

to de su muerte. Ahí se consigna una cierta suma de dinero y la existencia de 175 volúmenes adquiridos en los dos años previos, desde la venta de su biblioteca. Si se considera el precio de un sólo volumen, se puede deducir que, en contradicción con la leyenda, sor Juana no renunció a todos sus bienes. Lo más importante del documento es la mención de 15 cartapacios con obras literarias, que rebata la leyenda de su renuncia a la escritura. Otros documentos hallados demuestran la amistad entre el obispo de Puebla y el arzobispo de México: así sabemos que se le ofreció el trono arzobispal al obispo de Puebla, pero que éste renunció a favor de su amigo. Con ello, la teoría de la intriga y de las rivalidades de poder pierde todo asidero.

Todos estos documentos alteran radicalmente la imagen de sor Juana transmitida por Calleja. Ahora sabemos que no vivía dedicada exclusivamente al estudio y a la escritura, que participó en las intrigas palaciegas, que administró su dinero, especuló con él y se enriqueció. Y también sabemos que, al final de su vida, no hubo ni crisis mística ni tampoco una intriga eclesiástica. En la actualidad, los investigadores Reynalda López Mateos y Augusto Vallejo preparan la publicación de una gran colección de documentos descubiertos por ellos y relacionados directa o indirectamente con sor Juana. Es de esperarse que estos documentos contribuyan a aclarar las confusiones que siguen existiendo, e inauguren una etapa de estudios más serios que los promovidos por los especialistas de generaciones pasadas, quienes fomentaron, careciendo de otras pruebas documentales, el surgimiento de leyendas en torno a la vida de sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.

Alberto Pérez Amador Adam es egresado de la Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, y ha cursado estudios de doctorado en Literatura Comparada en Alemania; está especiali-

zado en literatura virreinal y poesía moderna latinoamericana.

Ana Dopico

Critical Passion, Cultural Revolutions: A Conversation with Jean Franco

A. D.: An anthology of your essays, *Critical Passions*, came out last year from Duke University Press, edited by Kathleen Newman and Mary Pratt. I wonder how looking at that collected body of writing has made you think about your work over a whole career?

J. F.: Well, it's a very uneven book in some ways, because some of these pieces were written for journals and some were quite short. What was kind of surprising, I suppose, was the way it was organized by Kathleen and Mary, who I think brought out some thematic continuities that I myself didn't necessarily suspect, especially the stuff on women and on Mexico that I think are two of the most interesting parts of the book. The women one, because it traces thinking over a long period, like the beginning of the discussions of feminism in Latin America to fairly recent writers. And then the Mexican one, because obviously that's the country I've had the most contact with and written about quite a lot and still have a lot to say about.

A. D.: Are there one or two pieces that are still a particular preoccupation, that you are still working through?

J. F.: I think I'm still working through a lot of the feminist stuff. And sometimes it's difficult to think back, about what you still want to work on, because you're still

caught up on the present rather than on what you've done in the past. The context is interesting, because the context really goes from the late 1970s to the 90s. There were so many changes and transformations in Latin America and in criticism outside Latin America, particularly in the US during that period. When I began to write, there was a scarcity of theory in the US field, very little theoretical debate integrating literature with other disciplines, whereas, I think, theory now predominates. So there have been these huge changes within that time, things have gone from close readings, from myth criticism, to structuralism, poststructuralism, new historicism, all these different ways, some of which have influenced me more than others. I must say that when I began in the early pieces, when I was talking about literature and society, that was somewhat of a taboo subject in the universities here, because everybody was concerned with separating literature from anything to do with history or with social change. But now it's come full circle, and now we have "cultural studies" (laughs), so there have been these huge changes on the way.

A. D.: Was your focus on literature and society partly a result of where you began in England, in a grounding in British cultural studies?

J. F.: Yes, absolutely. Because I came from England unprepared for this very enclosed criticism of the time, in the early seventies in the United States: almost a fear of contaminating criticism with anything outside.

A. D.: And at the time it must have been even more acute, because the Latin American political sphere and the cultural discourses around it was so complicated by Cold War contests.

J. F.: Yes. There was Marxist criticism in Latin America and a sort of Left criticism, but that was not much read in

the US. The US was very big on Wellek and Warren, Northrop Frye was very influential. It was very strange. And it seemed to me so illogical in Latin America to separate literature in that way, and regard it as some kind of self-propelling process.

Latin American Feminisms

A. D.: So in a way the ascent and inter-disciplinarity of Latin American studies also educated North American critics. Thinking about influential fields and their effect on cultural discourse, I'd like to talk about a central focus of your work, which is feminism. You've long been thinking and writing about where feminism stands in Latin America, what is at stake, and you've been recently asked to assess its history and status. So I wonder if you can reflect on that a little, what you see as changes, from maybe the time when you were writing about, to now?

J. F.: It's a very complex picture, I think, depending on what country you're looking at. Because on the one hand there are literally, I suppose, hundreds of feminist and women's NGOs. That was obvious at the Beijing conference, right? There were huge numbers of women, with hugely different interests, ranging from lesbian NGOs to NGOs around violence and abortion, all kinds of issues. And I think that's one major historical shift: how feminism has separated into these issue oriented groups, on a practical level that is. Something else is true that wasn't so in the seventies and that is the existence of an academic basis for feminism: the institutionalization of women's studies, both here and in Latin America. In Latin America this is particularly important and a fairly recent but highly articulate development. Several universities now have courses in women's studies, in gender studies:

the University of Chile inaugurated a new and influential program a few years ago. I think, these are important, because there's cross disciplinary reflections, theoretical reflections, but at the same time there's a serious feeling that even as the discussions become much more sophisticated, especially compared to what it was in the seventies, on the other hand actual programs or the process of getting feminist issues dealt with, especially on national levels, is very, very difficult. I think this continued struggle is clearly visible in the difficulties of getting any law passed on abortion, in the enormous persistence of domestic violence, in the toll of deaths of women due to illegal abortions and domestic violence. It's hard to see, even though there may be legislation in some countries, this effecting change in some official government organization; it's hard to see any huge changes, at least in my view.

A. D.: Is there a country where this struggle for women is most acute at the moment or is this pretty widespread?

J. F.: Well, it depends where you are in any country. For instance in Brazil, which is enormous, they've got extraordinarily good people, working even in municipalities in places like São Paulo, for instance, but if you go into some of the hinterlands, it's a very different state of affairs. I met a woman who was working in the backlands, working in clinics for pregnant women, where doctors were routinely practicing Caesarian births out of convenience, actually because it's quicker and easier for the doctor. So there are all these Caesarians being performed and affecting women's health and recovery, and she was trying to train women to challenge this and say no. It was really very uphill work, but there are all kinds of these pockets of local feminist activism all over Latin America, engaging in a politics of everyday. Well, there are in this country,

too, of the kinds we're talking about. So it's very hard to be too satisfied or celebratory about it. But I also think there's a lot of work being done and still to be done. Even though people talk about post-feminism, I think there are an awful lot of feminist issues that have to be dealt with.

A. D.: There seems to be this kind of curious mapping, that took place in this country, where on the one hand you have a kind of institutionalized, critical feminism that has a little bit of a public sphere, and a kind of recognition. Then you have, as you point out, a wider social crisis for women which is ongoing. The organizations most active as advocates or activists at the moment, given battles over state policy and state funding of programs for women, seem to be NGOs. How do you see the role of NGOs in feminist issues and elsewhere? Are they the most active sites in Latin America?

J. F.: At one stage, they certainly were. But now, what happened is that they've come under criticism: in many places they seem to be applying either international agendas, or applying some kind of corporate or government agenda. For instance, I met these people from Nicaragua who were attending seminars in "self-esteem" for women, which is a very US type of issue. So you begin to wonder about some of these NGO projects. One of the problems is precisely this international funding of NGOs, which leads us to wonder who are the brokers or middle men for this international funding? And how does this affect the policies? And this is a very important question that did not exist say 20 years ago, obviously, one connected to the consensus building and ideology connected to globalization.

A. D.: Because 20 years ago the battles or opportunities were with the state, because it was at the national level that the priorities were set?

J. F.: Yes. And also there wasn't this intense funding NGOs from foreign sources.

Neo-liberalism and the Nation-State

A. D.: Is there a way in which the neo-liberal victory in defining the nation-state and its institutions has affected, sometimes exhausted feminism as a place for resistance. Do you think people in the midst of recurrent economic crisis disengage from activism or resistance? Has feminism, as in this seminar on "self-esteem", been depoliticized or, ironically, "domesticated" in some ways?

J. F.: Neo-liberalism to me is quite puzzling, because on the one hand, supposedly the market is what is determining value. So there's this kind of idea that everything is up for grabs. On the other hand, there are local or regional hegemonies to contend with. For example, in most Latin American countries the Catholic church is enormously powerful. So, whereas neo-liberalism empties the public sphere in one way, or makes everything there homogeneous, it gets remapped or captured through other ideological battles, where, say, family organizations sponsored by the church become advocates for a very conservative social agenda: they're civil society fronts for the Catholic church. And they are succeeding in the public sphere, because neo-liberalism sort of leaves a vacant what were formerly state sites of political activity: in its international agenda, it privatizes public space, public agencies. So that means that these conservative organizations with deep infrastructures connected to, say, the church, Catholic or now evangelical, can jump in, and they are very active, filling an ideological void and claiming political

issues. Evangelical churches and their incredible growth is very worrying: this influence of Christian religious organizations, many with roots in the United States.

A. D.: So clearly part of the problems that can be traced across different fields of culture have to do with what's happening to the state, to the nation-state. On the one hand, it makes it harder to trace physical routes of alliance or resistance. Is part of the danger of these conservative organizations that they're creating a new social web, where the state has retrenched?

J. F.: Yes, they are. They're very powerful. And the state is hands off, if anything, in many of these questions. The welfare state has disappeared, or it never existed in many Latin American countries. So it's a much more difficult situation, I think, to struggle in. Because when there was or is a strong nation-state, then it's very clear where the issues are: where opposition, resistance, where voices are challenging policies of the state might come from. There's a place in civil society from which to challenge them. Although I don't think that the state disappears. I think it's become a facilitator. It's the difference between organizing social policies and facilitating market driven policies. It seems to me primarily that's what states have become.

A. D.: Sort of corporate franchises?

J. F.: And facilitators. So there isn't much in the way of national policies on social questions. But when ideology and policy are transparently market driven or when they are coming from these other kinds of privatized organizations, I think it's very difficult to confront them, to challenge their privilege in the public sphere.

A. D.: Are feminists doing this? Is there an active engagement with the church? Or is that a kind a sore point, a vulnerable point?

J. F.: I think in Mexico, especially, there's been a lot of criticism, a lot of mobilization of women in the face of church privilege over issues of sexuality or reproduction. I don't know too much about other countries. It's not quite the same, I don't think so. Every country has a slightly different problem and a slightly different mix.

**Public Intellectuals
and the Global Market**

A. D.: Is this new neo-liberal market of ideas, this remapping of the public sphere, affecting the way intellectuals can be public in Latin America?

J. F.: Yes. Because it's become much more difficult to define that role now. Also I think the media have made it very difficult, too.

A. D.: How so?

J. F.: Well, because the kind of, as it were, literary intellectuals don't necessarily have the same prestige in the media that other people have. What do you call them? Presenters, as it were...

A. D.: Of infotainment?

J. F.: Yes, infotainment, or whatever. There was no rival to the literary intellectuals, say, fifty or sixty years ago. But now most people get their information from television or from radio. They don't get it from reading some scholarly newspaper, so that's bound to affect a certain kind of intellectual anyway.

A. D.: Because in Latin America, as elsewhere, the intellectual was really connected with journalism, with print culture's mass audience, which is waning?

J. F.: Very much so.

A. D.: So, at the moment, who are the public intellectuals? Are they people like Jorge Castañeda, who serves as visiting professor in the United States and then becomes a cabinet minister? Who are the

public intellectuals in Latin America at the moment?

J. F.: Castañeda is certainly one of them. Or in Chile, there's Joaquín Brunner, who became Minister of Communication. That's at one level, those are the *políticos*. I still think in Latin America writers like Carlos Monsiváis and Beatriz Sarlo, for instance, and Nelly Richard are extremely important, and there seems to be a real place for them as public figures. In other words, people who are not connected or directly implicated in either the state or in corporate organizations, and do have some kind of outlet, usually through journals and newspapers. So that's still important, though they're minority voices now, not majority. But, for instance, somebody like Carlos Monsiváis exercises, I think, quite an influence in Mexico.

A. D.: Is it his history or engagement with the subjects, or is there something particular about the Mexican configuration?

J. F.: I think primarily, he's survived on wit, right? On wit. And Mexico loves, has a fantastic tradition of wit. The *socarrón*, other kinds of characters that appeal to a self-conscious and critical wit about national self and politics in Mexico, a certain kind of humorous but sharp reflection of the present, I think that's very attractive. And he has this appeal through his columns in the press.

A. D.: And he's also engaged with popular culture. And with national types. Is there a woman who occupies a place like that in Mexico or elsewhere?

J. F.: There are. I think, Beatriz Sarlo is very important in Argentina.

A. D.: Because she crosses particular lines of discipline? Are there places where she's published continuously?

J. F.: Yes. She writes on literature, on politics. She writes on film, on many fields and in the public press.

The Public Sphere, Human Rights, the Juridical Turn

A. D.: If the literary intellectual had this privilege thirty years ago, and they've also played roles in the state, was that privilege a kind of ethical or moral role, with people looking to a kind of leadership beyond national politics? If the intellectual occupies with difficulty the role of embodiment of a certain social critique, of the advocate for justice or truth, then what changes do you see coming? Who is moving into the public arena as supra-political public critic or advocate?

J. F.: I think, the church tries to. In questions of politics, certainly. I think, theology of liberation tried to at one stage, until it was really weakened by the actions of the Pope. So, there are certain number of people who do that. And human rights has been really important as well, as a place where these kind of ethical considerations get aired and discussed, particularly in Chile and Argentina, where, for instance, Pinochet's loss of immunity has been enormously important in stirring up debate, and in Argentina recently too the fact that the pardons for the military were declared illegal. It's very interesting that the people who've been involved in this to a very large degree are lawyers, justices and so on. I mean, they've managed to set a kind of ethical standards that have shaken those societies out of that amnesia that was prevalent in the late eighties and early nineties. So that's been a very interesting process, but the people who are doing it are not necessarily the literary intellectuals, even though they give their support to it. They've been very largely lawyers and justices, on that level.

A. D.: It's an interesting shift, that where literature and culture, exemplars of humanistic learning, used to have a public

privilege to talk about the social, now there's a turn to the juridical.

J. F.: There is, yes.

A. D.: Which makes the appeal more acute and more direct, but they only appeal to limited questions within a legal or legislative framework: the appeal is to law.

J. F.: Yes, it's limited to legal questions. Not to broader ethical questions, that's true.

A. D.: To think about the juridical and the nation: If as you're saying the nation is becoming this kind of facilitator for markets, is there now a shadow nation at the level of claiming the public sphere or defining a national imaginary? Is this the alternative nation, the juridical, a kind of national memory secured or redressed by the law?

J. F.: I think, the nation-state is quite a complex organization, which has many different levels. I mean, you can't just think of it as one set of commands, or set of policies, because there are many different things that are coming into it. I don't know how it is that at the moment the juridical angle has come to the fore. I think, it's partly probably the influence of international law and international legal questions that have dynamized this, which works in tandem with and to some degree fills the vacuum left by the weakening of the nation-state.

A. D.: A vacuum about enfranchisement or justice in the nation filled instead with articulations of, say, universal human rights?

J. F.: Yes. Because on the one hand there's the international, global nature of the markets, and on the other hand, there are more and more internationally determined questions. And I think that's been particularly the case in human rights disputes. So that international organizations are quite powerful; that's given the law-

yers and the legal people a place outside the nation-state, which can then uphold or support that particular policy. They're not simply within the nation.

Markets for Culture: Spain, Latin America, the United States

A. D.: Since the whole Pinochet thing was revived in Spain, I wonder if you could reflect a little on Spain's new position with respect to Latin America in what seems to be an ideological, moral or cultural reconquest. What do you make of Spain's new attention to Latin America in the last ten years?

J. F.: Sure, you can't help noticing it. Especially if you read *El País*. (Laughs). It's very interesting: so far as publishing is concerned, Spain has a real hegemony. There are some very powerful publishing organizations, like Planeta and Alfaguara. So in a certain way they set standards and define markets for anything written in Spanish in Latin America as well. Spain also has these very important literary prizes, like the *Planeta* or *Alfaguara* prizes, but also the *Príncipe de Asturias*, which sometimes go to Latin Americans. So you just wonder how much cultural policies, too, are reflecting Spanish preferences.

A. D.: And allow presses, cultural organizations and public intellectuals to do an end run around US hegemony, to claim another relationship and offer another sphere. Especially with respect to places like Cuba or, for example, Mexico, where Saramago marched into the capital in support of the Zapatistas.

J. F.: That's true.

A. D.: Let's talk a little bit more about these markets, switching from Spain to the US. We've been talking about the public intellectual. Mary Pratt was recently talking about the difficulties

intellectuals are facing, in the face of economic crisis and with the US serving as a huge magnet market for intellectuals. I wonder what your assessment of that is. Will there be a Latin American public intellectual working primarily in his or her home country in ten years, or will he or she survive economically only by teaching at Duke or Berkeley and going back only to do field work, as it were? Is that a permanent trend, or do you see that changing?

J. F.: I don't think, that trend will change very much, because economically conditions all over Latin America are pretty terrible, and so there's kind of a push factor to get US accreditation and have access to that market. You can measure that by the number of Latin American students who are studying in Ph.D. programs in the US, and many of them will then take jobs in the US and will not go back to Latin America. I mean, there's a completely unequal position: people in Buenos Aires who are teaching at two or three universities to make ends meet, and the same is true in many Latin American countries. And there is also less money for, say, cultural or intellectual infrastructure. So there are people who are really persistent, who stay home and then in staying, ironically, simply do not have the time or the facilities to do the same research as in the US. There's a huge inequality as far as resources are concerned between the US and Latin America, so it seems to me that it's already the case that most research on Latin America is done in the US at this particular time. I think, that's a very sad situation, but I don't see that it's going to change very much immediately. It won't change until Latin America has the resources to build up stronger institutions of their own.

A. D.: It's a kind of parallel to the patent market, where you have

intellectual patenting on the cultural front as much as you do on the scientific.

J. F.: I think it's also most dramatic in the sciences, because the sciences kinds of specialties are not possible in Latin America at present. It's obviously most acute in the sciences, but I still think even in literature things are difficult. I think, that's being reflected now in the work of a lot of Latin American critics, particularly in response to the citation of US sources. I was just reading a whole set of essays on Colombian literature, and nearly all of them set out by putting theoretical paradigms that came from the US. Their point of citation was researched in the US.

A. D.: So there's really a kind of assault on "Nuestra América", an oppositional or alternative Latin American critical discourse, which might serve a similar alternative function as, say, Europe, in terms of developing themes and theories. That's also part of the cost of this hemispheric market.

J. F.: I think so. I think, it makes it more difficult for sustained reflection. But I think, there are very many important exceptions to what I'm saying. I mean, I find it really amazing that there are journals like *Punto de vista*, *Revista de Critica Cultural*, *Debate feminista*, journals that have been founded by individuals very often: like Marta Lamas, who founded *Debate feminista*. And they've been kept going by those individuals in an uphill battle. They're extraordinary in their range and in their eclecticism, so it's not just all a dismal picture. But you have to think about the enormous labor and sacrifice that goes into all those journals to keep them going.

Local Formations and Mass Cultures in Latin America

A. D.: Is there a way that traditional literary intellectuals are being drained

away on the circuit of circular migration? Are there activities or arts, like performance, or other spheres of cultural practice where that local autonomy, resources, production are not being so drained, where there are more resources or activity?

J. F.: Yes, there's a lot of local activity. But one of the things about performance on that level is that it's almost impossible to register it if you live outside, because you have to be there, right? It's almost impossible to really get an idea of that unless you're on the spot. You'd have to be on the spot in all possible Latin American countries. I was really amazed when I went to Colombia a few years ago at the height of the fashion of storytellers, and on campuses there would be these people who every Thursday would get together and tell stories. There would be real storytelling. Not Broadway, or even Nuyorican Poets Café style. It was really amazing, very much local. I don't know if they still exist, but that was one way a few years ago that people kept a literary current alive in a way independent of any kind of institutions and participated in by 'real' people.

A. D.: Especially remarkable or perhaps especially necessary in Colombia, where narratives are otherwise so besieged.

J. F.: It was very remarkable I thought, but that's something you only get when you're on the spot. And similarly, recently in Uruguay and in Argentina, there's been all this activity around the old *morga*. That's the old carnival processions, where they used to have also dramatic performances. So that's become another form of contemporary popular art and resistance: street theater.

A. D.: That's been wielded, against the WTO, as well, and you find it in New York, the spectacle of protest. I wonder if we can move from performance to real mass culture, cinema in particular. How

has Latin American cinema changed over the last couple of decades? What are its strengths now, its major producers?

J. F.: I think, there is a Latin American cinema, yes. And it went through some very bad periods. One of the worst things that happened was when Brazil dissolved Imbrafilm and stopped the Brazilian film industry cold. I think, both Argentina and Mexico have got fairly active film industries, and they seem to be dealing with a lot of contemporary issues and functioning very much like US independents did a few years ago. But there they necessarily depend a lot on international finance and distribution. It's very difficult to Latin American film shown outside the country. But there is a Latin American popular art form that's enormously successful and gets exported everywhere: and that is the soap opera. (Laughs).

A. D.: Is there anyone in particular you're thinking of? I know there's one that you've been following in particular.

J. F.: Yes, *Betty la fea*. (Laughs).

A. D.: Does *Betty la fea* tell us anything about feminism in Latin America? Or is it a kind of national morality tale?

J. F.: I don't think it tells us anything about feminism. I think, what it tells you about, which is very interesting, is the local manifestation of globalization, right? (Laughs). It uses the fashion industry to talk about the fortunes and ambitions of a local girl. It plays with the pressures of image, of consumer culture and international fashion, and on the effects and ambitions about corporate business in a kind of traditional family. Because Betty's family is very traditional. So it's this culture clash played up by the plot that's quite interesting.

A. D.: So it's a kind of image market that meets...

J. F.: Tradition.

Cold War and Cultural Revolutions

A. D.: I'd like to ask you about your book on the Cold War. Because all these discourses about globalization and the state, I think, really have their roots in the unresolved vacuums and contests of the Cold War. I wonder if you could describe the book a little bit, and what you were trying to do there. It's called *Cultural Revolutions* and being published by Harvard University Press?

J. F.: Yes. Well, the book is really about the end of certain projects, or alternative projects of the fifties and the sixties. It tracks the dynamics and political fate of those projects and then surveys other cultural practices that developed in the period following the end of Cold War: the consequences of a certain breakdown of values in Latin America and elsewhere, which I think was one of the things that happened during the Cold War. Ironic, since the Cold War was pitched as precisely a war of values in the US. That supposed war of values was then exported to Latin America: the whole idea that this was a struggle of ideas between two universals. There was the universal of freedom, which was what the US was preaching. So you have to begin with the cultural politics around that, the propaganda armed around certain concepts that the US was plugging: freedom of the artist, the universal.

A. D.: What would be the other universal?

J. F.: Well, coming supposedly from the Soviet Union, right? This other universal was connected to the idea of "peace," peace and social justice through the Cold War. But the interesting thing about that is that socialist, Marxist aesthetics, Soviet aesthetics to be more accurate, they *never really took* culturally in Latin America. Socialist realism never took in Latin America. The most important Communist

artists and writers were Neruda, who wrote epic poetry, and the painters like Siqueiros and the Mexican muralists, who again were not exactly doing socialist realism. So it's very interesting that political alliance took off in a completely different way. But those practices and the political cultures surrounding them were affected by the bankruptcy, you could call it that, of both sides in that particular struggle of universals. As soon as it was discovered that the CIA was paying for certain kinds of publications, that undermined the whole concept of the freedom of the artist that they were apparently upholding and promoting. And the Soviet Union's response to the Hungarian crisis, its deployment of the personality cult, undermined a great deal of solidarity from an international Left. So there was some playing out during the fifties and the sixties of certain ideas, which foundered on both sides. And then Cuba came in and offered a whole different set of alternatives: the idea of national liberation, of third world liberation, the idea of overcoming the separation of art and life, as the artist became, or could become, a revolutionary. And I think that the solidarities and hopes raised by Cuba, the experiments it encouraged again, foundered against the *realpolitik* of what was happening in Cuba. In one line of argument in Cuba, the best and sometimes only way to help the revolution was actually to join the *guerillas* literally or as cultural front, and that, I think, more or less did away with any notion of artists and writers as independent in practice. So I think, it was interesting that as everything was being played out, many theorists who'd been initiated with the avant-garde from the Left underwent these huge shifts in alliances and style. That's how the first part of the book is structured.

A. D.: How is the rest of *Cultural Revolutions* structured?

J. F.: Well, I look at these other forces, ideas, theories, that were actually shaping the course of culture and that people were not that aware of in the same way they noticed Cold War battles. For instance, there's a whole chapter on the idea of the city and its influence: how writers and artists were responding to what was happening to the city with the demographic explosion. And the reaction of writers to that: this notion, this idea of the barbarian within the gates. There are also chapters that track the idea of national emancipation, too. I talk about that through various novels, and about how the idea of this kind of demiurge writer figure, the writer as hero, was central to the idea of a national history or identity. It becomes played out in different ways in literary texts as a kind of aporia. So, *Cultural Revolutions* is a book that covers many different things. But, I suppose, basically it's about the interplay of both obvious and more hidden factors that have produced whole changes in the cultural field in Latin America over the last thirty years. There really has been a sort of seismic change, and through the book I try to account for this seismic change in many different ways, through many different kinds of approach: from the kind of ideological breakdown, and you can put it like that, when the Cold War actually tried to set the agenda for literature and the arts, to thinking about how these more alternative or constructive agendas, like the sense that the faith in the nation, or the bankruptcy in that faith, the end of the republican ideal in Latin America, have affected literature, the arts, culture in general. The foundering of the republican ideal was a devastating thing. The Latin American republic came to a very abrupt end with the military governments, which were military governments of a new style. They were new and devastating, because they really outlawed part of the population and

said they were not citizens, basically: that a whole part of the population was not worth keeping alive and should be killed off. So, part of what I lay out is the effect of the military governments, the effect of the demographic explosions and the mass cultures, that follow these population explosions. This development was extremely important and difficult in Latin America, mass cultures come in and colonize public attention on a scale that I don't think most of the intelligentsia were capable of dealing with, or knew how to deal with.

A. D.: What in particular are you thinking of?

J. F.: The fact that all of a sudden somebody like García Márquez says, "Well, however many novels I sell, they'll never reach as many people as the telenovelas". Because there had always been this pedagogic dream of writers in Latin America that eventually with mass literacy they would be speaking to the mass of the people. And all of a sudden the mass of the people are speaking a different language to them, and they're really not in touch with that language.

Writing and Cultural Channels for the Nation

A. D.: So that writing or writers potentially stop being a channel, the preferred channel for the nation?

J. F.: They stop being a channel for the nation, right.

A. D.: It's funny that these explosions of the mass cultures are taking place at the same time as the *boom* is reaching its apogee at an international level in Latin America. Is that about right, historiographically?

J. F.: I think so. I think that's right. It's reaching its apogee, but at the same

time that apogee is somehow forecasting its own decline, if you can put it that way.

A. D.: There seems to be a general backlash now, or a desire to rehistoricize the *boom*. I think, in part you can trace that backlash to how someone like Vargas Llosa is now perceived as somehow.

J. F.: The conservative turn.

A. D.: Yes, even someone who was completely abandoned by his people at the polls. They were disgusted by his intervention in politics. Since the book uses the frame of Cold War and talks about other negotiations within it, what are the survivors, the loose threads of Cold War? Where are the loose threads still visible? In Cuba, in those old *boom* figures?

J. F.: I think, it's just that the *boom* people tried to configure their work by using the model of the nation. They *were* national allegories in many ways. But I think, they've not really been able to make a transition into a world in which there's an increasingly privatized individualism. I don't think the *boom* writers were ever good on subtle feelings, for instance, or subtle nuances. I think, a lot of the younger writers now have abandoned the big national pretensions, the big universal claims and social claims. They are much more into this other thing: a kind of retreat into, an experiment with whatever's left of the self. So I think, there's a very big gulf between people writing now and the people who were writing during the *boom* generation. A few people, a writer like Isabel Allende, try to keep it going in a way, and she is a bestseller. But I don't think, she's a bestseller that attracts the interest of younger writers.

A. D.: Is she a bestseller in Latin America?

J. F.: Well, she's on all the book stands. It's very funny, if you look at the book stands in Latin America, there's a kind of feeling temporal anachrony.

Because when I was coming out of Argentina last, the book shelves were packed with every possible thing that Mario Benedetti had ever written, and Isabel Allende. These were the writers on all the book stands.

A. D.: Is it because there are prizes or projects?

J. F.: I don't know what it is. They're publishing projects, right. And many younger writers are there and they're selling small issues. For instance, there's a writer I was interested in Mexico, called Pérez Cruz, who practically sells his things off a handcart. So, there's a huge difference between this best-selling circuit and what many writers are trying to do. And what's good and new.

New Writing and Cultural Citizenship: Poetry, the Borders of the Self, Chronicles of Urban Violence

A. D.: Can we say that the outmoding or privatization of the nation is a source for worry? Because it gets removed as an object of an intellectual critic, is that what's happening? Is that concurrent with the novel no longer being a kind of synthetic form that people turn to? You're talking about these other forms that take the self as their subject. So, where is the social or the political in that exploration of the self?

J. F.: It actually appears very rarely. I mean, I looked, for instance, recently at an anthology of young Mexican writers, and what was very interesting about them was that every single story took place in a non-Mexican background. In London, in Africa, Morocco, or wherever, but not in Mexico. That seems to be one of the predominant practices right now. It's a literature that's not bounded by the nation.

A. D.: Do you get to be post-modernly Mexican via the fact that you are a traveler?

J. F.: It seems so.

A. D.: Is that the mark of new international citizenship?

J. F.: It's got a lot to do with it. On the other hand, there is all this very local kind of literature, like the literature of Tijuana, or the literature of the Border, or whatever, or of Zacatecas, or of Chiapas, right? So, there's this two-fold thing: literature that is very local, but not looking to be centralized by the D. F., by Mexico City, and, on the other hand, literature with this kind of international scope. And I think, you probably find something similar in Argentina and in Chile.

A. D.: That's quite interesting. And different from the Spanish, Iberian situation. Where do women fit into the local? Is it a localized identity that is female? How are self-consciously feminist writers playing with these new writing practices of the self?

J. F.: I think, they are more concerned about the practices of the self, yes. But again I don't think there's any way you can generalize about women's writing, there's just such an enormous amount. Less and less is it concerned with feminist questions in the old sense. I think, it's interesting that where women seem to be very strong at the moment is in poetry. There's an enormous amount of excellent poetry by women, and that again is part of this examination of subjecthood.

A. D.: It's funny, I had a student who said to me (we were talking about genres for Latino literature): "Well, poetry's a much better, or elegant outlet for anger." So you have this new development in poetry? Is there another genre you're particularly interested in?

J. F.: I've been keeping my eye on a lot of different genres. But those two genres

that have been occupying me mostly in the last few weeks, have been the urban chronicles, which are mostly written by men actually, and poetry by both women and men. Poetry's very interesting, because the audience is really quite small, although there are hundreds of poetry readings held every night. It's quite a small constituency, but it seems to attract people who really in some way, in some very profound way, still believe in literature, who believe in the aesthetic. I find that very encouraging, myself. Even though it's a very sort of minor activity. At the urban chronicles I've been looking for a very different reason, because that's very much a phenomenon of the last few years. I think, it's partly trying to deal with the rapidity of change.

A. D.: Within the city?

J. F.: Within the city, yes. The rapidity of change which, I think, people find almost ungraspable.

A. D.: Is there a particular one? Were you thinking of *La virgen de los sicarios*?

J. F.: I was thinking of that, yes. And of others written in Colombia and Venezuela. But also just the urban chronicles of Monsiváis or Lemebel.

A. D.: A kind of transgenre?

J. F.: Yes. It's again very much connected to journalism.

A. D.: Because it was a very popular 19th century form?

J. F.: Yes, but it's come back, as a popular genre. It seems to be a way of trying to monitor this very rapidly changing scene.

A. D.: Is that a new national form?

J. F.: I don't think, it's national form. It's not a new form. It's more like *costumbrismo* in my mind, because that was always about what was disappearing with modernization in the 19th century. And now, again it's like "What's changing? What little bits of change, what can we pick up from all this debris?"

Violence and Sexual Difference: Masculinities and Feminism

A. D.: You're tracing violence particularly in these new chronicles?

J. F.: Yes. Nowadays, casual urban violence has replaced state violence as one of the concerns of most people living in the city. And it's related very much to unemployment, globalization, the breakdown of the welfare state, many many factors of this kind. It's making the city a very risky place to live in, a place where people have to risk their lives everyday. So it produces a kind of literature about fear.

A. D.: It's an interesting contrast to the *telenovela*?

J. F.: Yes, the comfort of the *telenovela*, where you can always solve it through romance, or something like that.

A. D.: Are these chronicles mostly written by men?

J. F.: Yes, all the ones I've read are written by men.

A. D.: It's an interesting gender divide, these alternate productions of fantasies?

J. F.: You see, I think it's related very much to feminist criticism, to certain pre-occupations of feminists about sexual difference, right?

A. D.: How so?

J. F.: Because, do you think of sexual difference as socially constructed gender, versus something like a sexual difference which is anterior—according to Lacan—to a subjectivity? Then you're either thinking of deep rooted attitudes that are either primordial or, as Judith Butler or Pierre Bourdieu would have it, a very long sedimented *habitus*, right? And so, just prospect that these differences can be changed or altered by legislation is not necessarily very promising. I think, this is the point about why these chronicles are

written by men: since in fact, most of this violence in the city is perpetrated by men. This is just a fact of life that nobody ever discusses, that the kidnappings, the rape, the absolute common occurrence of rape, the use of rape as a weapon of subjection, that these things are not much on people's agenda. People talk about violence as if it was something inexplicable.

A. D.: A natural phenomenon?

J. F.: Yes. But they never see the need then to discuss it in relation to sexual difference, to masculinities, to feminist issues.

A. D.: So you don't see these definitions of sexual difference as opposed to the social construction of gender as an insurmountable problem for feminism?

J. F.: I don't think it is. I think, the problem is that there's been this kind of debate between social constructivists and essentialists. And I think, people like Butler and Bourdieu, and some Latin American feminists, are trying to find some kind of middle ground which says social constructivism is too functional and, there is something there which needs more thought and more investigation, something that is not necessarily essential in an essentialist sense. That's why Judith Butler talks about repetition and citation of sexual difference, ways in which the sedimentation takes place, and Bourdieu talks about habitus. And it's not to say that men are worse than women, because in a sense it's the mutual subject formation that's interconnected, you can't separate one from the other. But I think, violence is the topic that most raises the question of this difference and it's construction. Because there is what Balibar calls "violence worse than death," that goes on in a lot of these places where law and order has broken down, where there is no universally recognized law. And so the law of the strongest and the law of revenge prevails.

A. D.: And that privilege of strength and revenge, privately or politically, is sort of re-essentialized then, as masculine?

J. F.: Yes, exactly. I read a very interesting book on rape cases in Brazil by a woman who interviewed prisoners who'd been convicted and raped, and one of her points is that it's the old honor code which has been resignified in an individualist society. So we have to think in terms of sexual difference again, but rethink that.

A. D.: And take up the honor code?

J. F.: And see why these primordial codes of masculinity are re-articulated in perfectly modern circumstances, right?

A. D.: Do you think that's partly because they're detached from the nation? That now violence is re-semanticized at a local, even a bodily level?

J. F.: Yes, right. It is.

A. D.: I wonder if we could talk return to gender studies for a minute, and ask whether or how studies of masculinities have changed the field for Latin American feminisms?

J. F.: In some countries like Chile, there's been a series of essays published on masculinity, but mostly by sociologists and social scientists, and still within a more or less constructivist context. I think, Marta Lamas in *Debate feminista* constantly brings up the question of sexual difference, she constantly poses this particular question. So people are aware of it. But there hasn't been any connection so far, or very much of a connection, made between the urban violence which people experience everyday and these other questions which are fundamental to feminism. So I think that connection needs to be made.

Futures for Latin American Cultures

A. D.: You've been a very good navigator and signaler of resources of experi-

ment and resistance and hope. Do you see any little important sites, in addition to the chronicles of violence, to poetry, places where Latin America responds to culture, in culture, in ways that don't get registered here?

J. F.: One thing that is always very interesting in Latin America to my mind is that people have never thrown out literature quite as thoroughly as they have in this country. (Laughs). There's still an enormous respect, obviously in certain circles we're talking about, we're not talking about generally. Even beyond certain circles, there's a sort of respect for the literary. You can talk to people, a Colombian taxi driver will talk about García Márquez, for instance. There's a sense that is important, to us, to have a writer of that stature. So it makes you feel that the situation is not at all hopeless, that there's going to be some kind of necessary public space of culture. I don't know about a revival of literature, but certainly, and perhaps more in Latin America even than here, there is still going to be a place for writing, for narration, for public critique.

Jean Franco has published, among her most important books, the following titles (with numerous translations and reeditions):

- The Modern Culture of Latin America: Society and the Artist* (1967)
- An Introduction to Spanish American Literature* (1969)
- Spanish American Literature since Independence* (1973)
- César Vallejo: the Dialectics of Poetry and Silence* (1976)
- Lectura socio-crítica de la obra novelística de Agustín Yáñez* (1988)
- Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (1989)
- Marcar diferencias, cruzar fronteras* (1996)
- Critical Passions: Selected Essays* (1999)
- The Decline and Fall of the Lettered City: Latin America and the Cold War* (2002)

Ana Dopico is Assistant Professor in the Departments of Spanish, Portuguese and Comparative Literatures at New York University and actually Faculty Fellow at the International Center for Advanced Studies at NYU.

Oscar Aguilar Ascencio

México durante el primer año de un gobierno de alternancia: ¿Dónde está el cambio?

Dependiendo del humor con que se interprete la dinámica de la política mexicana, ésta puede verse cínicamente, como una farsa en la que todo cambió para permanecer igual, o críticamente, como una obra de teatro que refleja un camino mucho más complicado que el mesianismo de Fox, a través de los medios de comunicación, hizo creer a muchos mexicanos. En cualquier caso, el primer año del gobierno de Fox puede describirse brevemente como una obra, todavía inconclusa (se espera que no termine hasta el 2006), que se llevó a cabo en 4 actos.

**Primer acto:
El anuncio. El cambio que viene**

Por primera vez en la historia de México se registra una alternancia en el poder: nunca antes un candidato de un partido opositor había ganado una elección presidencial. Más de 70 años de gobiernos nacidos de un movimiento revolucionario cedían finalmente el poder, mediante elecciones democráticas, a un presidente carismático, surgido de las filas del empresariado, que encarnaba la idea de cambio, que