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Thinking critically about Latin America: Letter to readers

The ***Brazilian Journal of Latin American Studies, BJLAS***, is pleased to present its 39th edition with a set of articles that allow it to consolidate its editorial and intellectual project based on analyzes in five fields of knowledge: Latin American thought; culture, art and literature; society, State and public policy, and international relations.

We open this issue with four articles that portray moments of thought produced in and about Latin America from different paradigms, whose common axis is the purpose of creating local knowledge in dialogue and/or tension with Eurocentered knowledge.

The first contribution we present in ***BJLAS*** is the critical and excellent review of the unique analyzes of Latin American modernity, which were elaborated by the Ecuadorian philosopher Bolívar Echeverría (1941-2010). From a Marxist perspective, Echeverría performs one of the most creative interpretations of Latin American modernity - baroque modernity - as an aesthetic experience of cultural miscegenation and resistance to capitalist modernity and that of fetishized productions. "***BOLÍVAR ECHEVERRÍA:***

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LATIN AMERICAN BAROQUE MODERNITY" is an article written by the researcher and doctoral student at the **University of Vale dos Sinos** (Brazil).

The second critical analysis presented in this block on Latin American thought focuses on understanding the intellectual and political project of anarchism at the beginning of the 20th century in Peru, as a current that proposes itself as an alternative to Marxism in the struggle for the construction of national emancipation. In a careful analysis of the strategies and assumptions of this current of thought and political action, the article **"PERUVIAN ANARCHISM AND THE BIRTH OF 'INCA COMMUNISM' "** argues that it is possible to contrast Peruvian anarchism, and also relate it, to one of the boldest interpretations of Latin American socialism, conceived by the Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui on the basis of Inca communism. The article also makes a consistent critique of a moment in social thought then charged by colonial values and prejudices about the Latin American indigenous matrix. For all these reasons, the article by researcher Alfredo Gomez Muller, from the **Tours University** (France), is a precise criticism that will also allow us to understand the value of the idealism and ethical and political commitment of anarchists – the focus of the analysis – and of their revolutionary project from the community experiences of indigenous peoples.

We go back even further in time, to the 19th century, and we will find the aesthetic sensibility of the Italian Guido Boggiani, a 'traveling artist', who thought, drew pictures and interpreted the indigenous America found in his passage through Paraguay, which allowed him to build an ethnographic collection and gather works of great recognition in European and Latin American artistic circles. By rescuing Boggiani's work *"as an example"*, the author of the article, Andrea Ciacchi, professor and researcher at the Federal **University for the Integration of Latin America** (UNILA-Brazil), challenges us to know not only the thoughts of artists who were also narrators, analysts, commentators and illustrators of the Latin

American diversity of that time. In "**DRAWING AND DESCRIBING. INTEGRATION OF ART HISTORY AND SOCIAL THINKING IN LATIN AMERICA (19th CENTURY)**", the researcher from UNILA invites us to think about the history of Latin American art from the testimony of visual artists who, "*from their positions taken in social and intellectuals of their times*", offer us other interpretations of the Latin American reality.

We closed the first block of thought on Latin America with work in the field of psychology, an area that has been little explored in social theory in the region. The author of the article is the Mexican David Pavón-Cuéllar (**Michoacana University**, Mexico) who analyzed the production of knowledge in psychology under the aegis of the epistemic decolonization project. The work is entitled "**TOWARDS A DECOLONIZATION OF LATIN AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGY: POSTCOLONIAL CONDITION, DECOLONIAL TURN AND ANTI-COLONIAL STRUGGLE**" and constitutes a critical review of decolonial thinking, now predominant in social sciences and in research on Latin America. Without denying the importance of the assumptions of the decolonial intellectual and political project, the author invites us to review the post-colonial condition, also rethinking the overcoming of the epistemic conflict between the indigenous and the Western. Ultimately, he proposes to bet on the coexistence of opposites, on antagonism and complementarity, as a possible path towards a decolonized psychology.

The next block of articles is dedicated to works dealing with culture and representation in the literary, media, ethnographic and sociological fields. In an interdisciplinary dialogue and starting from the major issues relevant to Latin America, namely poverty, hunger or racism, the proposed articles portray different moments of Latin American societies with their popular cultures, their revolutionary struggles and their unresolved historical issues.

Starting with the literary criticism by Gabriel dos Santos Lima, from the Doctoral Program in *Literary Theory* at the **University of São Paulo**, the

article entitled **“NARRATIVE COMPLEXITY AND DEPENDENCY IN GRANDE SERTÃO: VEREDAS BY GUIMARÃES ROSA AND PEDRO PÁRAMO BY JUAN RULFO”** compares two great works of Latin American literature, whose authors are different, as well as different are the scenarios for the representation of the central characters of the works. The comparative work is organized from the relationships established by the lived experiences of hunger and misery typical of ruralities in Mexico and Brazil - and why not say, in Latin America. Literary criticism will thus be not just an analysis of two great works and of two of the greatest representatives of regional literature. It will also be a portrait of the different forms that Latin American *“large landowner brutalism”* takes.

Based on the analysis of narratives of publications on racism and discrimination in a Cuban magazine, Mariurka Maturell Ruiz e Lisandro René Duvergel Smith, from the **Federal University of Santa Catarina** brings to light sensitive aspects of Cuban society and the limitations for debating the problem of racism on the Caribbean island. In **“RACISM IN CUBA: AN ANALYSIS OF ISSUE 2/2017 OF THE MAGAZINE EL MAR Y LA MONTAÑA, IN GUANTÁNAMO”**, the author analyzes the special edition of a Cultural Magazine designed to make the racial issue in Cuba visible. Taking into account text analysis, illustrations and supported by analytical tables, the author concludes that the problem of racism in Cuba remains nuanced both in specialized academic literature and in official discourse. She indicates that, despite revolutionary achievements, the national issue regarding Afro-Cuban minority identities still needs to face an open debate with the diversity of social and political actors in the nation.

The next article is also about the Caribbean country, but takes us to a 19th century and early 20th century Cuba. Based on the concept of biopolitics, the author analyzes reformatories for children, as a synthesis of state policies and strategies to deal with problems related to the economically most vulnerable sectors of the population. **“POVERTY AND CRIMINALIZATION OF CHILDREN IN CUBA (1857-1936). REFORMATORIES**

FOR JUVENILE OFFENDERS AND BIOPOLITICAL STRATEGIES" is not just a portrait of poverty, unemployment and criminality in a Cuba dating back to the years of absence of any social rights. It is mainly a study on the construction of a specific type of discourse about marginalized, poor, delinquent or considered to have limited mental capacities, that is, populations that do not adapt to the (self)image of Cuban elites or to the Western models sought by dominant sectors of any Latin American country. The work is the result of a rich survey of documentary sources and was produced by the team of researchers at the **Federal University of Santa Catarina**, Javier Ladrón de Guevara Marzal, Fernanda Martinhago and Sandra Caponi.

The last article in this block that articulates the representation of social and cultural aspects deals with the migration of Bolivians to the city of São Paulo. The study is of great originality. Instead of betting on the predominant analytical perspectives on the subject, that is, on the study of the work relations of Bolivians in sewing workshops, Vinícius Mendes, a sociology researcher at the **University of São Paulo**, interprets the rupture of work time by the time of party in the Bolivian community. **"THE CITY IN CELEBRATION: BOLIVIAN FOLK FRATERNITIES IN SÃO PAULO"** is a portrait of a population of migrants who experience and occupy the new city in which they will reside, territorializing in urban spaces and recreating with their festivals the dynamic cultural maps of the city.

The dialogue between geography and urban planning defines the field of knowledge for the next analyzes presented in this issue of **BJLAS**. In this section, case studies and analysis of broader public policies are published, which reflect the challenges and responses -or the absence of them- of planning in places where social dynamics define the priority use of territories.

The first article is a comparative analysis of the type of occupation and urban planning in the border region of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay.

The study is carried out by the researchers at the **Federal University of Paraná**, André Soler and Gislene Pereira, who interpret urban policies and normative systems that regulate border cities in the light of economic and geopolitical factors. The analyzes are accompanied by colored maps and comparative tables that illustrate the analyzes and allow for a better understanding of the difficulties of **"URBAN PLANNING IN TRANSBORDER: ANALYSIS OF THE PLANNING SYSTEMS IN FOZ DO IGUAÇU (BR), CIUDAD DEL ESTE (PY) AND PUERTO IGUAZÚ (AR)"**.

The spontaneous formation of urban communities and the challenges of planning the periphery and semiperiphery is the theme of **"COMMUNITY AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY. THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION: THE CASE OF PALMIRA IN GUANTANAMO, CUBA"**. The case study brings innovations to the field related to urban studies on settlements, and its results were obtained from a thorough research, carried out between 2011 and 2019. The purpose of this study is to portray not only the territorial occupation on the margins from the city of Guantánamo, but mainly to analyze historical and subjective aspects of the settlements, as well as the formation and consolidation of identity communities of migrant populations that come from different origins in the region. The study was developed by a team of researchers mainly from the *University of Guantanamo* and the *University of La Habana*, so this article brings new data from this research, with illustrations of maps, figures and tables updated by the author, David Rubio Méndez, of the **University of La Habana**.

Cuba's current political and economic challenges, as well as urban habitat management, are central to the next article. The Caribbean country accumulates the consequences of the economic blockade imposed by the United States of America for decades, which impacts and weakens the island's revolutionary achievements. In this context, this study not only analyzes the theme of **"URBAN HABITAT IN THE SECOND DECADE OF THE 21ST CENTURY: CUBAN EXPERIENCE"**, but also offers a careful and

important synthesis of the main state social policies since the Cuban Revolution, especially in the area of housing. The article was written by Dania Gonzalez Couret and is the result of a consolidated research of 20 years of articulation work by a team of researchers from the Master's Program in Social Living and the Doctoral Program in Architecture at the **Technological University of La Habana**. With photographs and figures that compare changes over time, the study does not shy away from the challenges of the future for the Cuban model. It highlights as a central element for overcoming future challenges the Cuban people's capacity for resilience, supported in the sense of community, solidarity, collaboration and, among other subjective aspects, in its capacity for social organization, its scientific and technical capital, and its creativity.

We close **BJLAS's** issue 39 with the last block of articles on International Relations, Foreign Policy and Economics, thus fulfilling the task of bringing together interdisciplinary studies that allow us to understand the complexity of the Latin American reality.

The first article in this block is located in the period of dictatorships in Brazil and in several Latin American countries, which began in the 1960s and, therefore, it constitutes a historical work on the memory of regional integration. Under the title "**REGIONALIZATIONS DURING THE BRAZILIAN DICTATORSHIP**", researcher Tainá Siman from the **Rio de Janeiro State University** analyzes the foreign policy and regionalism of the Brazilian military, sometimes in search of alliances with neighbors, sometimes of greater isolation, sometimes of alignment or subordination to US pressures. The oscillations of Brazilian foreign policy would have been induced by the country's dependent character in a polarized international context, thus also impacting all movements and regional integration plans.

The article that follows is also a historical recovery of an integration project of the Andean countries for the creation of a common market. The critical synthesis presented here results from the analysis of a *Document*

written by intellectuals such as Raúl Prebisch - the *Document of the Four* – in which diagnoses and guidelines for integrationist thinking in the region are presented. **“DOCUMENT OF FOUR AND THE ORIGINS OF THE ANDEAN COMMUNITY”** is an article by Flavia Loss de Araújo, from the *Institute of International Relations* of the **University of São Paulo**.

The last two analyzes are works based on issues of great contemporary relevance. The first study deals with Argentina's relations with China and economic and military agreements that, on the one hand, reduce the economic impact of the crisis that the Latin American country has faced in recent decades, and on the other, undermine its territorial sovereignty. **“CHINA'S SPACE BASE IN NEUQUÉN, ARGENTINA”** is an original and very important article to understand the advancement of economic and scientific cooperation between Latin American countries and China. It was carried out by Rogério do Nascimento Carvalho, researcher of the *Integration of Latin America Graduate Program* at the **University of São Paulo**.

The last article in the Brazilian Journal of Latin American Studies is a dense study covering the last decades under the title **“OVERVIEW OF THE BRAZILIAN INTERNATIONAL TRADE: EVOLUTION OF MAIN TRADING PARTNERS AND PRODUCTS (1997-2020)”**. In analyzes supported by updated data on exports and agro-industrial production, with graphs and comparative tables over time, the authors of the article - Romeu Bonk Mesquita, Edgard Monforte Merlo and Amaury Patrick Gremaud, researchers at the **University of São Paulo** - analyze trends in the international trade of Brazilian commodities.

Finally, BJLAS brings, as always, a review of a recent and relevant work for studies on Latin America. The task belongs to the researchers Maria Mercedes Palumbo from the **Universidad de Buenos Aires**, Paula Ramírez from the **Universidad Nacional del Comahue**, Inés Fernández Mouján from the **Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata**, and Elson

Santos Silva, from the **Universidade Federal de Goiás**. The authors book review “**DECOLONIZING PEDAGOGIES: BETWEEN EXPERIENCES AND THEORETICAL-EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**”, presents the book “*Pedagogias de(s)coloniais: Saberes e fazeres*” [*Decolonizing pedagogies: Knowledges and doings*]. Published in 2020, the book brings together the intellectual work of specialists and scholars of de(s)colonial thinking in the field of pedagogy, who work and investigate the theme in several Latin American countries. The plural perspectives and experiences of each author of the book thus guarantee the originality and relevance that must characterize critical works on Latin American thought.

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