Towards a Map of the Current Critical Debate about Latin American Cultural Studies

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Abstract

In his paper, “Towards a Map of the Current Critical Debate about Latin American Cultural Studies,” Julio Ortega surveys the shifting disciplinary, critical, and methodological paradigms used to study Latin American culture in both the United States and Latin America. Describing the post-theoretical period as a moment when grand analytical models are abandoned in favor of microanalyses, Ortega sees great potential in this new paradigm shift. In his paper, Ortega pays particular attention to the ways that the field of cultural studies has emerged and transformed in Latin American academic inquiry and he considers the disavowal of master critical models to open up spaces for dialogue and critical exchange. Nevertheless, the practice of cultural studies in Latin America and the U.S. has not always indicated emancipatory politics or liberating critical readings. In order for cultural study to be heterogeneous, fluid and dialogic, scholarly work must take care to negotiate the prevailing discourses of power. Ultimately, Ortega points to the emerging field of Trans-Atlantic Studies as an exemplary case of new critical practice and he describes the field as a dynamic and open-ended area of study that does not require a traditional canon or disciplinary configuration.

Recommended Citation


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Nevertheless, the practice of cultural studies in Latin America and the U.S. has not always indicated emancipatory politics or liberating critical readings. In order for cultural study to be heterogeneous, fluid and dialogic, scholarly work must take care to negotiate the prevailing discourses of power. In the current post-theoretical scene, what Ernesto Laclau calls a "contamination" between theory and the empirical is taking place, intercultural studies has acquired a distinctive role (vii). Laclau establishes a positivist solution to the current dilemma: "The destiny of theory in our century is a peculiar one."

The paper discusses how, despite the emergence of innovative maps, the plurinational project envisaged by indigenous cartographers remains stymied by a series of material, cultural and postcolonial limitations. 59 Neil Smith and Cindi Katz, 'Grounding Metaphor: Towards a Spatialised Politics', in Michael Keith and Steven Pile (eds.), Place and the Politics of Identity (London, 1993), p. 78. This paper offers a critical review and interpretation of gentrification in Latin American cities. Applying a flexible methodology, it examines enabling conditions associated with societal regime change and local contingencies to determine its presence, nature, extent, and possibilities. Cultural centers. Panamá (Ciudad del Saber), Caracas (expansion of Universidad Central), Commercial or mixed-use. I argued earlier that restructuring in Latin American cities followed different trajectories than in cities of the North.23 Thus, not only did gentrification lag behind but it also seems to have assumed different forms and paths. You will study these different possibilities. Cultural centers. Panamá (Ciudad del Saber), Caracas (expansion of Universidad Central), Commercial or mixed-use.