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Julio Marzán

# The Labyrinth of Multitude and Other Reality Checks on Being Latino/x

CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOCIAL SCIENCE

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## About the author

**Julio Marzán** was born in Puerto Rico and at the age of four months, he was brought to New York. He has a B.A. in English from Fordham U., an M.F.A. in Creative Writing from Columbia University, and a Ph.D. in Latin American Literature and Linguistics from New York University. He is currently a Professor Emeritus of English at Nassau Community College. In the Spring of 2006, he was a Visiting Associate Professor of Romance Languages at Harvard University.

As a poet he has won the 92nd Street Y Poetry Center Discovery Award and The New School's Dylan Thomas Award. He has published two poetry books, 'Translations without Originals' and, in Spanish, 'Puerta de Tierra', and his translations of selected poems by Luis Palés Matos in 'Selected Poems/Poesía Selecta: Luis Palés Matos'. Most recent is 'The Glue Trap and Other Poems'. His poems have appeared in the distinguished journals, among them, 'Prairie Schooner', 'New Letters', 'Parnassus', 'Ploughshares', 'Tin House', '3 Quarks Daily', and 'Harper's Magazine', and selections appear in numerous college texts, including 'The Bedford Introduction to Literature', 2nd-10th eds., 'The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature', 2nd-10th eds., and 'Poetry: An Introduction'. From 2004-2007 he was Poet Laureate of Queens, New York. A profile of him was published in the Fall 2009 issue of 'Columbia Magazine'. In nonfiction, he has published 'The Numinous Site: The Poetry of Luis Palés Matos', 'Luna', 'Luna: Creative Writing Ideas from Spanish', 'Latin American, and Latino Literature', and 'The Spanish American Roots of William Carlos Williams'.

As a novelist he has published 'The Bonjour Gene' and 'Don't Let Me Die in Disneyland: The 3-D Life of Eddie Loperena'.

## Summary

Seventies "Hispanics," identifying with Latin American emergence and increasing immigration to the U.S., adopted the epithet 'latino', soon written as Latino. Media fast-tracked, English Latino would eventually tilt presidential elections, advocate national programs, and protest policies, with native and immigrant subgroups presumed homogenous. Enunciated identically as 'latino' and presumed to be 'latino' or its exact translation, "Latino" proved to be a transliteration that since its coining started diverging from 'latino'.

Latino became the political mask of unity over discrete subgroups; its primary agenda identity politics as a racialized, brown consciousness divested of its Hispanic cultural history. In contrast, 'latino' retains its Spanish transracial semantics, invoking an 'hispano' cultural history. Nationally Latino represents the entire Hispanic demographic while internecinely not all subgroups identify as Latinos. Latino is defined by immediate sociopolitical issues yet when needed invokes the 'latino' cultural history it presumably disowns. Intellectual inconsistency and semantic amorphousness make Latino a confusing epithet that subverts both speech and scholarship. Collective critical thinking on its semantic dysfunction, deferring to solidarity, is displaced with politically correct but circumventing tweaks, creating Latino/a, Latin@, Latinx. On the other hand, Latino exists because its time had come, expressing an aspiration for a more participatory identity in a multicultural America. Julio Marzán, author of 'The Spanish American Roots of William Carlos Williams', suspends solidarity to articulate the intellectual challenges of his Latino identity. Writing to academic standards in a style accessible to the general reader, Marzán argues that from 'latino' roots Latino evolved into an American identity as a demographic summation implying a culture that actually origin cultures provide, ambiguously an ethnicity and a nostalgic assimilation. "Latino" are American-germane sociopolitical extrapolations of 'latino' experiential details, the often-conflicted distinction illustrated in Marzán's equally engaging essays that revisit iconic personages and personal events with more nuance than seen as Latino.

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