

explaining Lezama's text or ideas. Part Two of the book is an attempt to uncover those murmurs and scribbles in a selection of Lezama's writings. In my view this project succeeds for at least two reasons. First, after Part One the reader should be aware of why Christianity and politics are so central and the readings in Part Two follow these considerations very clearly. Second, borrowing key examples from Lezama's early essays, late poetry, *Paradiso* and *Oppiano Licario*, Rodríguez Matos chooses to examine very diverse registers of Lezama's texts: philosophical speculations, tropes, individual objects, plot sequences from his novels, characters, marks on the page, style, etc. This shows how the "writing of the formless" emerges at various levels and in different modalities. I cannot comment on these readings in detail, but they follow a general principle: to show that Lezama's very own religiosity and understanding of poetry amount to a withdrawal from the grand narratives of legitimation of religion, humanism, art and literature in modernity. However, as Rodríguez Matos argues, such withdrawal should not be understood as an "alternative" mode of politics; rather, it intimates an encounter with a "something" that cannot be grasped or subsumed under any form of politics. The way to understand this, as Rodríguez Matos proposes, is through a *radical* engagement with Lezama's Christianity – to look attentively at Lezama's own, "singular" (155), unique, and untranslatable (writing of) Christianity. Penetrating into this singularity reveals how Lezama's writing discloses the constitutive mismatch with respect to the totalizing aspirations of (any) politics. Reading into this fissure lets us glimpse at the non-masterable, formless excess lying before and beyond politics.

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SAMUEL STEINBERG. *Photopoetics at Tlatelolco: Afterimages of Mexico, 1968*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016. 253 pp.

It is at best a cliché to afford the year 1968 a unique place in any examination of the global horizon of twentieth-century politics and culture. Scholarship about Mexico has long considered this year an especially central one, and not without reason. On the fall of that year, the single-party Mexican state – ruled by the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, or PRI – sponsored the first Olympics celebrated anywhere in the developing world, in the midst of a profound crisis of its legitimacy that had caused significant unrest at least through its preceding summer.

Perhaps the single most infamous event associated with this context is the state-sponsored shooting of protesting students that took place in a

housing complex on the night of October 2, 1968, ten days before the Olympics began. Widely known by the name of its location – Tlatelolco, itself the name of an Aztec-era site over whose ruins the modernist complex was built in the early 1960s – this event has been at the center of debates about the recent evolution of Mexican culture and politics. Long excluded from the official cultural history of Mexico yet memorialized across multiple other cultural registers, the shooting is typically described as the primary catalyst behind the definitive crisis of the PRI's rule and a breakdown of its single-party apparatus during the 1970s and 1980s, what many scholars have characterized, often questionably, as a progressive democratization of Mexico's political horizon. Culturally, Tlatelolco is regarded as a watershed event that signaled the end of the state's totalizing control over Mexico's cultural landscape and announced a series of decisive departures away from such an environment.

Set against the backdrop of this historiography, Samuel Steinberg's *Photopoetics at Tlatelolco* stands out on account of its bold attempt to challenge many of 1968's central assumptions. Indeed, Steinberg's central contribution is to resist the hermeneutical closure on which much of the conventional historiography of Tlatelolco is premised. The author presents his argument not as a chronologically organized or positivist one, but precisely as a "selective account," which "hopes to serve as a corrective to the archival madness that [he examines] symptomatically throughout the study" (88). Over the course of its six chapters, the book skillfully ties together insightful analyses of film, photography and literature related, in a broad sense, to Tlatelolco.

Photopoetics at Tlatelolco's first few chapters provide close readings of fundamental works directly tied to various dimensions of the memory of October 2: Elena Poniatowska's literary and photographic *testimonio* entitled *La noche de Tlatelolco* (1971), a narrative of the events positioned from within the night itself; key writings by Carlos Monsiváis and Octavio Paz, which reflect on the event's resonance on multiple levels; and Jorge Fons's film *Rojo amanecer* (1989), which fictionalizes the events of the shootings two decades after they occurred.

While many of these works are well known to students of Mexican culture, Steinberg's readings run consistently and persuasively against the grain of their established interpretations. In the case of Poniatowska's work, for instance, Steinberg argues that both the title of this work and its narrative structure, which intersperses testimonies with the photographic image, reveal "the photopoetic act that rules [their conception], the citation that renders legible 1968, but legible only in the moment of its foreclosure" (88). When contrasting this form of photographic legibility of Tlatelolco to *Rojo amanecer's* cinematic relationship to the student shootings, Steinberg

argues that the film provides “a kind of exorcism” of the tragic night’s haunting photographic image. An attempt deeply ingrained in the form and function of the cinematic medium, the film, Steinberg claims, aims to transcend Tlatelolco’s presence yet falls just short of providing any kind of conventional closure for it (118).

The parts of Steinberg’s constellation sketched out in the final chapters of his book come to include works by contemporary artist Francys Alÿs and writer Jorge Volpi, pieces whose stakes are more decisively situated in an alleged “post-1968” era. Here as well, Steinberg argues, Tlatelolco’s resonance operates across registers of much longer duration, and in seemingly less direct but no less powerful ways, essentially calling the viability of such a periodization into question. He demonstrates how Volpi’s *El fin de la locura* (2003), a novel that narrates its protagonist’s disillusionment with the emancipatory potential of experimental culture and politics articulated during the 1960s, distances itself from, yet remains tied to, a certain belief in Tlatelolco’s emancipatory potential, a belief traced back to the first archival imaginations of the shootings (166). In a similar vein, Steinberg argues that Francys Alÿs’s *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002), a collective action organized in the outskirts of Lima, Peru, whose participants collectively shoveled away a layer of a giant dune, belongs too within a dispersed, rhizomatic field of resonance of the event itself, one similarly premised on the continued viability of collective action as a political gesture (192).

Photopoetics at Tlatelolco characterizes Tlatelolco less as a historically resolved event committed to the archival record or teleologically related to progressive democratization on any clear level, and more as a constellation of possibilities, contradictions and tensions that are both fundamentally unresolved and especially urgent in light of the current political crises defining Mexico: the PRI’s recent return to power, the breakdown of Mexico’s state apparatus vis-à-vis the political economy of the global drug trade, and the structural dislocation that characterizes culture-making in the neoliberal era. As such, it is both a fundamental addition to the literature on Mexican cultural and political history and a powerful commentary on the interrelation between culture and politics in a much broader sense.

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