

Reviews

Latin America at Fin-de Siècle Universal Exhibitions: Modern Cultures of Visuality. By Alejandra Uslenghi. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. 244 pages.

Replete with stunning black and white photographs, Alejandra Uslenghi's compelling study *Latin America at Fin-de Siècle Universal Exhibitions* creates a dialogue between late nineteenth-century Latin American world's fair exhibitions and contemporary writers whose works span the genres of *modernismo*, travel writing, and journalism. Within this framework, Uslenghi focuses on photography, early cinema, and print culture to investigate how technology and visual spectacle operated within the complex arena of nineteenth-century international commercial development and how these technologies intersected with writing, shaping the ways in which officially-sanctioned cultural representatives and writers together scripted Latin American nations into strategic positions of agency within the networks of U.S./European economic hegemony.

The Centennial International Exposition of 1876 (Philadelphia), the *Exposition Universelle* of 1889 (Paris), and the *Exposition Universelle of 1900* (Paris) provide the frames for each of the book's three main chapters. As sites of spectacle and phantasmagoria, and also as showcases for the new standards of categorization and arrangement, these exhibitions, Uslenghi skillfully argues, were at the same time catalysts for the merging of the historical, political, and progress-oriented expressions of nationhood and rehearsals of national self-envisioning that were yet to materialize beyond the fairs. The author blends sources derived from original archival research and late nineteenth-century written publications, citing an array of relevant scholars spanning various disciplinary lenses—among them, Walter Benjamin, Susan Buck-Morss, Jonathan Crary, Tom Gunning, W.T.J. Mitchell, and, specifically from the fields of Latin American literary and visual studies, Gerard Aching, Jens Andermann, Álvaro Fernández Bravo, Julio Ramos, Deborah Silverman, and Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo. Uslenghi emphasizes the performative aspect of the fairs and displays as political stages upon which the utopian projections of industry and technology sought to transform natural resources into potential products, citizens into consumers, and nations into networked and modernizing sites of agency. Rather than focus on the endeavors of one particular nation, Uslenghi significantly broadens previous studies by creating dialogues between host countries (France and the U.S.) and three Latin American nations (Argentina, Brazil and Mexico), all of which exemplify the struggles of modernization in complex and fascinating ways.

Chapter One, "Modern Vistas: Latin American Photography at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition," builds on the image of U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant and Brazilian Emperor Pedro II together starting the motor of American engineer George H. Corliss' steam engine. Uslenghi frames this invention as an emblem

of modern industrial progress, power, and design that fueled both the Centennial's exhibits and the fair's driving ethos, which favored representations of power devoid of any signs of labor. Stylistically transferring the palpable vibrations of technology to the written word in Canto X of his famous epic poem *O Guesa Errante*, Brazilian poet Joaquim de Sousa Andrade challenged the siren song of the Centennial fair's parade of progress in a scathing critique of Wall Street and American capitalism, demonstrating not only the extent to which technology was transforming modern life in the general sense, but also how writing could appropriate the styles and rhythms of modern life without endorsing its ideology. Although it lacked individual national pavilions, the fair invited and incorporated exhibits from Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, which made earnest efforts to render themselves legible within the networks of international display by constructing exhibits that offered "natural" visual progressions from raw materials and native craftworks to manufactured products. In the discussion of the Argentine *gaucho* statues to the lauded Brazilian and Mexican samples of raw materials, Uslenghi's book offers detailed close readings of individual displays that illustrated both the strengths and the contradictions of Latin American modernization. Displayed in the unique Centennial Photographic Hall, the wonderful images of Brazilian photographer Marc Ferrez (1843-1923) and the Portuguese-born Christiano Junior (1832-1902) are embedded in discussions about the status of photography as a way of ordering land and people while perceived as an unmediated embodiment of truth. Uslenghi reveals how Ferrez's focus on wild, inhospitable, and resistant Brazilian landscapes contrasted sharply with Junior's symmetrical representations of railways and other signs of Argentine industrial modernization, while the work of Mexican photographers Antiocho Cruces and Luis Campa bridged the *cartes-de-visite* that showcased the Mexican Porfirian elite to the famous *costumbrista* "Tipos Populares," which brought images of humble Mexican people to the curious gazes of public consumers. Intersecting with all of these works on exhibit was an underlying ethos of categorization and order that informed how the spectator could understand the world of late nineteenth-century culture.

Chapter Two, "Remnants of a Dream World: Latin American Pavilions at the Paris 1889 Exposition," reaches beyond the parameters of national identity and traces the mutual implications of Latin American and French aesthetic choices with respect to developments in modern architecture, art, and engineering. Following a detailed examination of the Eiffel Tower and its formal and social implications, Uslenghi explores the celebratory chronicles of Aurelia González de Castillo and José Martí, who viewed the tower's novel structure in allegorical terms as a dynamic expression of possibility for Latin American nations. The absence of formal government sponsorship by other European nations (which sidestepped the implications of celebrating the French revolution) created an "unprecedented opportunity for the new republics of the Ameri-

cas to achieve a central visibility," and no fewer than twelve Latin American countries fully participated through the construction of individual national pavilions to house comprehensive exhibits (105). There is a parallel, Uslenghi argues, between the strategic French displays of republican values and the efforts of Latin American nations to recast their own stories within the technological vocabulary of modern nationhood. She then explores in detail the Latin American architectural responses to the tower's design challenge--specifically, the national pavilions built for Mexico, Argentina and Brazil--all constructed at strategic distances from the exotic displays that merged with colonial values and European white supremacy. Drawing on both scholarly works and contemporary newspaper coverage of the exhibition, Uslenghi offers detailed close readings of the respective pavilions' exteriors and interiors, emphasizing the shared incongruities that resulted from the forcibly merged vocabularies of rational technology, artistic decoration, and developing industry, all blended to "inscribe utopian meanings onto the building materials of the industrial age" (123). The consequences of this fair and its simultaneous "mobilization of both modern and archaic emblems" resonated far beyond the scope of the events themselves and into the present era, offering a template through which to read both the uneven processes of development that have characterized Latin America, and the "encrustation of anachronisms, archaisms and ornaments, that renders them so symbolically rich" (137).

The third and final chapter shifts from an emphasis on visual and architectural displays to their critical reception by Latin American writers of the period. In "Cosmopolitan Itineraries: Modernity's Spectacle at the Paris 1900 Universal Exposition," Uslenghi argues that the travel narratives of Rubén Darío, Enrique Gómez Carrillo, Amado Nervo, and Manuel Ugarte--all permeated by the influences of early cinema, urban life, and the new modalities of seeing--reveal the mutual implications of visual technology and writing despite these authors' claims to the contrary. In a way that directly mimics cinematic effect, *modernista* chronicles reproduced the ongoing changes within urban life through an "incessant flow of images," oscillating between the panoramic/complete and the fragmentary, contradictory, and partial views of the constantly changing visual spectacle (176). Within this framework, the texts that were produced and circulated privileged not traditional, orderly narrative, but rather the "exhibit value" of the visual attraction that was introduced at the grounds of the Universal Exhibition. Thus emerged the newly mobile, fragmented, and fluctuating mode of viewing the modern urban landscape (199).

The many strengths of Uslenghi's ambitious and illuminating study can be summarized in terms of its methodology, analysis, and scope, which will appeal to scholarly readers spanning the disciplines of visual and material cultures as well as literary studies: the study's transdisciplinary lens, the close readings of multiple visual displays and literary texts, and the carefully constructed links between specific visual and textual products and broader national and international contexts. At times, the breadth of material in each

chapter can potentially overwhelm the central points, and the discussion can dwell on already well-trodden discussions about the ethos of world's fairs (e.g., the politics of display, visual phantasmagoria, commodity fetishism, Benjamin). However, neither of these minor concerns diminishes the importance of the book's fresh and novel explorations of the intersections of writing, visual display, and national identity, nor the implications that can be drawn about networked material cultures in late nineteenth-century Latin America.

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Trauma, Taboo and Truth Telling: Listening to Silences in Postdictatorship Argentina. By Nancy J. Gates-Madsen. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2016. 235 pages.

In the film *Un muro de silencio* (1993), Argentine producer and director Lita Stantic dramatizes the horrors of the last Argentine dictatorship by focusing not only on the events but also on the silences that surround the events. These silences protect the impunity of the crimes committed in the past and conceal the private battles and aesthetic dilemmas surrounding representation. Stantic's wall of silence, as a metaphor, is inhabited by images, voices, languages, and meanings left in parentheses, by loud secrets and the eloquence of what remains unsaid. Although in the post-dictatorship era we generally understand silence as the absence of narratives that give meaning to a past that refuses to be understood logically or coherently, silence can also be heard, in cinematic language, as a series of sounds and noises that can only be heard against silence itself. The practice of paying attention to silence and its manifestations is what Nancy J. Gates-Madsen proposes in *Trauma, Taboo and Truth Telling: Listening to Silences in Postdictatorship Argentina*, by pointing to the sound of silence or to the voices that silence other voices, and by asking about the role played by a particular type or instance of silence in a specific historical moment. There are two moments of the Argentine post-dictatorship period on which the study focuses. The first is the moment marked by impunity, after the laws of the *Obediencia Debida* and *Punto Final* and the issuing of presidential pardons. The second is the moment marked by the return to the model of responsibility that had characterized the first years of the Kirchner government, with the formulation of official memory policies from 2003 to 2015 and with the emergence of new subjects of memory (e.g., the generation of the children of the disappeared).

One of the central concerns in Gates-Madsen's study has to do with readers' expectations about testimonial narratives and with how to rethink silence and, especially, the capacity of silence to say something even about what has not been said. Closely related to the struggles for memory and justice, the book also suggests that silence is located in an interstice that cannot be reduced to oblivion

and that, paradoxically, sometimes embodies the key to both understanding and constructing the meaning of the past. This interstice is also inhabited by trauma, by the impossibility of representation, and by the destruction of subjectivity. Yet, it is also inhabited by the possibility of the reconstruction of the subject (as a witness) who, in addition, in order to articulate verbally a narrative about past events not only says but also expresses another truth: a truth that, for Gates-Madsen, lies in silence—an eloquent silence. The Argentine case allows for the exploration of the contrast between two types of silence: the one associated with the years of impunity of the 1990s, and the other virtually heard during the decade of the Kirchner administration. While the first is related to forgetting and impunity, the more recent era reveals the silences that are a constitutive part of struggles for memory. Silence is doubly embodied, Gates-Madsen proposes, in traumatic (and inexpressible) experience and in the political meanings that account for the difficulties of articulating certain truths (7)—or, to put it another way, the possibility of constructing other paradigms of truth.

The book's introduction elaborates a cultural map in which to locate memory struggles, focusing on the notion of silence either in terms of what has been muted, or even censored, or in terms of what testimonial narratives can never succeed in expressing. The six chapters that comprise the body of the study are organized into two parts: the first deals with the years of impunity and the second considers the aesthetic works of memory that often accompany the official memory policies in the new millennium. In the first chapter Gates-Madsen analyzes Eduardo Pavlovsky's *Paso de dos* (1990) and explores the torturer-victim relationship. The concept of *overt silence* is used here to suggest a double reading of silence and to underscore that silence might simultaneously symbolize agency and power (the will of remaining silent) and at the same time imply a reticence to talk about torture, and in particular sexual violence. Many of the discussions that aimed to dismantle the second type of silence occurred after 2010. This chronology might suggest that the 1990s were characterized (as exemplified in Pavlovsky's play) by an understanding of gender that conceals gender (and sexual issues) and by an interrogation of the past that exposes not only violence but also how violence was understood in the 1980s and 1990s.

In the second chapter, Gates-Madsen addresses the testimonial voice in Eric Stener Carlson's *I Remember Julia: Voices of the Disappeared* (1996) and, in particular, the "delegation" of the testimonial voice and the attempt to represent enforced disappearance through the testimonies of relatives and *compañeros* of the victims of State terrorism. The chapter explores the attempt to "remove from anonymity" one of the *desaparecidos* and, at the same time, studies the silences in the representation of Carlson to the extent that they are framed by narratives that fail to restore the missing voice. The testimonial record thus contrasts with both the image of human remains (Carlson worked as a volunteer for the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team) and the image of silhouettes in the Plaza de Mayo in its attempt to identify, name, or reconstruct

the story of the disappeared. Yet testimonial accounts seem to fail in recovering those stories and turn out to be intertwined with the silence surrounding the missing bodies and voices.

Chapter 3 considers further enforced disappearance, focusing on Juan José Saer's novel *La pesquisa* (1994), which is contrasted with *I Remember Julia*. Here Gates-Madsen reflects on the impact of the intermittent references to disappearance that interrupt the narration and shows how Saer underscores an aesthetics in which what becomes apparent is precisely the silence of an untold story. This chapter emphasizes the importance of silence in relation to the image of the silhouette and the emptiness of the silhouette as a metaphor for enforced disappearance. Gates-Madsen turns next to what she calls the "memory boom": Chapter 4 explores memory by focusing on the generation of children who were *appropriated* (illegally adopted) during the military dictatorship. The chapter discusses Elsa Osorio's novel *A veinte años, Luz* (1998) and the telenovela *Montecristo* (2006) and proposes a process (in relation to the silencing of identity) that evolves from Osorio to the TV series. Here, the discovery of concealed identities and covert violence (justified by alibi-narratives) cannot be reduced to the success of re-encounters or identity recovery. Instead, they account for the long-lasting effects that State terrorism had on the generation of the children of the disappeared. Gates-Madsen suggests that *A veinte años, Luz* and *Montecristo* represent clear cases of the recovery of identity. Many of the tensions, paradoxes, losses, and silences surrounding the appropriation of infants and children under the military dictatorship are outlined in these disparate cultural productions through both the stories they present and the moment of their appearance (i.e., at the end of the decade of impunity, in the case of Osorio's novel, and during decade when official memory policies had some success, in the case of the *telenovela*).

Through the analysis of Luisa Valenzuela's novel *La travesía* (2001) in Chapter 5, Gates-Madsen discusses silence and its eloquence in relation to trauma. While the centrality of the ambiguity of silence is apparent here, this chapter serves to think about the aesthetics of ellipses and of the unspoken as being more eloquent than language or narrative. Taking as the starting point the association H.I.J.O.S. and their struggle against silence and oblivion, the chapter reflects on the uses of silence not associated with amnesia. The reading of Valenzuela's text focuses on the emotional knowledge and the "somatic language" that can suggest that some silences do not imply forgetfulness or a failure of representation, but, on the contrary, play an important role in understanding traumatic events. The contrast between the representative and expressive instances of silence in the novel's protagonist serves to underscore the silences that conceal what the protagonist wants to suppress about the past and to highlight corporeal and nonverbal expressions of trauma. Rather than focusing on a dichotomy between discourse and silence, or between memory and forgetfulness, Gates-Madsen proposes that *La travesía* suggests that there is an "indefinite zone of somatic knowledge" and that there are silences

that, rather than muting, often incarnate (paradoxically) the very memory of the past.

Chapter 6, the book's final chapter, takes up Jonathan Perel's 2010 documentary *El predio*, which focuses on the ESMA, the former School of Mechanics of the Navy, which became a clandestine torture center during the dictatorship and was later redesigned as a site of memory. The chapter explores a series of tensions between the voices associated with official human rights policy and the silences locked within the memory site. Close-ups and fixed camera technique represent the former ESMA as a fragmented space that refuses an organizing logic or order. The author's analysis emphasizes visual and acoustic elements of the film (especially the absence of a voice-over and, thus, of interpretive clues for confronting the moving image) to highlight a new perspective that includes silence (and its ambiguities) as a mark of the impossibility of narrating the memory site. In contrast to some official narratives about memory sites, memory policies, and memory markets, the author points out, the film's importance lies in disassembling a singular interpretation of a horror, which continues to be inhabited by silences that cannot be undone.

In spite of a recurrent emphasis on complexity versus simplification, which sometimes derails the main argument, throughout the book Gates-Madsen presents the different layers of silence that inhabit the Argentine post-dictatorship (and post-dictatorships in general) and the different edges of silence as expressing disputes over meaning and tensions among the subjects of memory, social groups, and generations. Marked by the trauma of State-sponsored violence, these subjects of memory give an account of elements of meaning, of what was said and what remained unsaid. The author emphasizes that the difference between the cultural production from the years of impunity and from the years of truth and justice cannot be reduced to the difference between oblivion and memory, or between silence and narration, but is marked by a series of ellipses that occupies a central place within the labor of memory itself.

There are two aspects of *Trauma, Taboo, and Truth-Telling* that are worthy of special attention. First, the book's emphasis on the generation of the sons and daughters of the disappeared is an important contribution to the field. Even though there are many texts about memory that include examples of this new generation, Gates-Madsen's contributions lie in her focus on gestures such as the *escraches* (public shaming demonstrations) or the H.I.J.@.S organization in relation to truth and justice, and on cultural productions that re-position the first person "testimonial" in new subjects of memory. Nowadays, any discussion about the cultural aspects of Argentina's post-dictatorship era cannot ignore the transformations that the new generations have inserted into the labors of memory, the construction of images and narratives about the past. In this regard, the book's contribution lies also in thinking specifically about these new perspectives and focusing on expressions of silence. Secondly, Gates-Madsen makes an important contribution by situating the discussion about memory, truth, and silence di-

rectly within the national framework--rather than placing it in the ambiguous space of global studies, where comparative demands juxtapose different post-dictatorships and post-conflict societies, which depoliticize (precisely through the concept trauma) and disarticulate historical events and cultural productions that cannot be understood outside of their own political and domestic contexts. The title itself--*Trauma, Taboo and Truth-Telling: Listening to Silences in Postdictatorship Argentina*--demarcates the confines of the traumatic, by locating the ambivalence of the inexpressible in areas adjoining cultural demands and expectations (or even taboos) and, therefore, by re-situating trauma in a political scenario and competition for the hegemony of different truths and different memories. Within such disputes, silences play a role that, as Gates-Madsen very ably demonstrates, is worth rethinking.

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Invento, luego resisto: El Período Especial en Cuba como experiencia y metáfora (1990-2015). By Elzbieta Sklodowska. Santiago, Chile: Cuarto Propio, 2016. 494 pages.

It is by now conventional critical wisdom that the economic catastrophe wrought in everyday Cuban life of the 1990s by the Soviet withdrawal of support and the sudden disappearance of subsidized oil witnessed a parallel unraveling of ideological and cultural authority that generated new possibilities and forms of cultural and artistic expression. In the rapidly growing body of literary-cultural studies scholarship on Cuba's turn-of-the-millennium "Special Period," Elzbieta Sklodowska's contribution stands out for the bold reach and generic multiplicity of the primary materials it embraces, the depth of its close-readings of primary works and of related historical and sociological studies, and the magnitude and rigor of its critical documentation and dialogue with existing scholarship produced on and off the island. Other studies--including José Quiroga's *Cuban Palimpsests* (2005), Esther Whitfield's *Cuban Currency: The Dollar and "Special Period" Fiction* (2008), Ariana Hernández Reguant's collection *Cuba in the Special Period* (2009), Odette Casamayor-Cisneros's *Utopía, distopía, e ingravidez* (2012), and Guillermina De Ferrari's *Community and Culture in Post-Soviet Cuba* (2014)--have already alluded to the paradoxical dynamic between paucity and creativity that marks Cuban literature, film, music, or visual art following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Sklodowska would be the first to acknowledge the contributions of other scholars' work to her study, which places itself in productive dialogue with their research. But she singularizes her take on the concept "invention," as an articulatory mechanism among the "pléthora de discursos, prácticas y artefactos ... analizados" (21). "Invention," she argues, reveals itself both as a rhetorical manipulation reinforcing power structures and as a resistant "tactic" of everyday life (in Michel de Certeau's

sense of the phrase), by those without power, moves that include “toda clase de bricolajes, apaños, remiendos e improvisaciones” (21). Key to her usage of “invention” to characterize the period’s cultural production is Sklodowska’s affirmation of its self-referential, defamiliarizing substance and its propensity for satire, irony, and paradox that challenges facile interpretations. Sklodowska stands out among other literary-cultural *cubanólogos* in the convincing and meticulously supported argument that the metaphoric twists and turns of invention or re-invention, including exposing the limits of the concept itself, play out in conventional literary genres as well as in performances, testimonials, literary and cultural criticism, and material culture that recycles or repurposes ordinary things.

Focused on the metaphors of the Special Period, Chapter 1 unpacks debates about the legitimacy of the label as a meaningful cultural designation of the phrase that was originally coined by the state in 1990 as the “Special Period in Times of Peace” in order to characterize as exceptional and temporary an interval of extreme austerity of unknown duration. The chapter does far more than illuminate Sklodowska’s advocacy of the term’s viability as an epochal construct or to provide, through historical, economic, and sociological sources, a synthesis of the material deprivations experienced by Cuban citizens or the official and citizen measures that arose in response to those deprivations. Most compelling is Sklodowska’s analysis of the complex, sometimes contradictory ways of talking about and representing the open-ended crisis in both official and unofficial discourse; the resulting fissures in the Revolution’s ideological assumptions, futuristic promise, and presumed social safety net; the impact on perceptions of time and space from vacillations between a sense of imminent cataclysm and of transition toward something un-named; and the reappearance of racial or regional inequalities in the experience of deprivation. Through analyses of primary sources as diverse as official oratory or pamphlets, poems, short stories, popular songs, and photographic and literary testimonies, Sklodowska distills the multilayered structures of feeling of the epoch, ranging from the despair and frustration of lost illusions to manifestations of struggle, resistance, and critique.

Focused primarily on literature and literary-cultural criticism, Chapter 2 traces inventive responses to the material challenges to writing and publishing in the Special Period, which, Sklodowska argues, harvested durable positive consequences from deplorable conditions. These include: the adjustments in the book industry; the decentralization of some cultural institutions; the challenge posed by publishing abroad and its implicit market ethic; the search for alternative cultural spaces; the *destape* or stripping of longstanding thematic taboos such as sexuality, gender, and race; the proliferation of destabilizing street language and its incorporation into literary work; the innovations in literary historiography embodied in new anthologies and generational paradigms; and the search for new standards of literary scholarship and criticism. Sklodowska’s discussion of the pursuit of new scholarly and critical standards is grounded in a rigorous bibliographical review of the central debates

in Cuban literary scholarship, which, together with the discussion in Chapter 1, is an excellent resource for readers engaged in literary-cultural scholarship on contemporary Cuba.

Together with Chapter 6, Chapters 3 and 4 offer the book’s most striking analytical contributions. In the third and fourth chapters, Sklodowska addresses the experience and inventive representation of hunger as a central semantic axis of Special Period public discourse and artistic expression. Chapter 3 juxtaposes an overview of state austerity strategies, such as serial reconfigurations of the rationing system and its *libreta*, with an analysis of the culinary imaginary crafted through official pronouncements, scarcity-inspired ingredient substitutions in state sponsored cooking pamphlets, cookbooks, or TV shows (e.g., Nitza Villapol’s long-running show), and the invocation of culturalist national culinary traditions as compensations for the scarcity of food. Chapter 4 counterpoints these official rhetorical maneuvers to conjure up sustenance out of hunger through close readings of fiction, essays, plays, an artistic installation, and a video short that unmask the incongruities in state culinary discourse through hyperbolic reiteration, satire, irony, self-reflexivity, and intertextuality with earlier renditions of culinary thematics in Cuban literature.

Chapter 5 focuses on the intersections of the discourse of scarcity with that of gender in a period that witnessed the paradoxical reemergence of traditional gender roles in public discourse along with an upsurge in literary writing by women. Within the context of the extreme precariousness that designated Cuban women as the domestic overseers-in-chief of family and community material and spiritual survival, and based on analyses of poetry, fiction, and performance pieces primarily by women, Sklodowska traces a complex and diverse thematic network. She highlights the tensions among survival, ethics, and the revolutionary legacy, embodied, for example, in the ambivalent representation of the *jinetera* (prostitute or hustler); the creative process as a resistant hedge against material decline forged from dearth itself; the possibilities of humanity or creativity in conditions of abjection; and the search through innovative verbal and performative strategies for an artistic language capable of representing such experience.

Chapter 6 concludes the book with a fascinating inquiry into what Sklodowska designates as the material archive or legacy of the Special Period--that is, the recycled or repurposed objects of everyday life conjured up in the face of want and their representations in public discourse and artistic genres. Throughout the book, and especially here in Chapter 6, she works against an international and local propensity to folklorize or exoticize Cuba in the service of multiple ideologies. Instead, drawing on theorists of material culture from multiple disciplines, Sklodowska contextualizes these objects and their artistic representations to tease out their implications for debates about modernity, anti-modernity, or alternative modernity related to the Cuban Revolution; their potential lessons for twenty-first-century economic and environmental sustainability; and their unmasking, for example, in a video short of Havana

dumpster-divers, of inequalities and poverty rarely acknowledged by the Cuban state.

The book's 75-page bibliography and extensive endnotes embody a rigor of documentation and archival research increasingly rare in contemporary scholarship. Sklodowska also distills concepts from a stunning array of cultural theory at the service of intricate, persuasive arguments harvested from her own impressive intellectual repertoire, deep knowledge of Cuba, and engagement with a treasure of primary material. Essential reading for scholars of contemporary Cuban literary, artistic, and material culture at every level and of likely interest to other Latin Americanists as well, *Invento, luego resisto* constitutes an archive of Special Period cultural expression and multi-disciplinary scholarship that, in a future edition (or perhaps an English translation), could benefit from an index, whose absence here, one assumes, was determined by the publishers, rather than by the author.

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Literature and "Interregnum": Globalization, War, and the Crisis of Sovereignty in Latin America. By Patrick Dove. Albany: SUNY Press, 2016. 330 pages.

How are we to understand the complex times of "global war" and rampant neoliberalism in which we are living and the place of literature within them? This is the broad and difficult question that Patrick Dove's *Literature and "Interregnum": Globalization, War, and the Crisis of Sovereignty in Latin America* tackles with critical and theoretical acumen. Following Antonio Gramsci's general logic that the old order of modernity (linked to the state, the nation, and the national popular) is dying but has not yet given rise to new, easily identifiable iterations of sovereign power, Dove argues that we are currently living in a time of "interregnum": "an in-between time that constitutes neither a simple continuation of modernity nor a full break with its ordering principles" (265). While the familiar constructs of political modernity such as "state," "nation," and "people" continue to matter in the world today and have not by any means disappeared completely, the subjugation of everyone and everything to the logics of global capital have brought the very idea of sovereignty into crisis and, at the same time, have given rise to new forms of violence. If Lenin and Gramsci saw interregnum as a kind of articulation point within history that could potentially culminate in revolutionary change, Dove is not so optimistic on this matter. Instead, he thinks of interregnum as a protracted, uncertain period in which, in the shadow of the specter of familiar sovereign expressions of power (e.g., wars among nations, civil conflicts, bloody dictatorships), new forms of power and violence interwoven with the state but also disconnected from it (e.g., narcotrafficking, human trafficking, etc.) are now challenging long-held "distinctions be-

tween inside and outside, law and criminality, order and crisis, war and politics" (265).

In this study, Dove—who has previously reflected on the 1970s and 1980s dictatorships and their aftermath (e.g., forms of trauma, struggles for justice, construction of historical memory) and on the aftermath of the Cold War in Latin America—ventures beyond the debates in memory studies to consider and raise questions about the place of literature and critical thought in what might be called "post-transitional" Latin America. Perhaps his boldest hypothesis is that the current moment of interregnum "announces the exhaustion of the modern idea of 'literature,' or the aesthetic ideology of literature that prevailed from the Romantics through the rise of *testimonio* literature in Latin America during the 1980s and '90s" (2). Dove bases this claim not so much on the idea that literature has abandoned familiar generic forms, devices, or modes, but rather on the idea that literature has lost its clout as an autonomous sphere of reflection through which it was once possible (in the conceptualization of thinkers such as Echeverría or Rodó) to intervene critically in politics, religion, or the economy without running the risk of those spheres contaminating literature—it is, of course, debatable whether this was ever the case. Thinking with—and sometimes even against—critics such as Josefina Ludmer, Fredric Jameson, Beatriz Sarlo, and others, Dove understands literature to be but one more sphere that has become enmeshed within and subject to the forces of the market. Given this bleak state of affairs, he considers the strategies Latin American writers have deployed to preserve spaces for critical thought. Dove focuses on recent works by several well-known authors from Chile and Argentina—Marcelo Cohen, César Aira, Diamela Eltit, Sergio Chejfec, and Roberto Bolaño—and strives to understand the diverse poetics and concerns to which the current time of interregnum and loss of literary autonomy has given birth.

With increasing intensity, the book's five chapters call attention to the ways in which Southern Cone literature announces, inhabits, and challenges interregnum. Chapter 1 offers an analysis of Argentine author Marcelo Cohen's novel *El oído absoluto* (1989) as a text that, like a harbinger, announces the dawn of interregnum even before Carlos Menem would subject Argentina to painful neoliberal austerity measures in the 1990s. Cohen pens a postmodern literary world, the fictive city of Lorelei, in which utopian horizons have disappeared, contestatory politics is impossible, bodies are controlled biopolitically, and consumerism reigns. Politics is reduced to sound-bites and cheap neopopulism, and literature can no longer lay claim to any redemptive quality that might save a doomed world from destruction. Dove proposes that in Cohen's case literature parodies and reveals the devastation, fully aware that "it cannot provide answers or resolutions" (69), and that it treads on tenuous ground.

Chapter 2 looks at César Aira's novel *La villa* (2001), which is set in a *villa miseria*, an Argentine shantytown nestled in the heart of Buenos Aires. In this work, when a crime is committed, the truth about that crime matters less than the way in which the media ex-

plot the crime for its sensationalistic newsworthiness. The hypermediatized world that *La villa* depicts presents a post-truth reality in which all sense seems to be lost. Yet, Dove argues that Aira's writing—which has been criticized by some commentators as catering to the market—actually opens a space for disrupting the current regime of sense. As Dove sees it, on the one hand, Aira's work does not propose an easy way out of the current state of affairs, but, on the other, it does not foreclose the possibility of alternative temporalities or modes of being. In his excellent close reading of a passage from Aira's novel, Dove shows that, although all hope might appear to be lost in the time of interregnum, “for the time being” (*mientras tanto*) we are alive (115-18). Amidst bleakness, this temporal figuration—*mientras tanto*—becomes one possible site in Aira from which to “think, act in the world, and relate to one another” (119).

Chapters 3 and 4 look at two novels that deal with the shift from industrial capitalism (characterized by factories and organized unions) to a post-Fordist service economy characterized by the precariousness of labor: Chilean writer Diamela Eltit's *Mano de obra* (2002) and Argentine writer Sergio Chejfec's *Boca de lobo* (2000). At stake in these analyses is the ahistoricity of the present: the neoliberal moment as a time felt and experienced as one in which the intense ideological conflicts and organized resistance of the past no longer make sense. While Chejfec's novel hinges on the metaphor of the factory as *ruin*, Eltit's novel explores the biopolitical effects of the *supermercado* (an apt metaphor) on the bodies of workers who would sooner turn against one another rather than act in solidarity to defend their rights. The discontinuity between earlier historical moments (the effervescent and politically contentious 1960s and 1970s or even the 1920s in which labor movements began to form) and the current time of neoliberal interregnum is illustrated, in particular, in Eltit's novel through the use of “chapter headings . . . taken from the titles of working-class political and cultural journals from the early twentieth century, and [that] allude back to key sites and moments of conflict between labor and capital” (160). Dove reads Eltit's floating citations of the past, which stand in stark contrast to the workers' devastated lives in the present, as a call to *awaken* to the past. What remains ambiguous, however, is exactly what Eltit hopes readers will awaken to. Is her call to awaken a nostalgic desire to revive a past in which workers fought constructively for their rights? Or is her hope that readers simply awaken to see and understand the void that is the present?

Chapter 5, on Bolaño's *2666* (2004), serves to culminate and refocus the concerns that Dove develops throughout the book. He is attracted not only to how Bolaño's fictionalization of Ciudad Juárez stages the symptomatic effects of globalization, capital, and their intertwinement with global war, but also to the ways in which Bolaño's novel ironically treats the death of the avant-garde and of art's ability, in general, to provide “a compensatory ‘outside’ for modernity and its history of destruction” (259). Bolaño's novel, we might say, functions as a fictive mirror of Dove's critical act, or vice versa: “The novel registers how two of the foundational discourses

of modernity—the academic and literary institutional determination of literature, and the political logic of sovereignty—have fallen into crisis today” (234).

A critique of the vanguard tradition, which for Dove loses sense in the time of interregnum, runs through the book like something of a subplot, particularly in Chapters 3 and 5. Dove returns several times to the well-known polemic, from the early 2000s, between French-Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard and Chilean philosopher Willy Thayer regarding how to read Chile's “Escena de Avanzada,” the anti-Pinochet, neo-avant garde art scene of the 1980s. If Richard suggested that, for the Avanzada, the *fragment* could serve both as a site of disruption of the dictatorial, neoliberal order and as a site from which to think “a new way of being in common that would renounce the absolutist claims found in both the Latin American Left of the 1960s and the authoritarian traditionalist responses of the Right” (129), Willy Thayer, writing from a post-9/11 vantage point, took a more skeptical approach to (neo)avant-garde expressions. Given that all critical spaces and artistic practices are now subsumed within the logic of capital, Thayer argued that “we can no longer expect critique to generate the sufficient conditions for social transformation or revolution” (89). In Thayer (as in Bolaño), Dove finds a kindred voice that urges him to approach literature's role in the time of interregnum with caution. He is unwilling to place faith in cataclysmic events or grandiose gestures that might offer a way out; yet, at the same time, he does not lose faith entirely in literature. In the end, he thinks that literature's work with language that “cannot be reduced to instrumental or communicative rationales” might, in the best of cases, usefully question the semiotics of violence and sovereign power even when it cannot manage to see beyond them (270, 269).

Dove's book should take a prominent place within a series of recent reflections by Latin American and Latin Americanist scholars, who, each in her or his own way, seek to think a history of the present. While Jean Franco speaks of “cruel modernity,” other scholars such as the Mexican intellectual Rosana Reguillo and the Argentine feminist anthropologist Rita Segato have respectively coined terms such as “paralegality” and “second reality” to explain contexts in which modern political forms break down and sovereign power metastasizes in shadowy and insidious ways across the entirety of social life (e.g., as narcoviolence, etc.) (263). Dove's work dialogues closely with Reguillo and Segato, but also calls to mind studies—for example, Pilar Calveiro's *Violencias de Estado: la guerra antiterrorista y la guerra contra el crimen como medios de control global* (2012)—that move beyond the dictatorships of the 1970s and '80s and the problem of “memory” to explore new forms of violence that have become dispersed, are exercised from the shadows, and are no longer solely linked to the state. Dove's interdisciplinary and philosophically-dense work will appeal to specialists interested in globalization, neoliberalism, violence, literature, and the state of critical thought in Latin America. *Literature and “Interregnum”*: *Globalization, War, and the Crisis of Sovereignty in Latin America* is

a pioneering, even polemical, work that marks an inflection point in Latin American literary and cultural studies and, for that reason, should be essential reading for all Latin Americanists.

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The Limits of Identity: Poetics and Politics in Latin America. By Charles Hatfield. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2015. 158 pages.

Charles Hatfield's *The Limits of Identity* is a bold and concise book that seeks to build a critique of what he considers to be the "repudiation not of a bad universal but of anti-universalism writ large" present in the intellectual tradition of Latin Americanism, from José Martí to John Beverley. Although one could imagine quite a lengthy version of this argument, Hatfield opts for a shorter (the text runs just over 100 pages) and laser-focused discussion developed over four brief chapters, each with a specific conceptual focus. Hatfield's theoretical sources are drawn from critics of identity in the field of American Studies (most notably the work of Walter Benn Michaels), and he is, of course, also in dialogue with young Latin Americanist scholars (e.g., Abraham Acosta, Emilio Sauri) who have addressed different ways that the impasse of identity (or illiteracy as studied by Acosta) has informed the understanding of Latin American modernity.

In Chapter 1, "Culture," Hatfield traces the nineteenth-century roots of anti-universalism, with a focus on Martí's *Nuestra América* and in polemical dialogue with Balibar's argument about universalism as a basis of racism. In particular, Hatfield argues that "anti-universalist cultural polemics cannot function without race" (27), against the grain of Martí's own critique of racialization. Chapter 2, "Beliefs," argues, in a discussion of Rodó and, to a lesser extent, Rodolfo Kusch, that *Arielismo* ultimately locates his claim that the essence of Latin America lies in its ideals concerning notions of race, heritage, and the body. This idea, Hatfield contends, opens the door to anti-universalist arguments about the originality of Latin American thinking that are present in thinkers such as Leopoldo Zea and Rodolfo Kusch.

Chapter 3, "Meaning," makes a temporal and thematic leap. Here, the author presents a critique of the idea of the specificity of Latin American literature, tracing a line of argument from Jorge Luis Borges, to Octavio Paz, to Roberto Fernández Retamar, to Antonio Cornejo Polar. Hatfield seems to be targeting a circular logic through which a specific literature leads to the creation of a specific criticism, which, in turn, theorizes specificity. Chapter 4, "Memory," works with a wide array of writers (from Eduardo Galeano and Guillermo Bonfil Batalla to José Rabasa and Carmen Boullosa) to put into question the idea that Latin America is something to be remembered as such and the heightening of notions of identity that they bring. The book concludes with a short coda in which the author

debates John Beverley's *Latin Americanism after 9/11*, criticizing its "renewed commitment to identitarianism" (109).

The Limits of Identity has both the strengths and the shortcomings of a concise polemical book. There is indeed something salutary in putting into critical question the focus on identity and on specificity that has informed traditions of Latin Americanism across the board. Insofar as Latin Americanism--both in its philosophical dimension and in its institutional and scholarly practices--has been tied to practices of the political Left, anti-universalism and identity are categories that conflict directly with notions of solidarity and consciousness understood to be necessary for overcoming political and economic disparities (Michaels has written extensively about this topic). At its strongest, Hatfield's study provides provocative readings of core texts (e.g., Martí's *Nuestra América*, Rodó's *Ariel*, and Borges's "Pierre Menard, autor del Quijote")—critical analyses that will interest scholarly readers engaged with those works. And, while he would have strengthened the study by making additional references to more scholars, with this project Hatfield situates himself among some of the most exciting Latin Americanists in the U.S. (e.g., Joshua Lund, who develops timely critiques of notions of race, identity, and subalternity, as well as Acosta).

Yet, the book's brevity naturally brings with it a number of constraints. Moreover, some readers might find the selection of texts for discussion somewhat arbitrary or idiosyncratic by leaving aside other works that could have also problematized the book's argument. For instance, if the author had chosen to insert substantive discussion of Alfonso Reyes (to fill in the temporal gap between Rodó and Borges), the study could have noted that the balance between Latin America's specificity and the celebration of universalism in his writing presents more complexity than is suggested by the categorical notion of anti-universalism advanced in *The Limits of Identity*. Indeed, though Reyes wrote extensively about the idea of Latin America, as well as about universalism (i.e., the universalism of Goethean poetics and Greco-Latin culture), he is cited only in passing as a descendant of Rodó, even though in some of his late works (e.g., "Notas sobre la inteligencia americana") he proposes that Latin American specificity is in fact built on the possibility that Latin America can be more universal than Europe because it can place Western tradition in dialogue with its own traditions. Moreover, since Reyes's universalism was one of the targets of Fernández Retamar's literary theory and also influenced Borges's ideas about literature (cf. Chapter 3), more attention to his work could strengthen further the very genealogy established by the study. A more extensive exploration of the book's topic might also include other thinkers who have challenged identity as a structure of power (e.g., Roger Bartra), or those who have addressed the question of Latin American Marxism, whose trajectory, arguably, is closely related to the very subject of study. In addition, while Beverley's work (addressed in the book's coda) is of undeniable importance, one might consider as well other critics who do not advocate a return to identitarianism when discussing the idea of Latin America (e.g.,

Jorge Volpi, Josefina Ludmer). Nonetheless, while the restrictions imposed by the reduced scope of the case studies limit what the book is able to achieve, the project's intelligence and ambition are evident and notable.

The Limits of Identity is the type of book that successfully challenges the conceptual underpinnings of Latin Americanist ideology, and, as such, it is timely and astute. It lays a solid foundation for other readers and scholars to take the challenge further by considering

a wider corpus of materials that could expand its polemical potential. This is an important book and worthwhile reading for scholars in the Latin American field; it is a project that also calls attention to a scholar whose work one should read carefully in the future.

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