

est for non-Latin Americanist readers interested in middle-class politics and the links between memory, remembrance and violence.

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REBECCA J. ATENCIO: *Memory's Turn: Reckoning with Dictatorship in Brazil*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014.

What are the connections between cultural works and the shared process of dealing with the memory of tragic events, such as those associated with the repressive military regimes of South America in the 1960s and 70s? This is one of the many important questions that the insightful and creatively organized new book by Rebecca J. Atencio, Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies at Tulane University, invites one to consider. Centered on the experiences of Brazil, Atencio's work not only offers a well-researched examination of events pertaining to official and unofficial memory politics during the last 35 years, but also suggestively advances a promising frame of analysis for study of the multifaceted connections between artistic production and institutional mechanisms in postconflict societies.

Atencio convincingly argues that given the country's constrained arena for formal redress – a context constructed on the basis of the Amnesty Law of 1979, which prevented any effort towards legal individual culpability of the systematic repression committed by agents of the state – artistic expression became central in pushing for new ways of thinking about the established narratives of the years under authoritarian rule. This innovative claim is appropriately nuanced with the notion that, though resourceful in fostering new conversations about the experience of political repression, these same cultural artifacts (e.g. personal memoirs, novels, plays, TV soap-operas, and theatrical performances) have nonetheless been limited in their ability to move beyond the widely shared frame of *reconciliation by memory* wherein most Brazilians agreed to revisit these same traumatic experiences as long as they were to remain in the past, thus pushing aside any more ambitious, let alone restorative proposition for dealing with them.

The introductory chapter of the book suggests some of the complex reasons for the prevalence of this collective tendency to try to move beyond the authoritarian past largely by not actually revisiting the past in any substantive or legally binding way. It would have been useful though to reflect a bit further on how the Amnesty Law gained support from different segments of Brazilian society. The military regime lasted for 21 years and political assassinations were more constrained in scale in Brazil, compared to its neighbors in the region; one should

ask whether these facts played a role in the construction of Brazil's protracted and timid dealings with the legacy of dictatorship. Were Brazilians forced to accept the terms of the controlled *abertura* imposed by military leaders or were people simply trying to move on since there was no similar sense of broad destruction of civil society and thus there was no need to more assertively account for the violence perpetrated by the regime? Though important for providing an even fuller picture of memory's politics in the region, Atencio's work makes a persuasive case for the need to examine the ways in which popular forms of cultural expression and its associated social conversations interact with, or at least may potentially interact with, institutional approaches to collective experiences of political repression.

In fact, *Memory's Turn* persuasively demonstrates that official artistic dealings with memory politics that reinforce advancements in one realm may, and normally do, lead to similar developments in other realms. This claim is well documented in many instances in the book, starting with the examination (presented in chapter one) of the protracted path wherein the country transitioned from its military rule at the turn of the 1970s/80s. It is here that the author accurately posits that the hugely popular (revisionist-like) memoirs of former guerrilla members of the time (most importantly, Fernando Gabeira's *O que é isso companheiro?*) ended up, not always unintentionally, supporting the move forward by not redressing violent acts of the past set by the receding authoritarian regime.

Chapter two scrutinizes the complex interplay between artistic expression and memory politics manifested in the early 1990s with the broadcast of a TV series called *Anos Rebeldes* and the widespread student-led demonstrations for the impeachment of Collor de Mello, the first democratically elected president since 1960, whose administration was mired in huge corruption scandals. Here the multi-dimensionality of the interaction between art and politics is even more clearly revealed by the author's in-depth reading of not only the content of the TV film, but also its very process of production, as well as the internal politics of its executive producer, Globo TV, Brazil's largest and most influential network. Acknowledging the symbolic relevance of portraying, for the first time since the resumption of democratic rule, a dramatized depiction of the dictatorship, Atencio nonetheless accurately reminds us that no univocal interpretation of these same experiences was advanced and that much of the drive for revisiting these events was molded along the lines of memorialization rather than redress.

Chapter three probes other dimensions of the relationship between literature and official documents of memory by delving into Brazil's first truth report of 1997 and some counterpoints provided in theatrical and visual documentary works. Once again, literature seems to be pushing the process of memorializing violent events by providing alternative, more critical ways to reflect upon the more

single-handed narratives of formal, government sanctioned documents. Chapter four moves the analysis into new and promising venues as the author creatively considers how official sites of memory were put in place in non-univocal paths, wherein artistic works that demanded a more overt and active engagement with the past forced their way into urban renewal ideas inspired in less critical, more static representations of the repressive years. The added reflection presented in the closing section of the book nicely complements the detailed examinations of each preceding chapter and, as a whole, corroborates the author's case for continued and original investigations into the complex interplay between art expression and memory politics.

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MOSHE MORAD: *Fiesta de diez pesos: Music and Gay Identity in Special Period Cuba*. Surrey: Ashgate, 2014.

Moshe Morad's illuminating ethnography of music and gayness in *Special Period Cuba* (which he defines as beginning in 1990) draws on eight several-week research trips to the island between 1994 and 2007. His study offers insight into a fascinating time of transformation, connecting local shifts in gay self-fashioning with the government's increasing friendliness toward capitalism. At its best, which is much of the time, the book's effective writing and clear analysis bring us into the musical richness and complexity of the gay experience, manifested in a fully portrayed series of interconnected scenes, which he calls the *ambiente*: from the moving *fiestas* accessed only by knowledgeable cabbies to evade police harassment, to the audiences of the national ballet, to drag shows and home-based bolero evenings, and perhaps most dramatically to *Santería* networks. Morad navigates ably through these sites, weaving a compelling narrative that achieves the hallmark of good ethnography—opening our eyes to new and unexpected ideas while appearing completely logical and intuitive.

"[M]usic," Morad argues, "was the trigger, the focus, and the main social and conceptual space for Cuban gays during the Special Period in their search for self-expression and realization" (219). Emerging from an era where they frequently faced official suppression, gays (Morad's term) in the Special Period continued to look over their shoulders as public acceptance shifted back and forth, with music reflecting their changing circumstances. As foreign tourism grew and access to "Western" culture improved in the 1990s, claims Morad, music thus took on three central roles in the gay population he studied: as a mode