Pérez, Ricardo
Reseña de "Atlas ambiental de Puerto Rico" de Tania del Mar López Marrero and Nancy Villanueva
Colón
The City University of New York
New York, Estados Unidos

Available in: http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=37721248014
syllabi, this could only previously be achieved by complementing a multidisciplinary (mostly social science) anthology with a novel or two, a memoir, and some films and poetry. The effect, I believe, is that students sometimes come to falsely assume that poets and novelists feel, whereas scholars come to their topics solely from cerebral motivations. The passion, commitment to social justice, and, sometimes, personal trauma that inspire many scholars to work in their chosen fields is too often obscured by the conventions of academic prose. Here, in cogent, short essays, scholars describe how they came to be passionate about community problem solving (López), oral history (Broyles González), and the critique of colonialist discourse (Negrón-Montaner), to name only a few examples. But they also sketch out the central terms of debate in each of their areas of research, activism, or art. By discussing terms and concepts that are staples in Latino/a studies syllabi, including mine, such as racialization, language ideology, de/segregation, homoerotic desire, patriarchy, transnationalism, Latinidad, and critical practice, among other subjects, without pedantry, but in the context of personal and community histories, convivencia, and activism, the terms take on powerful meanings. For students, this could provide unprecedented pathways into scholarly practice, allowing them to learn why the scholars we require them to read do what they do, without simply expecting them to ingest the final product of scholarly labors, decontextualized from the very human stories of their creation.

In sum, I very highly recommend this text for adoption in any number of interdisciplinary Latino/a studies courses for both undergraduates and graduates. In spite of a few gaps (very little about the middle class, virtually nothing on Cubans, too little about South and Central American groups, almost nothing about the rise of non-progressive Latino politics, not enough about health), the rich and textured approach offered to dozens of other topics, especially language, racialization, segregation, colonialism and neocolonialism, labor, immigration, education, Latino pan-ethnicity, demography, music, border studies, poetry, even telecommunications, more than compensates for these gaps and makes this book a welcome compendium—one that is sure to draw in new generations of scholars.

 ATK ARS AMBIEN DEL DEI ROCO

By Tania del Mar López Marrero and Nancy Villanueva Colón
San Juan: La Editorial, Universidad de Puerto Rico, 2006
160 pages: $39.95 [cloth]

REVIEWER: RICARDO PÉREZ, Eastern Connecticut State University

In recent years, a great number of publications have addressed a wide variety of themes pertaining to Puerto Rican affairs both in the island and in the United States. While many of these publications have looked at general aspects, such as migration, political and cultural history, and electoral politics, which are widely known to most Puerto Ricans, others have focused on more specific themes, such as the environment, that have been—until now—largely understudied. The majority of these publications have been favorably reviewed in this journal, which indicates the quality of the recent works in the vibrant field of Puerto Rican studies. To this growing list of publications we can now add the Atlas ambiental de Puerto Rico, published in 2006 by the University
of Puerto Rico Press—the first and only attempt to compile an environmental atlas about the island. As authors Tania del Mar López Marrero and Nancy Villanueva Colón indicate in the foreword, the atlas attempts to fill a gap in the environmental knowledge of Puerto Rico and seeks to inform policy-making decisions related to the sustainable development of the island’s economy. The atlas is highly recommended as a general reference book with invaluable data on Puerto Rico’s physical, economic, and human characteristics readily accessible to most readers.

The atlas is organized around eleven chapters that provide clear and concise information on relevant topics such as the island’s physical and human geography (Chapter 1); population and economy (Chapter 2); natural and technological risks that can threaten the island (Chapter 3); energy production and use (Chapter 4); land use and vegetation cover—with an emphasis on urban development (Chapter 5); problems faced by the agricultural economy (Chapter 6), problems associated with waste production and disposal (Chapter 7), air quality (Chapter 8); the state of water resources (Chapter 9); management and protection of coastal resources (Chapter 10); and the conservation of natural resources (Chapter 11). With the exceptions of Chapter 8 (by Olga L. Mayol Bracero), Chapter 9 (by Frederick N. Scatena), and Chapter 11 (by Ariel E. Lugo), all the other chapters were prepared by the main authors. In addition, the atlas also includes a brief introduction and five case studies pertaining to the (1) 1918 earthquake in northwest Puerto Rico; (2) zoning and land use around El Yunque Rainforest; (3) clandestine dumps; (4) migratory native fauna in Puerto Rican rivers (by Juan Felipe Blanco); and (5) the environmental movement and environmental community struggles.

As the authors note, the case studies tend to highlight potential negative impacts of human activities in the island, on one hand, and the accomplishments and hopes of community groups united to protect the environment, on the other.

The introduction tackles key issues derived from human activities on the natural environment, especially in small Caribbean island-nations. According to the authors, such environmental problems as deforestation, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, high carbon emissions, and even climate change are generally the results of human impacts on natural resources. These environmental problems are relevant to the case of Puerto Rico, given the island’s limited geographic area, high population density, elevated consumption rates, and higher standards of living, at least when compared to other islands in the region. It is precisely because Puerto Rico shows some of the highest indicators of economic development in Latin America and the Caribbean—for instance, the island ranks among the top five countries in the region in terms of GDP performance, per capita income, energy consumption, and the maintenance of massive roadway systems—that the island is at greater risk of experiencing some of the environmental problems identified by López Marrero and Villanueva Colón in the introduction. In order to depict the frightening reality of Puerto Rico’s current environmental predicament, the authors note that in a square kilometer there are on average 429 people, 3.4 kilometers of roads, 267 automobiles, and 1,674 tons of waste discarded annually; in contrast, only 8 percent of the area is under conservation (p. 5). If we extrapolate these numbers to the entire geographic area of the island, which is only 9,104 square kilometers in size, it can be readily seen that Puerto Rico’s natural resources are intensively used in ways that can endanger the environment and compromise the well-being of its current and future populations. But, more important, these statistics seem to suggest that it is imperative for the Puerto Rican government to devise and implement sound environmental policies that can help balance economic development and environmental conservation.
Each one of the eleven main chapters is prefaced by a short narrative of three to four pages that explains the chapter’s theme; the narratives are direct, concise, and easy to understand; moreover, when the authors use technical geographic and scientific jargon, they explain clearly the terms and concepts that readers might not easily understand. As an atlas, the book is profusely illustrated with beautifully colored and arranged maps and tables that also help enhance its educational value. At the end of each chapter, a bibliography indicates the sources of information used by the authors to prepare them. It is this combination of short narratives and visual materials that make the atlas a remarkably balanced and informative text. The case studies, on the other hand, tend to be brief—two pages on average—but each one includes a bibliography that readers can use to locate the sources of information for further reading. Far from being mere appendices, the case studies reveal the complexities that most Puerto Ricans currently experience as the island struggles to balance economic development and environmental conservation. In particular, the case studies on zoning and land development around El Yunque Rainforest, the seemingly common occurrence of clandestine dumps throughout the island, the recent environmental and community struggle against air and water pollution, as well as efforts to gain access to beaches and coastal areas and preserve the limited forest resources, are clear reminders that the challenges of environmental conservation in Puerto Rico must be confronted and made a priority in any discussion on the political, social, and economic future of the island.

One of the many accomplishments of the Atlas ambiental de Puerto Rico is that the authors tend to frame the data they use within the historical context of the island’s economic development since the start of Operation Bootstrap in the late 1940s. As it is now acknowledged by most academics, the rapid economic and cultural modernization of Puerto Rico since the post-World War II period has changed dramatically the social, economic, cultural, and political character of the island as Puerto Rico changed decisively from a primarily rural and agrarian society to an urban and industrial society. Undoubtedly, describing this economic and cultural context can help explain the current drive toward the intensive use of natural resources in Puerto Rico. At other times, however, the authors offer historical data for earlier historical periods (for example, when they make reference to the social and economic conditions of the island during Spanish colonial times) in an attempt to depict long-term processes of change. In spite of the brevity of the reading material, every chapter relies on the most recent information and data available.

Another accomplishment is certainly the collaborative nature of the atlas. As indicated above, Chapters 8, 9, and 11, along with one of the case studies, were prepared by specialists who shed light on air and water quality, natural resource conservation, and the migratory patterns of freshwater fish species, respectively. The collaboration with specialists on these relevant and lesser-known subjects, the choice of topics documented in the atlas, and the visual appeal of the maps and tables make the Atlas ambiental de Puerto Rico a necessary and welcome contribution to Puerto Rican studies. Unfortunately, there are a few minor grammatical errors (on pp. 73, 82, and 102). More important, however, is the error on page 37, where the authors make reference to Map 3.5 (about the risks associated with mudslides as a result of heavy rainfall), which is not to be found in the atlas. Instead, the map about the risks associated with mudslides as a result of heavy rainfall does exist—but as Map 3.2, along with a map detailing the areas in the island susceptible to flooding. While this is a glaring confusion that could have been avoided with more careful editing and revision, the atlas’s positive attributes far outnumber its shortcomings.
At a time when there is an increasing global concern for potential human suffering as a result of environmental catastrophes—as painfully revealed by the devastation caused by tropical cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and the earthquake in China in May 2008, which together killed an estimated 205,000 people in Asia—raising awareness about the human impact on the environment in Puerto Rico becomes timely and urgent. The *Atlas ambiental de Puerto Rico* surely is destined to become more than a useful reference guide to anyone interested in learning about the general environmental and geographic facts of the island; it is my hope that it will soon be, as the authors intended it to be, a wake-up call to everyone concerned with the sustainable use of the island’s natural resources. At a more pragmatic level, the atlas provides policy makers, government officials, and all concerned citizens with useful information that can help create and implement better environmental policies for the sustainable economic development and preservation of Puerto Rico’s natural resources.

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**The Latino Body: Crisis, Identities in American Literary and Cultural Memory**

By Lázaro Lima  
New York: NYU Press, 2007  
240 pages; $21.00 [paper]

**Reviewer:** Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey—New Brunswick

This book studies the emergence of a Latino identity as a result of the cultural and political divide between Mexico and the United States, particularly after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848. Lima analyzes the creation of a Latino identity vis-à-vis American cultural, literary, and political history. Throughout the book, the author identifies a series of crisis moments, in which Latino identity was produced as a response to the polarized race relations defining an American identity as exclusive of all those who are not European white descendants. The two central tropes of Lima’s analysis are the body and memory, in many cases linked through the juridical notion of the *corpus delicti* (or body of crime), to explore the abject relationship between the American nation and the Latino community as illegal bodies or aliens.

This study is divided in two sections, composed of an introduction, four chapters, and a conclusion. The first chapter analyzes two testimonials written after the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo: Eulalia Pérez’s *An Old Woman and Her Recollections* (1877) and Catarina Avila de Ríos’ *Memoirs…* (1877). Both testimonials were included in the *History of California* project, a multivolume collection of oral histories gathered by Hubert Hone Bancroft, that has not been studied in detail by Chicano critics. These testimonials are analyzed to trace the problematic ethnic and national constitution of Mexicans vis-à-vis, within and against an American identity that defined the Mexican body as external to U.S. whiteness. Lima counterpoises these texts with María Amparo Ruiz de Burton’s historical romance, *The Squatter and the Don* (1885), a more canonical narrative in which heterosexual love is used to metaphorically erase the violent, conflictive, and racist exclusion of Californios from the American ethnic and national imaginaries. The second chapter focuses on a classic text in Chicano studies, Tomás Rivera’s *... y no se lo tragó la tierra/ ... And The*
Nancy Villanueva Colón tiene un doctorado en geografía de Clark University y es profesora de Geografía y Ciencias Ambientales en la Universidad de Puerto Rico. Ha escrito capítulos de geografía en libros de Estudios Sociales a nivel elemental y artículos en periódicos y revistas académicas sobre temas relacionados con la geografía humana. 


En primer lugar, el Atlas Ambiental de Puerto Rico parece ser un libro de hechos reiterando datos de diversas fuentes existentes bajo el lema de un Atlas ambiental. Sin embargo, una mayor reflexión sobre el libro revela un volumen a tiempo y bien construido sobre el estado actual y frágil del medio ambiente de Puerto Rico. El libro está dividido en tres partes: una introducción breve, once capítulos. 

Anthropogenic effects including river regulation, watershed development, contamination, and fish introductions have substantially affected the majority of freshwater habitats in Europe and North America. This pattern of resource development and degradation is widespread in the tropics, and often little is known about the resources before they are lost. Puerto Rico (oficialmente, el Commonwealth of Puerto Rico) tiene como primera administración las 78 municipalidades (municipios, singular – municipio), que son las divisiones administrativas de segundo orden en Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico - la nación más orientada del mundo y una parte del Archipiélago de las Antillas - está geográficamente situado en los hemisferios Norte y Occidental del planeta. Es situada al este de las Islas de la Hispaniola (compartidas por Haití y la República Dominicana), al oeste de las Islas de las Virgin y al sureste de Florida. 

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