vez más creativa y dinámica (187). También Rose Mary Salum, aunque de manera más personal, relata cómo el dislocamiento lingüístico que sentía en tanto libanesa mexicana en los Estados Unidos la llevó a editar una revista bilingüe.

El texto metaficcional y con reminiscencias autobiográficas de Isaac Goldemberg nos presenta la figura de un escritor peruano-judío que escribe en Nueva York una obra que rescata “visiones filtradas de tradiciones latinoamericanas y judías”, creando a través de esta nueva forma de mestizaje un nuevo idioma latinoamericano (220). Por su parte Gisela Heffes, compiladora del volumen, señala que “[l]a escritura […] puede funcionar como un dispositivo que […] restablece el vacío dejado por el desplazamiento”, ya que “en Estados Unidos un escritor deja de ser argentino para volverse latinoamericano”, siendo la unidad en la lengua lo que “conforma nuestro anclaje, nuestro hogar” (226, 232).

Ana Merino, oriunda de una familia literaria, narra los retos y logros no sólo de su trasplante a los Estados Unidos, sino también de la enseñanza de escritura creativa, pero no en su lengua materna. El ensayo final de Arturo Arias versa sobre EpiCentro, un audaz proyecto editorial en línea, que, en el contexto del desplazamiento de más de 3 millones de centroamericanos a causa de la violencia de guerras y masacres, busca dar voz a escritores emigrados de esa región.

Como retrato actual dentro de los parámetros antes mencionados, el libro presenta un panorama rico. Tal vez ubicar este fenómeno dentro de la abundante historia de la literatura del exilio, si no internacional, del contexto latinoamericano a partir del siglo XIX, habría generado interés como historia literaria. En todo caso, el volumen contribuye de manera importante a entender el fenómeno de la expansión de la literatura en lengua española en los Estados Unidos.

Odile Cisneros

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This is a study of Marcos Aguinis’ lifelong effort to democratize a culture with deep roots in dictatorship. Argentina’s lack of experience in democratic practices is evident in people’s attitudes towards different aspects of its culture and history (e.g., soccer fanaticism, the idealization of Evita, etc.). It is a nation that thrives on opposition, exclusion, and intolerance. Wassner examines Aguinis’ writing, as well as his cultural program as Secretary of Culture during
Ricardo Alfonsín’s presidency, in great detail. She focuses on his work between 1976 and 2002.

This book starts with a sophisticated historical analysis of the concept of the public intellectual: the construction of this figure during the French Enlightenment, its reinvention in the Argentine context, and political activism by intellectuals in Europe and Latin America. After that, Wassner does an in-depth study of the methods and arguments behind Aguinis’ cultural program and public interventions during Alfonsín’s presidency. President Alfonsín invited intellectuals into his government in order to advance modernity and democratization of culture. Wassner proposes that Aguinis’ work made Argentina an active participant in the conversation on modernization in the West. Specifically, his contribution to the values of reformation, democracy, and enlightenment has been to focus on the issues of anti-semitism, racism, and mestizaje, which had been swept under the rug before.

Wassner builds a strong theoretical framework to show the relevance of the public intellectual’s imprint on social change. In order to discuss the particular nature of the Argentine public intellectual, she dissects Jürgen Habermas’ term “the public sphere” as the basis for modern and democratic nations. She addresses the dangers of modernity and the key role language plays in manipulating the message to the masses. She looks into Habermas’ insight on the inherent conflict between democratic ideals and nationalism, as well as into his critics’ viewpoints, because she claims that this conflict is particularly true for Spanish America. She defines the role of the public intellectual throughout history, engaging with theorists such as Edward Said, Cynthia Ozick, Michiel Baud, Rossane Rutten, and Edward Shils, to frame the uniqueness of this role in post-colonial societies.

Following that is an overview of the main four generations of Argentine public intellectuals — Echeverría, Sarmiento, Alberdi; Lugones, Gerchunoff; Mallea, Martínez Estrada; and Viñas, Aguinis — which is very helpful for understanding the particular historical context of Marcos Aguinis’ ideology. Wassner delineates Alberto Gerchunoff’s conflictive legacy in Argentina’s cultural map because he was the first Jewish public intellectual in Argentina. Discussing Gerchunoff’s Los gauchos judios and his journalistic writing in La Nación newspaper is important to set the stage for the central role Marcos Aguinis’ Jewishness plays in Wassner’s argument. She states that the fact that Aguinis self-identifies as a Jew, and that he openly defends Jews, validates his unique understanding of the importance of including the Other in his cultural democratization agenda. His effort to promote inclusiveness and equal treatment to all citizens has been the most valuable contribution he made as a public intellectual. She argues that Marcos Aguinis should be recognized as the most valuable modern public intellectual in Argentina instead of David Viñas.
She also positions Aguinis as part of a larger historical trend of Jews who have disproportionately been key figures in building modern nation states. In addition, Wassner reviews Aguinis’ contemporaries around the world who were critical of the role of public intellectuals as agents of cultural homogeneization (Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Bronislaw Baczko, Augusto Boal, and Paulo Freire). She claims that Aguinis stands with them in advancing the connection between arts and politics for a change towards cultural inclusiveness.

This book discusses several key texts written by Aguinis in depth. *Memorias de una siembra, utopia y práctica del PRONDEC* (1990) is Aguinis’ reflection on his Programa Nacional de Democratización de la Cultura, to institute democratic values in Argentine culture. PRONDEC led seminars, workshops, colloquiums, courses, and congresses around the country. Wassner reviews the program’s reception, its successes, and its shortcomings. Then, she shows how Aguinis reinvents Erasmus’ thought in his essay “Elogio de la culpa”, which was written in response to the attacks on the Israeli embassy and the bombing of the AMIA in the 1990s, to explain his view of anti-semitism in Latin American society. Also, Wassner proposes that this essay is an example of how Aguinis borrows, recycles, and makes European reform political philosophy local using psychology as a tool to try to close the gap between Enlightenment’s ideals and Latin American reality.

She also looks at the intimate relationship between Aguinis and Monseñor Laguna, bishop to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Morón. In her close reading of *Las dudas y las certezas: diálogos completos* (2001), she proposes that this text evidences the need for religious reform as part of Aguinis’ democratization project. She looks at Latin America’s interfaith dialogue, and the dialogue genre itself, in order to stress the importance of participation, dialogue, and critical thought in Aguinis’ project.

Finally, Wassner discusses Aguinis’ novels, which best position him as a Jewish public intellectual. She analyses the central role that his background as a psychiatrist plays in his fiction writing in order to show that he is creating an “inconciente político” which needs to deconstruct before constructing new democratic cultures. She refers to other novels with Jewish themes to prove the consistency that exists among his narratives, and the importance of his being openly Jewish to advance his agenda.

This study focuses on a slice of intellectual history that is highly significant. Even if the reader is not interested in this particular author, this book successfully demonstrates the value of the public intellectual. It also illuminates a key aspect of Argentine political history: the nation’s weak democratic culture, which is the reason why Argentina struggled for so long to establish a stable democratic system. It shows the lifelong investment that Aguinis, together with
other intellectuals and politicians, has made to fix the problem. In the conclusion of the book Wassner discusses the great volume of articles he has published in newspapers in recent years. These articles are evidence of his ongoing commitment to cultural democratization. This book makes a strong case for Aguinis as a beacon of modernity who deserves more public recognition.

Ariana Huberman

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How to study the early modern Spanish monarchy? Was it really a national colonial empire? Can its complex constitution best be understood by a single author or by many historians working in tandem? Polycentric Monarchies offers forceful answers to these questions.

In a short yet clearly argued introduction, the editors claim that the Spanish monarchy had no centers and peripheries, that it was more than just a “composite monarchy,” a term coined some three decades ago by John Elliott. According to the editors the Spanish monarchy was more than an assembly of its European kingdoms, each with its own separate constitution, presided over by Castile, whose control over a vast colonial hinterland in the Americas and parts of Asia made it dominant. Global Spain, they argue, was not a colonial empire. It was, rather, a “polycentric monarchy,” that is, a globally dispersed collection of European “kingdoms” and American city states (in America the cities and their hinterlands often had vast territories in between under the control of indigenous sovereign polities), each claiming fierce autonomy (and often exaggerated claims of religious centrality for the whole).

This global collection of kingdoms and city states were loosely kept together by explicit and implicit constitutions, pacts, and exchanges. There was a complex political economy of favors by which “kingdoms” and cities transferred subsidies to the Crown in order to participate in the collegial co-direction of empire through councils and parliaments. The brisk circulation of lay and clerical bureaucracies, whose entourages often married into distinguished local families, also kept the whole together. As members of these bureaucracies stayed behind, they created vast trans-kingdom familiar networks that engaged in transoceanic commercial or religious enterprises (merchant guilds, cofradías, religious and secular orders).