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Latino Futures? Cultural Political Economy and Alternative Futures

This chapter makes a general case for grounding a twenty-first-century critical Latino studies and politics in something we shall provisionally call 'cultural political economy'.[1] It makes that case by attempting to resolve lingering theoretical tensions between socioeconomic (structural) and culture-based (semiotic) approaches to our neoliberal present.[2] This postdisciplinary interpretation reaffirms the centrality of capitalist formations in the study of the Latino question by embedding social and cultural categories in the lived spaces of our macroeconomic order. The kind of cultural political economy we posit strives for a theoretically and empirically useful analytic with which to approach the urban question for our changing times.

From the above approach, we sketch a few strategic lines to confront changing class formations and deindustrialisation in neoliberal capitalism's period of indefinitely prolonged crisis. Our cursory review then explores the ways our current economic crisis implicates the scholarly projects of Latino and Chicano urban studies—and how our interpretations of cultural political economy might reconfigure these projects to answer the continued attacks from the populist right.

We picked up some of our critical thread from theoretical themes previously addressed by Valle and Torres in *Latino Metropolis*.[3] From our perspective, this work was foundational in exploring the strategic political and discursive opportunities that Los Angeles offered as it emerged as a majority Mexican and Latino city. The context in which the city reached this demographic tipping point was as important as its passage through the socioeconomic minefield of industrial transformation. The maturation of what was then a hardly noticed transition to a post-Fordist mode of production in the nation's largest manufacturing centre spelled the most important element of that irreducible difference. The emergence of a majority-Latino immigrant working class in both the new manufacturing enterprises and the growing service sector was

a symptom of the wrenching deindustrialisation and reindustrialisation of the region, a thoroughgoing reorganisation of production in which neoliberal globalisation imported the *maquiladora* model to industrial sectors that were too expensive to relocate to Latin America or Asia. More important to the lived experiences of that emergent Latino working-class majority were the socioeconomic and cultural consequences of that new industrial order: its ever-harsher regime of class inequality, misery, and marginalisation.

Like Valle and Torres, we recognise the obvious: that attaining a supernumerary status would not guarantee diminished social inequalities so long as the region's symbolic economy continued to racialise, and therefore devalue, Latino immigrant labour. The means of cultural production, in other words, played a powerful role in reinforcing and reproducing the new social relations of post-Fordist production and its disciplinary requirements. There were, for example, subtle interactions between the recurring moral panics directed against 'illegal alien' workers, the postmodern commodification of Mexican cuisine and ethnic tourist enclaves, and a huge restaurant industry that depended on the exploitation of a Latino/a immigrant workforce.

We recognize that there was a confluence of economic, political, and cultural changes meshed with the consolidation of a progressive Latino labour leadership and the day-to-day practices of Latino hybridity as aspects of a contestatory and pragmatic survival strategy in all arenas of representation, including practices of place-making. Making sense of these enmeshments, or what Marx called the metabolism of social and material conditions, required a degree of theoretical and methodological experimentation on our parts. Marx, after all, never developed a full-blown theorisation of culture deduced from the logics of communicative processes. Instead, he saw the 'natural' environment as a seemingly endless yet two-sided metabolic dialectic with humans, who, in modifying it, evolved new social relations to survive the environment they had changed.

That metabolism cannot function without the coordinating and interpretive cultural membrane through which human societies appraise, modify, and adapt to their environments: an approach to the symbolic order that Marx lacked, but intuited, when he proposed the logic of his biological metaphor. He brushed up against the symbolic order again when he acknowledged the seeming mysteries of the commodity fetish, an object of socially produced value that is nevertheless a bearer of multiple

connotative secrets: 'A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties'.[4] Slavoj Žižek argues that the social relations that produce the commodity 'fetish as a solid object' nevertheless carry within them the ideology that hides the social costs of the commodity's creation, a spectral parallel of pure 'ideology' that hides the commodity's contradictions in plain sight. He convincingly uses the ways digital technology has taken the 'dematerialisation' of the money fetish, its transformations from gold bullion to paper currency to the transfer of the digital bank draft, to illustrate the extreme literalness with which these spectral transformations now occur, transformations that Marx would scarcely recognise. Our interpretation of the dematerialised fetish simply translates Žižek's notion of the 'spectral aspect of capitalism' as one aspect of the cultural life of capitalism, theorised from the more nuanced perspective of discourse and discursive practices.[5]

Our reading of the contributions of cultural studies has led to our exploration of Marx's biological metaphor and to look for the genealogies of social metabolism. Culture, in our version of this trope, functions as a medium and a by-product, a lived neural network, and a physical archive of knowledge from which societies formulate and test new social forms and conceptual and material technology. Our formulation of culture does not distinguish between its resemblance to a living organism and its transformations into market commodities or technology. It tries instead to sense the organic life of culture in those moments when lived neural networks and the residues of the symbolic order obey the genetic and viral logics of language mutation. It proposes a conceptual language that tries to detect a dynamic process, namely those instances when the network's residues materialise in the archive of the known and knowable and blur the boundaries with which we try to distinguish the contaminating human trace from our idealised images of nature. The combined, synergistic effect of medium and residue can powerfully influence our social and so-called natural environments by exerting an inertial force that retards social adaptation to new environmental conditions or by generating new knowledge with which to transform those conditions. That the cultural function's dual aspects fill the seemingly minimal interstitial gap that articulates the linkage of the social to the material environment does not diminish its power. Great effects often occur at a

seemingly microscopic scale, a subtlety that allows us to envision cultural processes occurring within an ecological model of the biosphere.

We could go further, arguing that living organisms cannot sustain themselves without mediating communicative systems—membranes, if you will—through which they interact and do something that resembles learning from the environment. Human society, in such a reformulation, would then emerge in that place where the spheres of culture, political economy, and biology overlap, a triangular arrangement that situates the lived 'materiality' of Henri Lefebvre's theorisation of 'the everyday' within an ecology of human and nonhuman communicative communities.[6] Such a reframing would allow us to resituate Marx's notion of metabolism within the most recent theorisations of ecology and evolutionary biology, but that task taxes our theoretical abilities and takes us far afield from our critique of the decreasing relevance of cultural studies.

What we are concerned with on this point is continuing to recalibrate the field's formidable critical tools for a new task: building the conceptual equation that would balance the discursive and the structural material realities of globalised capital accumulation. What could Stuart Hall and Michel Foucault tell us about the cultural-economic metabolism of post-Fordist political economy, and can we extrapolate a category that would fuse political economy and a critical theory of culture, a field since named *cultural political economy?* We, like our predecessors, are attempting to take the critical turn in the global metropolis seriously and to bring cultural critique to power and class relations as they occur in the globalised city—a messy, fluid, and densely meaningful place, and therefore the ideal arena in which to study the processes of globalisation. We are also interested in the global city's radical cosmopolitanism, a space of lived hybridity in which the immigrant subject's virtuoso experimentation with that environment's multiple political and cultural codes fosters new ways of thinking and acting around, under, and beyond the nation-state's rigid categories.

That cosmopolitanism underlies the implicit logic of *Latino Metropolis.* Valle and Torres expressed this by simultaneously running a positivist analytic alongside a critical interpretation to give each a reciprocal role within an overarching interpretive construct, which was Los Angeles's entire symbolic and built landscape. Like them, we cannot talk about Latinos, the city's ethnic majority, without a totalising theory of the city that could correlate a specific cultural process to every social relation within the context of market capitalism. Doing this, however, requires

us to redirect cultural studies away from its customary preoccupation with the subaltern subject and its myriad processes of identity formation. We believe that all subjectivities, including the varieties of 'whiteness' embodied by the city's corporate elite, merited the critical gaze of cultural studies. If these critical approaches hold any validity, they should allow us to interpret identity formation for all social classes and racialised ethnicities, and to locate the cultural effects we theorised within the totality of existing social relations of late global capital.

We therefore seek the reciprocal translatability between analytic and critical approaches, between the dialectical and the genealogical, to identify those points of structural articulation where cultural effects were unambiguous. Valle and Torres also strove for an approach that would allow us to plot the intersection of spatial and temporal planes from which indigenous local memories and their subjective spaces erupt from global capital's urban matrix. In sum, they have provided us with a powerful way to theorise the knowledge strands that construct a cultural political economy.

THE CITY AS NARRATIVE OBSERVATORY

Michel Foucault's theory of 'governmentality,' however, provides one method of doing the improbable—identifying the knowledge strands that encode the global city's assembly instructions. Each of its knowledge strands began to be instrumentalised and codified as a strain of governmental technology in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when emerging European states used the administrative apparatus of the medieval justice system to organise new governmental offices. These relatively small institutional innovations began to 'governmentalise' the state by increments.[7] Liberalism's eighteenth-century inauguration stimulated new government innovations to ensure the modern state's survival. Governments rapidly borrowed the new techniques of disciplining the populace they sent to prisons, hospitals, factories, and the military. The new census-taking methodologies established a concrete basis for imagining and implementing a national political economy. Obtaining accurate counts of the population provided a practical way to monitor a nation's demographic wealth and health and the material conditions and social relations that contributed to or detracted from its productivity.

As inventory-taking methods improved, it also became possible to monitor the lives of individual citizens. Birth and death certificates; school, tax, criminal, and military records; and a growing list of other documentary procedures allowed government to envision a state of perpetual surveillance initially devised for controlling prisoners and hospital patients but applied later to the full citizenry. Methods used to contain contagion in cities or reinforce the military chain of command also found their way into rationales for reorganising government bureaucracies. Innovations in the surveillance and regulation of mental illness, sexuality, and female fertility allowed bureaucracies to narrow the application of that technology from the general populace to discrete social groups until focussing its gaze upon the body of the individual.

The modern state's tendency to apply these disciplinary techniques to different classes of objects led to another innovation: one could more thoroughly manipulate and disseminate the abstract discourse of the state by ascribing to it human corporeal qualities. The state's metonymic association with the body grew from an earlier metaphor—the medieval city as corporate or fictional person.[8] Each innovation in governmental technology incrementally modified the state's forms and political rationality, a process that expanded the state's power while increasing its dependence on the invention and reorganisation of existing governmental institutions to consolidate its gains and neutralise challenges to its authority.

In time, the proliferation of governmental functions and organs not only produced internal contradictions that undermined older governmental functions but revealed that the state did not possess a coherent, essential core of truth upon which it was based, only a collection of different and sometimes incompatible administrative techniques that the populace experienced as the unitary state. Foucault called the state's ever-changing governmental adaptations: governmentality, or that 'ensemble' of 'institutions, procedures, analyses and . . . calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has [the population] as its target, [political economy] as its principal form of knowledge, and [the apparatuses of security] as its essential technical means'.[9]

From the eighteenth century onward, the formerly distinct spheres of 'government, population, and political economy' gradually fused into 'a solid series' of social practices we today call the economy. Foucault's spectrum of effects theorised the production of wealth, the security

of the state, and the control of the population as an integrated whole. However, rather than stress the Orwellian notion of a centralised state under the control of a single, all-knowing entity, Foucault envisioned the state as a field of effects generated by an ensemble of governmental technologies that naturalised that state's political hegemony. His theorisation would allow others to more than simply speculate on the vague possibilities of a genealogy of the present. It would give those with sufficiently rich archives the means to identify and disentangle the governmental technologies that shape the state and its inhabiting subjectivities.

A key observation, one half-explained in *Latino Metropolis*, was the role capital plays, via its power to create and implement laws and generate and circulate its necessary truths, in re-creating the governmental technologies that generate the state 'effect'. (Valle would take the next step and make that formulation of the cultural technologies of capital accumulation explicit in his next book, *City of Industry: Genealogies of Power in Southern California*.[10])

That was then, the more than a decade old 'then' of *Latino Metropolis,* in which Valle and Torres generally predicted the inevitability of our present economic collapse and resurgent anti-immigrant Latino hysteria. They recognised the potential for that crisis in the contradictions of a US capitalist system that cannibalised itself in successive crises of financialisation rather than reinvesting in the production of new wealth. It is therefore now understood, given that these conditions are recurring and intensifying, that Latino scholars and activist organisers accept social dislocation as a certainty they should plan for in their scholarship and praxis. We believe that the economic meltdown of 2008 and its effects validate the continued pursuit of the scholarly project we envision for Latino studies and politics: its interdisciplinarity as a field of study and its focus on interpreting the Latino working class within the totality of an urban landscape and experience.

The city, as the localised arena of global processes and changing class relations, is still the conceptual space in which to continue those experiments. The present-day context of economic collapse and resurgent anti-immigrant hysteria, however, also suggests that we remain vigilant to new possibilities of scholarly activism, that we look to the critical turn for more than monkey wrenches and cultural technologies of discontent. We should also consider using those tools to identify new opportunities of strategic urban intervention and to create moments of emancipatory rupture with which we might free ourselves to imagine another urban

future in the space opened up by the social and cultural equivalent of a cosmological singularity.

Genealogy offers another way to revisit our revolutions for the lessons their successes and failures teach, and for traces of the singularities that rupture and reset the clock of capitalist hegemony. We are not talking about reviving boring Stalinist hagiographies of worker heroes but of producing cultural genealogies of settings in which emancipatory subjectivity erupted in specific individuals, social movements, or class formations.

The various genres of narrative art, whether written, performed, or lived, represent one way of observing and exploring the fusion of these spaces and subjectivities. Entering that narrative observatory requires recovering the seemingly disconnected stories Latinos and Latinas told themselves when they encountered each other and reinvented themselves in the sweatshops, boulevards, slaughterhouses, and movie houses of the last century, when they dreamed of other radical futures, few outside the immigrant and exile communities seemed to hear or see. Making an inventory of revolutionary remembering could be that first step in preparing ourselves to identify, and if possible, cultivate new revolutionary subjectivities in the cities that Latina/o immigrants know best. We could start, in other words, by identifying the low-hanging fruit of an abandoned neighbourhood 'tree' and then making plans for that tree's pruning, watering, and feeding.

ANSWERING THE CALL TO ACTION

We borrow from a speech Mao gave on 29 May 1939 as a kind of ideal to which we should aspire in the aftermath of the rise of the Tea Party–led state censorship of the Latino/ethnic studies high-school curriculum in Arizona, an episode which, in the final analysis, contributed to today's anti-immigrant Trump era:

> It is good if the enemy attacks us, since it proves that we have drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves. It is still better if the enemy attacks us wildly and paints us as utterly black and without a single virtue; it demonstrates that we have not only drawn a clear line of demarcation between the enemy and ourselves but also achieved a great deal in our work.[11]

Could it be that these high-school educators deserved the epithets of the populist right, especially being accused of fomenting a postcolonial critique of the United States' conquest of the Arizona territory? As we all know, many of the attacks were fevered projections of an ethnic *reconquista* that our colleagues do not teach. We also know that they meant for these attacks to distract Arizonans from the ruling majority's failure to prevent the state's fiscal collapse. They chose to blame the racialised other they strove to recreate—Mexican and Latino immigrants and their children, who will indeed alter the state's balance of political power, if only modestly.

The 'Tea Party' populists needed to turn the Latino/a immigrant into a terrifying threat. It did not matter to them that the community's integration into the state's electorate, and their attendant acquisition and exercise of civil rights, has been painfully slow. The symbiotic media-state representations of immigrants' border violations had already produced the appropriate intensity of moral sensitisation. They targeted teachers who taught the modest virtues of ethnic and racial diversity and the Latino community's well-documented contributions to Arizona's wealth as agents of subversion. The teachers who had had the audacity to urge the next generation of Latino/a voters to act as first-class rather than alienated citizens were a terror too good to pass up. Why calmly accept that inevitability, one that would not fundamentally alter the state's neoliberal underpinnings, if you could orchestrate a major distraction? Cultivating a panic was much better than acknowledging that Latino immigration was a symptom, not a cause, of the economic globalisation that had destroyed the high-wage manufacturing Arizona had secured during the Cold War, or that the low-wage, no-benefit post-Fordist regime that had replaced it depended on a surplus of 'unskilled' immigrant labour. Such is the racist logic of populist xenophobia: it obsesses over the impure outsider that would threaten the purity of the polis, its innocent 'we' of (white) natives, the indispensable ingredient of 'whiteness' that the Tea Partiers, the 'birthers', and the anti-immigrant Trump supporters presume in their tribal construct of citizenship.

Perhaps it is time to earn their scorn. Perhaps it is time to search our political and cultural memories of failed revolutions, as Žižek recommends, for the antipode of the populist pole, a position around which a viable left could coalesce and offer a coherent alternative to the populist right. The next generation of Latino/a studies scholars has a particular role to play in the search for that new positionality. We hope

they will show that a viable left in the United States cannot emerge if it does not embrace the quintessential 'part of no part,' the undocumented immigrant, and others effectively stripped of citizenship as its core constituency, the future majority that will embody and express our deepest democratic values and impulses.

Place matters in this continuing enterprise. We assert an emphasis in *The Latino Question* on the places of production to imagine a new politics, one that would cut across districts and working-class neighbourhoods: community politics are not principally the politics of neighbourhoods but the politics of work, class, and culture. We should advance this line further now and reconsider what the category of class can mean in US cities when the immigrant-dependent restaurant industry scatters the place of production throughout the urban landscape. That same question applies more directly to the Walmart clerks and subcontracted warehouse workers symbiotically connected to Asian manufacturing via that vast trans-Pacific system of commodity distribution known as logistics. Not only does understanding immigrant workers' role in global manufacturing clarify their labour power's strategic significance, it forces us to question the notion that consumption is the new point of production, an implicitly nationalist orientation that tends to privilege the welfare of the 'American' worker-consumer over all the others, while ignoring the urgency of building transnational worker solidarity.

The organisers of Warehouse Workers United are, as of this writing, attempting such a re-centring of working-class citizenship amidst the world's largest concentration of warehouses. Global trade in the Pacific Rim and Southern California's north-south mountain corridors has created a new battlefield clustered around the rail, truck, and air infrastructure of San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. Geography has funnelled the huge increases in cargo pulsing from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach through the historically depressed region misleadingly named the Inland Empire. The transformation of the logistics industry, which was touted as the cure to the region's chronic job losses and housing foreclosures, actually raised particulate air pollution to the world's fourth-highest while turning temporary employment agencies into the new growth sector.[12] These permanently temporary agencies eagerly refined 'sweatshop' subcontracting technologies to the retail industry's specifications. They drastically lowered wages, job security, and safety standards for more than 53,000 workers (most of them undoc-

umented) by creating a barrier of deniability for warehouse retailers to evade responsibility for creating those conditions.[13]

The Change to Win[14]–supported campaign's answer to the atomising technologies of outsourcing has been to build an impressive coalition of environmental, labour unions, church groups, and West and East Coast Occupiers in support of immigrant Latino workers battling for union representation, living wages, and safer working conditions.[15] It attempts not only to create that tipping point at which Latino immigrant workers can make the transition from racialised minority to empowered working-class majority, but also to neutralise the demoralising effects of labour subcontracting by representing the entire transportation corridor as a continuation of the warehouse. Its strategy is to expose the industry's vulnerabilities to a variety of community actions, from regulatory and legal interventions against safety violations to blockades of key trucking arteries, by revealing its complicity in degrading the region's social and natural ecology.[16]

Obviously, a handful of Latino scholars will not lead this constructive political project by themselves. Already, many academics of seemingly marginalised tendencies (such as critical ethnic studies, postcolonial studies, cultural studies, women's studies, and gender studies) as well as independent scholars, artists, and activists are asking questions of this sort and engaging in emancipatory scholarship that seeks to expose the imbalance of power embedded within the social relations of production.

What lies ahead for this next generation of would-be scholars, and how do they pursue it? We believe that Latino/a urban theorists can perform a great service through research and practice that explains to their would-be colleagues, and progressives generally, why they must see their futures in creating class relations based upon complete identification with the emergent urban and rural immigrant majorities. They can also help by excavating the discursive legacy, those genealogies of knowledge and practice that have directly contributed to mass mobilisations of Latino immigrant workers. They can set an example by acknowledging the radical and revolutionary Latino/a intellectuals, workers, and scholars who shaped the agenda and narratives that reacquainted organised labour and today's movements with the feasibility of a national general strike by achieving a scale that spoke more loudly than its rhetoric.

Cultural processes were crucial in producing that result. The use of Spanish-language media, above all radio and print media, to mobilise

millions in 2006 validated the importance we gave to that strategic resource in previous works and which we give it now in *The Latino Question*. The content and forms of their appeal to Latino workers also betrayed a genealogical moment overlooked in the scholarly studies that interpreted the 2006 mobilisations. Immigrant-rights organisers formed in the Los Angeles Marxist-Leninist circles of the 1970s led that first push to prevent the passage of HR 4437, legislation that would have set the stage for deporting millions of undocumented immigrants and prosecuting anyone convicted of sheltering them. That generation's historical formation was especially evident in 2006's May Day demonstrations as well as in the ongoing Dreamer movement. They had orchestrated a mobilisation in which supposedly 'conservative' immigrants in immaculate white T-shirts denounced racism, sexism, class inequality, borders, imperialism, and neoliberal globalisation—a concise inventory, in other words, of a discursive formation we can call the Latino left.

Two immigrant-rights activists, Jesse Diaz and Javier Rodriguez, deserve recognition for their intrepid leadership in initiating, organising, and framing that day's unprecedented demonstrations. In addition to the million or so marchers who mobilised in Chicago, New York, Milwaukee, and dozens of smaller cities across the United States, a million more went to the streets of Los Angeles in two separate marches. That first wave of marches demanded immediate and unconditional amnesty for all undocumented immigrants, an immediate halt to border-fence construction, decriminalisation of the undocumented, and an immediate cessation of factory raids and deportations. More importantly, the mobilisations emptied the work place. As many as 75 percent of the Los Angeles industries employing Latino labour shut their doors, while as many as 90 percent of the day truckers hauling goods from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach stayed home. 'On farms in California and Arizona,' Rodriguez said, 'fruit and vegetables went unpicked, and across the country, meat-packing and poultry farms, fast-food franchises and other businesses were forced to close. In a lot of cases, employers supported their workers: all over Los Angeles businesses started putting up signs saying they would be closed on May 1'.[17]

Those events deserve further study, starting with the so-called mainstream Latino organisations and unions that fragmented and weakened the mobilisation's initial message by prematurely supporting the Democratic Party's pragmatic path to immigration reform. A new generation of scholars and organic intellectuals must also give itself

permission to question the institutions from which they should expect bolder leadership. Would it be reasonable for them to ask, for example, why the discipline of Chicano/a and Latino/a studies, especially its bureaucratic apparatus, seemed to take such a reticent stance toward the self-organising immigrant energy recently displayed on the streets? That institutional ambivalence (not the independent scholars who met in the streets) also suggests itself when a few scholars and administrators still try to reconcile the uniqueness of Chicano/a identity, as asserted in the 1960s, with the growing immigrant presence that has transformed Latino/a communities everywhere. We will not go into all the twists and turns of that reticence here. Suffice it to say that, except for the sober concluding pages of Michael Soldatenko's *Chicano Studies: The Genesis of a Discipline*,[18] only a fraction of works within the discipline seem to have mustered the courage to discuss the widening fissures of this ideological debate directly. Strangely, that silence continues, as Soldatenko observes, even though a growing number, perhaps a majority, of scholars sheltered under the rubric of Chicano/a studies practice strains of scholarship that have already outstripped the discursive boundaries of its most generous disciplinary definitions. That silence means that the pressure to re-radicalise Chicano/a studies has also come from the students and their sisters and brother academics outside the discipline.

We can hear that prodding to revisit pre-Chicano-movement origins in works such as Gilbert G. González's *Guest Workers or Colonized Labor? Mexican Labor Migration to the United States* (2007), Mike Davis's *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the US Big City* (2000), David R. Diaz's *Barrio Urbanism: Chicanos, Planning, and American Cities* (2005), and William David Estrada's *The Los Angeles Plaza: Sacred and Contested Space* (2008), especially for his masterful recontextualisation of the plaza's Magonista, Wobbly, and anarchist synergies. Raúl Homero Villa's *Barrio-Logos: Space and Place in Urban Chicano Literature and Culture* (2000) and Ignacio López-Calvo's *Latino Los Angeles in Film and Fiction: The Cultural Production of Social Anxiety* (2011) push upon that reticence from another direction. López-Calvo challenges the long-held myths that authentic Hispanic 'cultural identity was to be found outside the urban context' and that the early 1970s had somehow birthed a fully formed Chicano literature from the preceding decade's radical protest. López-Calvo's work does an especially effective job of debunking Chicano/a literature's pastoral image and uncomplicated identitarian origins. Not only does that literature draw from deep

Indigenous, Spanish, and African roots, but its late-twentieth-century energy is urban and therefore modern in its questioning of imposed or 'traditional' tropes of racial, gender, and sexual identity. Its polyvocal, restless, questioning energy will continue in this century, López-Calvo writes, given that 'the massive migration of Latinos to Los Angeles has turned this late-capitalist metropolis into a privileged site for Chicano and Latino cultural production. It is no longer the Babylon where Mexican immigrants inevitably lose their "authentic" national traits and roots,' but the imaginary in which they radically remap the city's democratic possibilities.[19]

Ernesto Galarza's cryptic Magonista and Wobbly references in his classic autobiography, *Barrio Boy*, represent another contribution that urges a critical look back to the early Chicano movement's preoccupation with identity formation. Galarza would say as much in a series of interviews he gave in 1977 to 1978 and 1981, when he questioned the way Chicano scholars and activists in the 1960s and 1970s tried to represent themselves through the single prism of ethnic identity:

> I try to stay away from terms that rely on ethnicity. I use terms that represent what people do for a living. *Occupation* is a much more meaningful term. Academics at UCLA have worked on this theme. In Arizona and in New Mexico there is a great deal of scholarly interest in this problem of choice of terminology. I don't think it leads very far, because if you look at these terms—you'll find people who are called Chicanos in San Jose; they're called Chicanos in Imperial Valley; they're called Chicanos in San Francisco. But if you know those people, the occupational differences are more important, to me, anyway. It may be because I have a certain bias against ethnic identity. I don't think people should be handled that way . . . should be catalogued . . . because it's not a permanent characteristic other than to those who believe in very strong racial, ethnic characteristics—and I don't.[20]

The Chicano/a-studies project would eventually catch up to Galarza's formulation and embrace his understanding of social constructivism. However, the discipline retains a certain ambivalence regarding the utility of Galarza's cautiously expressed class analysis (one informed more by Weber than by Marx).

Does the bureaucratic imperative to defend Chicano/a studies in some of the same institutions Galarza mentioned more than four decades ago still trick us into a scholarship that imbues Chicano/a identity with a transcendent quality, one that defies the historical flux that transforms all others? Do we harbour a deeply buried assimilationist wish when we expect new Latino immigrants to act as Chicano/a in the making, a vast transitional population reliving the traumas and joys of inventing a bicultural-bilingual citizenship? Discovering the common experiences with which different immigrant communities have reclaimed their humanity in a system that denies it is indeed valuable. But do lingering notions of identity politics freeze us in a neoliberal status quo that acknowledges diversity while preventing us from facing the brutal economic reality of our time? Will celebrating diversity challenge the state in its current embattled corporate configuration to countenance the continued naturalisation of millions of immigrants? Does not the current depth of the crisis require that we rethink what a 'Chicano/a' politics can mean in an economy that will stagnate for decades to come, in which even the most modest, most humane immigration reforms or defence against rollbacks on minor legislative victories require massive, broad-based national mobilisations to implement? It would seem that the manner in which Galarza's work slowly disappeared from the curriculum has answered these questions. His were not deemed interesting questions.

But an ideological debate that erupted in the 1970s, outside the academy: on Los Angeles's picket lines, its sweatshops and Immigration and Naturalization Services— *La Migra,* detention facilities—would revive Galarza's line of questioning. Laura Pulido's *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (2006) touched that nerve when she credited the Marxist-Leninist cadres of that decade for pushing the movement in a more radical and ultimately more fruitful direction. Pulido, who does not ignore the failures of Bert Corona[21] and Centro de Acción Social Autónomo (CASA), nevertheless recognises their undeniable impact on the city's present political landscape: 'Former members of CASA had not only created a network of like-minded people but seeds of resistance within the 'old' labour movement that would blossom with advent of greater institutional support'.[22] That cadre's most important discovery was to recognise the likely impact of the emergence of a majority immigrant Latino workforce on all other class and power relations in the city, a realisation they obfuscated when they tried to

replace Chicano/a cultural nationalism with Mexican nationalism as a means of achieving a new working-class solidarity. But even the seeming half-measure of representing CASA as the Marxist-Leninist vanguard of workers unified by a crudely constructed theory of nationalist loyalty had the benefit of loosening up the ways Chicano/a academics and activists had represented class relations and self-awareness until that time, and of recognising the possibilities of Latin American worker solidarity. The seeds they had sown would bear fruit in the 1990s, when former CASA members assumed pivotal positions of leadership within the local and national labour movement, the legal arm of the immigrant-rights movement, and the political class that began to reshape the city's entire political culture. Their emancipatory intentions, moreover, did not simply respond to that decade's material conditions; their practice would create the conditions of another struggle, one that re-appeared to fill the streets of Los Angeles and other major cities in 2006.

But the relative silence with which the Chicano/a-studies standard-bearers have received the work of Pulido and her urban-studies colleagues underscores the subtle rift in the discipline's ethnically focused bureaucratic project. The edge of that rift reappears each time Latino/a students treat the glories of the 1960s with more reverence than the mass immigrant mobilisations that have occurred since the 1990s, a nostalgic gaze that prevents them from recognising the radical possibilities of the present. That is what made Bert Corona so remarkable. If he were with us today, would he gently coax those students and nostalgic faculty to overcome their fears and tell them that the present is the best time and place to struggle and that the scale of the immigrant-led labour movement he helped create dwarfs anything the Chicano movement achieved?

We must also acknowledge the limits Pulido imposed on herself. Her understandable focus on the field from which the three ideological configurations of Los Angeles's ethnic left emerged necessarily gave less attention to Bert Corona's biography. Nor did she have the space to adequately address the subtle ways these revived 'Lefts' owed their successes to the city's early- and mid-twentieth-century leftist radicals. Perhaps we should put the responsibility for that silence at the feet of a prior generation of scholars and journalists who succeeded in distancing Corona from the early-twentieth-century left that formed him and made him a recurring target of Red-baiting. Perhaps we should also question those efforts to remake Bert as a wholesome ethnic leader of generic

progressive tendencies and only the slightest 'socialist' sympathies.[23] These revisions illustrate the ways the ghosts of the left still haunt the Chicano/a movement's ideological project, a squeamishness Bert understood and patiently tolerated but ignored when it came time to take the courageous political gamble of challenging the early Chicano/a movement to embrace the cause of undocumented Mexican, Central American, and South American immigrant workers.

The effect of Bert's strategic choices and his consistent critique of corporate capitalism, still cause some Chicano academics to agonise over whether they should embrace the immigrant workers who demonstrate a willingness to put their class loyalties before ethnic, racial, or national allegiances. That ambivalence persists when Chicano/a and Latino/a scholars look past the 1970s, that crucial decade in which the organisational and discursive foundations of the Latino immigrant mass mobilisations of the 2000s began to appear as a complicated, largely urban response to brutal worker exploitation, the government's policies of immigration terror, and the limitations of the previous decade's Chicano/a radical discourse. It was in that decade that the first women and gay artists began to express their dissatisfaction with constraints of Chicano/a cultural nationalism, and Chicano/a activists confronted the immigrant and political refugees who would alter the demographic composition and social relations that characterised what they had once understood as a predominantly Mexican American 'community'. Not only would Mexican and other Latin American immigrants soon emerge as the barrio's new majority, they would eventually emerge as urban America's working class, a realisation that obliged the more farsighted to see the sweatshop or factory floor as the crucial arena of struggle.

The ideological effects of Chicano activists, intellectuals, and artists travelling to Cuba, Mexico, Central America, and other destinations in Latin America, as well as China, in the late 1960s and continuing through the 1970s and 1980s provoked another series of discussions that would further erode the movement's insularity. They exposed themselves to a variety of Marxist and socialist critiques and debates centred on US capitalism and imperialism would acquire more nuanced understandings of how they fit into a larger anti-imperialist front, as well as of the left's failures and defeats. The pace of these conversations increased in the 1970s, when brutal military repression from Mexico, Chile, and Argentina sent Latin American refugees and intellectuals to the United States. These conversations continued in the late 1970s and 1980s with

the arrival of Central American political and economic refugees escaping US-funded terror and counter-revolution.

These intellectuals often arrived with their books, given the popularity of Latin American literature experienced during the 'boom' years, a reception enhanced by university courses that assigned them and Spanish-language print media that covered and interpreted them. Whether they passed through as touring performers or as lesser-known artists, writers, or professors who came to stay, young Chicano/a and Latino/a intellectuals found it easier to stay abreast of Latin America's political and cultural debates when they socialised with their Latin American cousins, dialogues that pushed that generation into a deeper exploration of their movement's pre-Chicano/a radical revolutionary roots.

These subversive influences and contradictory tendencies shared a geographic constant: they had converged in the major cities of the United States. The acknowledged centrality of the urban experience, as David Harvey's recent work suggests, therefore underlies the future study of the formation of Latino subjectivity. The recent studies that contextualise José Martí's New York, the city that witnessed Puerto Rican Bernardo Vega's political formation two decades later, represent a sample from that small number of postcolonial works that explore the US city's role in co-authoring a transnational, hemispheric Latino intellectual legacy. We would expect Chicago to have exerted a comparable effect upon Lucy Gonzales Parsons, a possibility only marginally appreciated by the identity-based projects of recent African American and Chicano/a scholarship. Where else but in that brutal cauldron of industrial exploitation and anarchist protest would the emancipated and fluently bilingual *mestiza* former slave be able to reinvent herself into a radical labour activist who would convince Martí in 1887 of the possibilities of a Latina feminism? Laura Lomas, in her indispensable *Translating Empire: José Martí, Migrant Latino Subjects, and American Modernities* (2008), helps us see that other Lucy, the one the poet witnessed through his emerging postcolonial gaze in New York when she spoke in defence of the Haymarket Martyrs. Her oratorical art, because it equalled his, forced him to question his macho prejudices about women made 'mannish' because they dared speak in the public sphere, and to recognise her as the unexpected female incarnation of the *mestizo* revolutionary he had begun to envision in *Nuestra America*. The following passage further illustrates the transformative spell she cast on Martí:

> There were moments when not a sound could be heard in the assembly except her inspired voice, which flowed slowly from her mouth, like spheres of fire, and the gasping of those who had stopped breathing momentarily in order to hear the sob in her throat. When this Indian and Mexican *mestiza* stopped speaking, all the heads were inclined, as if in prayer upon the benches in church, and the room seemed to fill, like a field of wheat bending in the wind. . . . Everything in her appears an invitation to believe and to rise up. Her speech, in its total sincerity, is literary. Her doctrines wave like a flag; she does not ask for mercy for those condemned to death, for her own husband, but denounces the causes and the accomplices to the misery that leads men to desperation.[24]

Lucy's performance, however, embodied not only a glorious beauty but also the necessity and possibility of a revolutionary, anti-capitalist politics rooted in the hemisphere's indigenous soil, and thus the seed of an organic, autochthonous society for which Martí still searched. There was one important realisation Lucy's anarchism seemed to lack, one that Martí possessed but did not live long enough to share: that the existence of modern capitalism depended upon the discourse of 'race' refined in the conquest of the Americas, a cultural technology re-adapted to that brutal task of dehumanising, dividing, and subordinating late-nineteenth-century workers.

Asking and answering these questions, when contextualised in the cultural political economy of the urban scene, not only will provide a way of revitalising the institutional purpose of Chicano/a studies but will suggest the role an urban Latino/a-studies agenda can play in transforming progressive national politics: Davis's 'magical urbanism'. These interventions can articulate new forms of critique and struggle through which labouring Latino/a classes, including the fragile first-generation middle class, might go beyond the limits imposed upon them by the logic of market capitalism to propose a Latino/a power of constructive and lasting effects, one through which a class teaches itself to think about capital while acting against it.