ACCOUNTING FOR THE FIELD OF LATIN AMERICAN GENDER HISTORY makes me a tad defensive. Area studies still invokes hierarchies suggesting that feminist paradigms, in particular, begin in European and U.S. American studies and trickle down to the rest of us. Such notions are bolstered by intellectual genealogies exactly like my own. Trained as a historian in the 1980s and early 1990s, I first encountered women’s history in undergraduate classes with Europeanist Natalie Zemon Davis and U.S. historian Christine Stansell. The bulk of my feminist history courses in graduate school—including Joan Wallach Scott’s *Gender and the Politics of History* as required reading—were seminars with Nancy Cott, likewise a U.S. Americanist. Feminist scholarship on Latin America also profoundly shaped me, but most of it was not historical. By the mid-1980s, debates on third world development and socialist revolution had inspired a vibrant anthropological and political science literature on Latin American women’s work and political participation.¹ I first discovered this scholarship in college anthropology courses with Kay Warren, a scholar of Guatemala who directed Princeton’s first women’s studies program and co-taught its introductory survey with Natalie Davis. Such a partnership between an anthropologist of Central America and a historian of France was indicative of a broader academic division of labor at the time, which produced women’s history as narratives of Europe and the United States, and Latin American feminist studies as engagements with contemporary politics. When I entered Yale’s doctoral program in 1989, I sensed that this bifurcation was still intact, despite the significant growth in Latin American

women’s history and the active mentorship for feminist history provided by the Latin Americanist faculty, Emilia da Costa and Daniel James.²

While others in my field will narrate such personal tales differently, Joan Scott’s 1988 book *Gender and the Politics of History* was important in helping to bridge real divides and to inspire the virtual explosion in feminist histories of Latin America published in the last twenty years.³ But rather than straight trickle-down, of course, Scott’s work helped to strengthen paradigms specific to Latin American history. Her arguments encouraged feminists working on Latin America to elaborate longstanding political commitments and materialist traditions within Latin American studies, while simultaneously taking up the challenge to critique empiricism and study gendered meanings. If for many historians of the United States and Europe Scott’s work marked the famous cultural turn, presumably away from social history (its Marxist variants in particular), within Latin American history it was precisely feminist social history that Scott’s work most inspired (much of it engaged with Marxist debates over political culture).

It is not that Latin Americanists failed to grasp Scott’s essay or labored at an earlier phase of scholarship, but that the questions being asked about Latin America compelled different uses. Such differences sprang in part from the different political contexts facing Latin America and the U.S. and Western Europe during the cold war and the correspondingly different academic agendas that area studies paradigms generated about “regions.”⁴ So, too, the differences flowed from the uneven dialogues taking place between “Latin Americanists”—scholars working in the United States and other English-dominant academies of the North Atlantic, and “Latin American intellectuals”—scholars working in Latin America.⁵ In other words, the different uses of Joan Scott by scholars of Latin America are themselves historical and political processes rather than matters of paradigm lag.

The tensions mediating Scott’s important influence on feminist historiography on Latin America have led to a number of innovative results. Feminist scholars located differently within the U.S./North Atlantic and Latin American contexts have shared concerns inspired by contemporary Latin American politics but have often diverged over goals and methodology in using gender as a category. While Scott’s work has


⁵ These are admittedly imperfect terms, and I invoke them as necessary shorthand for discussing broad distinctions in debates across regional academies—to acknowledge that differences exist, rather than to pose strict dichotomies. “Latin Americanists” also include intellectuals from and/or trained in Latin America who work within the U.S. and the broader North Atlantic. “Latin American intellectuals” are not all originally from Latin America. Many scholars are obviously both. Similarly, I use the term “North Atlantic” in a conceptual rather than strictly geographic sense to refer to scholarship from non-Latin American academies that have engaged area studies paradigms. This literature is largely in English, by scholars located in the U.S., Britain, Canada, and Australia, but is also produced elsewhere.
been vital to many Latin American intellectuals’ discussions of women’s agency and exploitation, it has never assumed the primacy that it did in North Atlantic debates over gender ideology and subjectivity. Yet it is also worth exploring at greater length the uses of Scott in the historiography on Latin America written in English. Such lopsidedness reflects not merely the daunting task of comparative analysis across dozens of national academies, but, more fundamentally, the reality that Scott had a much bigger impact on histories written in English. North Atlantic area studies paradigms constituted “Latin American Studies” and “women’s studies” as comparative fields in ways that they never were to the same purposes within Latin America. In the English-language historiography on Latin America, Scott’s work has been critical to the development of three particularly strong thematic areas: histories of gender and state formation, feminist labor histories, and histories of sexuality. In each of these areas, Latin Americanists have engaged her ideas in ways that blend structuralist and poststructuralist paradigms, social history, and cultural history—combinations born of a certain resistance to abandoning materialist analysis, often Marxist paradigms in particular. As a result, feminist analysis of political economy and of class has been a vibrant part of Latin Americanist considerations of gender and sexuality (and, more recently, considerations of race and popular culture), in contrast to the way such categories have often receded in priority in feminist literature on the United States and Europe. Such difference may in the future offer opportunities for intellectual flows in a less considered direction: from Latin American studies to its Others.

When I arrived in Santiago, Chile, in 1992 to begin research on my dissertation, Joan Scott already had a fan club at the Biblioteca Nacional. To be sure, it had a restricted membership, consisting largely of U.S.-trained gringa graduate students. Most of us had read Scott under similar circumstances (that is, not in seminars on Latin America), and like other graduate students from back home, we were eager to make the leap from women’s history to gender history. But Scott’s emphasis on “gender constructing politics and politics constructing gender” struck a special chord for us as Latin Americanists. Politics was the reason that most of us had chosen to study Latin America in the first place. We had come of age during the Reagan administration’s assault on Central America and support for Southern Cone dictators, and we saw writing Chilean history as an act of solidarity with the pro-democracy struggles that had ousted Augusto Pinochet from power in 1990. As an academic field, Latin American studies overwhelmingly privileged political economy and social histories of political movements, the paradigms for which were heavily Marxist. Scott’s call to study the gender politics of all institutions (not just those addressing women), and her insistence that gender shaped all forms of power, seemed the perfect Trojan horse for getting feminist analysis into hallowed fortresses.

With less military imagery in mind, we were also eager to share Scott’s work with Chileans. In the 1980s, Chilean feminists had played a crucial role in the struggles against Pinochet and generated abundant scholarship on women in the many non-

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governmental organizations that served as shadow academies to the heavily censored universities. But “women” rather than “gender” was the primary category of analysis for Chilean feminist scholars, most of whom were also activists in movements to expand women’s rights and political leadership. In 1992, historians at the Universidad de Santiago de Chile (USACH) sponsored the first Women’s History Workshop at a major university and invited several graduate students from the U.S. to participate. We quickly located a Spanish translation of Scott’s essay “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” to contribute and were shocked when it was met by several participants with disinterest and impatience.

The reaction was partly an objection to U.S. feminist proselytizing, in whose long history we could not help but participate. There were also generational conflicts, issues of terminology, and above all, genuine differences in scholarly goals. In the immediate advent of a post-Pinochet world, many Chileans were interested in asserting women as national historical actors and expanding empirical databases about women. Not all advocates of women’s studies identified as “feminists.” By contrast, many of us coming from the United States assumed an easy correlation between women’s history and feminism, and were inspired by Scott’s critique of “her-story” and wary of “add women and stir” projects. We were more interested in the process through which women and men were gendered, a goal that many Chileans felt was distracting from more pressing questions about women’s experience and roles in modernization. Not that these differences were necessarily irreconcilable. Scott herself had firmly insisted that feminism’s true radicalism lay in writing histories “that focus on women’s experiences and analyze the ways in which ‘politics construct gender and gender constructs politics.’ ” Nor did Chileans reject Scott. Indeed, as a direct outcome of the USACH Women’s History Workshop, the first collected volume of Chilean gender history in either Spanish or English was published (in Spanish) in 1995 in Santiago, edited by two Chilean feminists and two feminists based in the United States. Scott’s work is prominently cited in the introduction and pro-

7 For example, Julieta Kirkwood, Ser política en Chile: Las feministas y los partidos (Santiago de Chile, 1986); María Elena Valenzuela, La mujer en el Chile militar: Todas ibamos a ser reinas (Santiago de Chile, 1987); Centro de Estudios de la Mujer, Mundo de mujer: Continuidad y cambio (Santiago de Chile, 1988); Teresa Valdés, Ser mujer en sectores populares urbanos (Santiago de Chile, 1986).

8 Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” American Historical Review 91, no. 5 (December 1986): 1053–1075. This seminar was organized by Julio Pinto, Luis Ortega, and Diana Veneros Ruiz-Tagle of the Departamento de Historia, Universidad de Santiago de Chile.


10 Some scholars working on Chilean women viewed their projects as aligned more closely with the debates on the political left that asserted women’s inclusion within the popular classes. See Gabriel Salazar Vergara, Labradoros, peones y proletarios: Formación y crisis de la sociedad popular chilena del siglo XIX (Santiago de Chile, 1985). Other scholars identified with the Chilean women’s movement but understood North American feminist movements to be differently motivated than their own. See Edda Artiga Gaviola, Ximena Jiles Moreno, Lorela Lopresti Martínez, and Claudia Rojas Mira, Queremos votar en las próximas elecciones: Historia del movimiento femenino chileno, 1913–1932 (Santiago de Chile, 1986); Cecilia Salinas, La mujer proletaria: Una historia por contar (Santiago de Chile, 1987); Ximena Valdés, La posición de la mujer en la hacienda (Santiago de Chile, 1988).


12 Lorena Godoy, Elizabeth Hutchison, Karin Rosemblatt, and M. Soledad Zárate, eds., Disciplina y desacato: Construcción de identidad en Chile, siglos XIX y XX (Santiago de Chile, 1995).
vides the volume’s working definition for gender as historically constructed meaning. Yet even in this collaboration, a divergence exists between the mostly Chilean-authored scholarship, which focuses on constructions of women’s identities, and the U.S.-based scholarship, which focuses on gender ideologies.

Such differences were by no means peculiar to Chile, but characterized the tensions and trajectories of Scott’s influence in other Latin American countries as well. In contrast to the ways that feminist histories written in English increasingly took gender politics rather than women as the point of departure, the outpouring of feminist scholarship in Spanish and Portuguese more often privileged documenting and analyzing women’s experience and political authority. Pathbreaking work by Latin American scholars on women’s labor, sexuality, and activism long predated Scott’s book, yet, notably, when Latin American intellectuals did cite Scott, it was most often to champion woman-focused social history. In many places, Scott’s work dovetailed with the already well-developed paradigms in labor history, and especially urban history, that explored women’s lives through the nexus of sexuality, poverty, and violence. Similarly, it tapped into the rich literature on criminology and medicine, demography and family history. Nonetheless, where such Latin American scholarship highlighted gender-related themes, women’s roles and femininity rather than the process of constructing “gendered difference” were most often the objects of study.

Such generalizations are of course dangerous. They homogenize profound differences between and within national intellectual traditions. They overstate the eli-

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13 Ibid., 18–20.
14 Since the early 1990s, there have been numerous important studies of women’s history published in Chile. For example, Diana Veneros Ruiz-Tagle, ed., Perfiles revelados: Historias de mujeres en Chile, siglos XVIII–XX (Santiago de Chile, 1997); Ximena Valdés and Kathy Arajoo, Vida privada: Modernización agraria y modernidad (Santiago de Chile, 1999); Sol Serrano P., Virgenes viajeras: Diarios de religiosas francesas en su ruta a Chile, 1837–1874 (Santiago de Chile, 2000); Eduardo Cavaires and René Salinas, Amor, sexo y matrimonio en Chile tradicional (Valparaiso, 1991). For a review of historical work on Chilean women, see María Soledad Zárate and Lorena Godoy, “Análisis crítico de los estudios históricos del trabajo femenino en Chile,” Cuadernos de Investigación 2 (2005): 1–18. See also the online bibliography “El género en historia,” http://americas.sas.ac.uk/publications/genero/genero_portadilla.htm (accessed August 20, 2008).

15 For example, in Mexico, Scott’s work received early attention from scholars such as Carmen Ramos and Julia Tuñón, who helped establish Mexican women’s history as a major field. See Carmen Ramos Escandón et al., Presencia y transparencia: La mujer en la historia de México (Mexico City, 1987); Julia Tuñón Pablos, Mujeres en México: Una historia olvidada (Mexico City, 1987); Tuñón Pablos, “Porque Clio era mujer: Buscando caminos para su historia,” in Gabriela Cano, Carmen Ramos, and Julia Tuñón, Problemas en torno a la historia de las mujeres (Iztapalapa, 1991); Carmen Ramos, “La historia de México desde el género,” ibid.; Carmen Ramos Escandón, comp., Género e historia: La historiografía sobre la mujer (Mexico City, 1992).


sion of women’s history within North Atlantic academies and understates the intensity with which gender has been debated across Latin America, especially in disciplines other than history.¹⁸ Nor do such dichotomies accurately reflect the most recent trends in feminist studies from Latin America, which in the last half-decade have been much more centrally concerned with gender analysis, from explorations of the gendered discourses of law and science to studies of masculinity and homosexuality.¹⁹ Not all gender studies from Latin America have their roots in, or even engage, Joan Scott. French critical theory in sociology, psychology, and literature often provided a much more direct feminist inspiration, especially in places such as Brazil and Argentina.²⁰ Yet importantly, Scott was the much-celebrated keynote speaker at the Colloquium on the History of Women and Gender in Mexico held in Guadalajara in 2003,²¹ and her work is prominently featured in the scholarship of a new generation of Chilean, Brazilian, and Argentine historians who began their careers postdictatorship.²² Examples from elsewhere abound.²³ And yet a North-South binary

¹⁸ For example, in Chile, sociologist Julieta Kirkwood provided a foundational model for thinking about male/female hierarchies and military dictatorship. See Kirkwood, Ser política en Chile. More recently, Nelly Richard has discussed the relevance of gender for Latin American feminists’ struggle for democracy, social justice, and memory. See Richard, Masculino/Femenino: Prácticas de la diferencia y cultura democrática (Santiago de Chile, 1993); Richard, Residuos y metáforas: Ensaios de crítica cultural sobre el Chile de la transición (Santiago de Chile, 1998). Works on masculinity by sociologists and anthropologists have been important to asserting gender as a distinct project from studies on women. See Teresa Valdés and José Olavarría, eds., Masculinidades e equidad de género en América Latina (Santiago de Chile, 1998); Sonia Montecino Aguirre, Madres y huachos: Alegorías del mestizaje chileno (Santiago de Chile, 1991). Caulfield notes that in Brazil, “gender” has been discussed more by social scientists than by historians, and extensively so at the Núcleo de Estudos de Gênero Pagu at the State University of Campinas, São Paulo (UNICAMP). Caulfield, “The History of Gender,” 450. See also Margareth Rago, “Descobrindo historicamente o gênero,” Cadernos Pagu 11 (1998): 89–98; Elena Varikas, “Gênero, experiência, e subjetividade: A propósito do desacordo Tilly-Scott,” Cadernos Pagu 3 (1994): 63–84; Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias, “Teoria e método dos estudos feministas: Perspectiva histórica e hermenêutica do cotidiano,” in Albertina de Oliveira Costa and Cristina Buschini, eds., Uma questão de gênero (Rio de Janeiro, 1992).


²⁰ As Caulfield notes, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, Hélène Cixous, and Michel Foucault all inspired studies of sexuality, but often without addressing gender history or women per se. See Caulfield, “The History of Gender.”

²¹ The full title of the conference was “II Coloquio de Historia de Mujeres y de Género en México, CIESAS-Occidente”; it was held in Guadalajara, Mexico, September 5–7, 2003. This was the second of a series of four conferences involving collaboration between North Atlantic–based and Mexico-based scholars.

²² For Chile, see María Soledad Zárate C., Dar a luz en Chile, siglo XIX: De la “ciencia de hembra” a la ciencia obstétrica (Santiago de Chile, 2007); Alejandra Brito, “La construcción histórica de las mentalidades de género en la sociedad popular chilena (1900–1930),” Nomadías Monográficas 1, no. 1 (1999): 213–228; Marcela Rios Tobar, Lorena Godoy Catalán, and Elizabeth Guerrero Caviedes, ¿Un nuevo silencio feminista? La transformación de un movimiento social en el Chile posdictadura (Santiago de Chile, 2003); Tomás Cornejo Cancino, Manuela Orellana, la criminal: Género, cultura y sociedad en el Chile del siglo XVIII (Santiago de Chile, 2006); Consuelo Figueroa, “El honor femenino: Ideario colectivo y práctica cotidiana,” in Veneros, Perfiles revelados, 63–90; Rafael Sagredo and Cristián Gazmuri, eds., Historia de la vida privada en Chile, 4 vols. (Santiago de Chile, 2005); Cecilia Osorio, “Ser hombre en la pampa: Aproximación hacia los rasgos de masculinidad del peón chileno en las tierras del salitre, 1860–1880,” in Colectivo Oficios Varios, Arriba quemando el sol: Estudios de historia social chilena, experiencias populares de trabajo, revuelta y autonomía, 1830–1940 (Santiago de Chile, 2004), 91–110; Rodrigo Henríquez
persists. To what extent, and in which ways, “gender” or “women” should be a privileged site of inquiry has been an issue of contention and different timing. While many Latin Americanists from the North Atlantic were eager converts to Scott’s vision of gender history, Latin American intellectuals often were more cautious and selective.

Here, different cold war histories of feminism matter a great deal. In the United States, Scott’s work emerged out of, and helped to inspire, women’s studies projects generated by second-wave feminist struggles located in significant ways inside universities, institutions that assumed existing liberal democratic frameworks, however imperfect and embattled. Feminist deconstruction, including Scott’s call to study the process through which gendered subjects are created, flowed from a disenchantment with ideals about universal rights, but nonetheless took political subjectivity, even citizenship, as a primary object of study. By contrast, in South and Central America, where feminism also reemerged with force after the 1960s but where U.S. foreign policy helped to perpetuate civil wars and military dictatorships, feminists were largely excluded from universities and articulated their projects around pro-democracy struggles aimed at recovering liberal institutions or within socialist revolutions aspiring to transcend them. Even in Mexico, and very differently in Cuba, where revolutionary nationalism held out a promise of radical inclusion, authoritarian, one-party states presented profound obstacles to non-official feminist claims. As a result of such cold war contexts, Latin American women’s activism on human rights, military violence, and economic inequality generated questions less about gendered subject formation than about women’s exclusion or oppression by specific institutions. Even following the transition of most Latin American countries to democracy, feminism remained (and remains) far more excluded from university life than in the North Atlantic. The point here is not that gender analysis was a first world luxury that Chileans or Nicaraguans could ill afford, but that what constitutes useful cat-

Vásquez, “La jarana del desierto: Burdeles, prostitutas y pampinos en Tarapacá, 1890–1910,” ibid., 111–113; María Angélica Illanes, Trabajadoras sociales (Santiago de Chile, 2006); Sonia Montecino Aguirre, ed., Mujeres chilenas: Fragmentos de una historia (Santiago de Chile, 2008).


For Argentina, see Fernanda Gil Lozano, Valeria Silvina Pita, and Maria Gabriela Ini, eds., Historia de las mujeres en Argentina (Buenos Aires, 2000); Paula Halperin and Omar Acha, eds., Cuerpos, géneros e identidades: Estudios de historia de género en Argentina (Buenos Aires, 2001); Marcela Nari, Políticas de maternidad y maternismo político: Buenos Aires, 1890–1940 (Buenos Aires, 2004); Mirta Zaida Lobato, Historia de las trabajadoras en la Argentina (1869–1960) (Buenos Aires, 2007); Dora Barrancos, Mujeres en la sociedad argentina: Una historia de cinco siglos (Buenos Aires, 2007).

For Peru, see contributions to Scarlett O’Phelan Godoy and Margarita Zegarra Flórez, eds., Congreso internacional de mujeres, familia y sociedad en la historia de América Latina, siglos XVII–XXI (Lima, 2003).
egories of feminist analysis is a matter of geopolitics rather than epistemological catch-up. Different relationships to the nation and to poststructuralism matter here, too. In the U.S. academy, Scott’s work helped to inspire not only the shift from studying “causation” to studying “meaning,” but a shift from national history to historical critiques of the nation and of modernity more broadly. For scholars in Latin America, by contrast, national (even nationalist) narratives about modernization have operated as a critical tool for challenging authoritarianism at home and accusations of underdevelopment from abroad. Essentialist renderings of “women” or “workers,” and the pitfalls of economic determinism, are no less problematic for Latin American scholars than they were for the European and U.S. historians who were so poignantly critiqued by Scott in the 1980s. But given past and present histories of empire, something different has been at stake in jettisoning frameworks that probe questions of national sovereignty and universal inclusion.

Consider, for example, the contrasting fates of Marxism. In the United States and Britain, Scott’s withering and much-deserved critique of E. P. Thompson’s failure to interrogate the masculine nature of his beloved English working class signaled a broader trend by the late 1980s in which academic Marxism, like leftist politics, was in decline, and many feminists were pursuing distinct agendas that increasingly questioned the coherence of universal categories such as “class” and “woman.” By contrast, in Latin America, the 1980s and the election of Ronald Reagan signaled not the eclipse of leftist radicalism but the hyperpolarization of cold war dichotomies. The U.S. government massively funded bloody “counterinsurgency” wars in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua and proclaimed military despots such as Pinochet to be key allies in the fight against Communism. In Latin American studies, this recharged older debates about dependency and imperialism, which had been central to Latin American intellectual radicalism since the 1950s, and engaged new paradigms provided by social history for thinking about political agency and resistance within the nation. Many Latin American feminists sharply criticized Marxism on much the same grounds as those used by U.S. and European feminists, and Marxism itself underwent innumerable renovations. Nonetheless, ideas about class and class-based struggles over the state and economy were reinvigorated as sites of study and activism, including among feminists, precisely because Marxism was tied to debates over national liberation and democracy in different ways and to a greater extent in Latin America than it had been in the United States or even much of Western Europe.

These concerns also have shaped how Latin Americanists from the United States and the broader North Atlantic frame their projects. If “northern” feminists differed from “southern” feminists in their specific approach to issues that Scott raised, North Atlantic scholars also engaged Latin America’s cold war landscape (albeit with very different risks) and generated questions that took cues from the wider debates inside Latin America over national politics. As a result, a great deal of the English-language historiography on Latin American women and gender interrogates questions of modernization, state-building, and political economy. Marxism, of various tones, regu-

larly inflects these narratives, if only as an explanatory mode to be refused. So, too, claims about gendered meanings, while forming the centerpiece of most English-language feminist histories, generally have been made while elaborating a great deal of “her-story” about where the women were and what they were doing. Of course, such double-tasking, thanks partly to Scott, is common to feminist history on other regions as well. But it is a combination especially marked in the English-language literature on Latin America precisely because of the ways that scholarship straddles specific agendas from Latin America while also finding in Scott’s work a useful, indeed crucial, tool for generating narratives about politics.

One of the first and most enduring areas in which Scott’s discussion of gender has had an impact on historians of Latin America is histories of the state. Debates about Iberian centralism and unequal development have long made the state of particular concern to Latin Americanists across disciplines. Around the time that Scott’s book appeared, the small but excellent body of historical scholarship on Latin American gender relations was coming mostly from colonialists, who emphasized connections between sexuality (honor, marriage, violence) and the high politics of church and crown. Colonialists were especially well poised to engage Scott’s outline of four strategic areas for studying gender: symbolism, normative concepts, social institutions/organizations, and subjective identity. By the late 1980s, studies of the Spanish conquest were drawing lessons from anthropology about the importance of ritual and kinship; histories of honor were premised on nuanced readings of legal transcripts as clues into the meaning of masculinity and femininity. Scott’s specific mention of “the polity” and “law” as institutions and concepts in connection with which historians should explore gender bolstered Latin Americanists’ already strong tendency to foreground institutional government. At the same time, Scott’s two-pronged approach to gender both as “constitutive of social relationships” and as a “primary way of signifying power” greatly expanded the terrain that scholars considered as constituting “the state” and provided a more robust theoretical language for connecting gender to politics. For example, new studies of indigenous co-


28 Scott, “Gender as a Useful Category,” 42–43.

29 For the modern period, Sandra McGee Deutsch played a crucial early role in bringing Scott’s ideas to bear on the reinterpretation of four iconic Latin American states: revolutionary Mexico, Peronist Argentina, Allende’s Chile, and Fidel Castro’s Cuba. She argued that ideals of revolutionary masculinity and the male-headed family had been foundational to twentieth-century state-building and that these projects centrally shaped Latin American women’s and men’s subjectivities. See Deutsch, “Gender and
munities, peasants, and plebeians argued that quotidian forms of patriarchy provided a central logic of colonial rule. In addition, Scott’s ideas helped to reshape debates about honor and purity of blood, highlighting the colonial state’s role in producing race through distinctions between public and private.

For the modern period, Scott’s work has had its greatest impact within the protracted debates in Latin American studies over hegemony. Indeed, Latin American history is especially noteworthy for its feminist reformulations of Antonio Gramsci’s ideas about the manufacture of consent and culture as a site of political struggle. Gramsci’s ideas have appealed to Latin Americanists eager to break with economic determinism and explain why “the masses” so often support projects counter to “their interests.” They have also helped to prioritize the political lives of peasants, indigenous people, and other constituencies consigned to passivity by orthodox Marxism. Feminists have insisted that gender is central to the creation of hegemony’s cross-class agreements and contestations.

One especially long-lasting paradigm has discussed this process in terms of the “modernization of patriarchy” and the promotion of civic domesticity. As this story goes, within nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrialization projects, an array of constituencies—including industrial leaders, politicians, liberal professionals, feminists, and the labor movement—all pushed varying ideals of the nuclear family in which men were the breadwinners and women dedicated themselves to scientific motherhood. Although this was never a reality for most poor people, the policies underlying such ideals had wide appeal to working-class and middle-class Latin Americans alike and helped to generate political legitimacy and relative social peace in projects as diverse as Brazil’s business-led modernization, Mexico’s revolutionary


31 Lyman L. Johnson and Sonya Lipssett-Rivera, eds., The Faces of Honor: Sex, Shame, and Violence in Colonial Latin America (Albuquerque, 1998); Ann Twinam, Public Lives, Private Secrets: Gender, Honor, Sexuality, and Illegitimacy in Colonial Spanish America (Stanford, Calif., 1999); María Elena Martínez, Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico (Stanford, Calif., 2008).


nationalism, and Puerto Rico’s anti-imperialism. Labor historians have also taken up this narrative plot, arguing that domesticity formed the template of numerous radical challenges to elite authority as working-class people struggled to realize their own version of the modern family.\textsuperscript{34} An important body of work on Latin American feminism has more explicitly addressed how women’s movements corroborated or challenged the patriarchal fantasies of nationalist domesticity.\textsuperscript{35}

Feminist scholarship on the nineteenth century has also utilized Scott’s work in thinking about the state and patriarchy, arguing that republican liberalism stripped many women of entitlements they had enjoyed under Spanish law and conditioned the ways in which emerging capitalist economies generated new forms of coerced family labor.\textsuperscript{36} At the same time, scholars have stressed how ideas about republican virtue and women’s civilizing role provided some women with meaningful access to education, indirect citizenship, and land.\textsuperscript{37} Debates have centered on whether the creation of independent nation-states carried women “one step forward and two steps back” or the reverse, and have largely concluded that it was the former. Such formulations rehearse a trope identified by Scott twenty years ago as a mission of women’s history: “to challenge received interpretations of progress and regress.”\textsuperscript{38} They have nonetheless radically reinvigorated political history and made “the long nineteenth century” perhaps the most lively site of current historical investigation on Latin America. New work on indigenous and Catholic institutions has insisted


\textsuperscript{37} Elizabeth Dore, \textit{Myths of Modernity: Peonage and Patriarchy in Nicaragua} (Durham, N.C., 2006); William E. French, \textit{In the Path of Progress: Railroads and Moral Reform in Porfirian Mexico} (New York, 1991); Chambers, \textit{From Subjects to Citizens}.

\textsuperscript{38} Scott, “Women’s History,” 19; Dore, “One Step Forward, Two Steps Back.”
that religion helped to revitalize rather than erode liberal modernity.\textsuperscript{39} Recent scholarship on race has emphasized how state-promoted patriarchy helped to produce “whiteness” and myths of national mestizaje.\textsuperscript{40}

Interestingly, “histories of patriarchy” are a tradition that Scott took particularly to task in 1988, criticizing their implicit biological essentialism and structural determinism. Such objections certainly are shared by feminist historians of Latin America, and some scholars seriously question whether patriarchy has any historical applicability to early modern societies at all.\textsuperscript{41} Yet if some scholars eschew the term, it is perhaps more remarkable how many do not. Patriarchy—or some rough equivalent that engages “patterns of male dominance”—has retained its vitality because of its emphasis on the principle of political authority, a concept fundamental to Latin Americanists’ interest in the state. Not that the term has gone unrevised. Patriarchy is invoked not as an overarching “system” or result of “nature,” but as a heterogeneous and contradictory set of dynamics and meanings: symbols, institutional arrangements, normative pacts, subjective identities. In other words, Scott’s discussion of gendered power has been crucial to transforming patriarchy into a category of analysis that many Latin Americanists still find useful.

Scott’s introduction of Michel Foucault’s relevance for history is especially important here. Scott urged scholars to consider gendered power as “dispersed constellations of unequal relationships, discursively constituted in social ‘fields of force.’”\textsuperscript{42} While provoking incredulity and outrage among many historians of the day, it was precisely her ingenious discussion of discourse that enabled Latin Americanists to rethink patriarchy (as well as many other “ideologies” and “structures”) in terms of contested culture and political language. This has resulted not in a turn away from social history per se—if by “social history” we mean studies of material relations and experience, presumably as distinct from studies focused more centrally on representation and meaning. Rather, Scott’s uses of Foucault helped to make cultural meanings—dispersed, multiple, and contested—a chief object of what many social historians of Latin America imagined themselves to be recovering. Indeed, some of the most innovative Latin Americanist scholarship on gender has engaged Foucault’s ideas within the domain of formal political history—histories of political parties, government policy, and war. This literature creatively weds Foucault’s ideas about disciplined bodies and technologies of power to Gramscian debates over class


\textsuperscript{40} Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, and Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, eds., \textit{Race and Nation in Modern Latin America} (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2003); Ana María Alonso, \textit{Thread of Blood: Colonialism, Revolution, and Gender on Mexico’s Northern Frontier} (Tucson, Ariz., 1995); Diana Paton, \textit{No Bond but the Law: Punishment, Race, and Gender in Jamaican State Formation, 1780–1870} (Durham, N.C., 2004); Pamela Scully and Diana Paton, eds., \textit{Gender and Slave Emancipation in the Atlantic World} (Durham, N.C., 2005).


\textsuperscript{42} Scott, “Gender as a Useful Category,” 42.
coalitions and organic intellectuals. For example, studies of indigenous struggles for land have emphasized the importance of liberalism to native political claims and underscored how languages of gender internally fissure constructions of “Indian community.” Work on twentieth-century revolutions and welfare states has explored how discourses of “rights” and “citizenship” are generated by shifting alliances of professionals, politicians, and popular movements. Much of this scholarship also engages postcolonial theory and South Asian subaltern studies, bodies of thought that likewise took inspiration from Gramsci to revise orthodox Marxism.

One could easily criticize Latin Americanist studies of gender for focusing too much on the state. Area studies is haunted by a tendency to see “Iberian” and “third world” political cultures as essentially state-driven and authoritarian, in contrast to the civilian republicanism and pluralism of the United States and Western Europe. There is a certain teleology at work in even the best social histories of Latin America that threatens to eclipse dynamics of gender and sexuality (as well as race) that cannot be folded into stories of state expansion or national liberation. But precisely because of the problematic dichotomies structuring “third world” versus “Western” histories, considerations of the state’s role in the formation of gender and sexuality have been much less developed in many histories of the United States as well as in some literatures on Europe, and beg for greater attention. Struggles over state power are no less acute in contexts where politics appears dispersed through “civil society.” One of the greatest strengths of Latin Americanist feminist history, and something to which Scott’s work has been fundamental, is its exhaustive demonstration that states use gender on multiple institutional and cultural levels to naturalize the hierarchies of political order.

A second and related area where Scott’s Gender and the Politics of History has had a great impact on Latin Americanists is the longstanding scholarship on labor. By the 1980s, labor history had become a leading subfield within Latin American studies, straddling older concerns with tracing Latin America’s economic development (or lack thereof) with the newer “history from below” modeled by British Marxists who stressed workers’ agency and political culture. Given the prolonged vio-

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44 For example, Rosembatt, Gendered Compromises, and Olcott, Revolutionary Women.


lence and repression of contemporary cold war Latin America, labor history’s elaboration of subaltern militancy (peasant and indigenous as well as industrial working-class) was especially charged and often served as a metanarrative for broader moral and political critiques. Despite its energy and complexity, however, it was a literature in which women and/or any in-depth consideration of sexual divisions of labor were largely absent. This contrasted sharply with the considerable U.S. and European historiography on women’s labor that existed by the late 1980s, however embattled. Such a glaring omission in the Latin Americanist case owed both to the greater importance of Marxism to Latin American history, especially labor history, and to the peculiar way in which the “third world woman” as an object of U.S. and European concern was hailed as a subject and then relegated to the realm of the contemporary.

Since the mid-1990s, numerous histories on the gendered nature of Latin American labor have appeared, almost every one of which cites Joan Scott as a point of departure. This outpouring contrasts with the relative waning of feminist labor history as a genre in scholarship on the U.S. and Europe. For Latin Americanists, Scott’s theorization of gender was seen as directly rooted in, rather than a departure from, her earlier scholarship on French labor activism and women’s work. Scott provided a crucial blueprint for going beyond documentations of sexual divisions of labor (which were never adequately explored by Latin Americanists in the first place) to examining connections between the naturalized gendered ideologies within labor arrangements and the gender politics of the broader society. The literature has been closely intertwined with, if not inseparable from, the scholarship on gender and state formation, making labor central to how histories of Latin American “nation” get narrated. There is an abiding concern with workers’ and peasants’ relationship to hegemonic projects of governing elites as well as with how identities are constituted through multiple sites of discursively generated hierarchy. Such templates are anchored by Scott’s assertion of language and the symbolic as modes of gendered power but have retained a fundamental concern with the structures of political economy. Historians have largely reworked rather than jettisoned Marxist idioms of class formation and struggle for the state. In much the same way that Scott’s work helped to revitalize discussions of patriarchy, her dialectic of “gender constructing politics and politics constructing gender” has helped to transform older Marxist-feminist ideas about “dual systems” of interacting capitalism and male domination, a concept


48 There were certainly exceptions to this. See Arrom, The Women of Mexico City; Graham, House and Street; Guy, Sex and Danger.


also pointedly criticized by Scott in 1988. Historians of Latin American labor have retained and refined a notion of gender and sexuality as fundamental to divisions of labor, but also see them as operating outside and against those logics, and in multiple and uneven forms.\textsuperscript{51}

Partly because of the relatively later timing of feminist labor history on Latin America, the literature has centrally addressed two key concerns raised by Scott in 1988 for gender histories of the future. One was a call to explore masculinity as a gendered formation of equal importance to femininity. The other was a call to consider sexuality as a formation distinct from gender. As if in direct response to these challenges, several feminist histories of Latin American labor have focused on the gendered constructions of male workers and the importance of misogyny and male desire to worker solidarity and militancy.\textsuperscript{52} So, too, the excellent literature on early labor movements emphasizes that debates over prostitution and women workers’ morality were key to realignments among working-class men, leftists, liberals, Catholics, and feminists.\textsuperscript{53} Almost all recent labor scholarship combines what might be called a poststructuralist analysis of discourse with a structuralist mapping of changing industrial labor relations.\textsuperscript{54} Gender and sexuality are treated as modes of power that fundamentally rethink how social struggles are constituted. At the same time, this scholarship continues to probe issues of class formation, fights over state power, and the importance of U.S. empire.\textsuperscript{55}

Histories of sexuality are certainly not the sole province of labor historians, although Latin American labor history as labor history is especially remarkable for this emphasis. The feminist literatures on state formation all consider contested efforts to control men’s and women’s sexual lives, both within and beyond relations of work. Of particular note are the many superb studies on nineteenth- and twentieth-century political culture that elaborate how sexual honor—a concept long associated with the colonial period—fundamentally shaped modern identities and struggles.\textsuperscript{56} Likewise,


\textsuperscript{53} See especially Findlay, \textit{Imposing Decency}, and Hutchison, \textit{Labors Appropriate to Their Sex}.


a rapidly expanding literature on homosexuality has helped to de-center the ubiquitous “male-headed family” that anchors so much feminist historiography. Such scholarship has not only revealed the contentious presence of homosexual practices and identities, but underscored how the very category of “the homosexual” informed modern debate over criminality, public health, the military, and citizenship.57 The literatures on honor and homosexuality have done perhaps the best job of engaging Scott’s conceptualization of gender as a “subjective identity” fundamentally shaped by sexuality. Notably, this has been done together with, rather than instead of, exploring gender’s institutional and organizational modalities, the importance of which Scott also stressed. Latin Americanists have undertaken close discursive analysis of medical, judicial, and ecclesiastical records to probe the complexities of subject formation. At the same time, scholars have made claims about sexual practice and experience, sexuality’s connection to state institutions, labor, and property arrangements—in short, the materiality of sex.

Some of the most innovative work on Latin American sexuality has specifically heeded Scott’s recognition that psychoanalysis has critical (if not sufficient) lessons to offer historians.58 Scholars have employed Lacanian ideas about sexual identification and subject formation to interpret broader political cultures, from the Maya negotiation of Spanish conquest to the machismo of revolutionary Nicaragua.59 A burgeoning scholarship that critically engages oral histories of workers, peasants, and indigenous people has radically revised the longstanding Latin Americanist romance with testimonio (bearing witness). The best of this work draws on psychoanalytic concepts within literary criticism and cultural anthropology to argue that it is through discourses of sexuality that the subaltern speaks.60

And yet it is precisely the discursively constituted nature of culture and the vast terrain of culture’s operation that Latin Americanist historians have least developed as sites for exploring gender (as well as other power dynamics). The field’s very strengths in theorizing state formation and political economy partly account for this fact: culture and subjectivity have largely been explored in terms of these other concerns. This is changing quickly with the emergence of Latin American studies’ own version of cultural studies, which has generated exciting historical work on music,

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57 See James N. Green, Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil (Chicago, 1999); Peter M. Beattie, The Tribute of Blood: Army, Honor, Race, and Nation in Brazil, 1864–1945 (Durham, N.C., 2001); Robert M. Buffington, Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico (Lincoln, Neb., 2000); Robert McKee Irwin, Mexican Masculinities (Minneapolis, 2003); Robert McKee Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocio Nasser, eds., The Famous 41: Sexuality and Social Control in Mexico, c. 1901 (New York, 2003); Sylvia Molloy and Robert McKee Irwin, eds., Hispanisms and Homosexualities (Durham, N.C., 1998); William E. French and Katherine Elaine Bliss, eds., Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Latin America since Independence (Lanham, Md., 2007).

58 Scott, “Gender as a Useful Category,” 44.


60 See especially Daniel James, Doña María’s Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity (Durham, N.C., 2000); Rosa Isabel Reuque Paillalef, When a Flower Is Reborn: The Life and Times of a Mapuche Feminist, ed., trans., and with an introduction by Florencia E. Mallon (Durham, N.C., 2002).
popular literature, and consumer culture. Much of this scholarship proactively breaches area studies to engage issues of transnationalism: the hemispheric dynamics of cinema and comic books, tourism, and rock ‘n’ roll. Similarly exciting—and long overdue—is a new scholarship on gender and racial formation, which is re-interrogating histories of mestizaje, blackness, and the vexed place of Asia as an origin of Latin American heritage. Despite its troublesome inattention to gender and sexuality, recent discussions about Latin America and globalization outside the discipline of history have provided vital encouragement to scholars eager to shift focus away from the state and to reconsider world dynamics in ways beyond imperialism.

The idea that historians of Latin America are “finally arriving” at culture as a subject of study circles us back to the specter of paradigm lag. But Joan Scott’s impact on Latin American studies suggests something rather different. Latin Americanists enthusiastically embraced Scott’s discussion of gender to develop innovative and often unique models for thinking about the state, hegemony, subaltern agency, labor, and sexuality—models which themselves responded to questions specific to struggles in contemporary cold war Latin America. Given a persistent engagement with materialist paradigms, Latin Americanists have used Scott’s discussion of social organization to rework older concerns with political economy, while finding new questions about meaning in her identification of gender’s symbolic power and elaboration of discursively constituted identity. This has created something of a balance, rather than a chasm, between “social history” and “cultural history,” a distinction that has often polarized debates in European and U.S. American studies, and in which willful misunderstandings of Scott’s work have been frequent. Feminist scholarship on Latin America has much to offer those who have grown weary of the dichotomy.

As historians of Latin America more fully enter into, and widen, their consideration of what counts as culture, there is reason to believe that the scholarship will also rework materialist paradigms for thinking about geopolitical inequality rather than set them aside. The very questions motivating today’s “cultural turn” among Latin Americanists are inspired by issues of economic globalization and the breakup


63 See especially Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Rosemblatt, Race and Nation. The bibliography in this excellent volume is extensive, testifying to the virtual explosion of interdisciplinary and historical studies of race formation in Latin America in the last fifteen years.

of former cold war alliances. As the Middle East replaces Latin America as the primary site of U.S. militarism and nation-making, a majority of Latin American governments have broken with the “Washington consensus” and articulated themselves as independent world actors. Social movements from the Mexican Zapatistas to Brazil’s Movement of Landless Rural Workers actively reference global solidarities and rely on the Internet more than on M-16s to get their message out. In the United States, Latin America’s presence within has been dramatized by massive marches for immigrants’ rights and renewed culture wars over who counts as an “American.” The politics of gender are critical to such processes. I can write this as an obvious truism in part because of Joan Scott. Scott also made it clear that history matters to the study of culture, an assertion with crucial implications for contemporary cultural studies, whatever their disciplinary origin or temporal focus. In the brave new worlds of Latin American studies, *Gender and the Politics of History* will continue to offer lessons and generate creativity. It is a book we have long made our own.

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