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At a time when there is an increasing global concern for potential human suffering as a result of environmental catastrophes—as painfully revealed by the devastation caused by tropical cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake in China in May 2008, which together killed an estimated 205,000 people in Asia—raising awareness about the human impact on the environment in Puerto Rico becomes timely and urgent. The *Atlas ambiental de Puerto Rico* surely is destined to become more than a useful reference guide to anyone interested in learning about the general environmental and geographic facts of the island; it is my hope that it will soon be, as the authors intended it to be, a wake-up call to everyone concerned with the sustainable use of the island's natural resources. At a more pragmatic level, the atlas provides policy makers, government officials, and all concerned citizens with useful information that can help create and implement better environmental policies for the sustainable economic development and preservation of Puerto Rico's natural resources.

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### *The Latino Body: Crisis, Identities in American Literary and Cultural Memory*

By Lázaro Lima

New York: NYU Press, 2007

240 pages; \$21.00 [paper]

**REVIEWER:** YOLANDA MARTÍNEZ-SAN MIGUEL, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick

This book studies the emergence of a Latino identity as a result of the cultural and political divide between Mexico and the United States, particularly after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Lima analyzes the creation of a Latino identity *vis-à-vis* American cultural, literary, and political history. Throughout the book, the author identifies a series of crisis moments, in which Latino identity was produced as a response to the polarized race relations defining an American identity as exclusive of all those who are not European white descendants. The two central tropes of Lima's analysis are the body and memory, in many cases linked through the juridical notion of the *corpus delicti* (or body of crime), to explore the abject relationship between the American nation and the Latino community as illegal bodies or aliens.

This study is divided in two sections, composed of an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter analyzes two testimonials written after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Eulalia Pérez's *An Old Woman and Her Recollections* (1877) and Catarina Avila de Ríos' *Memoirs...* (1877). Both testimonials were included in the *History of California* project, a multivolume collection of oral histories gathered by Hubert Hone Bancroft, that has not been studied in detail by Chicano critics. These testimonials are analyzed to trace the problematic ethnic and national constitution of Mexicans *vis-à-vis*, within and against an American identity that defined the Mexican body as external to U.S. whiteness. Lima counterpoises these texts with María Amparo Ruiz de Burton's historical romance, *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), a more canonical narrative in which heterosexual love is used to metaphorically erase the violent, conflictive, and racist exclusion of Californios from the American ethnic and national imaginaries. The second chapter focuses on a classic text in Chicano studies, Tomás Rivera's ... *y no se lo tragó la tierra/ ... And The*

*Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971) and its relationship to the Chicano equality rights movement of the 1960s. Lima observes that Rivera's text attained a symbolic capital in the public sphere, and was able to consolidate a diasporic Mexican identity, while other texts by Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, and Agustín Yáñez were unable to do so. The main trope of the Mexican American imaginary of the 1960s was the invocation of Aztlán, the mythic homeland of the Aztecs in the southwestern United States, to ground Chicanos to the U.S. territory as legitimate inhabitants. Rivera's novel enacts the discontinuities of this trope in the real exclusion of Mexican Americans from the American body politic, at the same time that it produces a "body of evidence" that makes visible this very real act of expulsion in a public sphere. In the absence of a living body, the novel proposes affective ties to the dead as alternative forms of communal memory.

The second part of the book is devoted to contemporary debates in Latino Studies, and it includes what I consider the two best chapters of this study. Chapter three traces the institutionalization of Latino studies in academia and its paradoxical relationship with the expulsion of real Latino bodies from academic, social, and political spaces after the erosion of the legal protections of immigrants and minorities—the result of the reverse discrimination argument, which mirrored the civil rights movements in America but was intended to *take away* Latino privileges. It would have been interesting if Lima described in his work the very recent debates on academic colonization, such as Walter Mignolo and Juan Poblete's contributions in *Critical Latin American and Latino Studies*, or the work done by Frances Aparicio and Suzanne Oboler about the ambivalent place of Latino Studies in American universities. It would also have been useful if Lima addressed the contested place of Latinos in American society, put forth in books such as Samuel Huntington's *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity*, or Nicolas de Vaca's *The Presumed Alliance: The Unspoken Conflict Between Latinos and Blacks and what it Means for America*. The focus of the rest of the chapter is a critical reassessment of Cabeza de Vaca's recreation as a literary forefather of Chicano and Latino Studies. According to Lima, the main contradiction of this critical gesture is that it expands the Chicano claim of continuous presence in the American lands through the myth of Aztlán, but it ultimately adopts an assimilationist stance that privileges imperial—Spanish and North American—identities. By tracing the strategic incorporation and eventual digestion of this invented Chicano body, Lima is able to identify the gestures of imperial colonialism and historical imperialism implicit in claiming a Spanish conquistador as the forefather of Chicano/Latino identity. One question that Lima does not explore fully in this chapter, however, is the reification of an indigenous identity in Chicano imaginaries, and the need to deconstruct the problematic relationship with the real bodies of the native populations in the constitution of contemporary Chicano identities. Alvar Núñez's *Castaways* could be an interesting pretext to explore the internal contradictions of the idealization of Aztlán and the subalternization of Indians in Mexican and Chicano political discourse as a crucial aporia that has not been critically addressed.

The last chapter focuses on representations of the body in contemporary Latino writing, and proposes a brilliant reading of the *Margarita Poems* (1987) by Luz María Umpierre, *The Greatest Performance* (1991) by Elías Miguel Muñoz, and Rafael Campos's *What the Body Told* (1996). Curiously enough, Lima includes in the last chapter a broader corpus of Latino texts—i.e., literary works by a Puerto Rican, and two Cuban Americans—since most of the theoretical frame of his book does

not explore a comparative approach of diverse Latino experiences. The structure of this study implicitly proposes Chicano discourse as the paradigm of Latino writing up until the 1980s, displacing the centrality of Puerto Rican and Cuban writers since the end of the nineteenth century. However, this chapter includes an interesting reading of Latino identity, seen from a gender and sexuality perspective that shows Lima's interpretive capabilities at their best. Here Lima advances three thought-provoking readings: Umpierre's poetry as a counter-discourse to the metaphor of *insularismo*; queer intimacy as an alternative for political action in *The Greatest Performance*; and the retracing of Wallace Stevens as an intertext for Campos's narrative on Latino bodies and the AIDS virus as threats to the American body politic. The conclusion includes a historically grounded exercise in cultural studies, proposed as a site for political intervention, by focusing on the paradoxical consequences of NAFTA and globalization on Latino bodies. Lima closes his book by studying the "femicidios" of Ciudad Juárez and Alicia Gaspar de Alba's *Desert Blood: The Juárez Murders* (2005) as the most recent example of the problematic incorporation of a Latino body into the American national imaginaries. The conclusion also brings into focus a brief commentary of Cherrí Moraga's ethical call for understanding the Chicana body as an embodiment of history in her forthcoming *A Xicanadyke Codex of Changing Consciousness*.

Lima's book makes several crucial contributions. First, it is based on an intersection of various disciplines, such as American, Latin American, and Latino studies with ethnic, queer, gender, and cultural studies, allowing for interdisciplinary readings that focus on the multiple dimensions of cultural productions. Second, Lima combines solid historiographical research with literary and cultural analysis, promoting critical interventions that are not seduced by empty impositions of "high" or "abstract" theory on literature as a primary, untheorized discourse; on the contrary, Lima takes into consideration each text's very specific context of production, and he even combines theoretical approaches with some critical interventions that are directly derived from the cultural materials analyzed. Finally, the book has an excellent balance between new or not so well-known texts and paradigmatic texts in the canon of Chicano/Latino studies.

However, the corpus studied is mostly Chicano or Mexican American, an intriguing decision given the fact that this book supposedly analyzes the formation of a broader Latino identity. This privileging of Chicano experience, specially in the theoretical reflections on citizenship, the border, and the constitution of an ethnic identity, leave out the problematic incorporation of Puerto Ricans and Cubans as second-class citizens, or their contributions to the civil right movements of the 1960s. On the other hand, the introduction's suggestive proposal of Latino experience as "the newest of Hispanism's long line of *convivencia* strategies [...] reach[ing] its political potential in the United States" (p. 10) encourages the reader to explore the intersections between Latino and American studies using a central trope in Hispanic Studies as point of departure. Furthermore, this usage of the notion of *convivencia* establishes an interesting parallelism between the conflictive interactions among Moors, Jews, and Christians during early modernity and ethnic minorities in the U.S., at a time when the conflation of national and religious identities in mainstream discourses seems to approximate current U.S. political debates regarding foundational motives in the Spanish national experience.

In sum, this book clearly demonstrates that Lima knows his area of research well, and seems quite capable of producing relevant critical interventions on the intersections and contradictions between political debates and cultural productions. This study questions the limits between an American and a Latino identity by focusing on the rearticulation of a Chicano archive, but still needs to dialogue more fully with the other forms of Latinidad that coexist and compete with the Chicano imaginaries for the creation of a more inclusive notion of “americanismo.”

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### *Governing Spirits: Religion, Miracles, and Spectacles in Cuba and Puerto Rico, 1898–1954*

By Reinaldo L. Román

Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007

288 pages; \$24.95 [paper]

**REVIEWER:** MARTHA ELLEN DAVIS, Archivo General de la Nación, Dominican Republic and University of Florida—Gainesville

*Governing Spirits* is an ambitious work. Reinaldo L. Román’s study uses all written sources available, primary and secondary, to piece together as complete a documentation and analysis possible regarding phenomena and episodes in popular religion of 20th-century Cuba and Puerto Rico, a topic considered peripheral to the usual political and economic issues in historiography. Piece by piece, the author has assembled coherent pictures of vernacular religious phenomena from as long as over a century ago, which he presents with an eloquent and engaging style of prose. In so doing, his work takes Caribbean studies a step beyond the national inquiry by applying his historical scrutiny to parallel phenomena in two similar sites, Cuba and Puerto Rico, during the period between the end of Spanish-American War and the Cuban Revolution.

The American occupation of both Spanish colonies permitted freedom of religion, a freedom continued under Puerto Rico as a commonwealth and Cuba as a republic. But surely the framers of the U.S. constitution did not conceive of this freedom as encompassing nonorganized vernacular religion, which, in the Afro-Hispanic Caribbean domain, includes spiritism, *santería*, apparitions, miracles, folk-healing, witchcraft, and similar phenomena. Indeed, the management of such phenomena, during the course of the twentieth century, presented challenges to the authorities. The title *Governing Spirits*, then, appears to use “governing” both as a verb—with regard to how to govern, how to manage such phenomena—and as an adjective—with regard to the dominance of the spirits over the institutional authorities, who attempt to control popular mind.

The work is structured by alternating chapters regarding vernacular religion in Cuba and Puerto Rico in chronological order, with an epilogue about the late 20th-century Puerto Rican phenomenon of the “exotic predator” called the “*chupacabras*.” The figures in popular religion examined by the study are what the author terms “man-gods,” “woman-virgins,” and saintly figures of various sorts: Hilario Mustelier and Juan Manso of Cuba, Elenita and the Hermanos Cheos of Puerto Rico, La Samaritana of Puerto Rico, La Estigmatizada and Clavelito in Cuba, as well as an apparition of the Virgin in Sabana Grande, Puerto Rico. Key topics