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From the Editor: Who are our Ancestors?

ELIZABETH COONROD MARTÍNEZ
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

It is with great pleasure that we present the first issue of 2013, articles in response to a special theme created by Dr. Peter Casarella, “Cosmic Liturgy: Latina/o Catholicism Today.” Submissions range from research on a Latino-Chicago neighborhood, the diary of an early 20th century immigrant to Chicago, and the continuity of indigenous culture in Mexican-American practices. The articles tackle society and faith, community organizing and perseverance, dance hybridity and cultural history. The tender and evocative creative pieces grapple with faith and memoir.

This issue inaugurates a book and film/media review section, with provocative new angles on texts and cinema. The in-depth interview conducted by Peter Casarella with author, and Notre Dame University professor, Timothy Matovina reveals the impact of *Latino Catholicism* on U.S. society, a theme throughout this collection of articles.

During our second year of biannual preparation, we have improved layout and design, and the DePaul University blue will now permanently grace our front and back covers. *Diálogo* has long been distinguished as one of few academic journals presented in full-color, and for its mission to highlight the works of Latino and Latin American artists. We are grateful for the collaboration on this occasion of two artists: the enchanting examples, including cover image by contemporary El Salvador artist Fernando Llorc, and few images by Chicago artist Eric J. García, together with his reflections in narrative on the creation of his exhibit.

We encourage reading Thomas Finger’s account (who worked closely with the artist’s daughter, María José), on the background and life of the Salvadoran artist. Fernando Llorc’s images explode with vivid colors and the warm feeling of being in the tropical Latin American countryside. Influences of Catholicism, history and indigenous culture weave through works such as “Fragmento de mi país” and “Sol de Esperanza,” and Llorc’s “Domingo en La Palma” is a rich, folkloric image of small-town life in harmonious ambiance.

Eric García analyzes a space provided him and the works he will hang, providing a unique glimpse into the

artistic eye: He takes in all that surrounds an image, and considers the impact of reception. He brings together contemporary and past history, both European and indigenous-origin cultures and their social impact. Just as Puerto Rican-Chicago artist Bibiana Suárez described her artistic goals and types of media for her exhibit highlighted in last year’s 15th anniversary issue of *Diálogo*, García’s words bring new insights to the artistic process.

The present theme continues to our second issue of Fall 2013, in a slightly different manner: most articles will comprise a tribute to the influential, Cuban-born theologian Alejandro García-Rivera, who arrived in the U.S. at age eight. He pursued other careers before serving for many years as a faculty member of the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, California (now merged with Santa Clara University). His impact was strongly felt long before his untimely death two years ago. Contributors will celebrate the way he tackled the mystery of faith, his influence, and legacy. We invite your subscriptions so that you do not miss this rich issue.

Throughout the readings of *Diálogo* 16:1, we hope you find enlightenment, explore new ideas and connections to your own heritage and history, and discover (or re-discover) the intrinsic essence of indigenous cultural heritage in traditions both Catholic and U.S. American—a legacy that has and cannot be erased despite the centuries since European arrival.

Each issue of a journal is a magical coming together of the chance encounter of narratives that together take on a personality, a unified voice as contextualized by these articles selected. In the process of receiving submissions and shaping an issue, a certain magic emerges that pulls together new themes. Here it springs from the essence of *being*. Who are we in the contemporary era? What is meaningful from our roots? Are they mixed with, tainted by, or removed from, histories and experiences? Such questions emerge from both research and creative articles in this issue. What is the identity of a person from the beautiful but remote, flat region of southeast Texas? (Mary Helen Pérez’s article). What is the personal impact of religion and faith during childhood or youth? (Arthur Ramírez’s and

Edwin Murillo's articles). Which initiatives make a difference in a neighborhood? (Karen Mary Davalos' article). Several articles contemplate how diverging traditions are practiced, what history they teach, and how indigenous, native-to-the-continent heritage is valued.

Now that we have surpassed the much-popularized hoopla over supposed Mayan ideas that the world would "end" on (the date equivalent to our) December 21, 2012—actions that infantilized or caricaturized ancient civilizations, rather than attempting to understand its nature as a super-calendar, identified by scholars as the *Long Count*—it would be helpful to read and contemplate the rich studies available to us on their intelligence and contribution.

Unique to the region of now-southern Mexico and Central America, but shared by many nations, the Mesoamerican calendric system reflected complex studies of astronomy and mathematics. They had several calendars: the *Tzolkin*, 260-day ritual calendar, which regulated agriculture and other societal stages; the *Haab'*, which was a 360-day span—18 months of 20 days each, with 5 idle days (to account for leap year)—and which ran simultaneously with the ritual calendar. At junctures of about 52 years the two calendars caught up with each other. That moment was identified as a *calendar round*, and was met with fasting and societal rejuvenation as one cycle ended and another began. The *Long Count* is the most complex calendar of all (ancient portions have been found in carvings as early as 500 BCE): Consisting of a sequence of cycles of increasing length, it spans about 5125 solar years (perhaps creating one was the highest pinnacle of math achievement in those days?). The extensive cycle just completed began in 3114 BCE (before the Christian era). Wow. What was the rest of the world doing at that time?

After European arrival—due to limited interest in studying the society around them—conquerors read into a long calendar with beginning and ending dates their own apocalyptic vision of the end of the world. Rather than attempting to study a new language system (consisting of glyphs, much like Asian languages, rather than alphabet letters), they categorized the symbols demonic or pagan, and destroyed entire libraries of texts. Several were saved: these are studied by contemporary scholars, left in storage, and new examples of writing have been discovered at ancient city sites. From the inception of colonial systems, Mesoamerican contributions were never disseminated, nor propagated by the nations formed on this continent.

Thus they would not be included in primary education. That is why we continue ignorant of their ideas and accomplishments.

Beginning in the early 20th century, archaeologists and other scientists began meticulous study of Mayan and other Mesoamerican inscriptions; from their texts historians have now prepared books accessible to the lay reader. We are fortunate to live in an era when new translations and studies are published, as well as books that describe, in less complex technical terms, the systems developed by ancient societies. For example, we can read historian Mathew Restall's *2012 and the End of the World, The Western Roots of the Maya Apocalypse* (2011), or *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (2003), to understand how simplistic conclusions were drawn, and misconceptions developed (such as the "end of the world"). Also, journalist Charles McMann's *1491, New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (2005), to examine early civilizations from a variety of scientific perspectives: this book was discovered by former students of mine the year it was published (and provided to me as a gift), demonstrating their desire to continue learning about their hemisphere, and what was left out of our educational system.

Perhaps 2013 could become the year we begin to credit Native societies and peoples of this continent for their vast contributions, not the least of which are many excellent food products now enjoyed globally (see *Chilies to Chocolate: Food the Americas Gave the World*). Beginning with corn, vanilla and chocolate, where would our lives be without the discovery of the agriculture of American indigenous societies?

We wish you enjoyment in reading the articles of this issue, and that you become inspired to greater pursuit of reading and learning about our ancestors. Until our next issue, *saludos cordiales*.

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From the Guest Thematic Editor: True Interdisciplinarity

PETER CASARELLA
DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

It has been a pleasure to serve as guest thematic editor of *Diálogo* 16. The timing was just right. Latino Studies and Latino/a Theology have not always walked on the same path. This collaboration brings together two dynamic centers of scholarly productivity at DePaul: the Center for Latino Research, and the Center for World Catholicism and Intercultural Theology, both in the College of Liberal Arts & Social Sciences. Both entities are committed to interdisciplinary research that fosters greater solidarity and understanding between North America and Latin America as well as to the themes of immigration and transnationalism. But the truly novel part of the collaboration was to engage Latino/a reality in the U.S. from dual perspectives. I sincerely hope the exchange, in these *Diálogo* pages, can contribute to broader methodological discussions of how these two disciplines complement each other.

This issue brings together a fascinating collection of insights into Latino/a aesthetics and the history of the Mexican presence in Chicago. We invited contributions that explore the current state of Latino/a Catholicism in the U.S., and current and historical struggles to achieve transformations in Latino/a Catholicism. I myself was particularly interested in ways in which Latino/a Catholicism integrates a vision of beauty and justice and thus articulates a new and compelling view of nature, culture, art, and social change. We offer a glimpse of the history and contemporary lived experience of Latino/a Religious Communities in Chicago by focusing on the diary of a Mexican woman from the time of early migration, and an article that studies The Resurrection Project in the Pilsen neighborhood of Chicago.

The collaboration was fruitful beyond my expectations. It is easy to talk about broad and noble ideals like “interdisciplinarity,” but we actually produced an interdisciplinary issue. Now that is exciting!

We chose the theme of: “Cosmic Liturgy: Latino/a Catholicism Today.” The term “cosmic liturgy” comes from a distant but interesting source. A highly regarded Swiss Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, first used it in 1941 to summarize the achievement of

a groundbreaking thinker from the seventh century (Maximus the Confessor) whose synthetic understanding of life and liturgy brought together a vast expanse of the wisdom of Asia and the Christian East into a single vision.¹ Under the same thematic title, a second issue of *Diálogo* 16 will describe the work of Alejandro García-Rivera, a Cuban American theologian (and former nuclear physicist) who died on December 13, 2010 and was indebted in some ways to von Balthasar and especially to his search for a new vision of cosmic synthesis in the world today.

In context of this journal, however, the meaning of cosmic liturgy has a very broad, multivalent meaning. For Latinas and Latinos the study of faith and culture always lies at the crossroads. Alex García-Rivera talked about the Latino/a theology as a fusion of the indigenous cosmivision with the Christian view of the world as the garden of God. Alex highlighted the woundedness of the artist that comes from standing in solidarity with the marginalized. All of the symbols in religion and rituals of daily life reflect these multiple sources of identity and meaning as well as the struggle to articulate their integration in a novel way.

Volume 16, Number 2 will focus on the theological aesthetics of Latino/a Catholicism. This thematic focus grows out of a conference held in the Fall of 2011 at DePaul University entitled, “Cosmic Liturgy: The Vision of Alejandro García-Rivera.” We gathered then to celebrate Alex’s legacy and mourn his passing. Alex died young, and his departure was both sad and sudden. The collection of short essays in that issue, revised from presentations given at that conference, will be a fitting memorial to the still undiscovered legacy of this remarkable man, and will be joined by complementary articles from scholars in Latin American and Latino Studies.

These two issues are just the beginning; evidence of *diálogo* in process of discovering a new path, *un camino*. In his last publication before he died, Alex García-Rivera wrote about the eschewal of utopian gardens, the both oppressive and homogenizing American Eden and the eternal quest to return to the mythical pre-lapsarian home of Adam and Eve. He wrote:

Gardens, after all, have a natural integrity that human cultural activity must respect. Gardens require a tender reciprocal engagement between the natural and the cultural. In other words, gardens are meant to be “lived-with,” not merely “lived-in.”²

In preparing these two issues we are living with the tragic struggles and wondrous newness of Latino Catholicism. The engagement has been hi-tech and arduously slow at the same time, demanding *Sitzfleisch* and inner patience. In that sense, we have tended to our garden, and as a result the collaboration has been beautiful and luminous.

As *Diálogo* Editor Elizabeth Martínez remarks, we are reminded that the much ballyhooed end of the Mayan calendar is an opportune time to think with sober and curious eyes about the complexity of the Latino/a presence in our midst. I concur. I too write with a palpable sense of *kairos*, of anticipating the right moment and a new discovery. In fact, as I began these remarks on December 12, 2012, a moment not in fear of apocalypse but instead the middle of the Catholic season of Advent and precise date of the feast of *La Morenita*, the Virgin of Guadalupe.

Among the many sites for this celebration in the Midwest is “the second Tepeyac of North America” in Des Plaines, IL.³ This designation was affirmed by the Cardinal Archbishop of Mexico City in 2001, and is a palpable reality to the throngs who have visited it since 2001. The sheer size of the devotion lends weight to the cultural imprint. It is reported that 200,000 pilgrims make the trek to the Chicago suburb during the celebration each year.⁴ Is there a more massive religious gathering anywhere in North America? But even more remarkable, as Elaine Peña notes, is the curious confluence of time and space. The original site, *La villa*, is revered as the place where *La Morenita* appeared to the indigenous St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin. It is a furnace for the nurturing of national and religious identity. No apparition, however, is associated with the site in Des Plaines. It is a constructed, transnational sacred space, utilizing Chicago engineering and fundraising and the gumption of local Mexican clergy and faithful. There is nothing transient about Maryville outside of Chicago for the worshipping faithful, for the Aztec dancers who perform there, or even for the curious DePaul students who accompanied me there last year on a class trip.

The story of the two Tepeyacs is illustrative of what we are trying to accomplish with these two issues. Both sites are socially and ecclesiastically constructed realities even though I do not share doubts about the religious legitimacy of either one. For the pilgrims forging their path in Northern Illinois, they are indissolubly linked. Without using the word “transnational,” the ethos is plainly that. Faith, politics, history, culture and identity converge in a unique and surprising way on the way to the site in the Midwest. If we can bring more sustained attention to the myriad sites of such convergence in our very midst, then these two issues will not have been in vain.

ENDNOTES

- 1 The English translation is based upon a subsequent revision: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988).
- 2 Alejandro García-Rivera, *The Garden of God: A Theological Cosmology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 129.
- 3 Cf. Elaine Peña, *Performing Piety: Making Space Sacred With the Virgin of Guadalupe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 3.
- 4 As reported by journalist Rocco Palmo in “Whispers in the Loggia,” on Dec. 12, 2009. See <<http://whispersintheloggia.blogspot.com/2009/12/in-chitown-la-morenita-as-mother-lode.html>> (accessed online on January 5, 2013).