

Si bien las figuras de Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Benítez Rojo, José Martí, José María Heredia, Calvert Casey y otros pueden ser relacionadas en términos de exilio o más genéricamente de diáspora, la literatura y el cine a los que se refiere el título no tienen una circunscripción nacional exclusiva y sirven como el marco, de referencia y teórico, que González necesariamente utiliza a medida que va desplegando sus lecturas y desarrollando sus argumentos. De la misma manera, el concepto de diáspora utilizado excede la referencia demasiado estrecha a un momento particular de la historia cubana, al que nos tiene acostumbrado lo escrito en relación al período que comienza en los 90. *Cuba and the Tempest* constituye, en suma, una excepción y uno de los estudios más originales que se han publicado últimamente, en el que la reflexión sobre cuestiones de autoría romántica dota a la literatura cubana de una complejidad filosófica que se había dejado de lado en favor de análisis mucho más centrados en la representación de la realidad social.

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JEFFREY LESSER: *A Discontented Diaspora: Japanese Brazilians and the Meanings of Ethnic Militancy, 1960-1980*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007.

Lesser is the author of *Welcoming the Undesirables; Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), easily the best book written about Jewish immigrants in Latin America. In it, Lesser argues eloquently that Jews were both desirable and undesirable for Brazil: desirable because they contributed to “whitening” the national population and enhancing a Brazilian brain trust in science and technology, but undesirable because their religious beliefs and practices and socio-ethnic horizons constituted a significant dissonance in terms of the rather carefully managed concepts of a unified Brazilian cultural nationalism. Jews in Brazil today are somewhere between the unquestionable strong visibility they enjoy in Argentina and their much muffled presence in Mexico. *Welcoming the Undesirables* was a major scholarly contribution at a time when the Latin American Jewish Studies Association was just beginning to provide a forum for a concentrated analysis of Latin American Jewry. If the record of Latin American Jewry continues to be insufficient today, before the early 1990s it was undoubtedly spotty. Moreover, Lesser’s 1994 monograph was the first in a series of research efforts on his part to examine the other and, one could argue, physically more visible, minority in Brazil, the Japanese Brazilians (I will follow Lesser’s lead in not resorting to the hyphen): in 1999 he published

Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil, and in 2003 he edited *Something for Home Abroad: Japanese-Brazilians and Transnational's* (both published by Duke University Press; note that the hyphen is used in the second title).

Unlike the Jews, who were considered in Brazil potential agents of racial whitening (although elsewhere, such as in the United States, they were lumped together with other agents of “blackening,” alongside the Afro-Americans, such as the Irish and the Italians), the Japanese in Brazil were viewed as unable to contribute to whitening Brazilian society and, indeed, as adding a further degree of dissonance as regards Brazil’s project of becoming a giant of modernity, which would, it was believed, necessarily involve a process of whitening. This was especially true for the southern region of the country, which saw the need to go its own way in the project of modernity, essentially writing off the indigenous/mestizo/mulatto/black north (which became Brazil’s own version of *il problema del Mezzogiorno*, with the geographical poles being reversed), with São Paulo (and, collaterally Curitiba and, to some extent, Porto Alegre) emerging as the true capital of Brazil in the twentieth century.

By the middle of the twentieth century, São Paulo had become the largest Japanese city outside of Japan (just as Curitiba had become, with its own project of whitening, the largest Polish city outside of Warsaw and Chicago), and issues relating to the Japanese became crucial components of the city’s imagery. Lesser speaks of the positive image of the Japanese (in reality, their children, the Nikkei: Japanese immigration to Brazil, which began after World War I, was predominantly agricultural, with the Brazilian-born children leaving the countryside for the city) in terms of their notable accomplishments in contributing to the furthering of São Paulo’s aggressive pursuit of modernity: the concentration of Japanese Brazilians in commerce and finance, in science and technology, and in the prestige professions is quite evident and easily verifiable.

Yet, there is the negative image of the Japanese as ultimately unassimilable within the project of the whitening of the Brazilian “race.” Lesser, however, touches on the increasing ratios of intermarriage between Japanese Brazilians and “real” Brazilians (i.e., those perceived as not of immigrant extraction), as an issue which is also important within the Jewish community (although I do not personally know if it has become as much an issue of intense controversy in Brazil as it has in Argentina). An issue that Lesser does not touch on is the matter of cosmetic surgery (a veritable national pastime in Brazil) and the degree to which it may reflect a quest for a Brazilian look.

Lesser’s research in *A Discontented Diaspora* concentrates, then, on the city of São Paulo, and he focuses on two cultural topics in particular: erotic cinema and political militancy. These are strikingly different topics. Erotic cinema

constitutes a body of explicitly identified cultural texts that are viewed under privileged circumstances—that is, they are not part of the overall sociocultural fabric, but are sought out by audiences who choose to consume this particular genre of cultural production, either in the circumscribed space of a theater or in the privacy of the home. For those interested in cultural studies, especially the considerable importance of Brazilian film, the coverage here of the eroticized Japanese body, male as well as female, is enormously useful.

The other topic, Japanese political militancy on the left during the period of dictatorship during the 1960s and 1970s, is not as tied to a specific cultural production, although one could argue that the range of interpretive documents such as journalistic coverage, photography, police reports, even “wanted” posters does constitute a textual inventory susceptible to interpretive critique by cultural studies protocols, in addition to Lesser’s conventional historical analysis. Urbanized Japanese Brazilians participated with great visibility in the fabric of national life afforded by both venues, political militancy and erotic cinema, imaging themselves, according to Lesser’s analysis, to be Brazilian. Yet, as Lesser points out—and in this he returns to the same sort of divided record he identified for Jews in Brazil—as much as these participants/protagonists wished to assert their Brazilianness, they could never escape being identified as the problematic Other, whether “wanted” for the undesirability of their political militancy or “wanted” for their erotically objectified bodies.

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ELIZABETH W. KIDDY: *Blacks of the Rosary*. Penn State University Press, 2005.

Combining detailed archival research with oral history, Elizabeth W. Kiddy’s *Blacks of the Rosary* tells the story of self-identified “black” (*preto*) lay religious brotherhoods in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais from the early colonial period to the present. Through this broad temporal lens, Kiddy aims to show how brotherhoods dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary of the Blacks, and the present-day Afro-Brazilian *congados* or ritual communities that continue their traditions, provided a flexible institutional space for people of African descent to build long-lasting forms of community and identity, despite the asymmetries of power they faced during and after slavery.

The book has three parts. The first part examines the history of the rosary brotherhoods in Europe and Africa before Brazil’s colonization. Chapter One focuses on the emergence of lay brotherhoods as popular forms of devotion in