



LATINX STUDIES IN THE UK

Conference held at the University of Leicester, Thursday 20-Friday 21 April 2023

Sponsored by the Institute of Languages, Cultures and Societies (ILCS), SAS, London, and the University of Leicester Institute for Advanced Study (LIAS)

Thursday 20th April

Sir Bob Burgess Building

9.00-9.45, SBB 1.01

Registration & Coffee

All today's conference panels will take place in the Sir Bob Burgess Building, room SBB 1.03

9.45-10.00 Opening Remarks

Emma Staniland and Clara Garavelli (Conference Organisers)

Catherine Morley (Head of School of Arts, University of Leicester)

10.00-11.00 Keynote Address: Professor Cathy McIlwaine, King's College

London Imaginations and cartographies of Latinidades in the UK

Cathy McIlwaine is a Professor of Geography at King's College London. She has worked for several decades on issues of gender, poverty and violence in cities of the global South, and in London with a specific focus on the Latin American community from the perspective of livelihoods and gender-based violence. She has published widely including twelve books and over 40 journal papers. Cathy has also worked with policy-makers at the World Bank, Inter-American Development Bank and UN-Habitat as well as with migrant and human rights organisations in London as a collaborator and trustee (with the Carila Latin American Welfare Association, Latin American Women's Rights Service, Latin Elephant and Latin America Bureau) and with artists through a Visual and Embodied Methodologies network at King's.

Cathy's keynote address will explore the making and re-making of the Latin American/Latinx community in the UK with a specific focus on London, where many reside. She will trace the emergence of Latin

Americans as a population group comprising diverse nationalities and identities forged by a collective imaginary of British *Latinidad* that is both illusory and potentially cohesive. In exploring the growth of the population since the 1970s, she delineates the complex cartographies that have emerged as different groups from the continent have migrated, settled and negotiated a hostile immigration environment that has simultaneously embrace and rejected them. Drawing on her research on the making of 'Latin London' since the early 2000s, she examines how the 'community' has become more visible over time in economic, political and cultural terms. She will specifically address the notion of 'feminised onward precarity' to reflect the often hidden migration trajectories of many Latin Americans via southern Europe, as well as underexplored experiences of direct and indirect gendered violence. Cathy's address will thus also highlight that whilst research carried out to date has contributed to ensuring that the Latin American/ Latinx population now has a place within the multicultural imagination of London, bolstered by the work of civil society organisations and burgeoning artistic work, there remains much to be done to raise their profile further, especially in relation to their recognition as an ethnic group.

11.00-11.30, SBB 1.01 Coffee break

11.30-12.30 Panel 1: Latinx British Identity

Dr Raúl Valdivia-Murgueytio, Bristol University (UK)

My Queen: Anglophilia and the construction of a Latinx-British identity in the UK

How deep does Anglophilia run among Latin Americans in the UK? Does it cut across class, ethnicity and nationality, or are there some significant differences? How does it inform the construction of individual identities, especially in relation to feelings of national belonging? This paper is based on a research proposal that aims to explore the role of Anglophilia in the making of a Latinx-British identity in the UK. It is argued that the death of Queen Elizabeth II prompted different reactions among Latin American migrants in the UK, which reflect individual attitudes towards England and Britain more generally. For example, it is possible that for some Latin Americans, the death of the Queen interpellated them as 'subjects of the Crown', or perhaps reinforced their sense of belonging to Britain. For others, this event may not have had the same resonance, especially in terms of national identity. In terms of methodology, this project will use in-depth interviews with a cross section of Latin Americans in the UK. It will also analyse the discourses articulated in posts, either written or image-based, found on social media platforms of different Latin American groups and organisations in the UK.

Dr María Soledad Montañez, University of Glasgow (UK)

Devolved Invisibility: The Latin American Communities in Scotland

Since 1998, the Scottish Parliament has the power to introduce new laws on several national affairs, known as devolved matters. Although immigration remains a reserved matter, and therefore, controlled by the UK parliament in Westminster, the Scottish government suggests a more positive discourse around migration. Scotland has been traditionally a nation of emigration. However, in the last decades Scotland has experienced an increase in the numbers of immigrants arriving to the country. According to the Migration Statistics Quarterly Summary for Scotland (2021) there were around 400,000 non-British national living in

Scotland in 2019, from which 178,000 are non-EU nationals. Polish and Indian remain the most common non-British nationality. However, in the last five years, I have been working with the Latin American communities in London and Glasgow, and increasingly looking at the disparity between existing data about the Latin American communities in Scotland and other BAME communities. Although existing figures suggest that the Latin American communities in Scotland are not particularly significant, work on the ground, as well as data on community languages suggest a different reality. Indeed, the Latin American communities in Scotland are under-represented, under-researched and remain highly invisible, despite a rich history of migration that spans almost five decades. This paper explores the Latin American communities in Scotland, the challenges and opportunities the community face in the country.

12.30-14.00, SBB 1.01 Lunch

14.00-15.00 Panel 2: Latinx Eco-narratives

Karina Lickorish Quinn, Royal Holloway

The River Dies Quietly, A British-Latina's Hydronarrative

Karina Lickorish Quinn is a Peruvian-British novelist and Lecturer in Creative Writing at Royal Holloway University of London. Karina is the author of *The Dust Never Settles* (Oneworld, 2021) and was featured in *Un Nuevo Sol*, the first major anthology of British Latinx writers. This paper will be a reading from Karina's novel-in-progress, *The River Dies Quietly*, which examines the threats to the Amazon River due to extractivism and large-scale construction projects. The novel centres on the Donati-Flores siblings, children of a prominent environmental activist from the fictional Yurayaku Valley. Now, privileged, grown up and living in the Global North while their home continent is plundered for resources, the Donati-Flores siblings struggle to honour their mother's eco-conscious legacy. Through the reading, Karina will offer provocations on the nature of the British-Latinx novel as an emerging genre including its multilingualism, its decolonial impulse, its exploration of the local versus the global, and its ecological focus. In particular, this novel asks what Latinxs in the diaspora owe to the landscapes, creatures, and communities of their homelands in this age of environmental disaster. In what way, if at all, do we remain connected to the lands of our ancestors?

Emma Staniland, University of Leicester

An Ecocritical Reading of US Latinx Writings

This paper reads a series of late-20th and 21st-century US Latinx texts of a variety of genres through the lens of ecocriticism, with the objective of examining the diverse roles given to the urban and natural worlds in their authors' writing. The texts in question – including Cristina García's *The Agüero Sisters* (1992), Daisy Hernández's *A Cup of Water under my Bed* (2014) and Javier Zamora's *Solito* (2022) – represent a range of literary styles that are popular in US Latinx literature, such as magical realism, crime fiction, memoir, and autobiographical fiction, but all have in common a desire to enact the excavation of roots... Be they genetic, cultural, spiritual, literary; or be they of hegemonic sociocultural dynamics that themselves require us to turn to flora, fauna, waterscape and landscape in order to measure their impact and consequences. Ultimately, what is revealed by this approach to reading US Latinx writing,

therefore, is the rich contribution that it has to make, for Latinx and non-Latinx readerships alike, by reminding us of our connections, metaphorical and literal, to the Earth from, on and through which we grow.

15.00-16.00 Panel 3: Artistic Collaborations & Migrant Identities

Dr Clara Garavelli, University of Leicester

Using Participatory Research and Collaborative Art Practices to Address the Community-Building Challenges of UK-based Latinxs

Collaborative modes of production in the creative arts have become a growing global phenomenon (Kester 2011). While these modes of working together are prone to multiple political and ethical debates regarding collective versus individual power struggles and authorship, the exchanges they produce provide fertile ground for identity construction and debates about hybrid communities. By reinforcing partnership and sharing leadership, participatory research offers, as well, meaningful ways of enriching creative practices and consolidating multicultural communities (Vaughn & Jacquez 2020). *Art Ubicua*, as a project comprising music, film, dance, performance, visual arts and critical debates inspired by encounters between people in major cities, navigates these reciprocal relationships, and in doing so can be understood to provide just this kind of foundation for community building. This paper will explore the use of collaborative and research-led practices by the *Art Ubicua* collective, paying particular attention to their work with Latin American artists and communities in the UK, and exploring how the members' creative approaches help them positively negotiate their differences, to find in them a hybrid yet united voice. I will consider how our experiences and ideas metamorphose as a consequence of physical relocations, as well as how we are transformed by encounters with Others. Thus, my paper will explore the dynamics at play in cross-disciplinary encounters and consider whether they are becoming the ubiquitous form of expression of hybrid and in-flux identities.

Artubicua Collective: Short film showing and discussion

16.00-16.15, SBB 1.01 Coffee Break

16.15-17.15, SB 1.02

Audiovisual Performance

MinA - Migrants in Action : 'We Still Fight in the Dark'



Professor Cathy McIlwaine, along with Carolina Cal Angrisani (Artistic Director), Simone Amorim and Eliete Reis, members of the London-based Migrants in Action (MinA) organization, will introduce the audiovisual performance/ installation 'We Still Fight in the Dark', which resulted from the research carried out for the 2016-2018 'We Can't Fight in the Dark' project, run in partnership with Latin American Women's Rights Service (LAWRS) (funded by the ESRC). This was one of the first research projects to gather data on the nature and

types of gender-based violence experienced by Brazilian migrant women in London. Drawing from academic evidence and using Theatre of the Oppressed methodologies, MinA then worked collaboratively with a group of 12 Brazilian women during eight creative applied arts sessions (theatre, creative writing, music and video), and together have produced this creative response to the alarmingly high levels of gendered violence experienced by Brazilian women in London.

17.30-19.00, SBB LT2

Keynote Presentation

***Being Eñye*. Documentary film viewing followed by Q&A with director, Denise Soler Cox**

Denise Soler Cox is the US-based creator of *Project Eñye*, which she established with the aim of ‘transform[ing] how we think and speak about culture, identity and what it means to belong’ as US Latinxs. Before her keynote on the second day of the conference, Denise will introduce a screening of her award-winning documentary *Being Eñye* (2016, 37 mins), which explores contemporary Latinx identities in the USA. The screening will be followed by a Q&A with Denise.

19.30 Conference dinner @BodegaCantina

Join us for a meal at one of Leicester’s best Latin American restaurants: <https://www.bodegacantina.co.uk>

Friday 21st April

Sir Bob Burgess Building

9.30-10.30, SBB LT2

Keynote Address: Denise Soler Cox

Magical Belonging – or, imagine what’s possible when everyone feels safe to be their full self.

Drawing on the lessons she has learned and concepts for communication about belonging that she has developed throughout her 8-year journey since founding the [Being Eñye](#) project, US Latina advocate Denise Soler Cox’s keynote will share her take on the capacity that Latinx identities and perspectives have to reveal existing dominant sociocultural values and, crucially, expose their inability to fully express the experiences of, or address the needs of, Global Majority people. Exploring the concepts of Singular Perspective Theory, Collectivism versus Self-reliance, Positive Inter-reliance, and introducing her concept of ‘Magical Belonging’ as the ultimate result of a commitment to enabling authenticity, this talk will speak to both academic and non-academic audiences through its spotlighting of the social dynamics that inform every aspect of our work as a university. Hence, this talk is of relevance to anyone who recognises the importance of decolonised approaches to institutional structures, communication systems, and curricula; to anyone who values Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity on campus, and to anyone who wishes to develop their intercultural competency.

10.30-11.00, SBB 1.01 Coffee break

All today's conference panels will take place in the Sir Bob Burgess Building, room SBB 1.03

11.00-12.00 Panel 4: Exploring the Archives

Sandra Araya-Rojas, King's College London

"With earnest wishes for your success". The letters of Chilean sculptor Clotilde Zanetta in the Album Amicorum of a female Methodist Missionary.

This paper examines the literary exchanges between Cincinnati-based Chilean sculptor Clotilde Zanetta and her teacher, Lelia Waterhouse, a musician and former Methodist missionary in Chile. Considering studies on material culture and gift theory, I ask how Zanetta, without renouncing Catholicism, was mentored by Waterhouse both spiritually and professionally through exchange of personal writing. In particular, I discuss how that mentorship relationship was purposefully sought out and subsequently nurtured: After graduating from Cincinnati Art Academy, Zanetta sent a travel account and clippings to Waterhouse during an artistic residence in Europe by early 1930s, in appreciation for acting as a referee when she applied for the scholarship that made possible that trip. Waterhouse pasted those materials in an album amicorum, which was subsequently posted to the Methodist Church in Chile in the form of "Lelia Waterhouse bequest, founder of Concepción College". In doing so, Waterhouse shared not only the material and discursive evidence of the strength and importance of women's networks, but also her role and that of Zanetta in the cultural and political scene in the Americas. Although this album has never been analysed, my study proposes to rescue its objects and materials in order to contribute to the historical knowledge of the Latinx community in the Global North, and to propose a new line of study that allows us to understand the functions that women played in the social life of the time.

Kenya C. Dworkin y Méndez, Carnegie Mellon University & Elisa Sampson Vera Tudela, King's College London

Decolonising the Archive 1444-1886: Editing Volume 1 of the Cambridge Latinx Literature in Transition Series

We will present the work we have been doing as editors of the first volume 'Latinx Pasts: Decolonizing Archives: 1444 to 1886' in the CUP series Latinx Literature in Transition. The series has the ambition to encompass textual interactions and intersections and other expressive practices that distinguish the deterritorialized, border-crossing, and heterogeneous nature of Latinx literatures from the fifteenth century until the present. We discuss how we approached the daunting challenge of (re)covering four hundred years of oral/textual/performance cultures across the Americas in a way that clearly connects these earlier materials to the contemporary lives of Latinx populations whose existence could not have been forecast but were informed by those living in that past. The problems were methodological as well as practical, and we will address how, in assembling the volume, we have tried to showcase a textual and graphic history that is often translational, spans centuries, has ever-changing borders, and draws upon autochthonous, diasporic, migrant, and compulsory routes since its inception. Instead of trying to extend the concept 'Latinx' literatures to past centuries, as editors we have committed to conceptualizing how the materials in early archives of latinidad have informed the evolution of and transitions in Latinx literatures.

12.00-13.30, SBB 1.01 Lunch

13.30-14.30 Panel 5: *Mexicanidad* across borders

Lori Flores, Stony Brook University (State University of New York)

Documenting Latinx Presence, Labor, and Creativity through Food Mapping

Paradoxically, though Latinx food seems to be more beloved in the US every year, Latinx food workers experience continued discrimination, xenophobia, and exploitation. The US has a tandem appetite for Latin American food and Latin/x American food labor, but exhibits contradictory behavior in its treatment of the cuisine versus the people. A key way many Americans “see” Latinx people is through food, but this obscures how longtime Latinx labor in the food chain writ large—farm work, processing, transportation, service, street vending, and delivery—has sustained and even saved local, regional, and national economies. While food workers are devalued in their wages, Latinx food entrepreneurs suffer criticism about their menu’s price points or “authenticity” in ways white chefs do not. Using my digital history project *The Mexican Restaurants of New York City*, I show how historicizing Latinx people in a place is as important as documenting their culinary contributions. Truly digesting this population’s labor and struggles for rights is something that “fiesta” stereotypes (most recently observed in *Great British Bake-Off*) permit consumers to evade. This project, which lies at the intersection of Latinx, labor, immigration, and food studies, will provoke discussion about whether similar mapping can make visible a facet of British Latinx life and labor.

Dr Jane Lavery, Lecturer in Hispanic Studies, University of Southampton & Professor Nuala Finnegan, Professor in Hispanic Studies, University College Cork

Changing Configurations of Día de Muertos during the Covid-19 (Post-) Pandemic in Ireland and England: Affective, Creative and Community Responses by Coastal Diasporic Communities

In *The Work of the Dead* (2016), Thomas Laqueur reminds us that the dead come in and out of cultural focus. The period of time since Covid-19 erupted into the lives of millions across the globe from early 2020 onwards has seen a painful energizing of the cultural focus of which Laqueur writes. We explore how death in Mexico —most associated with the visual tour-de-force that is *Día de Muertos*— has been reconfigured and reimagined since Covid in Mexico and for some Mexican migrant communities beyond the nation’s boundaries. We trace these transformations by taking two diasporic coastal communities in the UK and Ireland as case studies through which to study the changing configurations of the festival and its commemoration of the dead during the pandemic time-frame of 2020-2021, and during the tentative post pandemic period of 2022. By working in close collaboration with Mexican and British artists and Mexican communities, we examine how their creative responses movingly capture the ‘incalculable’ (María Bustillo 2021) losses felt through the pandemic as part of a broader psychic void (Osberg 2021). At yet, these same responses showcase how *Día de Muertos* can foster healing, (co)creativity, proactive citizenship, community shared values, and regeneration in (post) pandemic times.

14.30-15.30 Panel 6: *Documentary Film and Articulations of Selfhood*

Isobel Webster, University of Leicester

Rewriting ‘familia’ via Queer Puerto Rican Documentary Films

In Puerto Rico, and in the USA, the words *familia* and family refer to a heteronormative, cisnormative and amatonormative construct. This paper explores how the documentary film genre is embraced as a space through which to present the conflicts that queer Puerto Ricans experience in relation to such normative notions of *familia*, and how/to what extent the idea of *familia* is reconstructed by the film's protagonists/subjects/directors to mitigate this conflict. To this end, I compare the experiences of having homophobic Puerto Rican parents that we see in *Brincando el charco* (1994) and *Memories of a Penitent Heart* (2016), and contrast these relationships with the one Desmond Napoles has with their radically accepting mother WendyLou in *Desmond is Amazing* (2018). Through a critical and cultural analysis of these works, I explore how romantic and sexual relationships come to be, in some cases, the primary source of chosen family, and seek to begin assessing the extent to which relationships that defy amatonormativity are featured in queer Puerto Rican documentaries – ultimately to examine the value of this visual format as a means by which to “rewrite *familia*”.

Karoline Pelikan, Pelikan Pictures

Conexión: Huachuma (2020): Screening and Discussion

Karoline is a German-Peruvian film maker now based in London, and the founder of the Cine Latino film festival. Karoline will introduce a screening of her short documentary *Conexión: Huachuma*, to be followed by a discussion of this production and of her work more broadly.

About the film: Nachi, a native elderly curandero observes the beautiful nature of his beloved Andean highlands. His final destination? Marcahuasi, a mystical stone forest at 4000 metres altitude. In his backpack the healer carries the San Pedro, a cactus so respected in the region for its hallucinogenic effect. He believes that the Huachuma, as the plant is called in Quechua, can connect our past, present and future. Karoline, a young filmmaker, follows him with her camera. Full of doubts and questions, she wants to use the Huachuma to communicate with her deceased parents. Will she be able to see them one more time? *Conexión: Huachuma* is an intimate journey of grief and the difficulties of letting go.

15.30-16.00 Walk/taxis to *Serendipity – Institute for Black Arts and Heritage*, 21 Bowling Green Street, Leicester city centre.

16.00-18.00 Visit to the *Serendipity – Institute for Black Arts and Heritage* with CEO and Artistic Director, Pawlet Brookes MBE.



The [Serendipity](#) team has recently been developing a new thread within the broader tapestry of its work on Black arts and heritage, by bringing focus to the connections between Black and Latinx lives and cultures throughout global diasporas. This visit will allow us to end our conference with a viewing and discussion of the short film (TBC) [Entre Puerto Rico y Richmond: Women in Resistance Shall Not Be Moved](#) (Dir. Alicia Díaz, Puerto Rico, 2020, 17 minutes), as well as a visit to Serendipity's living archive on Black arts and heritage.