

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Cultures of Authoritarianism and Resistance in Mexico and Brazil

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This essay reviews the following works:

Securing Sex: Morality and Repression in the Making of Cold War Brazil. By Benjamin A. Cowan. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 311. \$34.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781469627502.

Contracultura: Alternative Arts and Social Transformation in Authoritarian Brazil. By Christopher Dunn. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. xi + 251. \$29.95 paperback. ISBN: 9781469628516.

Hotel Mexico: Dwelling on the '68 Movement. By George F. Flaherty. Oakland: University of California Press, 2016. Pp. ix + 299. \$34.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780520291072.

Speaking of Flowers: Student Movements and the Making and Remembering of 1968 in Military Brazil. By Victoria Langland. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 307. \$28.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780822353126.

Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture during the Long Sixties. By Jaime M. Pensado. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 213. \$32.00 paperback. ISBN: 9780804797252.

A Persistent Revolution: History, Nationalism, and Politics in Mexico since 1968. By Randal Sheppard. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016. Pp. vii + 359. \$39.95 paperback. ISBN: 9780826358370.

In both public memory and scholarly literature, “1968” serves as a metonym for the social protests, countercultural movements, and state repression that punctuated the long 1960s. As in Paris and Washington, DC, young people took to the streets of Latin American cities, including Montevideo, Santiago de Chile, and Guayaquil, to protest imperialism, authoritarianism, and the lack of economic opportunity. The largest demonstrations surfaced in Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro and ended with a crescendo of state repression in the fall of 1968. In the historiographies of Mexico and Brazil, the year has marked a watershed for either democratic opening (in the case of Mexico) or increased repression (in the case of Brazil). However, recent scholarship brings new questions, protagonists, and periodizations to the study of both authoritarianism and resistance, providing the opportunity to reconsider the broader significance of 1968.

The conditions that gave rise to 1968 in Mexico City or Rio de Janeiro were not so distinct from those in Paris or Washington, DC. Effervescent student cultures emerged in cities where child-centered state policies and mass media had cultivated new subjectivities and behaviors.¹ Over the course of a few decades, Mexico and Brazil transformed from predominantly rural to predominantly urban countries. Cities swelled as industrialization offered new employment opportunities and roads connected the countryside to

¹ Mary Kay Vaughan, *Portrait of a Young Painter: Pepe Zúñiga and Mexico City's Rebel Generation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

burgeoning urban centers. Expanded public health services and medical advances lowered infant mortality, contributing to rapidly growing populations. Both countries witnessed the rise of mass politics with the creation of broad-based corporatist organizations in the 1930s. Brazilian and Mexican leaders also invested in social welfare, public housing, and universities. Young people's political expectations were further informed by the popularization of Marxist thought, the inspiration of the Cuban Revolution, and the hemispheric circulation of films and music. The reviewed books attend to these global and regional congruencies, while avoiding mimetic arguments of a shared "language of dissent."² These nationally grounded histories instead underscore that while Latin American leaders and students were informed by transnational ideas and trends, they responded to local concerns and politics.

Victoria Langland expertly treats the Brazilian experience of 1968 in her book *Speaking of Flowers*. By focusing on the cultural politics of memory, her work complicates conventional narratives of the Brazilian student movement, which tend to center on the events of that year. By contrast, Langland examines how 1968 "swelled beyond the bounds of a temporal marker to become a broadly powerful and contested memory of massive anti-regime student protest" (171). Oral interviews with former student activists led her to this approach, as they impressed upon her the continued importance that 1968 held for students long after repression drove most political activists underground.

Speaking of Flowers begins by contextualizing the Brazilian government's hardening stance toward student activism in the 1960s. While higher education historically represented a site of elite male privilege, the midcentury democratization of Brazil's universities diversified the student body. Steeped in leftist writings, students engaged in strikes that were soon met with police repression. The formerly symbiotic relationship between students and the government was effectively ruptured on the day following the 1964 coup, which brought a military dictatorship to power. Coup supporters celebrated by stationing themselves in front of the União Nacional dos Estudantes (UNE) building and setting it on fire. Over the following years, state repression fueled protests in what Langland terms a "dialectic of violence" that generated new grievances and broadened students' platform from university-specific issues to demands for democratization.

Attending to the power of political narrative, Langland denaturalizes the process by which particular episodes are cast as transformative events. She uses oral interviews, students' personal archives at the Archive of Rio de Janeiro, and security files from the Departamento de Ordem Política e Social (DOPS) to revisit canonical moments in the movement's history. A careful analysis of these sources demonstrates that student leaders consciously inscribed particular figures and events with symbolic meaning. Langland returns, for example, to the March 28, 1968, police shooting of student Edson Luis, whose death provided the catalyst for the massive protests that erupted across the country that year. Langland resists commonplace assumptions that the student reaction was a "foreseeable and even inevitable consequence of such a blatant act of injustice" (112). She underscores that comparable police shootings failed to elicit the same reaction and instead argues that students endowed Luis's death with a charged political symbolism. Following the shooting, they marched the deceased student to the nearby Guanabara State Assembly and displayed his corpse before congressional representatives and journalists. Luis's body remained in the State Assembly building for a public autopsy and wake, eliciting sympathetic newspaper coverage and condolence letters from across the country. By analyzing this as a student-orchestrated spectacle, Langland provides critical context for understanding why this death, and not others, became a lasting symbol of regime intolerance and violence.

Cold War fears of communist infiltration hardened the military's reaction to student protesters, and repression brought the movement to an end by December. Langland notes that members of the military regime frequently invoked memories of 1968 to warn against the threat of an armed revolt, which officials conflated with the student protests. These fears provided the rationale for the December passage of the Institutional Act 5 (AI-5), which inaugurated the so-called years of lead, the most brutal period of disappearances, torture, and kidnappings under the dictatorship. AI-5 disbanded Congress, suspended elections, and prohibited unsanctioned political organizing, including strikes and protests. Many activists were expelled from their universities, and faculty were fired or forced into retirement. Some students radicalized and joined armed guerrilla groups, while others retreated from political organizing.

With political organizing banned, Langland argues, memory became a mechanism through which students formed a transgenerational, collective identity. Students used remembrances of the lives lost to solidify narratives of their struggle and, later, to rebuild a coalition around the UNE. As censorship loosened and a gradual re-democratization was under way in the late 1970s, certain deaths assumed new, potent

² Jeremy Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

symbolism. Highlighting the unstable meaning of past events, Langland examines the 1973 torture and murder of UNE president Honestino Guimarães. While his death initially failed to mobilize students, Guimarães later became one of the most visible martyrs of the revitalized student movement. Langland also applies a gender analysis to these commemorations, illustrating that students framed participation and martyrdom in decidedly masculinist terms and thereby overshadowed women's participation. In so doing, she joins Mexicanist scholars who have emphasized that dominant masculinist narratives overshadowed key protagonists and processes of the student movements.³ By disentangling the layered meanings and memories around "1968," *Speaking of Flowers* challenges assumptions about the inevitability of student mobilization and offers an excellent model for those who endeavor to study the recent past.

The global 1960s was characterized not only by street protests but also by significant cultural changes, including challenges to traditional gender norms and the adoption of alternative lifestyles. In the historiography of Latin America, scholars have at times treated this counterculture as analytically distinct from the revolutionary struggles that erupted after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. However, in the last decade, new studies have expanded definitions of the New Left to include the artistic and countercultural movements, street protests, and antiauthoritarian subjectivities that challenged the political and social status quo during the long 1960s.⁴

Christopher Dunn's book *Contracultura* follows this cue and examines the myriad Brazilian artistic and countercultural movements, including Tropicália music, the alternative press, hippie tourism, the soul and funk scene, and gay and lesbian groups, which flourished despite repression and censorship. Dunn's work complements Langland's analysis of collective organizing by examining the individual modes of resistance that pervaded music clubs and beaches in the 1970s. While Marxists and armed leftist groups reviled counterculture as an apolitical and inauthentic foreign import, Dunn argues that sensorial and corporeal expressions represented a "microlevel" politics. Indeed, he challenges long-standing assumptions that leftist guerrilla activity represented the only Brazilian political opposition of the early 1970s. Instead, Dunn sees counterculture as an everyday "manifestation of resistance" to the regime's technocratic authoritarianism (33). The experimental effervescence of poetry movements, for example, contrasted with modernist state efforts to "enforce conformity and obedience" (107). The hippie movement, meanwhile, rejected capital accumulation and consumption by seeking to withdraw from society. Dunn thus sees these individual expressions as a form of political resistance that could contribute to societal transformation.

Each of *Contracultura's* five chapters focuses on a different countercultural manifestation, providing the reader with a sense of the heterogeneity of expression. Chapters 3 and 4 are particularly welcome complements to Langland's work, as Dunn examines how counterculture intersected with Brazil's racial politics. In chapter 3, he explores the transformation of the northeastern state of Bahia into a mecca for South American hippie travelers. Hippies celebrated Bahia's Afro-Brazilian culture and fetishized the region as a space of freedom, non-Western spirituality, and cultural alterity, while ignoring local inequalities and conservatism. Dunn demonstrates that hippies echoed local authorities by embracing the regional discourse of *baianidade*, which "presented itself as an ideal paradigm for Brazilian nationality based on racial and cultural inclusivity" (114). Dunn aptly highlights that even while hippie culture resisted authoritarian social norms, it simultaneously undergirded prevailing discourses that denied the existence of racial discrimination and inequities.

In chapter 4, Dunn examines "Black Rio," a social scene that emerged among lower-class, Black residents in Rio de Janeiro's north zone. Centered in music clubs that played US soul and funk music, and these venues provided spaces for Afro-Brazilians to develop shared collective identities and promote Black consciousness. Black Rio emerged as Afro-Brazilians were gaining a degree of social mobility while also confronting familiar racial discrimination in new contexts. Although music lyrics at times drew the concerned attention of censors, particularly when they challenged the idea of a racial democracy, Black Rio was not an overtly political movement. Instead, Dunn argues that "the soul movement was more about transgressing social conventions than about political organizing. It was a movement heavily focused on the management of appearance and the display of embodied competencies, especially through dance" (173). Highlighting the everyday forms of resistance that prevailed when repression forced political organizing underground, Dunn

³ See, for example, Herbert Braun, "Protests of Engagement: Dignity, False Love, and Self-Love in Mexico during 1968," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 3 (1997): 511–549; and Lessie Jo Frazier and Deborah Cohen, "Defining the Space of Mexico '68: Heroic Masculinity in the Prison and 'Women' in the Streets," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 4 (2003): 617–660.

⁴ On this turn, see Eric Zolov, "Expanding Our Conceptual Horizons: The Shift from an Old to a New Left in Latin America," *A Contracorriente* 5, no. 2 (2008): 51, 53; Vania Markarian, *Uruguay, 1968: Student Activism from Global Counterculture to Molotov Cocktails* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); and Camilo D. Trumper, *Ephemeral Histories Public Art, Politics, and the Struggle for the Streets in Chile* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

foregrounds subjectivity as central to forging antiauthoritarian sentiment and, eventually, broader societal change. One wonders what Dunn's analysis would look like if extended beyond the years of lead. How did counterculture—focused on leisure and consumption—intersect or conflict with revitalized student movements in the late 1970s?

If youthful resistance was not monolithic, neither were the states it critiqued. Three of the authors under review (Cowan, Pensado, and Sheppard) examine cultures of authoritarianism and challenge the notion that Brazil's military dictatorship and Mexico's long-standing ruling party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), were unified in terms of ideology, strategy, and purpose. The authors instead illustrate the competing interests that shaped these regimes and highlight the importance of studying the intellectual and political history of conservatism.

Benjamin Cowan's expertly researched book *Securing Sex* turns our attention to the architects of countersubversion in Brazil. Through an examination of influential conservative thinkers and institutions, Cowan argues that anticommunists in Brazil saw political subversion and moral deviance as inextricably connected. This intellectual and cultural history explains why familiar outcomes, such as repression, detention, and censorship, targeted the individuals that they did. By tracing how moralists' ideas found their way into military dictionaries and school textbooks, Cowan cautions readers not to assume that anti-communists would naturally have seen gay men or working women as threats. This, he asserts, was "a reaction against trappings of modernization," which conservatives believed undermined traditional family and gender norms (9). Moral technocrats saw the Cold War as a battle "to be waged across sexual and bodily practice, clothing, music, art, mass media, and gender" (10).

The book moves chronologically, with roughly the first half tracing the ideological and interwar roots of this "moral panic." In chapter 3, Cowan delves into the policy proposals, propaganda, and educational materials produced by right-wing institutions, such as the Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Sociais (IPES), and influential moralist individuals, such as Dom Geraldo Proença Sigaud (Archbishop of Diamantina) and Gustavo Corção. Cowan highlights the transnational right-wing influences that similarly linked sexual and moral transgressions with political subversion. The second half of the book methodically details how these notions found expression in public policy and strategy. For example, moralist individuals and organizations influenced the 1970 passage of Decree Law 1077, which legislated the censorship of amoral publications and behavior. Examining archival materials from the Escola Superior de Guerra (ESG), subsequent chapters illustrate how the military college shaped and disseminated national security doctrine, resulting for example, in "moral civic education," legislated in September 1969. Under this mandate, school textbooks inculcated students with ideals of moralism, good hygiene, and masculinity—qualities that military leaders believed would defend against communist incursions.

By illustrating the competing interests and ideas that informed the military regime, *Securing Sex* disrupts notions of a monolithic authoritarian state. The book's final chapter offers a nice illustration of the *bagunça* (or mess) of the dictatorship through an exploration of censorship policies that prevailed after hardline moralists' influence had waned. In the mid-1970s, censors from different government agencies shared a clear moral mandate but received uneven training and frequently issued competing orders. This often led to ironic and contradictory results: moralist propaganda was at times censored, while government film institutions funded *pornofachadas* (soft-core pornography). *Securing Sex* effectively illustrates the competing pressures and ideologies that composed the military regime, dispelling characterizations that at times paint members of authoritarian governments as unified in purpose and action.

As in Brazil, 1968 has figured as a key turning point in the historiography and popular memory of late twentieth-century Mexico. In the 1960s, student protests brought hundreds of thousands to Mexico City streets to oppose the authoritarianism of their universities, schools, and the riot police. Students were often confronted with state repression and at times responded in turn with violence. The movement climaxed in the summer of 1968 and ended on October 2, when plainclothes security forces blocked the exits to the Plaza de Tres Culturas and began shooting at the students and teachers who had gathered for a rally. Though the exact death toll is unknown, the highly visible Tlatelolco Massacre—named for the neighborhood and housing complex where it occurred—profoundly affected many of the nation's most prominent intellectuals and artists. Their narrations, which achieved outsized influence in popular memory and scholarly literature, presented the 1968 protests as Mexico's first independent democratic movement and lionized student activists as masculinist, self-sacrificing martyrs.⁵ The repression had other consequences for knowledge production and deepened a revisionist historiographical turn that framed the 1910 Mexican Revolution

⁵ See, for example, Braun, "Protests of Engagement."

as an elite rather than emancipatory and popular project and recast the ruling party as an authoritarian “system.”

Jaime Pensado revises long-standing assumptions regarding the periodization and composition of Mexico City’s student movement by decentering 1968. His book *Rebel Mexico* argues that a new era of confrontational student activism began in 1956, when the military occupied Mexico City’s Instituto Politécnico Nacional (IPN). Pensado contends that this action, orchestrated to put down a massive strike, inaugurated a period of activism characterized by new strategies and goals. For example, students’ demands expanded to include democratic participation in their universities and schools and an end to corporatist political culture. Participants also adopted new protest strategies, including direct action and *mítimes relámpagos* (lightning meetings) to engage the public beyond their universities and schools. Pensado highlights how democratic student movements fit squarely within a nascent New Left in Mexico.

Pensado also contributes to a literature that seeks to explain how the ruling party consolidated and maintained its hold on power. Scholars previously characterized the years between 1940 and 1968 as the *pax priísta*, a period of relative peace, political quiescence, and stability in which the PRI maintained its dominance through patronage, co-optation, and cultural politics. However, understandings of midcentury Mexico have been revised by the 2002 declassification of two intelligence agencies’ archives, the Dirección Federal de Seguridad (DFS) and the Dirección General de Investigaciones Políticas y Sociales (DGIPS).⁶ Analyzing these sources, scholars have shown that repression and violence remained a common tool used by the ruling party to quell dissent. *Rebel Mexico* contributes to this literature by elucidating two repressive strategies, *porrismo* and *charrismo*, which governing officials and opposition parties used to manipulate and demobilize student activism in schools and universities. Pensado defines *porros* as “agents provocateurs” and “charismatic intermediaries,” while *charros* refers to corrupt leaders in organizations or unions. Pensado argues that both authoritarian groups contributed to the longevity of PRI rule.

Rebel Mexico brings these practices to light by showing how *porrismo* and *charrismo* pervaded every aspect of student life, including the organization of “festive disorder” (*relajo*) in schools. Cheerleaders (*porristas*) organized parades, hazing rituals, and sporting events that not only solidified a collective identity among the student body but also provided the opportunity to critique traditional values and the government’s revolutionary nationalism in the 1940s and 1950s. Authorities saw these rowdy activities as evidence of a growing “crisis of youth” and feared that *porristas* could turn their followers toward subversive ends (72). Governing officials and opposition leaders alike sought to co-opt *porristas* with financial support and offers of plush government positions upon graduation. *Porristas* (later described by media as *porros*) came to assume prominent roles as political intermediaries who distributed favors and incited violence to gain control of schools and universities. Yet Pensado cautions against characterizing these tactics as evidence of an all-powerful regime. Indeed, factions within the PRI recruited student leaders to serve distinctive ends. Elites across the ideological spectrum similarly planted nonstudent thugs to incite violence and disrupt campus activities, including elections. *Rebel Mexico* thus depicts Mexico City universities and schools as battlegrounds where competing groups fought for political and ideological control.

Pensado’s interviews with prominent movement leaders from this early period and his consultation of student ephemera, including bulletins and newsletters, allow him to move away from the “official” narrative of student activism. This narrative has privileged the perspectives of a handful of middle-class, male student leaders from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM) in 1968 and has overstated the support that the movement enjoyed from the broader population. Pensado instead highlights the participation of lower-class students at the IPN, preparatory and vocational schools, and teacher-training colleges. In so doing, he undermines the picture of a unified and homogenous movement. Pensado’s attention to the early years of mobilization further reveals the extent to which the Cuban Revolution and the government repression of striking railroad workers in 1958–1959 helped solidify students’ demands for union independence, the dissolution of riot police, and the release of political prisoners—all of which would become central to the 1968 student movement. Finally, by examining conservative and mainstream media, which largely villainized students, Pensado also challenges the assumption that the Tlatelolco Massacre was a fundamentally delegitimizing moment for the PRI. *Rebel Mexico* effectively revises fundamental assumptions about the 1968 student movement and its singular contribution to Mexico’s democratization.

⁶ See Mary Kay Vaughan’s excellent review essay on the historiography covering this period, “Mexico, 1940–1968 and Beyond: Perfect Dictatorship? Dictablanda? or PRI State Hegemony?,” *Latin American Research Review* 53, no. 1 (2018): 167–176.

The final two books under review attend to the cultural modes of political control and resistance in Mexico. George Flaherty's *Hotel Mexico* and Randal Sheppard's *A Persistent Revolution* focus on urban spaces and cultural rituals as important sites for both the perpetuation and contestation of one-party rule. *Hotel Mexico* offers an analysis of the 1968 student movement from the perspective of art history, focusing on how urban space became a primary medium through which Mexico City residents expressed their discontent with the ruling party. The book's title references the highly anticipated but unfinished hotel project that was designed to house international visitors for the 1968 Summer Olympic Games in Mexico City. For Flaherty, *Hotel Mexico* provides a central metaphor for the book, as it symbolizes the transformation that the capital underwent in anticipation of the Olympic Games, as well as the ways in which middle-class residents envisioned their relationship to the city and their political rights. Flaherty utilizes the metaphor of a hotel to describe Mexicans' "conditional citizenship," arguing that by the late 1960s, they had become estranged citizens or "guests of the state" (2). Drawing on Jacques Derrida's concept of hospitality, Flaherty notes that the hotel metaphor captures the "complex cultural rules and rituals associated with the encounter between a state and nation when the former presumes the latter to be its docile guest rather than a full-fledged citizen" (9).

Hotel Mexico is organized thematically, with each chapter focusing on the representation or occupation of a distinct Mexico City space, including the notorious Lecumberri Prison, which held political prisoners. Chapters engage the 1968 movement from different perspectives, alternatively exploring the roots, strategies, and collective memories of the movement and the Tlatelolco Massacre. Flaherty returns to well-known works, including Elena Poniatowska's *La noche de Tlatelolco*, Octavio Paz's *Postdata*, Jorge Fons's dramatized film *Rojo amanecer*, David Siqueiros's mural *Marcha de la humanidad*, and Luis González de Alba's prison memoir and novel, *Los días y los años*. In his analysis of these works, Flaherty gives particular attention to how the artists' or authors' representation of space advanced their criticisms of political life. He argues, for example, that novels written in Lecumberri present the prison as a "microcosm of Mexico's degraded democracy and the state's biopolitics" (25). *Hotel Mexico* links imaginaries of Mexican citizenship to spatial understandings of the city.

Hotel Mexico stresses that the management of city space was a key mechanism through which the one-party state exercised control over city residents. Chapter 2, for example, considers government attempts to rationalize and modernize the Tlatelolco neighborhood. In the 1950s, social experts associated the neighborhood and its crowded tenements with the dangers and illegibility of the city's lower classes. The government cleared Tlatelolco to construct modern, affordable housing for the middle classes, leading to the violent removal and dispossession of lower-income residents. Writers such as Juan Rulfo and Carlos Fuentes criticized capitalist urbanization in their novels' representations of the neighborhood's "spectral" nature. Flaherty explains that "the Plaza de Tres Culturas heritage site [located in Tlatelolco] was a metonym of the Mexican government's seemingly inescapable 'vortex of integration,' its claim to sovereignty and biopolitical governance, which could integrate the rest of Tlatelolco only as a shadow to be made transparent and ultimately disappeared by the Nonoalco-Tlatelolco housing complex," which the government inaugurated in 1964 (68). In chapter 3, Flaherty explores the Olympic Committee's creation of "kinetic environments" and maps used to visually convey the state's technological control and modernist management of space. For example, mobile television units drove through poor and working-class neighborhoods to promote the government's successful planning of the Olympic Games.

If Pensado frames 1968 as the culmination of a decade of student activism, Flaherty presents it as a sui generis democratic movement. He argues that "the '68 Movement proposed alternative ways to experience and move through the city, rerouting how citizens encountered and potentially engaged one another" (2). Chapter 5 focuses on how the movement's mobilizations in the streets and university challenged state attempts to manage space. Here, Flaherty employs a second key concept, "dwelling," which references the ways in which Mexico City residents imagined the city as well as how they physically inhabited it. In taking over the UNAM, for example, students "made themselves at home" by renaming rooms and repurposing them as domestic spaces to bathe, sleep, and eat (146). Students similarly challenged mainstream media by altering public space with posters and distributing their own photographs and ephemera related to city life. Flaherty understands students' "spatiopolitical imaginations" as offering counterhegemonic visions of their rights to the city (136). *Hotel Mexico* rightly argues that urban space was a constant site of political struggle. However, the book foregrounds the struggle between the government and middle-class citizens, while eliding the class, gender, and race-based struggles for access that created fault lines within popular and social movements.

Despite evident discontent, the PRI still occupied most major political offices for the next four decades and only lost the presidency to the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) in 2000. In *The Persistent Revolution*, Sheppard argues that the PRI's adherence to a revolutionary nationalist discourse allowed the party to retain power, even while its public policies abandoned long-standing promises of state-led socioeconomic uplift. He defines revolutionary nationalism as "a framework of historical myths and symbols" that included beloved political heroes and a discourse of social justice associated with Mexico's 1910 revolution (2). Sheppard sees the construction of monuments and memorials and the enactment of national rituals as key to the reinforcement of PRI legitimacy.

Sheppard follows the cue of historians of post-1968 Mexico, like Louise E. Walker, who argue that cultural expectations shaped the political consequences of economic hardship.⁷ *The Persistent Revolution* centers on the decades that followed Mexico's 1982 debt crisis, when the inconsistencies in revolutionary nationalism became increasingly apparent. The 1980s and 1990s were characterized by high unemployment and the implementation of neoliberal economic reforms that undermined long-standing promises of state-led development. In November 1982, Mexico signed a structural adjustment agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), initiating the sale of nearly half of the country's public companies and the slashing of the social safety net. Sheppard analyses how PRI leaders struggled to articulate what distinguished the ruling party from the PAN, which similarly embraced market liberalization and increasingly challenged the ruling party in municipal and state elections. Sheppard contends that President Miguel de la Madrid (1982–1988) walked this line by emphasizing his "revolutionary realism," which maintained "neoliberalism [w]as an objective science of economics such that "there is no alternative" (88). De la Madrid's successors would similarly invoke revolutionary heroes, even as their policies deviated from the social and economic rights conventionally associated with the Mexican Revolution.

Sheppard asserts that revolutionary nationalism became a source of vulnerability because conservative and leftist groups alike could mobilize this discourse to highlight the distance between PRI rhetoric and action. Chapter 3 examines, for example, the center-left challenge to the PRI in the 1988 presidential elections. During the campaign, the newly created opposition party, the Frente Democrático Nacional (FDN), claimed as its figurehead the former president Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940), whose agrarian reform and nationalization of oil was commonly associated with the high-water mark of economic nationalism. The FDN's candidate, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, invoked his father's legacy with promises to return to Lázaro's social justice platforms. Sheppard underscores that the FDN gained broad-based support, though not ultimately the presidency, precisely because it laid claim to revolutionary nationalism. In chapter 5, he further highlights how the 1994 Zapatista rebellion took up the legacy of revolutionary leader Emiliano Zapata to undergird the defense of communal lands against privatization.

One wonders to what extent the vulnerability of revolutionary nationalism was unique to the post-debt crisis era. Indeed, the discourse was always ideologically flexible enough to accommodate the ruling party's shifts to the left and right throughout the twentieth century. Moreover, revolutionary nationalism was always vulnerable to co-optation, as competing groups historically used the language of the state to make demands. Work by Pensado, Alexander Aviña, and Tanalís Padilla, for example, demonstrates that revolutionary nationalism was subject to deep criticism by peasant and student movements in the 1960s and 1970s.⁸ Nonetheless, Sheppard rightly shows that revolutionary nationalism remained a salient language for political engagement well into the twenty-first century.

Collectively, these works illustrate creative methods for studying the recent past. Scholars writing on contemporary history regularly encounter an uneven archival source base (often due to collections that remain classified) and a limited secondary literature. For this reason, they frequently turn to contemporaneous memoirs and histories to make sense of the period. The historiographic prominence of the 1968 student movement is, in part, a reflection of the influence such contemporaneous writings achieved. Many of the authors here give critical attention to the works that shaped this dominant collective memory and thereby challenge long-cherished narratives that view "1968" as a *sui generis* moment of heroic resistance.

Reading these works together, however, suggests that there still exists a divide between those who wish to decenter 1968 and those who believe that its historical centrality is merited. Going forward, more studies of

⁷ Louise E. Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico's Middle Classes after 1968* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

⁸ Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta, 1940–1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); and Alexander Aviña, *Specters of Revolution: Peasant Guerrillas in the Cold War Mexican Countryside* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

the resistance movements that emerged in the second half of the twentieth century will provide additional evidence of the political consequences and significance of the student and countercultural movements. Recent work on popular, guerrilla, indigenous, and intersectional movements indicate a promising new direction for such research.⁹ Finally, there remains disagreement about the political significance of counterculture. For some, critical subjectivities and new cultural practices laid the groundwork for collective action, while for others they were a coincident but less influential mode of dissent.¹⁰

The books reviewed here further diverge in their understandings of the role violence and cultural politics played in sustaining authoritarian rule. Cowan and Pensado see repression as a primary catalyst for political action and an important tool of countersubversion. Dunn, Flaherty, Langland, and Sheppard, by contrast, focus on hegemony to highlight how culture functioned as a site of struggle for political control and resistance. Together, these books emphasize the need, as Cowan aptly states, to “disentangle” the nature of authoritarian rule. Similarly, placing the 1968 student movement in conversation with other, nonurban movements will offer a fuller understanding of how modes of resistance varied geographically and how repressive strategies differed given the class and racial background of those who dared to dissent.

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⁹ See, for example, Guillermo Trejo, *Popular Movements in Autocracies: Religion, Repression, and Indigenous Collective Action in Mexico* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Aviña, *Specters of Revolution*; María L. O. Muñoz, *Stand Up and Fight: Participatory Indigenismo, Populism, and Mobilization in Mexico, 1970–1984* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016); Sandra Mendiola García, *Street Democracy: Vendors, Violence, and Public Space in Late Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2017); James N. Green, *Exile within Exiles: Herbert Daniel, Gay Brazilian Revolutionary* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018); and Sarah Sarzynski, *Revolution in the Terra do Sol: The Cold War in Brazil* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2018).

¹⁰ Articles for the *American Historical Review's* 2009 forum on 1968 were divided along similar lines. “Introduction,” *American Historical Review* 114, no. 1 (2009): 43.

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