States, contributed to the establishment of what Tulio Halperin Donghi, in another well-known characterization, has called the “maturity of the neocolonial order” (158). In any case, all these terms tend to suggest an acute awareness of beginnings and endings, but above all, an experience of drastic and extreme transformation in political, social, and cultural relations. Many of these changes came to a halt, or adopted new articulations or directions, in the 1930s, when the Wall Street crash and the rise of profascist governments in Latin America signaled the collapse of liberal modernization projects.

This volume explores how the circulation of goods, people, and ideas permeated every aspect of the continent’s cultural production at the turn of the century. We are interested not only in understanding how literature and the arts confronted the unprecedented penetration of global capital in Latin America but also in exploring the ways in which rapidly transforming technological and labor conditions contributed to forging new intellectual networks, creating original discourses, exploring innovative forms of knowledge, and reimagining the material and immaterial worlds.

Scholarship on turn-of-the-century Latin America has been entirely transformed in the last four decades. Since the 1980s and 1990s, scholars have devoted breakthrough studies to the literary cultures of Spanish American *Modernismo* and the avant-garde movements that asserted the originality of aesthetic modernity in Latin America. Ángel Rama (1970, 1985), Aníbal González (1983, 1987), Julio Ramos (1989), Graciela Montaldo (1994), and Susana Rotker (1992) pointed out the impact of global capital in the cultural production of the period, underlining in particular its effects on the emergence of new literary forms (such as the *crónica*) as well as the contradictory place of the writer in a consolidating market of cultural goods. Sylvia Molloy (2012) investigated critical issues of gender and sexuality, while Francine Masiello (1986), Beatriz Sarlo (1988), Jorge Schwartz (1991), and Nelson Osorio Tejada (1988) contributed

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crucial works to the understanding of the avant-gardes' complex engagement with concepts of urban and aesthetic modernity; Carlos Alonso (1990) explored the significance of the rural imagination in canonical *regionalista* works of the 1920s and 1930s. A parallel trend developed in relation to Brazilian cultural production. Nicolau Sevcenko (1983) studied literature's resisting logic vis-à-vis the market-oriented cultural practices during the years of the First Republic (1889–1930); from a Marxist perspective, Roberto Schwarz (1990) investigated the role of capital and class-related issues in Brazilian intellectual circles and cultural production. The ways in which new technologies of travel and representation, both in the nation's frontier and in its rapidly changing urban centers, transformed the aesthetic understanding of space and time were analyzed by Flora Süssekind (1987) and Francisco Foot Hardman (1988). Silviano Santiago (1989) offered novel theoretical and methodological approaches to Brazilian *Modernismo* and the literature that preceded this artistic movement, and Lília Moritz Schwarcz (1993) studied the role of racial theories in scientific discourses and institutions.

This volume shows the new directions in turn-of-the-century scholarship that developed over the last two decades by investigating how the experience of capitalism produced an array of works that deal with primitive accumulation, transnational crossings, and an emerging technological and material reality in diverse geographies and a variety of cultural forms. The various contributions provide a novel understanding of the period, as they discuss the ways in which particular commodities, intellectual networks, popular uprisings, materialities, and nonmetropolitan locations redefined cultural production at a time when the place of Latin America in global affairs was significantly transformed. Some chapters establish productive dialogues with the field of environmental studies, emphasizing the relations between humans and nature, the devastating logic of extractivism, or the renewed attention paid to Latin American landscapes within aesthetic production. Others draw on the theoretical contributions of new materialisms, as they rethink how objects and their circulation shape cultural practices, including perspectives on the materiality of everyday urban life – bodies, travel, money, visual technologies, infrastructure – and, crucially, of the letter itself. At some points, chapters work close to theories associated with the spatial turn, directing their attention toward issues of location and place, circulation and displacement, as well as changing geographies, routes, and maps.

Our volume also provides a fresh look at the turn-of-the-century archive: Contributors discuss fiction and poetry, but they also take into consideration travelogues, diaries, letters, sketches of manners, journalistic accounts, essays, scientific treatises, political pamphlets, visual art, photography, and the moving image. They also study official records, unpublished manuscripts, personal correspondence, film repositories, and a variety of original sources that have been previously marginalized in the research on this period. This approach allows us to offer a detailed analysis of how scientific exploration and theorization, speculative thinking, grass-root political engagement, urban planning, and novel visual technologies contributed to the transformation of the notion of literature and the task of the intellectual.

In addition to discussing some of the best-known and forgotten works of the period's canonical figures and hegemonic cultural centers, this volume also analyzes popular culture, as well as the production of writers and artists of Indigenous and African descent, of sexual dissidents, and of migrant and *fronterizo* creators working on the fringes of institutionally sanctioned cultural systems. Chapters privilege transnational and comparative approaches to the topics discussed while giving particular attention to geographies and sites that have been systematically ignored in the past. Places such as Paraguay and Bolivia, rarely present in analysis of Latin American cultures at the turn of the century, play a prominent role in our project. Besides the ever-present references to Europe, Russia and China appear as key sites in the exploration of transcontinental and transpacific artistic mediations. The study of liminal urban enclaves that were dramatically reinvented at the turn of the century – Iquique, Manaus, San Juan de Puerto Rico, and Ciudad Juárez-El Paso – aims at reassessing the role of cities in the culture of this period. The exploration of inter-American wars – such as the Paraguayan War (in which an alliance between Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay defeated Paraguay, 1864–1870), the War of the Pacific (which pitted an alliance between Peru and Bolivia against Chile, 1879–1884), the Spanish–American War (by which the United States took possession of Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898), and the Chaco War (between Paraguay and Bolivia, 1932–1935) – also contributes to rethinking established ideas about Latin America as a unified and peaceful continent at the turn of the century.

This volume also widens the traditional scope of the research on the period 1870–1930 by studying the impact of the increased circulation of capital on the constitution of lettered diasporic communities, popular and middle-class movements of resistance to hegemonic powers, the place of

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ethnic minorities in social and political life, the way intellectuals engaged with architectural and infrastructural developments in border and colonial outposts, and the manner in which writers and artists understood the technologies of the body and its circulation.

This book is divided into five parts. We have preferred to use a single word for sections and chapter titles to provide a comprehensive approach to the subjects and convey the idea of their interconnectedness. In order to underline the concept of transition, many chapters cover the entire 1870–1930 timeframe, although some of them lean more decidedly on the period's beginning and/or end. Indeed, several contributors emphasize the ways in which the period in question constitutes a rearticulation of previous phenomena or prolongs itself into the following decades. While the chapters can be read individually, the book can be illuminating if approached transversally, as topics recur and expand in different sections.

Entitled “Commodities,” Part I discusses, following some of the insights offered by Ericka Beckman (2013), the ways in which the “booms” of rubber, guano and nitrates, coffee, bananas and plantains, and yerba generated new modes of writing and cultural production. This process was led by a liberal elite that encouraged the incorporation of new territories through war and pillaging (both against lands inhabited by Indigenous or peasant peoples and through interstate armed conflicts), as well as European immigration or internal population displacements. The echoes of this “boom and bust” logic can be perceived in the ways landscape and nature are represented in literature, as well as in debates regarding land ownership, labor conditions, and the effects that fluctuations in international prices had on businessmen and urban elites. Extractivism had dramatic effects on the lives and the social fabric of various Black, Indigenous, and Mestizo peoples; a varied corpus of texts discussed in this book addresses the social crisis brought about in these years.

The analysis of these issues proves instrumental in broadening our reflection on the role of national states vis-à-vis transnational capital and various forms of neocolonialism. The state apparatus underwent a profound modernization in the last years of the nineteenth century; through increased bureaucratic centralization and the expansion of the military, it became more visible and managed to impose its power over the entire territory. At the same time, the Latin American ruling elites sought to open up the countries to foreign investment, a move that again seemed to reduce state power as overseer and regulator of the practices of international companies. This propelled intellectuals into traveling to the frontier regions where these companies were frequently established, as

they tried to scrutinize and denounce the destruction of vegetation and soils as well as the dire working conditions that subaltern groups and immigrants experienced. Some of these elements are also visible in cases when exploitative systems were not controlled by foreign companies but, as the chapters about coffee and yerba point out, responded to local caciques or businessmen.

Intellectuals were themselves somewhat torn between an enthusiastic impulse to promote national development and industrialization, and concerns over the perils that capitalist enterprises represented for national independence, fragile ecosystems, and labor legislation. In this sense, it is worth noting how in the authors discussed in Part I, nationalist sentiments can coexist somewhat in tension with a cosmopolitan embrace of foreign influence. The chapters included here offer an enlightening perspective on the way in which the commodity boom changed the ways of experiencing and imagining geography, as writers describe new regions where the commodities are (or would be) produced while projecting the relations between those supposedly unknown lands and the metropolitan centers. Also discussed in Part I is how perception of time changes in relation to economic processes; for many workers, the strong reliance on debt peonage (characteristic of the modes of production of commodities such as rubber and yerba) made the future look uncannily like the present. The idea of debt was complemented, for the urban classes who enjoyed the benefits of the export boom, by that of credit, which added a fictional character to the very idea of the future.

Part II explores networks. If turn-of-the-century capitalism promoted the transformation of national economies and the corresponding cultural discourses of nationalism and national identity (underscoring each Latin American country's eminent place in a globalized world), it also contributed to increasing transnational exchanges between social and cultural actors. Of particular significance here are the new communication technologies developed in the mid-nineteenth century to accelerate the flow of information, such as the undersea cable, which had a crucial impact on the development of journalism, as it allowed people in faraway locations to communicate across borders with unprecedented speed. New forms of writing, such as the *crónica*, emerged as a result of the significant impact of these technological changes. Railroad systems also expanded in the last decades of the nineteenth century. By the end of the period considered in this volume, the car had started to have a visible presence in the city and the countryside, and airplane companies increased their hemispheric outreach.

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Increased communications helped to expand hemispheric intellectual networks throughout the continent and beyond. On the one hand, intellectuals themselves increasingly circulated across the globe, promoting new alliances and imagining original transnational projects. On the other hand, currents of thought were significantly reshaped through massive displacement of people, as immigration (from Europe to the Americas, from the Caribbean to the United States, from China and Japan to the Caribbean, Peru, and Brazil) transformed the ways in which Latin America was conceived of and debated in these years. Given the unprecedented role of the United States in Latin America since the 1880s, movements devoted to promoting both hemispheric integration and resistance to US expansionism after the Spanish–American War benefited from increased circulation of information and intellectual solidarity. Latin American integration into the global markets fueled an extraordinary array of discourses and practices articulated by intellectuals participating directly or indirectly in antiestablishment organizations that promoted ethnic, sexual, or social justice in the public sphere. The diasporic Latin American communities in the United States were also integrated into the cartographies of knowledge and power that emerged at the turn of the century. This period further witnessed the expansion of intellectual engagement with the nascent Republic of China and the Soviet Union as a result of the revolutionary movements emerging at the time in some Latin American countries. In particular, the chapters emphasize the way these projects, which involved increased travel between peripheral and central enclaves, allowed for the constitution of novel elite and nonelite intellectual alliances.

Uprisings are the thematic focus of Part III. While intellectual networks were developed to promote principles of cultural cooperation and social commitment in the lettered sphere, the Latin American turn of the century also witnessed the emergence of radical movements that opposed the exclusionary logics of the modern nation-state and US hemispheric dominance. These movements were not always organically articulated or organized, and their conflictive relations with the state could range from suspicion and close surveillance to open clashes or even war. In particular, this section pays attention to the role that nonelite intellectuals and the popular public sphere played in the development of political and cultural forces against land grabbing or exploitative working conditions both in urban settings and the countryside.

While anarchism and the abolitionist movement brought to the foreground tensions and dialogues between urban Latin American intellectuals and international political processes, the various forms of *Indigenismo* and

of rural insurgencies strongly rearticulated the relationship between the urban centers and the peripheral regions that resisted their hegemony within the national space. Anarchism grew among the unprecedented Spanish and Italian immigrant communities in many Latin American countries and relied on a strong transatlantic network of ideas. The fact that Cuba and Brazil were the last countries in the hemisphere to catch up with what had been a strong liberal trend during the nineteenth century concerning slavery triggered a fundamental discussion about the real meaning of modernization in these countries. Concern for the place of subaltern sectors in the national body was also part of the abundant literature focused on forms of rural insurgency articulated as banditry, revolution, *caudillismo*, and millenarianism, among others. All of these ideologies and movements were strongly infused with ideas of futurity, as they sought to unleash profound social and political transformations and took actions directed toward the construction of new and different societies. In sum, authors in this section analyze radical political practices consolidated through varied ethnic, class, kinship, or leadership lines, in sharp contrast to the unified modern capitalist projects of the ruling urban elites.

Part IV, entitled “Connectors,” focuses on the way cultural producers dealt with shared social and cultural experiences and forms of knowledge that received increased attention between 1870 and 1930. The incorporation of Latin America in the international financial markets expanded the debate on money and monetary transactions, making them engines of fiction. The expansion of the export economy and global financial capitalism was marked by periods of euphoria and decline, where prosperity and rampant speculation were followed by deep economic crises. The acceleration in communications and new forms of transport technology allowed for further exploration and appropriation of lands, as well as for the reconfiguration of notions of time and space that fundamentally reshaped personal subjectivities and notions of collectivity. The traveler (who in previous years had been mostly described as an explorer or adventurer and now was viewed increasingly as a tourist) went beyond European cosmopolitan centers. The Near East and Asia became appealing to elite intellectuals, who produced written and visual reports about their journeys to these regions. This interest in far-off lands went hand in hand with a sustained exploration of Latin America’s unknown and politically unstable borders; travelers were often spurred by the state’s urge to control and exploit these areas, which were seen as fragile and potentially threatened by foreign countries. To write about travel also allowed the

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renegotiation of the place of national cultures in the global scene and the exploration of new ways of embodying gender and ethnic identity. Illnesses, clothes, and prostheses became part of queer experiences that brought the materiality of the body to the foreground.

Since the end of the nineteenth century, science and technology reshaped the concept of modern life, as well as forms of control and transformation of the environment; circulation of scientific knowledge expanded through periodical publications and progressively reached wider audiences. The discourses of literature and science influenced each other, as the latter transformed the technologies of seeing. The way the state understood geopolitics and hegemony also changed, as evidenced by the greatly consequential interstate and internal military conflicts (the Paraguayan War, the War of the Pacific, the Canudos War, the Chaco War) that reconfigured state borders, discourses on nationhood, legal and foreign-affairs writings and doctrine, and cultural production. Finally, Part IV explores how visual technologies intersected verbal discourses, becoming both a component of the very materiality of literary objects and a subject of fiction. The Latin American *crónica*, a recurrent presence in this volume, was the genre that subtly captured a shift in the perception of cityscapes by showing the unsettling effects of simultaneity, the rapid succession of fleeting impressions, and the intellectual curiosity generated by the nascent cinematic image. In addition to representing new visual trends (and arguably becoming one of them itself), the *crónica* also served to denounce rural labor conditions in the frontier and the exploitation of migrant workers, as well as to articulate the emerging notion of a Hispanic intellectual community in the United States.

Part V, “Cities,” seeks to displace the attention traditionally given in turn-of-the-century scholarship to the metropolis, as urban settings located at the outposts of territorial expansion were equally impacted by state-sponsored and private capital expansion, international and internal migrations of people, and the rise of regional cultural identities. Although there is a significant amount of studies devoted to the extraordinary growth and transformations of many Latin American capital cities at the turn of the century (Buenos Aires, Havana, Mexico City, and Rio de Janeiro being the best-known cases), this section adds new perspectives on liminal urban centers whose histories allow the reassessment of established notions of modernization and coloniality, cosmopolitanism and regionalism, technology and infrastructure, artistic and linguistic experimentation, as well as emerging ideas of spatiality and temporality.

While the possibilities were numerous, we decided to focus here on Iquique, in the saltpeter-producing Tarapacá region of the Atacama Desert, which became Chilean after the defeat of Peru in the War of the Pacific and subsequently prompted important debates concerning national mourning and workers' rights; and Manaus, at the heart of the Brazilian Amazon, which saw its infrastructure transform in an unprecedented way during the years of the rubber boom, as bankers, traders, and immigrant groups built luxurious palaces and public buildings, and intellectuals started to develop an Amazonian regionalist movement. This section's last two essays focus on the borders of the United States as the country consolidated its economic and military role in Latin America: San Juan de Puerto Rico, the capital city of a new US colonial possession, which underwent a dramatic infrastructural and architectural transformation after the Spanish–American War, triggering passionate debates about empire landscapes and cultural heritage in varied discursive formats; and Ciudad Juárez and El Paso, two linked border enclaves that allow for a *fronterizo* history of the Mexican Revolution and for new critical approaches to migrating communities, and artistic experimentation in literature and film.

Our volume opens up necessary critical debates surrounding the turn of the century in Latin America and invites further exploration into related issues, archives, and modes of scholarly inquiry. Far from being exhaustive, our aim is to provide a new framework to rethink this period as transitional. The planning of the volume revealed to us the difficulties and possibilities of examining understudied topics, both in terms of sources and specialists. We observed that certain commodities have received extraordinary levels of literary and critical attention, while others have not as often been objects of representation by writers and artists. The focus on environmental issues has prevailed over the study of the use of certain commodities as stimulants within global and regional circuits of consumption, an aspect that the chapters about coffee and yerba start to explore. In Part II, we privileged the exploration of intellectual networks in Latin America “from below,” in an attempt to change long-established research approaches to this topic. The contributions in this part introduce novel perspectives about the role of technology, street activism, and transnational women's networks, as well as the intersections of Latin America with Asia and Africa, but much more critical exploration is needed in this area. The chapters devoted to uprisings equally incorporate new viewpoints into community-based forms of resistance forged beyond conventional party and class alliances. Critical analysis intersects lettered perspectives with