

EDITORS' NOTE

This special issue of *Politeja* is devoted to cultural encounters between Europe and Latin America. It contains papers by Mexican, Spanish and Polish authors. What all these colleagues have in common is their interest in the numerous ways that Europe and Latin America have affected each other over last five centuries. Of course, each author realizes perfectly well that these contacts were far from being of such a nature that the mild word “encounter” might be always appropriate and adequate.

A broad range of approaches, themes and views presented in this volume takes us far beyond the traditional view of the “clash of cultures,” conceived as the first-phase of contact inherently linked to the military confrontation. Authors look at prolonged linguistic, cultural, social and spiritual adjustments, emerging political, intellectual, and cultural challenges, a variety of reactions to novelties and methods for their domestication, or evidence for accommodation, resistance and reconciliation. A great variety of settings approached over a long time span make it possible to identify diverse types of encounters and evolving forms of discourse.

One of the exemplifications of such discourse could be conceptualized in terms of dialectics of remembering and forgetting in constructing collective identity in the situation of cultural encounters. Dialectics of remembering and forgetting takes the form of discursive re-construction of memory, which denotes symbolically constructed meaning of the past in understanding the present. This holds true especially when studying an impact of historical encounters for contemporary symbolic interactions between closely interwoven cultures – Europe and Latin America. In the context of presented volume, we have in mind the role of de-mythologized picture of European presence in Latin American culture and society.

The history of the relationship of Both Worlds has been complex. Any history textbook will show what the reasons and causes of these complications were. However, this story still remains irresistibly fascinating when we go into its details – when we start to study, for example, the on-going process of various interactions between European

languages and those of the indigenous peoples, between different patterns of culture, modes of artistic expression, constructions of identities, paradigms of religious beliefs, rituals and celebrations, architectural and urban tastes and styles, systems of social and political organization, different conceptions of what is just and right. Such studies are not only fascinating. They also help us to better understand more subtle facets of the present day encounters of Both Worlds that are so close to, and far from, each other.

In a quest for a better understanding of past realities that can bear upon the present and future of both Europe and Latin America, we are looking for lines of confluence, convergence and negotiation between intersecting worlds and traditions. Crossing thematic boundaries, the present volume shows the potential of combining different research perspectives: indigenous Western/European, Latin American that, taken together, reveal deeply intertwined historical processes. In effect, we propose an alternative to a process that has traditionally been dealt with as culturally two-sided and historically split.

In consequence, the following papers are concerned with many subjects, illuminating the complex processes of continuity, transformation, and myriad forms of communication. They deal, for example, with the contact-induced change in both colonial Nahuatl and Spanish, pre-Hispanic forms of theatrical spectacles, survival of pre-conquest rituals in modern indigenous communities or the special character of political relationship between Mexico and Cuba. These papers differ also in degree of generality: apart from studies into precisely defined special topics, there are discussions of such problems as search for Latin American identity as reflected in literature and philosophy. In the latter context major figures of José Gaos and Leopoldo Zea are presented.

Another common feature of all the authors that meets the eye is that they all appreciate interdisciplinary approach to Latin American studies. They also appear to be quite convinced that exchanging ideas with colleagues representing different types of academic expertise and different investigative cultures and traditions makes a lot of sense. We believe, therefore, that the importance of their joint contribution to studying European-Latin American encounters consists of highlighting many forms and facets of cross-cultural communication in their historical depth, through the colonial and postcolonial eras to the present day and across disciplinary boundaries.

Because of this mind-set they have been for a few years active members of an informal team that brings together colleagues from the Department "Artes Liberales" of the University of Warsaw, the Universidad de Sevilla, the Centro de Investigaciones sobre América Latina y el Caribe CIALC of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, the Pedagogical University of Cracow, the Institute of American Studies and Polish Diaspora of the Jagiellonian University, and the Institute of European Studies of the Jagiellonian University.

Activities of this group have resulted so far in several co-organized conferences and other meetings, in joint teaching programs, research stays, sharing and inspiring research ideas. As members of this group we hope that this team work will be continued and that the present publication will soon be followed by more editorial initiatives.

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