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SUGGESTIONS AND DEBATES

History, Morality, and Politics: Latin American Intellectuals in a Global Context

Michiel Baud

> They tried to banish all that was hybrid and foreign by adopting the outward forms of the Europeans. And in so doing, they attached the spurious to the authentic. It went so far that they spoke French or English and wore tailcoats, but under the smoothly ironed shirt the gaucho remained.
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> E. Martínez Estrada
> *Radiografía de la Pampa*, 1933 (1993) p. 253.

On impulse one afternoon during the early stages of my research into the Dirty War in Argentina and the political past of the former Minister of Agriculture, Jorge Zorreguieta,[1] I sent an e-mail to an Argentinian friend and colleague asking for suggestions about recent literature. He replied promptly with a number of titles, adding:

> I don't do any research into those themes because I can't. It turns my stomach and I lack the necessary peace of mind. I lost so many people I loved: men and women friends, an ex-girlfriend who was with the Montoneros and saved herself by collaborating with the Navy, my cousin, who was as close as a brother, and a sister who was in prison for a long time and died in exile.

I was deeply moved, for the request I had made so casually had clearly opened up the past, and evoked emotions of an intensity I could scarcely have foreseen, and of which I was quite unaware when I sent the e-mail. It brought to mind once again a theme that has fascinated me in various ways throughout the years: the differences between the social and political context in which I work as a Dutch academic in Latin America, and that of my Latin American counterparts. In my view, European and US studies of the so-called non-Western world, often grouped together as "area studies", devote far too little attention to this relationship of crucial importance for

1. This research resulted in Michiel Baud, *El padre de la novia. Jorge Zorreguieta, la sociedad argentina y el régimen militar* (Buenos Aires, 2001).

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the themes, nature, and results of social research. It is a difference which is important, not only at the personal level but also with regard to our perception and analysis of reality, and thus ultimately to the results and integration of our research. Therefore, this essay discusses the relationship between European and North American researchers and their Latin American counterparts, and its consequences for the dialogue between them.

RESEARCHERS HERE AND THERE

To begin with an obvious but too often disregarded point, Western academics who concern themselves with the non-Western world study a world which to them, at least at first, is unfamiliar. They do fieldwork, talk to local colleagues, read and copy documents, and then return to their Western universities and institutes to write studies based on the material they have collected. Because their work deals with unfamiliar themes and is often published in "obscure" journals, it is not always given its full due in their own countries. This situation can constitute a career risk for them, especially in times of economic crisis.

Their colleagues in the countries they study are in an altogether different situation. They live and work in a society they have known since childhood, and which generally forms the subject of their publications. Economic problems and financial insecurity usually mean a struggle to find a balance between research and economic survival. Needing to earn money, many have two or three jobs in addition to their research work, which suffers accordingly. As research funds are in extremely short supply, much research is prompted more by practical considerations than by theoretical questions or a systematic methodology. Foreign books are expensive and libraries poorly stocked, making it difficult to stay abreast of international discussions and events. Many of the public universities lead an impoverished existence, with financial resources totally disproportionate to the vastly increased student population. Internally, they are often highly politicized, adversely affecting their administrative and professional stability. Moreover, the universities in many countries have suffered grievously from authoritarian regimes that spared no effort to bring them under their control. Private universities, although mostly in a somewhat better position, are likewise characterized by instability and dependence. Except for a small group of privileged top academics with more or less structural connections with universities abroad, there are few social researchers in the third world who are in a position to work independently to high academic standards.[2]

2. Little has been written on this subject. For interesting viewpoints on Latin America, see Roderic A. Camp, *Intellectuals and the State in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Austin, TX, 1985),

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At the present time we see the emergence of a group of transnational academics in European and American universities who are engaged in studying their countries of origin. From the United States and Europe, they remain in contact with their home countries in all manner of ways. Often their position is characterized by an ambivalent professional relationship with their colleagues at both institutional and the personal levels. At the institutional level, they occupy a position midway between their colleagues at home and foreign researchers who concern themselves with Latin America. Some experience personal difficulty in determining their position between different cultures. For example, in the introduction to her absorbing book on race relations in Cuzco, the Peruvian-American, Marisol de la Cadena, states that she repeatedly experienced conflicting perceptions – one American and one Peruvian – of the racial identity of herself and the others working on the project.[3] The Venezuelan anthropologist, Daniel Mato, who teaches regularly in the United States, writes that the discourse of academics such as himself (*de doble pertenencia*) inevitably takes place in two worlds (*dos aguas*).[4] In that sense they are the personification of the ambivalent nature of global research.

ACADEMIC INEQUALITY

Needless to say, this simple dichotomy between academics in the north and south does not do justice to the diversity and complexity of the academic communities in both parts of the world, but it does give an indication of the international inequality of the two communities. It is often the case that the work of non-Westerners is not taken very seriously and has little impact outside the countries concerned. The development of theory attracts international attention only when it is taken up by respected scientific journals and publishers in the West, and is given the seal of approval by European or US scholars. Communication between non-Western academics is too often confined to conferences and publications in the West. In a short, largely unnoticed, article published nearly twenty years ago, Carol Smith showed how the academic work of Guatemalan scholars was generally ignored by US scholars. She gave the example of an important book by two Central American authors that went unnoticed and unappreciated until the ideas it put forward were

in particular ch. 10, pp. 208–222; Victoria Peralta and Michael LaRosa, *Los Colombianistas. Una completa vision de los investigadores extranjeros que estudian a Colombia* (Bogotá, 1997), in particular the interviews with Frank Safford (pp. 160–169) and Joanne Rappaport (pp. 244–252).
3. Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991* (Durham, NC [etc.], 2000), p. 11.
4. E-mail to the author, 24 September 2001.

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reproduced some years later in a book published in the US.[5] In a series of articles, Daniel Mato has pointed out that this kind of inequality in the academic world still exists.[6] While not going so far as Walter Mignolo, who writes of the subaltern status (*subalternización*) of Latin American scholars, Mato observes that the American academic world tends to regard colleagues on the spot as "informants". The information contained in their work is utilized, but they are not thought capable of taking a comprehensive view and of formulating original ideas of their own. He states: "Their work is seldom appreciated as a contribution to theory, or as the findings of colleagues."[7] One of my original reasons for dealing with this subject was precisely this mechanism, which I also recognized in my own work. When I, as a comparative outsider, embarked on a new research project in Cuenca, Ecuador, I received a great deal of support from a number of local intellectuals. I read their work and absorbed their knowledge and insights.[8] After a time, however, I went my own way. Returning to the Netherlands, I formulated my ideas and used the knowledge I had gained to publish in Ecuadorian and international journals. The crucial part played by my local colleagues was reduced to the usual expressions of thanks and mention in footnotes. While feeling that something was wrong, I didn't know what I could do about it.

Another example of inequality may be found in the discussion in the pages of the authoritative *Hispanic American Historical Review* about the "new cultural history", the historical variant of the "cultural studies" approach to research on Latin America. Two eminent American historians, Eric Van Young and Florencia Mallon, wrote scholarly articles stressing the importance of this new cultural approach to the history of Mexico. Mallon's article contains no reference at all to Latin American authors, while Van Young's lists 100 English-language publications as compared with 33 in Spanish written by Latin American authors of which 12 are combined in just one note to indicate the fact that, despite "its somewhat traditional ethnographic tendencies", this work of Latin American colleagues can, with a little indulgence, yield interesting

5. Carol Smith, "Ideologies of Social History", *Critique of Anthropology*, 7 (1987), pp. 51–60.
6. Daniel Mato, "Estudios y otras prácticas latinoamericanos en cultura y poder", *Revista Venezolana de Economia y Ciencias Sociales*, 7 (2001). See also Daniel Mato (ed.), *Estudios latinoamericanos sobre cultura y transformaciones sociales en tiempos de globalización* (Buenos Aires, 2001).
7. Mato, "Estudios y otras prácticas latinoamericanos", p. 12. Walter Mignolo, "Posoccidentalismo: el argumento desde América Latina", in Santiago Castro-Gómez and Eduardo Mendieta (eds), *Teorías sin disciplinas: Latinoamericanismo, postcolonialidad y globalización en debate* (Mexico City, 1998).
8. In particular, the local historian Lucas Achiq and the philosopher Carlos Rojas. See Michiel Baud, "Campesinos indígenas contra el Estado. La huelga de los indígenas de Azuay, 1920/21", *Procesos. Revista ecuatoriana de historia* (Quito), 4 (1993), pp. 41–72.

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insights.[9] Such short-sightedness is particularly problematic for this academic trend because it explicitly presents itself as post- or anticolonial. Carol Smith draws attention to the same attitude of her US colleagues in Central America. She concludes:

> [B]y acknowledging their intellectual debts to (if not "dependency" on) Latin American scholarship, they could have challenged the fact as well as the idea that the First World dominates Third World intellectual production in the same way that they challenge the fact as well as the idea that the First World dominates Third World social life.[10]

Cultural studies constitutes another, equally paradoxical, phenomenon in that Latin American authors are not ignored but in fact accorded a prominent place. This signifies that the American academic world is not so closed as the foregoing instance might suggest, but is capable of identifying new sources of inspiration and of incorporating them into its own discourse. For that very reason, however, this trend is criticized in Latin America.[11] The Chilean literary scholar Nelly Richard writes: "Local heterogeneity in Latin America is in danger of being homogenized by the academic translation by Latin Americanists and Latin American Studies [in the United States]."[12] Latin American authors like Nestor Garcia Canclini, José Joaquín Brunner, Nelly Richard, Jesús Martín Barbero, Renato Ortiz, Beatriz Sarlo, Elisabeth Jelin, and many others have made highly original contributions to the debate on present-day processes of change, and their work has greatly influenced American and European authors. Both Martín Barbero and García have, however, felt compelled to protest on more than one occasion that their ideas were formulated prior to and independently of North American and European cultural studies,

9. "Special Issue: Mexico's New Cultural History: Una Lucha Libre?", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 79 (1999). The articles in question are: Eric Van Young, "The New Cultural History Comes to Old Mexico", pp. 211–247, and Florencia E. Mallon, "Time on the Wheel: Cycles of Revisionism and the 'New Cultural History'", pp. 331–351. To quote Van Young in full, "[Mexican ethnohistory] claims its culturalist credentials more from its somewhat traditional ethnographic tendencies than from any postmodernist or cultural studies genealogy, so that it has to be *read for* the cultural meanings and symbolic exegeses one would suppose typical of the new cultural history, rather than supplying them intentionally and overtly"; pp. 232–233.

10. Smith, "Ideologies of Social History", p. 59.

11. This may be regarded as the most characteristic feature of colonialism. See Tzvetan Todorov, *La Conquête de l'Amérique. La question de l'autre* (Paris, 1982).

12. Nelly Richard, "Globalización académica, estudios culturales y crítica latinoamericana", in Mato, *Estudios latinoamericanos sobre cultura*, pp. 185–199, 188. She echoes Alberto Moreiras's observation: "Through Latin Americanist representation, Latin American differences are controlled and homogenized and put at the service of global representation"; Alberto Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference: The Politics of Latin American Cultural Studies* (Durham, NC [etc.], 2001), p. 32.

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and that they knew nothing of the Birmingham School and the gurus of cultural studies in the United States until some time later.[13] Latin American authors who are incorporated into the canon of cultural studies are thus in danger of the implicit loss of their originality and intellectual independence.

In the case of Latin America, discussions of this kind on the political economy of academic research soon acquire a linguistic connotation. Many Latin American scholars regard English as a colonial or neocolonial language engaged in a permanent struggle with Spanish. This is an interesting point because in Latin America Spanish is itself a "colonial" language that for more than 500 years has dominated a host of indigenous languages.[14] The discussion is rendered more complicated by the fact that those fostering progressive political aims have reverted to the nineteenth-century ultranationalist view of English and Anglo-Saxon culture as a direct threat to their (superior) Hispanic culture. These ideas stem from the work of the Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó, whose essay, *Ariel*, published in 1900, was a sharp attack on the liberal and decadent influence of North American imperialism.[15] The emphasis on Spanish should therefore be viewed as part of Latin America's efforts to wrest itself free of the dominating influence of its powerful northern neighbour, and to counter the hegemony of English as the lingua franca of a globalized world.

Because of the continent's specific social and cultural historical development this combination of different, opposing views has a special significance in Latin America. I was not aware of this before reading an interesting essay by Benedict Anderson on the historical development of Southeast Asian studies in the United States, in which he posits that the emergence of "a substantial indigenous academic and non-academic intelligentsia" in the region has brought about a significant change in the whole of Southeast Asian studies.[16] The observation surprised me, and suddenly I realized that Latin America is unique in the possession of an intellectual elite that, since the nineteenth century and indeed earlier, has been engaged in a continual dialogue with Western intellectual traditions

13. Daniel Mato, "Introducción: Cultura y transformaciones sociales en tiempos de globalización", in Mato, *Estudios Latinoamericanos sobre cultura*, p. 20.

14. See, for example, Raúl Avila, "Lenguaje, medios e identidad nacional", *Revista Europea de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe/European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, 64 (1998), pp. 105–112. Moreover, the term "Latin America" is also somewhat controversial: Michiel Baud, *Intelectuales y jus utopías. Indigenismo y la imaginación de América Latina* (Amsterdam, 2003).

15. It is also available in English: José Enrique Rodó, *Ariel* (Austin, TX, 1988).

16. Benedict R. Anderson, "The Changing Ecology of Southeast Asian Studies in the United States, 1950–1990", in Charles Hirschman, Charles F. Keyes, and Karl Hutterer (eds), *Southeast Asian Studies in the Balance: Reflections from America* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1992), pp. 25–40, 36.

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in all manner of conflicting and complex ways. [17] An outspoken, and at times vociferous, intellectual elite expressing their ideas with the aid of Western ideas and insights – in some cases slavishly imitated, in others appropriated and creatively manipulated – have wrought substantial changes in the intellectual landscape or, in Anderson's terminology, the "intellectual ecology" of the continent. Movements like the "Hispanic" *arielismo* founded on the work of Rodó, and *indigenismo*, promoting the incorporation of the indigenous population in the new Latin American nation states, together with the *dependencia* theories on the economic and political independence of the Third World and, in a certain sense, the liberation theology, are all typically Latin American theories that have deeply influenced our thinking.

Still today, a particular characteristic of Latin American societies is the need felt by people at all social levels to write about their own culture and to place it in its historical context.[18] The majority of these studies, published privately and barely conforming to scholarly standards, seldom reach the national intellectual community, much less the international academic world. In the local context, however, they endow the author with considerable prestige and are read with interest, while passing anthropologists and historians make ready use of the unique insights they provide into local customs and history. In some instances, such as the *indigenismo* in Peru, they formed the basis for movements that eventually acquired national significance.[19]

It follows, therefore, that the contemporary European or American researcher in Latin America should be prepared for an intensive dialogue with local intellectuals. Some of them work in the same international arena as foreign researchers; others fulfil no more than a local role. In all cases, however, their research on the whole is structured and integrated differently from that of, say, a Dutch researcher. This can be demonstrated by the following example.

ARGUEDAS AND FAVRE

On 23 June 1965, a group of prominent social scientists and literary critics gathered in a villa at the prestigious Instituto de Estudios Peruanos for a public discussion with the Peruvian writer and anthropologist, José Maria

17. While writing this essay, I realized that this is also the central theme of Angel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Hanover, 1984). See also Nicola Miller, *In the Shadow of the State: Intellectuals and the Quest for National Identity in Twentieth-Century Spanish America* (London [etc.], 1999).

18. Angel Rama suggests that their fascination with the written word is partly a reaction to the political instability of the continent. Rama, *La ciudad letrada*, p. 9: "Esta palabra escrita viviría en América Latina como la única valedera, en oposición a la palabra hablada que pertenecía al reino de lo inseguro y lo precario."

19. See for example: Manuel Aquizolo Castro (ed.), *La polémica del indigenismo* (Lima, 1976).

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Arguedas, on his recently published and highly controversial ethnographic novel. The book was an expression of the author's hope that the indigenous culture of the Andes would be proof against the destructive tendencies of capitalism and the modernization of society. In other words, he hoped the inherent strength of Indian culture would ensure that modernization was in harmony with the social order of the Andes. The closing sentences of the novel were highly revealing: "Do you not feel it? Listen carefully. It is like an underground river gathering force."

At the meeting, Arguedas was heavily criticized by a number of social scientists who accused him of romanticizing the indigenous Andes communities out of a nostalgic leaning towards a mythical past. This criticism brought the fifty-four-year-old author close to despair. That same evening, he wrote to a friend: "I feel that after today my life has lost all meaning".[20] Four years later he committed suicide. Although there were also personal and other reasons for this dramatic decision, his death was without doubt partly attributable to the lack of understanding greeting his interpretation of Indian society in the Andes.

Arguedas's most severe critics were the Peruvian sociologist, Anibal Quijano, and Henri Favre, a young French anthropologist who was to devote his life to the study of Latin America. Favre dismissed Arguedas's approach as a totally indigenistic (*absolutamente indigenista*) portrayal of the Indian population as by definition "good" and unspoiled. He professed himself shocked by the biological determinism of the novel, which implied that Indians would always choose that which was good. In Favre's view, the novel did not present a true image of Peruvian society. In the two years he had spent in Huancavélica, he found no Indians, just exploited peasants.[21] In the end, he asserted, the effect of Arguedas's book would be negative for Peru. Quijano agreed with this judgement. He did not think the rural Indian population and their culture could play any part in the social and economic transformation taking place in Peru.

In the following years, this episode played an important part in conceptions of the nature of Peruvian society. In the course of time Arguedas achieved something of a cult status in Peru. The neo-Marxist view of Peruvian peasant communities gradually lost ground to a new interest in their place in the process of the social and economic development of Peru. The Arguedian belief in the vitality of Indian society was suddenly generally accepted and Arguedas was regarded as the prophet of the new Indian emancipation movements.[22] The tragic death of the author

20. *¿He vivido en vano? Mesa Redonda sobre "Todas las Sangres", 23 de Junio de 1965* (Lima, 1985).

21. *¿He vivido en vano?*, p. 38.

22. See, for example, the virtual cyberayllu library in which the work of Arguedas plays a crucial role (www.ciberayllu.org). The Peruvian historian Alberto Flores Galindo played a pivotal part in the revaluation. See Alberto Flores Galindo, *Buscando un Inca* (Lima, 1988).

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merely served to enhance his magical seductiveness. As Flores Galindo observes: "The actuality of Arguedas' work lies in its power to cut through to society itself and, what is more, to fuse together social and collective problems and those of a personal nature."[23]

The discussion outlined above occupied an important place in the revaluation of Arguedas. A transcription of it was published in 1985, and reissued in 2000 together with two CD-Roms covering the greater part of the debate.[24] The resonance of the polemic was such that in 1996 Favre, who had meanwhile become an eminent Latin Americanist, felt compelled to explain his part in it.[25] He declared that he had no feelings of guilt about the position he had adopted then. It had been an open discussion on an important theme of topical interest, and not at all the inquisition, the *tribunal de inquisición*, that later observers made of it. If anyone had behaved badly, he added, it was Arguedas. To prove his point, he told the story of his two meetings with him when he himself was still a young anthropologist, giving a far from flattering picture of the celebrated writer. Arguedas had scarcely bothered to talk to the Frenchman, whom he treated with undisguised disdain. Favre found this treatment all the more irritating because he was not greatly impressed by Arguedas's views, which he and his friends considered to be *passé* (*pasadista*) and nostalgic (*arcaisante*). It is clear from Favre's short article that the argument between the two intellectuals had not ended with Arguedas's death.

The object here is not to highlight the personal drama of a great Peruvian writer, or to discuss the complex Peruvian reality at the heart of the polemics described above. I draw attention to these events in order to discuss the relationship between Latin American and foreign intellectuals and their body of ideas. Favre was a French anthropologist who plunged precipitously into a discussion of the nature of Peruvian society. Underlying everything said that evening were other factors of a more personal and political nature. Arguedas enjoyed a huge reputation among Peruvian intellectuals, and conducted himself accordingly. Favre was undoubtedly familiar with similar attitudes in the French academy at that time, and that was precisely what he and his generation were fighting against. He admitted in his later publication that his harsh critique was connected with the battle that the French students were to wage against their own intellectual establishment in 1968. Arguedas, for his part, must have been shocked by the young man's ruthless onslaught, and on his

23. Flores Galindo, *Dos ensayos sobre José Maria Arguedas* (Lima, 1992), p. 34.
24. *¿He vivido en vano?*; and Guillermo Rochabrún (ed.), *La Mesa Redonda sobre "Todas las Sangres" del 23 de junio de 1965* (Lima, 2000).
25. Henri Favre, "José Maria Arguedas y yo. Un breve encuentro o una cita frustrada?", *Socialismo y participación*, 74 (1996), pp. 107–111.

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own terrain at that.[26] It was obvious that he did not know how to deal with it.[27]

A FIRST REFLECTION

I have no doubt that all foreign researchers engaged in discussions with Latin American colleagues have experienced similarly charged conflicts. They stem from the tensions inherent in the study of another culture or society. In the Netherlands, too, we tend to be suspicious of outsiders who air their opinions of aspects of our history. In the case of the Third World, there is the added complication of the history of colonialism and the ongoing inequality on a world scale. In Latin America, for instance, no-one can circumvent a deeply rooted anti-Americanism.[28] In Spanish texts, almost without realizing it, I would have referred to "North America" in order to distinguish the mighty United States from the "other" Latin America. To be sure: the occasional distinction I make here between Western and non-Western countries (which I find preferable to the current use of the terms north and south) is also unacceptable to many Latin American intellectuals, who consider themselves to be part of Western culture. Moreover, reminders of a "colonial" past are not confined to *gringos*. Once, during an animated discussion in the Dominican Republic, it was subtly conveyed to me that South Africa's apartheid system was a Dutch "invention".

The point here is not whether such a reproach was justified. It is that in our work we are accompanied by our own culture and history, whether we like it or not. As the Colombian political scientist, Gonzalo Sánchez, observes: "The actual participation and engagement of the intellectuals does not depend solely on his position a social category, but also on the type of society in which they develop their ideas and on their place in the organization of culture." [29] If we are in agreement with this – as I believe

26. Floris Galindo writes: "Allí le (Arguedas; MB) dicen, con el tono doctoral de Favre, un historiador francés, que él no ha entendido el mundo andino, que ha hecho una caricatura y que ha retratado un mundo que ya no existe"; Flores Galindo, *Dos ensayos*, 23. About Arguedas's sensitivity to the criticism of "los doctores": Alfredo Quintanilla Ponce, "El *wakcha* Arguedas y los doctores", www.ciberayllu.org (2000).

27. It is interesting to note that the Peruvian historian Nelson Manriqe has shown that Arguedas was heavily influenced by a variety of American culturalist theories disseminated in Peru through the indigenist leader Luis Valcárcel: Nelson Manrique, "José Maria Arguedas y el problema del mestizaje", in Maruja Martínez and Nelson Manrique (eds), *Amor y fuego. José Maria Arguedas 25 años después* (Lima, 1995). Also www.ciberayllu.org (1999).

28. For an analysis of this from the viewpoint of the United States, see Frederick B. Pike, *The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature* (Austin, TX, 1992).

29. Gonzalo Sánchez Gómez, "El compromiso social y politico de los intelectuales", Presentation of the Diskin Memorial Lectureship at the Conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Miami, March 2000. www.mamacoca.org/sanchez_intelectuales, pp. 2–3.

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we must be – then reflection on our own position as historians and social scientists is of vital importance. And if our goal is to gain knowledge and expertise about other cultures and societies, it is just as necessary to give thought to the position of our colleagues in those societies. As stated by Carol Smith: "[I]ntellectual discourse is a part of social history. As such, it partakes in a world system of ideology in which scholars take an active role, whether they are fully conscious of their role or not."[30]

Our dialogue with intellectuals seeking to investigate the same realities and to answer similar questions in widely different circumstances is inevitably filled with misunderstandings and tensions that become apparent in both the personal and the work contexts. For whatever reason, academics tend to avoid openly discussing the tensions connected with their work, perhaps because they are so difficult to deal with and to resolve. To give an example from my own early years in research: while working in the National Archives of the Dominican Republic I had established a good professional relationship with the Dominican colleagues who also regularly worked there. One day, a porter with whom I was on friendly terms took me aside rather furtively and told me in a roundabout way that for years I had been paying 25 centavos per photocopy while everyone knew that after a simple request to the director researchers were charged only 10 centavos. I have often thought about this, but still cannot altogether explain it. In a sense, I felt betrayed. Why had none of my colleagues told me this? Was it because they thought I had plenty of money? At that stage of my career, this was clearly not the case, even though I came from a rich country and could obviously pay the travel and accommodation costs. Were they less well-inclined towards me than I had thought? And what to think of the fact that it was a porter, on the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder, who had eventually told me about it? Although I still don't understand why this happened, it did open my eyes to the fact that good intentions alone are not enough in intercultural academic intercourse.

This is not the place to go further into this trifling incident, which however does illustrate the point that academic conflicts like that between Favre and Arguedas are often accompanied by, or even based on, much more trivial everyday differences in our research practices. Clearly, they must be rendered more explicit and integrated into our scientific reflections.

If the above reflection largely concerns relations between academics, to scientific discourse both in and beyond Latin America has recently been added the voice of the indigenous population. Indian groups are coming forward to present in many different ways their own vision of Latin American reality and its history. A rapidly growing number of Indian

30. Smith, "Ideologies of Social History", p. 59.

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intellectuals are placing their knowledge and expertise at the disposal of the emancipation struggle of the Indian population and the revaluation of their language and culture. It is a development that in many respects is comparable to the revaluation of the local knowledge and expertise of local "peasant" intellectuals in other parts of the world,[31] who make use of a global culture in which the rights of indigenous peoples are assured of a growing body of political support.[32] The complex consequences of this development for scientific dialogue are shown by the following example.

RIGOBERTA MENCHÚ AND DAVID STOLL

The life story of Rigoberta Menchú, a Mayan woman in Guatemala, was recorded in 1982 by Elizabeth Burgos, the wife of the celebrated French revolutionary Regis Debray. The resulting book, published in 1984, bore eloquent testimony to the hopeless situation of the Indian population of Guatemala.[33] A damning indictment of the genocidal policy of a military regime that cost more than 150,000 Indian peasants their lives, the story of an illiterate woman whose father and brothers were among the victims of the regime had an immediate and profound effect on European and North American public opinion and was obligatory reading in many Latin American educational programmes. Rigoberta Menchú became the figurehead of the Maya movement agitating in the 1980s and 1990s for better conditions for the Indian population in Guatemala and for an end to the military dictatorship. She was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992, a symbolic year witnessing the quincentenary of Columbus's discovery of America. These events renewed the struggle of the indigenous population in many Latin American countries, and in this way were a major factor in the subsequent restoration of democracy in Guatemala. The multicultural nature of the "new" Guatemala was clearly set out in the peace agreements signed in December 1996.[34]

31. Steven Feierman, *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania* (Madison, WI, 1990). For an historical interpretation see: Florencia E. Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley, CA [etc.], 1995).
32. Joanne Rappaport, *Cumbe Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History* (Chicago, IL [etc.], 1994); Alison Brysk, *From Tribal Village to Global Village: Indian Rights and International Relations in Latin America* (Stanford, CA, 2000).
33. Elizabeth Burgos, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (Barcelona, 1992; orig. 1983). For the origins of the book see Elizabeth Burgos's introduction. See also David Stoll, *Rigoberto Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans* (Boulder, CO, 1999), pp. 177–188.
34. See article 5 of the accords: "El reconocimiento de la identidad y derechos de los pueblos indigenas es fundamental para la construcción de una nación de unidad nacional multiétnica, pluricultural y multilingüe. El respeto y ejercicio de los derechos politicos, culturales, económicos y espirituales de todos los guatemaltecos, es la base de una nueve convivencia que refleje la diversidad de su nación." *Acuerdo de paz Guatemala, 29 de diciembre de 1996.* http://www.minugua.guate.net/acuerdos/firmeyduradero.htm.

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Although Rigoberto Menchú was an important figure in the struggle, she was less representative of the Maya movement than her admirers abroad liked to believe. Like Elizabeth Burgos, she believed from the outset that the revolutionary overthrow of the old order was the only possible solution for Guatemala. Her book was co-edited by the exiled leaders of the CUC (Comité de Unidad Campesina), of which her family were members, and which figures prominently in the book. Many Maya groups supporting the cultural revitalization of their people were by no means wholly in agreement with Menchú's interpretations and programme points, much less the leading position attributed to her by her foreign admirers.[35] Few reports of the strategic political discussions prompted by the differences of opinion reached other countries, and any that did find their way abroad were suppressed by foreign intellectuals to avoid a negative effect on the legitimate struggle of the Maya people against a genocidal regime. Menchú gradually became estranged even from Elizabeth Burgos, the person who had recorded her story, culminating in friction over responsibility for the book's contents and copyright which was also concealed from the outside world.[36]

The silence was abruptly broken with the publication of a book by the American anthropologist David Stoll. It was a frontal attack on Rigoberta Menchú and the story that had made her famous.[37] Though he had expressed his views in the limited circle of colleagues since 1990, they had awakened little interest. Between 1993 and 1995 he conducted supplementary research, and his book eventually appeared in 1998.[38] He explained that he had delayed its publication for fear of endangering the struggle to end the reign of terror in Guatemala. Stoll attacked Menchú's testimony on several points. First, he argued that the revolutionary struggle at the heart of Menchú's book was not supported by the majority of the Indian population, and that it had in fact prolonged their suffering. He then proceeded to point out many errors and inconsistencies in her life story, stating that her father had not been a prominent member of the CUC and that, contrary to her account, her brother was still alive. He did not deny the scale of the genocide committed by the military, but placed part of the blame on the guerrillas. Stoll's final conclusion was that

35. Kay B. Warren, *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala* (Princeton, NJ, 1998), pp. 116–117.

36. Elizabeth Burgos, "The Story of a Testimony", *Latin American Perspectives*, 26 (1999), pp. 53–63.

37. Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú*. The Spanish version of the book is available on the author's website: http://community.middlebury.edu/~dstoll/rm.html. See also Peter Canby, "The Truth about Rigoberta Menchú", *The New York Review of Books*, 46: 6 (8 April 1999).

38. See Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú*, pp. 239–242. Also David Stoll, "Rigoberta Menchú and the Last-Resort Paradigm", *Latin American Perspectives*, 26 (1999), pp. 70–80.

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Menchú, along with all the intellectuals who had supported her, had given a distorted account of the conflict and of Guatemalan reality in general.

Stoll's book created a stir not only in the American press but also in Europe. Amongst Guatemala specialists his views were already broadly known, but their publication prompted reactions ranging from furious to analytical. Some critics saw the book as proof that Stoll, a white American male, could never understand the struggle of a colonized people. Latin American scholars and Guatemala specialists, on the other hand, took it seriously and reacted accordingly. Most of the discussions focused on the substance of the book and were conducted at congresses and in journals.[39] One of the major points debated was Stoll's analysis of the civil war in Guatemala. On the basis of their own research, they disputed his conclusion that the situation of the Maya population was improving at the time when Menchú's story appeared, and queried his assertion that the vast majority were opposed to the war.[40] By and large, they agreed with Stoll that further research was needed.

Another point of contention was the nature of the book. What did it matter, argued Menchú's sympathisers, that some relatively insignificant facts were incorrect? After all, the important thing was what her story had meant for the insurgency against the military terror in Guatemala. According to the American anthropologist Gary Gossen, it should not be judged as a personal testimony in which it could – or should – be possible to distinguish truth from untruth. In his view, the book was an example of "epic literature", describing and justifying the struggle of the Maya people in Central America. He pointed out that compression into a personal story and the use of the first-person form were characteristics of the cultural world of the Maya people. Stoll's analysis of the inconsistencies in Menchú's story seemed to be based on the wrong premise. It was an established fact that she came from a reasonably well-off Indian family occupying an important position in the local community. It was precisely that background which enabled her to play such an important part. That she kept more or less silent about it was probably for strategic political reasons shared with Elizabeth Burgos. Gossen added that there were also undoubtedly cultural considerations, which Stoll apparently did not wish to acknowledge. The book was of importance for the very reason that it combined a personal story with the collective experience of the

39. At two congresses of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) special sessions were devoted to it. See also the theme number of *Latin American Perspectives*, 26 (November 1999) and *Lateral. Revista de Cultura* (April 2002), www.lateral-ed.es/revista. For a general survey of the debate, see Arturo Arias (ed.), *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy* (Minneapolis, MN [etc.], 2001).

40. See, for example, Carol A. Smith, "Why Write an Exposé of Rigoberta Menchú?", *Latin American Perspectives*, 26 (November 1999), pp. 15–28.

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population. For Menchú's more prominent position made it possible for her to compress the experiences of the local Maya population into those of one person. While the "facts" presented by Stoll might be largely true, his analytical framework was based on a strict division between personal and collective experience which in the local context was virtually meaningless. Gossen concludes: "When the dust settles from the current controversy, I think the work will assume its rightful place as a major charter document for the Maya cultural and political renaissance that is occurring in our time".[41]

A last point of the controversy that attracted less direct attention but is of interest here concerns the position of the academics involved. In presenting his book, Stoll suggested repeatedly that the academic world had deliberately closed its eyes to the painful facts he had revealed. Provocatively, he wrote that Rigoberta's last supporters were "the Europeans and North Americans who first responded to her story and set her on the path of fame".[42] He went so far as to accuse American academics of "moral angst", so influenced by politically correct and postmodern trends that they did not dare to acknowledge the untruths and dubious position of Rigoberta Menchú. "By dismissing empirical research as a form of Western domination, critical theorists can end up interpreting texts in terms of simplistic stereotypes of collectivity, authenticity and resistance that, because they are authorized by identity with victimhood, are not to be questioned".[43] Although the political bias and jargon of some reactions seemed to confirm Stoll's accusation,[44] it must nonetheless be stated that the seriousness with which his book was debated in the American academic world indicates that on this point he was wrong.

In Guatemala, Stoll's book caused less of a stir. The Maya leaders and left-wing intellectuals were outraged and angry, but the most remarkable aspect of the Stoll–Menchú controversy was the comparative indifference with which it was greeted.[45] The book was of course discussed and a few reviews appeared in the press, but by and large it must be concluded that it

41. Gary H. Gossen, "Rigoberta Menchú and her Epic Narrative", *Latin American Perspectives*, 26 (November 1999), pp. 64–99.

42. David Stoll, "Life Story as Mythopoesis", *Anthropology Newsletter*, (April 1998).

43. Stoll, *Rigoberta Menchú*, p. 347. He adds: "The simplistic images of innocence, oppression and defiance can be used to construct mythologies of purity for academic factions claiming moral authority on the grounds that they identify with the oppressed."

44. One example is George Gugelberger's reproving remark that Stoll was "resistant to literary theory" and had closed his eyes to the "enormous power of this literary text", as if that was the core of his analysis. George M. Gugelberger, "Stollwerk or Bulwark? David Meets Goliath and the Continuation of the Testimony Debate", *Latin American Perspectives*, 26 (1999), pp. 47–52.

45. See for example Paul Jeffrey, "In the end, the Poor May Decide", *National Catholic Reporter*, 3 May 1999: www.natcath.com/NCR_Online/archives/030599/030599m.

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prompted less upheaval than in the United States.[46] Though this may have been partly due to the fact that it was first published in English, it was also attributable to other factors, and specifically the emergence of a social debate in Guatemala itself. In a sense, when Stoll's book appeared in Guatemala it was already out of date. In 1998 and 1999 two reports were issued with the aid of the Catholic Church, containing a full account of the scale and horrors of the years of military oppression.[47] David Stoll was severely criticized for publishing his book at the same time as the publication of these impressive reports. In any case, given the content of the reports, an intensive debate on David Stoll's study was then hardly to be expected.[48]

Today, social debate in Guatemala relates more to the future. In the course of freeing themselves from the dictatorship a large group of Maya intellectuals emerged, and now play a part in the peace process that was inconceivable before.[49] Intent upon enforcing the implementation of the peace accords, they are engaged in the construction of a "new" Guatemala. Regarding themselves as the representatives of the Maya people, they actively promote the cultural and political interests of the peasant population, rendered all the more essential by the fact that the country is still fraught with violence and political murders that go unpunished. These indigenous leaders are highly suspicious of Western, neocolonial thought patterns and concepts, which they regard as inimical to a new Maya nationalism.[50] They attribute the doubts of Western intellectuals and aid workers to a lack of understanding of their long years of resistance. At the same time, they accept the support of foreign scientists so long as their work furthers the Maya movement. In her book on pan-Maya activism, the American anthropologist, Kay Warren, shows to what complicated intellectual discussions this can lead and how difficult it is for Western scientists to decolonize their research practices. On the one hand, many anthropologists do not object to their position as researchers being open to discussion; on the other hand, they feel a certain unease with the various

46. For a number of Guatemalan reactions, see Arias, *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy.*

47. Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification: *Guatemala: Memory of Silence*; Informe de la Comisión para el Esclarecimiento Histórica: *Guatemala: Memoria del Silencio*. Proyecto interdiocesano de Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica (REMHI); *Guatemala: Nunca Más.* Both documents are available on: http:/www.zmag.org/LAM/zguatemala.html.

48. Kay Warren, "Telling Truths: Taking David Stoll and the Rigoberta Menchú Exposé Seriously", in Arias, *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*, pp. 198–218, 210–211.

49. Jorge Rogachevsky, "Review of Stoll's Rigoberta Menchú etc.", *Zmagazine*, (July/August 1999), www.zmag.org/Zmag/articles/july/99toc. He writes: "The civil war led to the opening up of a political space for the majority of Guatemalans to assert themselves in ways that were unthinkable throughout the entire previous history of that country."

50. See: Edward F. Fischer and R. McKenna Brown (eds), *Maya Cultural Activism in Guatemala* (Austin, TX, 1996).

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essentialist interpretations of Maya culture that are also part of the ideology of the Mayas' cultural activism.[51] Warren's analysis demonstrates the difficulties and complexities of this kind of reflection. Even in her subtle interpretation we can discern certain colonialist tendencies. She places considerable emphasis on the essentialist trends of the Maya movement, stating, for instance: "Mayanists assert there is a culturally specific indigenous way of knowing: a subject position no one else can occupy." She concludes that American anthropologists are accepted only if their research findings confirm the continuities of a timeless Maya culture. In its political aspirations, however, the Maya movement is less one-sided than she suggests. A Maya author such as Demetrio Cojti has proposed a subtle analysis of Guatemala's past and present that steers clear of simplistic essentialisms.[52] Warren's interpretation seems to be based more on her personal contacts with Maya intellectuals than on their writings.

The situation of political activists intent upon achieving political results and influencing public opinion is fundamentally different from that of academics seeking to understand and analyse reality, and can give rise to considerable tension in everyday practice. Are Western scientists prepared to allow their sympathy for subaltern, colonized groups to influence their research findings? And if not, how do they formulate their dialogue (and differences of opinion) with local intellectuals?[53] The formulation of "counter-histories" from the Maya perspective is a fundamental element of Indian emancipation, but for that reason can at the same time give rise to new tensions with academic research.

Nor is interpretation of the Maya movement any less ambivalent in the Guatemalan academic world. Rejecting what they see as new "essentialism", some Guatemalan intellectuals supported, implicitly or explicitly, Stoll's analysis. They perceive the ethnic identity movements, founded as they are on new, racially-based social differences, as a threat to the construction of a democratic society. These objections are voiced, for instance, by the writer Mario Roberto Morales, who makes provocative use of the literary jargon of "cultural studies". He uses key terms such as *mestizaje*, hybridity, mimesis and multiple identities in support of his argument that the contemporary Indian movement is a symbol of the past and that the Maya movement propagates a dangerous essentialist and, in a sense, racist ideology. In their scheme of things, he asserts, there is no place for Indian youngsters with Reebok trainers, punk hairstyles and a liking

51. Warren, *Indigenous Movements*, pp. 37, 74.

52. See for example Demetrio Cojí Cuxil, "The Politics of Maya Revindication", in Fischer and McKenna Brown, *Maya Cultural Activism*, pp. 19–50.

53. For an interesting discussion of tensions of this kind, see Les W. Field, "Complicities and Collaborations: Anthropologists and the 'Unacknowledged Tribes' of California", *Current Anthropology*, 40 (1999), pp. 193–209.

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for heavy metal.[54] He accuses foreign intellectuals and international organizations of having projected simplistic ideas on to Guatemalan society out of a combination of empathy, arrogance and economic interests. The latter point refers chiefly to tourism, which stands to gain from the preservation and diffusion of images associated with a traditional, unspoiled Indian culture. Not surprisingly, he too has serious doubts about the international iconic status of Rigoberta Menchú. He distrusts the unquestioning international support accorded her national leftist struggle:

> In the discourse of Menchú, in herself, and in the adhesion and solidarity accorded to her and they believed she represented (the "Maya" people of Guatemala and the indigenous peoples of the world), these sectors found a symbol and a living subject that helped them to give their academic activities a projection that transcended the lecture rooms and supported the popular revolution in Central America.[55]

Morales argues that foreign intellectuals have appropriated the (authentic?) voice of Rigoberta Menchú for their own political and intellectual purposes.

This brings us back to the central theme of this essay: the complex relationship between intellectuals and scientists in the Euro-American world and their counterparts in Latin America. The examples drawn from Guatemala clearly illustrate the complexity and contradictions of that relationship. With the aid of a French-Venezuelan ghost writer, an Indian woman achieved world fame and became the symbol of the oppressed indigenous peoples in Latin America and elsewhere in the world. She cleared the way for a new generation of Indian intellectuals (some with an American Ph.D.) who are now an important political factor in Guatemala. An American anthropologist, seeking the objective truth, set about investigating her story. Though causing no sensation in post-civil-war Guatemala, it prompted a heated debate in the American academic world that focused less on the actual facts than on the interpretation of those facts and their political and social consequences. Finally, a Guatemalan academic and journalist with a doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh utilized postmodern literary jargon to counter what he condemns as a racist and essentialist Indian movement supported by an American intelligentsia that makes use of it in seeking a solution to their own problems with race and identity.

54. Mario Roberto Morales, *La articulación de las diferencias o el syndrome de Maximón. Los discursos literarios y politicos del debate interétnico en Guatemala* (Guatemala City, 1998), pp. 295–390; also Warren, *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics*, pp. 41–42.
55. Morales, *La articulación de las diferencias*, pp. 134–135.

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A SECOND REFLECTION

First and foremost, these examples show it would be wrong simply to contrast the Latin American intellectual with the foreign academic.[56] There are wide differences within every group, and discussions on the matter of substance cut across them all. Political and scientific links no longer exist solely within national boundaries, and in the case of Latin America have probably never done so. Modern means of communication facilitate not only regular contact between like-minded researchers but also the establishment of international academic networks. Latin America is highly computerized, and over the past twenty years I have observed its ongoing integration in the modern global world. Direct daily contact is now such a matter of course that we tend to forget how much more effort it entailed just a short time ago. As we have seen, emancipation movements are making increasing use of this global compaction to further their struggle, a process that has led to new and, in some cases, no less complex forms of intellectual dialogue.

At the same time, the world, including the intellectual world, is still characterized by huge differences of economic and political power. A legacy of colonial and neocolonial structures, they also result from new economic inequalities on a global scale. That is not to say, however, that intellectual agendas are drawn up only at the centres of world power, for they are prepared and implemented at all levels everywhere,[57] and juxtaposed in the most unexpected places and at the most surprising moments. Did Favre's critique destroy Arguedas's utopia? On the contrary, it was partly responsible for Arguedas's elevation to the status of a cultural and political cult figure in Peru. Nor was the dispute with Arguedas in any way damaging to Favre, for it helped him to establish his reputation as an anthropologist by enabling him to demonstrate to his colleagues that he was an independent thinker with a deep respect for objectivity and proper analysis.

In the case of Rigoberta Menchú the course of events was different. She rose to national prominence in Guatemala through the international

56. In his search for a new paradigm for Latin American studies, Moreiras states: "The Latin American Latin Americanists, or those who assume that position, have no real right to assume the representation of subaltern negation, because they also think from colonial discourse, just as, for example, the US Latin Americanists (and all other cosmopolitans and neocosmopolitans, to the extent that they are Latin Americanists) are no impeccable representatives of the system of epistemic domination. Location, here, is always crossed, and crisscrossed"; *The Exhaustion of Difference*, p. 17.

57. For a provocative analysis of various "agendas" relating to Andes studies, see Orin Starn, "Rethinking the Politics of Anthropology: The Case of the Andes", *Current Anthropology*, 35 (1994), pp. 13–38; Daniel Mato, "Reflexiones para un diálogo sobre 'Agendas intelectuales críticas en América Latina'", paper delivered at the Seminario Internacional "Agendas intelectuales críticas en América Latina, un diálogo", Buenos Aires, 27–29 August, 2001.

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recognition bestowed by the Nobel Prize. Was her position weakened by Stoll's critical analysis? To some extent that was the case, but its impact was negligible in the local context. If her influence waned at all, it was largely due to the internal conflicts in Guatemala.[58] Stoll, on the other hand, can hardly be regarded as a typical representative of the powerful American academy. His harsh criticism of Menchú was related in part to his somewhat marginal position in the American academic world at that time.[59] The accusations of arrogance and of a neocolonial attitude levelled against me in the Dominican Republic are similar examples of conflicting agendas. They were probably prompted by the frustration or anger of a Dominican colleague. But I used them to elucidate my point of view. So the scientific dialogue that formed the point of departure for these reflections is rather less self-evident than it may at first have seemed. A number of different aspects can be discerned. All parties manipulate one another's rhetoric and appropriate elements of others' arguments, which they then utilize for their own scientific or political agendas.

That does not mean of course that differences in power and symbolic capital have become irrelevant, as evidenced, for instance, by the fact that we study "them" while "they" are scarcely ever in a position to do the same with us. A monograph published by an American university press has infinitely more impact than a study published by a local Latin American university. In many respects, Latin American academics' criticism of the powerful position of the American (and, to a lesser extent, European) academic world is justified.

DIALOGUE AND CONFRONTATION IN A GLOBAL WORLD

Reflections of this kind gain added importance in a continent like Latin America, where the sciences and intellectual life in general are deeply, almost inextricably, embedded in a diversity of political and social discussions. Latin American intellectuals are well aware of this fact and see themselves as the major actors in political debates. One of the foremost representatives of the *dependencia* school, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, was the President of Brazil; Jorge Castañeda, the celebrated author of an impressive study of leftwing movements in Latin America and biographer of Che Guevara, is the foreign minister of Mexico; and José Joaquin Brunner, a well-known writer on Latin American modernity, was the education minister in the last Chilean government. These are just a few examples.

The interplay of political forces is an important factor in the scientific

58. Victor D. Montejo emphasizes this point in "Truth, Human Rights and Representation", in Arias, *The Rigoberta Menchú Controversy*, pp. 372–391.
59. Warren, "Telling Truths", p. 207.

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world. There are of course networks of academics working in the same fields, but it took me some time to realize that in Latin America the principal, most solid networks are political. Thus, the same is true of the principal dividing lines. As a result, arguments and conflicts of little significance or relevance in the academic sense can become deep-seated feuds. Just like political parties, intellectuals can find themselves "in the government" or "in the opposition". This has scientific as well as economic ramifications, for it determines who will occupy positions of power or be allotted funds for new research. Intellectuals who receive government commissions or are appointed to government posts are viewed with deep suspicion, giving rise at times to what Peter Wilson has termed "crab antics".[60] Scientists are sometimes locked in a deadly embrace of suspicion and/or political correctness that prevents them from playing a constructive role in society.

Even should they wish to disregard the situation, Latin American academics would still be confronted with it in their daily lives. It does not always go so far as in Colombia, where academics and opinion leaders are constantly threatened, and indeed many intellectuals have been murdered in recent years, or as in Peru, where over the past years the widely respected IEP institute has constantly been compelled to steer a difficult course between the political pressures of the Fujimori regime and the intimidation and threats of groups allied with Sendero Luminoso.[61] It can also simply have to do with the nature of political debate and social polarization, both of which influence the organization and dynamics of research in Latin America.

In the Netherlands, some social research is also integrated in politics. A substantial number of our most ambitious social scientists maintain direct or indirect links with a political party. We are nonetheless inclined to regard the political integration of Latin American scholarship as a weakness preventing researchers from committing themselves single-mindedly to work of a high academic standard. The politicization of scientific discussion in Latin America soon becomes irksome. On the other hand, Dutch academics in Latin America often meet with disbelief when they try to explain that their sole object is research.[62] Many Latin Americans consider us to be hopelessly, almost unbelievably, naïve in disclaiming any political context of our work and disregarding the power relations underlying it. They are never under any illusion that it might be possible to work independently of a political and social context. Their

60. Peter J. Wilson, *Crab Antics: the Social Anthropology of English-speaking Negro Societies of the Caribbean* (New Haven, CT, 1973).
61. See "Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP): A Nest of Counterinsurgency Propaganda": www.blythe-org/peru-pcp/newflag.
62. For an account of such a discussion, see Lynn Stephens, *Zapata lives! Histories and Cultural Politics in Southern Mexico* (Berkeley, CA [etc.], 2002), p. 10.

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work *is* politics. As Gonzalo Sánchez observes: "In Latin America [...] the intellectual has no other option than to be *into politics*. Even neutrality is taken as a political stance, and is considered treason."[63] Latin American academics are constantly aware of the political implications of their work. Not infrequently, some of their writings are aimed at mobilizing public opinion.[64] It is not by chance that the political and moral essay is among the most characteristic products of the Latin American intelligentsia.[65]

To highlight the contrast, Daniel Mato distinguishes between Western "academics" and Latin American "intellectuals".[66] The former can live and work in comparative autonomy; the latter can seldom permit themselves the luxury of concentrating exclusively on scientific work, but are compelled by economic and political problems to lead a multidimensional life. The political situation usually determines the direction and intensity of their work, which is never value-free. In some cases it can even lead to violent death, imprisonment or exile. The fact that a number of Chilean and Argentine intellectuals have remained in the Netherlands after their years of exile testifies eloquently to the situation. We are thus faced with a paradox. While globalization has led to increasing international cooperation and greater internationalization of scientific debate, it has failed to create a uniform context for that debate. Intellectual and political agendas and scientific traditions are still largely shaped by local conditions and global inequalities.[67]

63. Sánchez, "El compromiso social", p. 14.
64. The letters written by Colombian intellectuals to the guerrillas in 1992 are examples of such explicit intervention: "Colombian Intellectuals and the Guerrilla", in Charles Bergquist, Ricardo Peñaranda and Gonzalo G. Sánchez (eds), *Violence in Colombia 1990–2000: Waging War and Negotiating Peace* (Wilmington, DE, 2001), pp. 214–225. Also the political testament written by the Peruvian historian Flores Galindo shortly before his death: Alberto Flores Galindo, "Reencontremos la dimension utópica", *Socialismo y Participación*, 50 (June 1990), pp. 83–88. Two interesting Chilean examples are Alfredo Jocelyn-Holt Letelier, *El Chile perplejo. Del avanzar al transar sin parar* (Santiago, 1998), and Sergio Grez and Gabriel Salazar (eds), *Manifiesto de Historiadores* (Santiago, 1999). See also Sergio Ramirez's impressive review of the Sandinist revolution: Sergio Ramírez, *Adiós muchachos. Una memoria de la revolución sandinista* (Mexico, 1999).
65. See Pedro Morande, *Cultura y modernización en América Latina* (Santiago, 1984). Also, Rama, *La ciudad letrada.* It is interesting to note that the revaluation of these essays is part of discussions between Latin American and North American academics about cultural studies. The former posit that "el referente hegemónico de los estudios culturales está silenciando la tradición del ensayismo latinoamericano que, sin embargo, anticipó varios de los actuales desplazamientos de fronteras disciplinarias que tanto se celebran internacionalmente; Richard, "Globalización Académica", p. 187.
66. Mato, "Introducción", p. 18.
67. This is the theme of Mariano Plotkin and Ricardo Gonzáles Leandri (eds), *Localismo y globalización. Aportes para una historia de los intelectuales en Iberamérica* (Madrid, 2000).

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BY WAY OF CONCLUSION

I am all too aware of two limitations of my analysis. First, it focuses almost exclusively on the situation in Latin America. That does not mean it is of relevance only to that region. Intellectual dialogues and polemics occur in all countries. It would be very interesting to compare them. Second, in the past few years this general theme has been the subject of a comprehensive theoretical debate.[68] I have left most of this aside in order to concentrate on the more concrete aspects of academic dialogue for the reason that I believe it is here that reflection is lacking. What this analysis indisputably reveals is that reflection on the premises and context of our work should be an integral part of our research. In the same way, the study of other societies calls for reflection on the context of the work of our colleagues. That is of crucial importance if those studies relate to morally and politically charged subjects such as race relations, identity, development problems and human rights.[69]

We should perhaps not be under any illusion that definitive solutions to these dilemmas can be found. Nevertheless, simply raising them as points for discussion and integrating them into our research work will constitute a significant step in the right direction. It means we must be prepared to work in a permanent dialogue with our colleagues in Latin America – and elsewhere in the world – which will entail incorporating the various contexts of our work in the substantive debate, awareness of the specifically "local" significance attached to all kinds of concepts and theory building in the social sciences, and accepting that every society has its own specific debates that may also determine the terms under which researchers publish the results of their work. Finally, such a dialogue means that we will feel no hesitation about arguing with our colleagues

68. To mention just a few studies: Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978); Kwame Anthony Appish, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York [etc.], 1992); Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis, MN, 1996); Ranajit Guha (ed.) *Subaltern Studies*, several vols; Gyan Prakash (ed.), *After Colonialism: Imperial Histories and Postcolonial Displacements* (Princeton, NJ, 1995); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA [etc.], 1999). These ideas are widely known among American authors and Latin American authors in the United States. See, for example, Moreiras, *The Exhaustion of Difference.* In Latin America itself they have had little impact, but see, for example, Edgardo Lander (ed.), *La colonialidad del saber. Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas* (Buenos Aires, 2000). In the Latin American context the "postcolonial" discussion centres largely on the nature of Latin American modernity, coming to terms with the authoritarian past, and the new multiculturalism. Anthropology has of course a long tradition of self-reflection, but it primarily relates to the relationship between the researcher and the informant, and scarcely to that between intellectuals.

69. If I am not mistaken, that is also the point of Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton, NJ, 1995): see, for example, pp. 224–225.

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whenever it seems necessary, not for reasons of morality or because we feel academically superior, but based on the need to understand as fully as possible the reality that we study collectively. Only by means of such a dialogue can we hope to arrive at a balanced intellectual relationship and to rid the social sciences and area studies of the colonial past.

Translation: *Elizabeth Berkhof-Haig*

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