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## Introduction to the First Issue

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Welcome to *Latin American Encounters'* (LAE) first online publication. Through this and future publications, LAE hopes to provide a platform for bilingual, critical and interdisciplinary discussions on issues that affect and shape the lives of Latin Americans in Canada and the World. LAE hopes to encourage the production and dissemination of knowledge that questions hierarchical relations at the local, national and global levels. It also aims to contribute to a comprehensive exploration of Latin-American subjectivities and the social, economic, political and demographic contexts within which such subjectivities take form.

As a peer-reviewed journal, LAE hopes to engage with the work of young and senior professional-academics as well as with grassroots-intellectuals whose work has been based on grounded knowledge and whose histories of intellectual production has had little (or indirect) ties to institutional/academic settings. LAE's editorial board is conscious that dichotomies such as academic/non-academic are not only problematic but also embedded in a complex history of colonization (Asad 1973, Said 1978, Velásquez Nimatuj 2012) and resistance (Smith, 1999). By simultaneously combining the work of professional and grassroots intellectuals, LAE hopes to 1) further problematize this dichotomy, 2) explicitly validate the work of those who have historically been excluded from the tenets of dominant institutions, and 3) encourage critical dialogue around what constitutes "legitimate" knowledge.

As a Latin American journal, LAE hopes to attract authors who despite their diverse disciplinary traditions, intellectual histories, and geographic backgrounds, choose to define themselves and/or their work as *Latin American*. LAE's editorial board is aware that categories such as this one are the result of particular historical and contextual conditions and as such, they often reproduce exclusionary discourses that affect people differently. The editorial board is particularly aware that categories such as *Latin American* have the potential to evoke different and contradictory meanings and are, therefore, constantly subject to contestation and redefinition (Páez de Victor, 2011). This is particularly the case in Canada, where the category of *Latin American* encompasses 21 nationalities and more than 45 ethnic groups (Schugurensky and Ginieniewicz, 2007). Recognizing the great diversity that characterizes *Latin Americans* in Canada and beyond and recognizing the *agency* embedded in the act of self-identification, we leave the category open for ongoing discussion and critical self-reflection.

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1 Irma Molina holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Toronto (Canada). She has done research on issues of indigeneity, warfare, and violence with a particular focus on Latin America. Her work has included extensive fieldwork in various indigenous communities in Chiapas, Mexico and teaching at various post-secondary institutions in Toronto. She is presently involved in the project "Unsettling the Classroom: Social Work Education in the Context of New Managerialism" through which she is exploring the relationship between institutional constraints, the formation of academic subjects and the production of academic knowledge.

2 Lidia Valencia Fourcans holds a B.A. in English literature from the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico and an M.A. in Latin American and Caribbean Studies from the University of Guelph. She is currently pursuing graduate studies at the Department of Geography, University of Guelph. Lidia has taught contemporary literature, textual analysis and theory of translation at the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos and The Alzate University, Mexico. She is also a registered English-Spanish Translator with specialization in Literary and Legal translation. Her main areas of interest and research are Latin American Culture and Identity, Gender and Development Studies, Contemporary Latin American Philosophy and Thought, Modern Latin American and Spanish-American Literature, Economic Geography and Consumption Geographies.

## Contributions to the first issue

The editorial board is grateful to the authors who contributed to the first issue for leading the way. The contributions are interdisciplinary, drawing from a range of disciplinary traditions such as sociology, history, literature, theatre, music and visual arts. They engage issues related to undocumentedness (Denise Gastaldo, Christine Carrasco & Lilian Magalhães), revolution (Juan Duchesne Winter), solitude (Lidia Fourcans), migration (Paloma Villegas), memory (Luis Rojas *et al*, Tania Iraheta.), masculinity (Carlos Satizábal), tradition (Alec Dempster), and identity (Esery Mondesir).

“The Creation of a Mobile Workforce: Latin American Undocumented Workers in the Greater Toronto Area”, by Denise Gastaldo, Christine Carrasco & Lilian Magalhães, presents findings on the migration journeys of 20 undocumented workers performing a range of occupations for a minimum of 18 months in Canada, but more typically for a few years. Focusing on the case of Latin Americans in the GTA, the authors contest popular understandings of who is undocumented and how undocumentedness is produced. While the authors recognize that some of the issues identified in the article are not unique to undocumented workers, they argue that they are *present in* undocumented workers’ experiences and *unfold in* ways that are different to that of other precarious status groups as a direct result of undocumented workers’ minimal-to-no legal and social protections in Canada.

The Prologue to the third edition of Chiqui Ramirez’s *La Guerra de los 36 Años, Vista con Ojos de Mujer de Izquierda* by Juan Duchesne Winter, describes this as an exceptional book. Duchesne-Winter highlights the sophisticated manner in which Ramirez engages the contradictions of the Guatemalan revolutionary project, carefully examining, through her own experience, the complex humanity of some of the protagonists of this particular moment. Sharp critique, flexible style enriched by Guatemalan colloquialisms, and grounded analysis and self-reflection make this book a remarkable contribution.

“La Soledad como *Leitmotiv* en la Poética de Jaime Sabines”, by Lidia Fourcans, focuses on “solitude” as a recurrent theme in the poetic work of Jaime Sabines (1926 – 1999). By arguing that “solitude” is fundamental to the construction of Sabines’ creative identity, the author is able to beautifully unravel the poetic essence of one of the greatest exponents of Mexican and Latin American poetry of the 20th century. The author introduces Sabines’ poetry as a form of subversion and critique to the conventional social discourses related to love (marriage), religion, death and individualism that prevailed in Sabines’ historical context.

“Migrant illegalization and transnational precarities in Maya’s *Toronto*” by Paloma E. Villegas draws on the poem *Toronto*, by Jesús Maya, to analyze the production of migrant illegalization for Latin Americans migrating to *el Norte*. The author argues that Toronto allows one to see the complicated workings of migrant illegalization, some of which are transnational in nature. In addition, *Toronto* demonstrates the fact that migration and immigration status trajectories are not linear. Finally, *Toronto* depicts the ways in which migrants negotiate processes of illegalization by drawing on their personal, affective and transnational connections in search for the ever elusive dream of stability.

“Laboratorio Teatral Amigo Imaginario” by Luis Rojas *et al* is a collective experimental play that explores childhood imaginary friendship as a central theme. The play is divided into four

acts which describe the authors' concerns with unrealized dreams, fear, surrealism, dictatorships, nostalgia, and memory. Each act embodies a different experience of what it may mean to be a Latin American immigrant in Toronto constantly searching for freedom.

"New Masculinities" is a humorous and thought provoking "performance paper" by playwright/director Carlos Satizábal (Translated to English by Carlos González-Vio). The paper challenges conventional views of masculinity and provides the basis for dialogue about what it means to be "male" as well as for imagining how alternative or new masculinities may reshape social relations. The paper touches on silent cultural codes and paradigms that work to produce "machos," support patriarchal legitimacy and reproduce the dominance of men over women. Satizábal forcefully argues that a search for new masculinities ultimately implies *unlearning* the values and attitudes that devalue women.

"Faces of Son Jarocho: Scratching the surface of a tradition" by Alec Dempster, is part of a larger multidisciplinary project combining the documentation of oral history with portraiture, using the printmaking medium. The subjects are elderly musicians, singers and dancers from two neighbouring municipalities in the state of Veracruz, Mexico, whose lives have all revolved around *Son Jarocho*, a traditional musical style associated to this particular region. Alec Dempster began these interviews in 1999 while making field recordings in the area around the town of Santiago Tuxtla. The musicians' stories became as important as the recording of the music.

"Yo No Soy Pichón" (working title) by Esery Mondesir is a five-minute work-in-progress documentary narrative. The film explores the concepts of cultural identity, nationality and citizenship by following a group of Cubans of Haitian descent as they prepare for a vodou ceremony. While they have never set foot in Haiti, these "pichón de haitiano", as they are derogatorily called by other Cubans, have proudly preserved the Creole language and have made the vodou religion a place of resistance and survival.

The final section, "Iraheta: Sobre la Experiencia en Pintura", presents the visual work of Tania Iraheta, a self-taught visual artist and educator. This section also contains a short review by Maria del Carmen Suescun Pozas, Associate Professor from the Department of History at Brock University. Tania Iraheta's paintings evoke mood, memory and emotions coming from places and events in her life that have left an imprint in her memory. For Suescun Pozas, Iraheta offers the viewer four conceptual spaces through which abstraction makes two worlds possible: memory and painting. Her work is an invitation to untangle the experience in the painting from the notion of representation and discover its liberating capacity.

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