

pide que el malogrado proyecto de traer a Cuba el “buen gobierno” ceda su sitio al legítimo derecho de Cuba al auto-gobierno.

Por una parte, resulta inesperado que un libro que ha dedicado tantas páginas a explorar la política real, proponga como solución un acto de buena fe. Quizás hubiese resultado más interesante explorar algunas soluciones dentro de los mismos términos de la política real que el autor ha analizado con tanto tino. Por otra parte, la apelación al derecho a la autodeterminación le debe mucho a un concepto que, con cierta justicia, se encuentra hoy en franca decadencia: el de soberanía. Solicitar el derecho del estado a existir sin interferencias va en sentido opuesto a la internacionalización del criterio de que los derechos no sólo deben dejar de pensarse en el marco de la soberanía del estado-nación, sino en contra de esa prerrogativa. En lugar de apelar al principio de *laissez faire* político de los estados, tal vez hubiese sido más recomendable profundizar en cómo abandonar la mirada condescendiente que ha guiado la aproximación norteamericana a la isla. Finalmente, el carácter reductor con que la metáfora de los vecinos representa la complejidad de lo social ensombrece un poco la calidad del juicio moral del autor. Apelar al símil del vecino implica considerar a Cuba como una familia nuclear y no una sociedad compleja marcada por claros disensos y por un deseo creciente de su sociedad civil de participar en el modelo emergente de ciudadanía global.

En resumen, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic* es un libro fascinante que tiene toda la potencialidad de convertirse en una referencia obligada para aquellos que se interesan en la historia contemporánea de las Américas. El libro tiene la singularidad de ofrecer una historia con tramas simultáneas: la historia de la política real en las Américas, con sus profecías incumplidas y las resignaciones asociadas a su fracaso; la co-producción de proyectos nacionales con sus equilibrios frágiles, pero duraderos; la producción política de las categorías de otredad y anomalía. Para su fortuna, estos múltiples niveles ayudarán a *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic* a afianzar su trascendencia. Audiencias disímiles, con intereses y cuestionamientos diversificados, encontrarán en sus páginas abundante material sobre la historia política de este hemisferio.

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RAFAEL DE LA DEHESA: *Queering the Public Sphere in Mexico and Brazil: Sexual Rights in Emerging Democracies*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010.

De la Dehesa's book is a detailed account of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) activism in both Mexico and Brazil over the last couple

of decades. As such, and as Richard Parker points out on the back cover, the volume will no doubt become a major reference source in the GLBT field of research. The volume is clearly a major contribution in several ways, not least of which is its rich archival and detailed ethnographic exploration of these two major national activists processes. The author maintains a keen eye on how each country is engaged in constant conversation and interaction with other elements of the GLBT agenda/movements worldwide.

However, perhaps the work's biggest element of differentiation, and therefore contribution, is its emphasis on the manner in which these two activist movements engage with the more official state processes of nation-building. Unlike most GLBT scholarship, de la Dehesa's emphasis is precisely on the manner in which both the Mexican and Brazilian movements, neither as singular entities, have collaborated with state institutions at the local, regional, and federal levels. Thus, the book is a rich exploration of these nations' attempts to negotiate with the ruling political parties and state institutions to effect a difference and create a more just and democratic structure for the GLBT communities in both Mexico and Brazil.

The author points out that his main concern or objective is less with the outcome of this particular strategy and more with the approach itself, and the different groups and activists that consolidate GLBT concerns through this, arguably, more politically savvy model. For de la Dehesa, the work is really more about the "activists' strategies rather than policy outcomes" (xiii), and he is interested in understanding the how rather than the why of these strategies. He is quite aware of the rich GLBT grass-roots activism and cultural productions in both countries but he argues, and I would contend rightly so, that that work is more readily highlighted in most GLBT scholarship. Equally important is his understanding of the enormous limitations of state-directed strategies and enormous pitfalls that these political maneuverings always entail for progressive movements. Yet precisely because of these troubling characteristics, the GLBT activists' involvement with state policies becomes an urgent point of scholarly focus.

In order to address his objective the book is divided into three parts. Part I, titled "Frames," is mainly an introductory chapter that outlines the main historical context for both the Mexican and Brazilian nation-states, and how sexual and gendered stigma has been associated with the GLBT from each of their republican foundations. In this chapter it also becomes clear why Brazil and Mexico would be the ideal nation-states to carry out this comparative research, not only because they represent two of the oldest GLBT activist communities in the continent, but also because both countries pride themselves on a strong

leftist vanguard that has traditionally looked to negotiate power within formal democratic politics.

Part II, titled “Doorways,” is divided into chapters 2 and 3 and as the name suggests provides an initial understanding of the manner in which the different GLBT groups set out to influence state strategies. More particularly, chapter 2 is engaged with the manner in which the traditional left in each country incorporated the GLBT debate into their midst. Chapter 3 analyzes how each country saw the first electoral activist movements flourish in the early 1980s.

Finally Part III, titled “Pathways,” is divided into chapters 4, 5 and 6 and this is by far the central part of the volume, engaging the different on-the-ground practices carried out by Mexican and Brazilian activists over the last twenty years. Chapters 4 and 5 engage with Brazil and Mexico respectively, offering a detailed account of the many legislative actions that have taken place over the last years, and in many ways defined the contours of the official GLBT debate, particularly within the state’s official outlook. Meanwhile chapter 6 goes ahead to take a closer look at a grand federal program, “Brazil without Homophobia,” implemented in the country in 2004. The program, with varying results, aimed to incorporate different government branches including the Ministry of Health into this national social policy.

The book’s most succinct contribution, and success, is its unique idea of focusing on state strategies (as opposed to grass-roots activism). Even more valuable is its detailed exploration of each case. However, it is only in the conclusion that de la Dehesa fully entertains the larger theoretical issues that his work points to. In particular he explores the manner in which these particular forms of GLBT engagements with the state speak to larger issues of democratic transformation and the ever menacing landscape of modernity re-defined in the new age of terrorist fears. If there is any weakness in the book, it is that it should have more fully explored these theoretical insights in greater depth. But that would most probably have taken another book of its own. Hopefully de la Dehesa, or other scholars, will be willing to take on this task in the near future.

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HENDON, JULIA A: *Houses in a Landscape: Memory and Everyday Life in Mesoamerica*. Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2010.

Houses in a Landscape: Memory and Everyday Life in Mesoamerica, by Julia Hendon, is the outcome of a rigorous research tradition established in the Mayan region that has revealed a large and varied body of spectacular archaeological