Proposal for two workshops and two edited volumes on comparative approaches to the history of medicine and science in Latin America and the Caribbean

Ford-LASA Special projects Fourth Cycle

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1. Rationale for proposal
This research project expressly addresses the lack of dialogue between Latin Americanist and Caribbeanist scholars. Over the past couple of decades, new research on the history of science and medicine in Latin America has emerged as a dynamic field of scholarship exploring the constitution of the state, the impact of North American philanthropy, and the relationship between local researchers and practitioners with scientific “centres” of the US and Europe. At the same time, Caribbeanists have begun to explore the role of public health in shaping colonial regimes and how medical knowledge was constituted by subaltern groups, reflected in the emerging research cluster on the history of medicine at the University of the West Indies. Despite these emerging common concerns, research on the history of medicine and science in Latin America and the Caribbean has tended to be fragmented by language and remained in largely national-focused studies. This network seeks to bring together Latin Americanists and Caribbeanists into a common dialogue on the similarities and divergences between the two regions. Such a collective engagement is particularly timely given that UK scholarship on the history of medicine and science has tended to focus on South Asia rather than the Americas.

The project focuses therefore on what we consider to be two key areas of research in the history of science and medicine: the constitution of medical and scientific knowledges in the so-called periphery and the political economy of public health. Our focus is historical and restricted to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but our approach is informed by both historical studies on earlier periods and by broad multi and interdisciplinary perspectives. The first theme, ‘Creole Sciences: Medical Communities, Networks and Practices’ reflects on the divergent meanings invoked by the term creole for Latin Americanists and Caribbeanists. For the former it most commonly refers to white elites and their national projects, whereas for the latter it most often describes Afro-Caribbean folk culture. This tension highlights the significance of local contexts in shaping how knowledges are constructed out of the interactions between different local and international scientific and medical communities. The project seeks to confront and compare the scholarship arising from these divergent meanings to explore further the ways in which medical and scientific knowledges produced in Latin America and the Caribbean, or as Marcos Cueto has put it ‘scientific excellence in the periphery’, were constituted by the inflection of hegemonic knowledge by local knowledges. At the same time, we pay careful attention to the ways in which such peripheral knowledges in turn inflected hegemonic scientific and medical knowledge.

The second theme, “Cultures of Hygiene: Comparative Approaches to the Political Economy of Public Health”, draws on ongoing attempts (beginning, in the case of Latin America, with the pioneering studies of Nancy Leys Stepan, who we are inviting to give a keynote lecture) to map and interpret the emergence and triumph, from the late nineteenth century to the present, of public health projects and more specifically of a web of hygienic values and prescriptions that sustained ideals and ideologies, cultural and political programs, and lifestyles (see, among others, the work of Diego Armus, Maria Silvia di Liscia, Donna Guy and Julia Rodriguez for Argentina, David Sowell, Chris Abel and Diana Obregon on Colombia, Marcos Cueto for Peru, Steven Palmer for Costa Rica, Anne-Emmanuelle Birn, Ann Blum, Alexandra Stern, Katherine Bliss and Claudia Agostoni for Mexico, Julyan Peard, Sydney Chalhoub, Teresa Meade, Jeffrey Needell, Gilberto Hochman for Brazil, Alejandra Bronfman and Stephan Palmié for Cuba, Ronn Pineo and Kim Clark for Ecuador Ann Zulawski for Bolivia, Juanita de Barros for Guyana,
Rosemarijn Hoefte for Surinam). We believe that studying cultures of hygiene in Latin America and the Caribbean will enable us to understand aspects of health, morality, individual and social behaviour, and societal norms that can easily become invisible in conventional studies of the history of medicine or public health. Once put in conversation through the workshop, our comparative studies of cultures of hygiene in the Caribbean and Latin America promise to generate important new insights about disease, morality, behaviour, and modern rituals of healthy living but also about broader themes of interest to a broader scholarly community such as the state, race, gender, class, and nation.

We believe that a Latin American-Caribbean dialogue across these themes can enrich present understandings and offer new comparative avenues of research. We see this most clearly in the case of our first theme, ‘creole sciences’. With few exceptions (such as the work of David Sowell, Steven Palmer, Stephan Palmié), historians of Latin America have paid relatively little attention to indigenous or native American, Afro-American or indeed, other forms of healing and curing. Medical syncretism has tended to be the preserve of the anthropologist (Paul Farmer, who we are also inviting to give a keynote lecture, being one of the most well know cases). Caribbean perspectives on ‘creole’ medicine (in the Caribbean sense) therefore have much to offer Latin Americanists. Similarly, Caribbeanists have paid relatively limited attention to the ways in which ‘creole’ scientific excellence (in the Latin American sense) was produced in the region. In particular, Latin American perspectives on the ways in which ‘creole’ scientific knowledges fed into projects of nation-state formation that were central to the region’s negotiation of its role into both formal imperial and informal imperial orders seems of significant relevance to Caribbeanists (here the recent work of Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra is of particular importance).

The concept of ‘cultures of hygiene’ similarly offers new interpretative possibilities that would gain from a comparative approach. Though hygiene was a key component of the modern experience in Latin America and the Caribbean, it has not been systematically analysed. As a cultural artifact, disciplinary device, and vehicle of self-improvement, hygiene is still a new topic for historical and sociocultural research on the region. Early incursions, echoing a conservative, institutional history of medicine, and recent Foucauldian medicalisation approaches have led to formulaic histories. The approach promoted through these workshops and the broader network is archive-based and empirical, which we believe is a better method for recovering the specificity of the Latin American and Caribbean experience for re-evaluating that history of public health. Some of the themes to consider include: in what ways were cultures of hygiene responses to the new urgencies stemming from the urbanization and incipient industrialization of Latin American and Caribbean cities?; to what extent did cultures of hygiene contribute to modeling the behavior of the popular sectors? In what ways did they reflect, or were inflected by, class, racial and gender hierarchies?. Finally, to what extent were elite projects of hygiene inflected by resistance from below?

Latin America and the Caribbean comprise diverse human geographies and cultures. Yet given the many commonalities in languages, religions, and patterns of engagement with Western Europe and the United States, as well as Africa and Asia, the regions’ heterogeneity is eminently suited to comparative analysis. It offers particularly fertile ground for understanding how scientific knowledges and cultures of hygiene became vital components of the many modernities negotiated within the peripheral West. While comparative Latin American and Caribbean histories of the constitution of scientific knowledges and cultures of hygiene are conceptually compelling, it remains a daunting logistical task. Individual studies are most practically undertaken at the local level. Yet, because both scientific knowledges and cultures of hygiene inevitably transcended such borders, these “national” studies and regional perspectives must then be brought together for comparative analysis, and only an international research collaboration of the kind we propose here can meet this need.

This project aims to nurture and consolidate existing links within a network of historians of science and medicine in Latin America, and within network of historians of science and medicine in the Caribbean, and to bring together these two networks into a larger network of scholars.
spanning the two regions. Dr Drinot has been working for some years with a group of scholars in Latin America and the US. Previous meetings have taken place at the Rockefeller Archive Centre (funded by the Rockefeller Foundation) in the United States and the Oswaldo Cruz Institute in Rio de Janeiro, and an additional meeting is to take place in Mexico City in November 2008. Led by Professor Alan Cobley, the University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus) hosted an international conference on the ‘Social History of Medicine and Public Health in the Caribbean’ in May 2001. The history of medicine, science and technology represents a key area of research for the university, which is reflected both in its development of interdisciplinary undergraduate courses and programmes on the subject and the group of young researchers who have conducted post-graduate research on the history of medicine in the Caribbean. Given that teaching and research strategies for the history of medicine are still being formulated and discussed within the University of the West Indies, these workshops would make a particularly timely contribution to how the field could be conceptualized in regional terms.

2. Working plan

Workshop 1
This workshop, to be held in Manchester in January 2009, takes a broad approach to exploring how medical practice was constituted as scientific knowledge in Latin America and the Caribbean. Medical practice emerged from the interactions between different social groups and scientific networks. A first theme explores how subaltern medical practices were alternatively constructed as science or religion, and the extent to which the creolization of medical knowledge varied across geography, time and Asian, African or indigenous populations. A second theme examines how local knowledges were translated by national elites or outside observers such as visiting anthropologists. A third theme centres on how the physical production of medical remedies in Latin America and the Caribbean emerged from interactions between “professional sciences” of botany and pharmacy, “popular quackery” and “folk medicine”. A final theme focuses on how reproductive health practices and demography were shaped by debates over gender, race, class and national identity.

The workshop will include the following panels:

1. ‘Cross-cultural approaches to medicine in Latin American and the Caribbean’
2. ‘The indigenisation of medical science and nationalism’
3. ‘Professionalisation and the production of medicine’
4. ‘Birthing the nation: Race, gender and reproduction’

In addition to the seminar, Professor Paul Farmer will be invited to give a keynote in the evening of the first day.

Potential participants, local
Paulo Drinot (Manchester); Laurence Brown (Manchester); Mick Worboys (Manchester)
Patience Schell (Manchester); Margaret Jones (Oxford); Diana Paton (Newcastle); Chris Abel (UCL); Yolanda Eraso (Oxford Brookes)

Potential participants, international
Tara Inniss, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus); Deryck Murry, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus); Radica Mahase, University of the West Indies (St Augustine Campus); Claudia Agostoni (UNAM, Mexico); Gilberto Hochman (FIOCRUZ, Brazil)

Potential North American-based participants
Diego Armus (Swarthmore College. USA), Steven Palmer (University of Windsor, Canada), Alexandra Minna Stern (University of Michigan, USA), Kim Clark (University of Western Ontario, Canada), Ann Zulawski (Smith College, USA), AlejandraBronfman (University of British Columbia, Canada); Paul Farmer (Harvard, USA)
The seminar will last a full two days (three nights) with 15 active participants. It will be based on a series of panel presentations (provisional titles above), which will be open to a wider audience, including invited younger researchers.

Most of the people listed above have been contacted and have agreed to participate in the workshop.

**Workshop 2**

This workshop, to be held at the UWI campus in Barbados in April 2009, focuses on exploring local sources for the history of ‘cultures of hygiene’ in Latin America and the Caribbean. A first theme is focused on three overlapping arenas. First is the role of rulers, legislators, physicians, and public health officials in producing normative ideas and instructions related to hygienic practices. Our second focus is on the production in advertising and education of textual and visual discourses related to hygiene. Our third focus is on the manner in which distinct social groups incorporated and tailored these hygienic prescriptions for modern, urbane living. The social groups in question will differ according to the case under study; while gender, ethnicity, and class are of primary concern in each instance, questions of social occupation, immigrant or colonizer nationality, and neighborhood community also come into play in some cases. A second theme is the relationship between the material environment and cultures of hygiene. This draws on emerging scholarship with focuses on the infrastructures of public health and on new applications of historical Geographic Information Systems in connecting spatial patterns of disease, intervention and environment.

Bringing together scholars from Latin America and the Caribbean will enable new examination of the divergences and commonalities between colonial and national experiences of the cultures of hygiene. The workshop will include the following panels:

1. ‘Public health as a project of governmentality: discipline and development in the Americas’
2. ‘Selling soap: cultures of hygiene and the marketing of public health’
3. ‘Cultures of hygiene from below: local sources in Latin America and the Caribbean’
4. ‘Mapping vertical and horizontal public health campaigns in the Americas’

In addition to the workshop, Prof Nancy Leys Stepan will give a keynote in the evening of the first day.

**Potential participants, local**
Alan Cobley, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus); Tara Inniss, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus); Deryck Murry, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus); Pedro Welch, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus); Henry Fraser, University of the West Indies (Cave Hill Campus)

**Potential participants, regional**
Debbie McCollin, University of the West Indies (St Augustine Campus); Dominique Taffin (Martinique); Gilberto Hochman (Fiocruz-Brazil); Nisia Trindade (Fiocruz-Brazil); Claudia Agostoni (UNAM, Mexico)

**Potential participants, international**
Paulo Drinot (Manchester); Laurence Brown (Manchester); Mick Worboys (Manchester)

**Potential North American-based participants**
Diego Armus (Swarthmore College, USA), Steven Palmer (University of Windsor, Canada), Alexandra Minna Stern (University of Michigan, USA), Kim Clark (University of Western Ontario, Canada), Ann Zulawski (Smith College, USA), Alejandra Bronfman (University of British Columbia, Canada); Nancy Leys Stepan (Columbia, USA)
The seminar will last a full two days (three nights) with 15 active participants. It will be based on a series of panel presentations (provisional titles above), which will be open to a wider audience, including invited younger researchers.

Most of the people listed above have been contacted and have agreed to participate in the workshop

3. Request for funding
We have applied to the British Academy for the bulk of the funding required. This funding stream is restricted to UK and Latin American and Caribbean participants. Therefore we are requesting funds to cover the costs of the North American participants. We want to fund 5 participants in each workshop and estimate that we will require $1200 per participant. We are therefore requesting US$12,000.