

Associate Editor's Report

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This issue is the last one under Sonia Alvarez's watch. It is fit, therefore, to recognize her brilliant job in de-centering Latin American Studies, a mandate that she inherited from the 2003 LASA Strategic Plan. Sonia took seriously her mandate of debating cutting-edge issues that are presently shaping the field. Incoming president Charlie Hale will pursue our strategic mandate of promoting the transnationalization of the field and its diversification. His Other Americas/Otros Saberes initiative is tangible proof of his energy and direction. They both embody the ethical qualities that most Latin Americans seek in academics who are both intellectually first-rate and cutting-edge, yet *comprometidos* in one fashion or another with the peoples of the hemisphere, without allowing ego, promotions, or selfishness, to get in the way of their vision. Thank you.

The *On the Profession* section features two different articles in this issue. On the one hand, we have Miguel León-Portilla's talk as recipient of the 2006 Kalman Silvert award. Unfortunately, Miguel, who dedicated his life to the rescue of indigenous knowledge in Mexico before this became fashionable, was the first-ever Kalman Silvert recipient to be unable to attend the Congress because of health reasons. However, his lecture "La construcción del significado en la historia" was read during the Congress, and is included here as has been traditional. Engaged in a dialogical relationship with Ferdinand Braudel's school of *Annales*, León-Portilla explains that the construction of meaning in history "implica la integración de conceptos que dan a entender lo que ocurrió en un determinado tiempo y lugar con todas sus implicaciones, antecedentes, causas y consecuencias." The historian's job thus consists of re-constructing his data conceptually. This enables León-Portilla to argue that a

historian is not just a collector of facts. Events themselves are not bearers of signification. Meaning is constructed as a result of a critical processing of facts and events. Thus, signification can never be separate from a theoretico-critical focus.

The other article featured in the *On the Profession* section is Arturo Escobar's "Revisioning Latin American/Caribbean Studies: A Geo-Politics of Knowledge Approach." This article traces the transformation of area studies as a result of globalization, the emergence of paradigmatic trends in the social sciences and the humanities, and the consolidation of more substantial interdisciplinary approaches. Escobar analyzes the scholarly factors involved in this transformation, listing social issues such as the end of the Cold War, the rise of neo-liberal models, or the emergence of NGOs, and scholarly ones, such as the emergence of post-structuralism, the appearance of new interdisciplinary fields such as cultural studies, and the financial pressures on universities. All of these factors have led to a transformation of what constitutes "Latin America." This raises a whole set of challenges, complicating the object of study, its boundaries, regional sub-groupings, topographical identities, paradigms, frameworks and methodologies. It also generates new knowledge producers on site. How institutions respond to them will define the future of the field.

Given LASA's 40th anniversary, the *Debates* section will not feature debates per se, on this issue. Instead, it will include the various recollections, memoirs, testimonials, and historical reconstructions of LASA's founders, regarding both the creation of the Association in 1966, and the presence of Cuba as "the Other" of the United States in both the emergence of Latin American Studies, and in shaping the original debates,

policies, structure, orientation, political practice and scholarly ethics of the association. This rich documentation was gathered in the two special sessions commemorating LASA's 40th anniversary at the San Juan Congress. These special sessions were organized by past LASA presidents Carmen Diana Deere, Susan Eckstein, and Lars Schoultz. The first one was "Tumultuous Times: LASA in the 1960s." The second one, "The Never-Ending Cold War: The United States, Cuba, and LASA's Battle for Academic Freedom." The first of these included Paul Doughty, Margaret E. Crahan, Peter Smith, and Ronald H. Chilcote, with Terry Karl as discussant. To this panel we have added Richard N. Adams's presentation. Rick was supposed to participate in this panel, but was unable to attend at the last minute. The second panel included Jorge Domínguez, Sandra Levinson, and Wayne Smith. These short presentations enable LASA to document and reconstruct its early history, if only by systematizing primary sources: the testimonials of surviving participants of this process.

Richard Adams, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology from the University of Texas at Austin, and LASA's second president, attributes the bulk of the initiative for LASA's creation to Kalman Silvert, its first president, working out of New York University. He also attributes LASA's logo to him, and notes that Richard Schaedel, an anthropologist from UT Austin, was *LARR*'s first editor.

Paul Doughty, still another anthropologist, Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Florida and the eighth president of LASA, serving in 1974, emphasizes LASA's academic radicalism. He raised the issue that LASA should not be housed in an institution linked to the U.S. government. Paul claims that the war

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in Vietnam, the civil rights movement in the United States, the Equal Rights movement, combined with oppression in Latin America, and of course, U.S.-Cuba relations, quickly radicalized LASA. But a qualitative jump was made after Pinochet's coup in Chile. The Chilean coup also led to LASA canceling its 1974 Congress at the ITT-owned San Francisco Sheraton, because of ITT's involvement in the Chilean coup. He also credits Felicity Trueblood with changing the role of Executive Secretary to that of Executive Director.

Margaret E. Crahan, Professor of Religion, Politics and Human Rights at Hampshire College, was a pioneer feminist, and in 1973 was the first woman to be elected to the LASA Executive Council (EC). She credits Felicity Trueblood with helping her prepare her participation in the EC so that women would be taken seriously by early Latin Americanists. She also co-chaired the only joint LASA-African Studies meeting in Houston in 1977, and organized the first U.S.-Cuba exchange.

Peter Smith, Simón Bolívar Professor of Political Science at the University of California, San Diego, and LASA's 14th president, serving in 1981, says that the relationship to the U.S. government raised to the highest level the ethical concerns about scholarly behavior, and that it drew a line in the sand for all. It established that LASA was not going to become an arm of U.S. policy, and that those who did it could not belong to the association. He also claims that LASA's original discussions established that the association was both professional and academic.

Ronald H. Chilcote, Professor of Economics and Political Science at the University of California, Riverside, argues that the Cuban revolution provided the context for his involvement in LASA, and

draws various lessons from the sixties. These included the importance of spending time in Latin America, the need to explore the Iberian peninsula, the need to study the Latin American left, the need to become activists and public intellectuals at the same time, and the need to still learn from the sixties as an era of innovation, openness, and a search for alternative possibilities and outcomes.

Terry Karl, Gilbert Professor of Political Science at Stanford University, comments on the main points raised by presenters, and adds that unlike what happened in the 1960s, the political and democratic lessons are now coming from Latin America back to the United States.

Jorge Domínguez, Professor of Political Science at Harvard University and past president of LASA, comments on the difficulty of security relations between the U.S. and Cuban governments, finds Bush administration policies paradoxical and contradictory, and argues that, in the matter of denying visas for Cuban scholars attending LASA Congresses, the Bush administration has chosen to label LASA as a "Cuba solidarity organization."

Sandra Levinson is Executive Director of the Center for Cuban Studies. She explains what the Center was, and how it was structured, in a presentation shared with Wayne Smith, Senior Fellow at the Center for International Policy and adjunct professor/director of the Cuban Exchange Program at Johns Hopkins University. Wayne explains the nature of the lawsuit filed in Federal Court against the Bush administration for violating academic freedoms.

This issue also includes an analysis of the election of Michele Bachelet as president of Chile. Titled "¿Más político que cultural! o ¿Cómo llegó en Chile una mujer a la

Presidencia?" by Marcela Ríos Tobar of FLACSO-Chile, it analyzes the factors that explain how a woman who was not married to a politician but had developed an independent political trajectory of her own, was elected with a sizeable percentage of the vote. Marcela argues that two factors combined to explain this result: on the one hand, the historical feminist demands as they developed throughout the 1990s, pushing for a public presence in Chilean politics; on the other, the particular aspects of this election, that included the certainty that the governing coalition would win, the high approval of President Lagos, the sustained economic growth, and the support that women, especially working-class women, gave to Bachelet. She was also perceived by many as warmer and closer to the people than her predecessor, while also representing a generational change in leadership. ■