
Patricia L. Swier and Julia Riordan-Goncalves, editors. *Dictatorships in the Hispanic World. Transatlantic and Transnational Perspectives*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson UP, 2013. 352 p.

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This volume collects twelve articles that address the direct or indirect influence of totalitarian political systems on the cultural production of Hispanic nations. Different artistic and literary disciplines are included: visual arts, novel, poetry, film and even puppet theater. The book denounces many forms of damage inflicted by dictatorships in Hispanic societies, including assassination, torture, gender violence, censorship and political corruption. This multilayered approach shows the wide cultural variety existing in the Hispanic world and demonstrates the inexhaustible power of resistance of art and literature against totalitarianism.

This wide range of focus comes with a price. Dictatorships in the Hispanic world have many different faces, but not all of the articles include enough background information to understand their specific idiosyncrasies. Moreover, the diverse connections between the works analyzed and Hispanic dictatorships are not always clearly stated, although some essays focus on a period before the dictatorships in question began, while others treat exile or democratic reconstruction. Finally, a handful fails to justify connections among the texts selected for analysis.

A number of the studies shed light on genres usually ignored by literary and cultural critics. Such is the case for the first article, "Feminine voices of resistance against dictatorships" by Ana Corbalan. Her excellent contribution focuses on two different female prison narratives under a dictatorial regime, *Desde la noche y la niebla* (Juana Doña, 1978), about the experiences of a political prisoner in Francisco Franco's Spain, and *Fragmentos de la memoria* (Margarita Drago, 2009) describing an Argentinian women's prison during Rafael Videla's military dictatorship. Both texts are presented as testimonies, not so much as literary artifacts. Using this fresh approach, Corbalán describes the different strategies of denunciation in both and explains the role of memory in their composition. The article presents a compelling analysis of the role of self-censorship in these prison narratives, which depict their protagonists as heroines devoid of negative traits for the sake of ideological effectiveness.

This volume also illuminates critical works on literary fiction. Of particular interest is Irene Gómez Castellano's essay about two classics in twentieth century peninsular literature, *Nada* (Carmen Laforet, 1944) and *La*

plaça del diamant (Mercedes Salisachs, 1962). Both novels written by women launched indirect attacks on Franco's dictatorship. The article consists of a terse and insightful analysis centered on specific topics. *Nada* is studied through its imagery of hunger, a common trait in postwar Spain, and is read as a symbol of political, cultural and sexual repression. *La plaça del diamant* is interpreted via its images of parasite-ridden decaying flesh as a commentary on the Spanish Second Republic, whose failure would give way to forty years of military dictatorship.

Reinaldo Arenas became a world icon after the opening of a film based on his autobiography in 2000. Rafael Ocasio's "Queering the Cuban Exile" attempts to understand Arenas's literature by researching his role as a Cuban refugee in the United States. Ocasio, who was a personal friend of Arenas, is able to give a first-hand account of the writer's exploits in New York, beginning with his ambivalent relationship with the critic Angel Rama, an experience which opened the way to Arenas's conscious decision to sexualize his own literary persona in his novel *Before Night Falls*. This article offers poignant testimony of his literary and personal goals and values.

The politics of Cuban art in Castro's dictatorship is the topic of "The World Within the Island: The International Projection of Cuban Artists's Books and Prints: 1985-2009," authored by Ana León Tavora. The title refers to an international exhibition presenting the work of some Cuban artists during the *Periodo Especial* on the island. This exhibition offered several meaningful examples of political resistance in Cuba through art and literature. Tavora is able to construct an insider description of the toils and repression suffered by Cuban artists. Some of the works studied are pieces by Ana Mendieta, Rolando Estévez, Senel Paz, Sandra Ramos, Danilo Moreno and Yván and Joan Capote.

"Nostalgia, Memory and Politics in Chilean Documentaries of Return" by Antonio Traverso is probably the most perceptive example of film analysis here. Traverso defines the category of "documentary of return" as a non-fiction film focusing on individuals coming back to a site of disaster where they previously dwelled. He studies five documentaries of Chilean exiles trying to reconstruct their lives by returning to their country after or during the Gustavo Pinochet dictatorship. Traverso interprets the exiles's emotional reactions through the concept of nostalgia, in some cases presented just as an evocative emotion focused on the past, and in others as a powerful tool to build the future.

A dictatorial regime impacts millions of lives in ways that are often unforeseen or overlooked. A general theory of autocracy is an impossible task, but it is always essential to keep exploring the dark alleys of institutional crime. *Dictatorships in the Spanish World* is an academic collage that combines

studies of canonical works seen under new perspectives with topics often considered marginal. The more tangential or unusual the approach, the more illuminating it can be.

Thomas Szende. *The Foreign Language Appropriation Conundrum: Micro Realities & Macro Dynamics*. Brussels: P.I.E. Peter Lang, 2016. 276 p.

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In *The Foreign Language Appropriation Conundrum*, Thomas Szende addresses critical issues of foreign- and second-language teaching in our globalized world of the twenty-first century. Clearly passionate about language teaching, he takes care to position concerns about classroom practices and the increasing reliance on technology (called “micro realities”) in relation to the myriad external cultural, political, and institutional forces (“macro dynamics”) that influence attitudes toward language learning. At a time when the legitimacy of foreign languages as an academic endeavor in the United States is being challenged and dismissed as mere “skill building” by those who make critical decisions regarding core curriculum at state universities and colleges, Szende’s study is a welcome contribution to the debate on the importance of multilingualism in our globalized society.

His central argument is that language is not separate from culture. He first argues that “the plurality of language and culture is part of the dynamics of humanity” (13) and continues to observe that language teaching “is to fully enter into all that defines language as a socially appropriate tool” and that it reflects the society in which it is spoken (21). Teaching a foreign language, then, means to broaden the horizons of language learners, as well as to guide them toward being able to move beyond the boundaries of their native language and culture as they learn to “see the world through the lens of the Other and thus to see themselves more clearly” (42).

Szende’s respect for languages and cultures, especially those from marginalized or non-dominant communities of speakers, shines through in his considerations about the relative status of local and imposed languages in former colonies. Repeatedly, he points out the importance of “political, economic, cultural, and other power[s]” that determine the value assigned to a particular language (38). In this context, he expresses legitimate concern about the linguistic hegemony of English brought about by globalization, as well as to the migrations of peoples due to forces of globalization and war. He suggests that migration, its “linguistic consequences,” and the dichotomy of disrespect by the host culture for unskilled, uneducated migrants