Machado de Assis satirised late nineteenth-century order, progress and reliance upon scientific empiricism.

The images of twentieth-century Brazil are contradictory, with the tension between progress and its antithesis – poverty, violence, corruption, illegality – constituting the major theme. Modifications of artistic, literary, architectural and musical productions aimed at making them more 'Brazilian' culminated in a modernist movement that peaked during the 1922 Modern Art Week held in São Paulo. The modernist trend was a significant shift in cultural invention, emphasising an endemic national refinement capable of absorbing, rather than imitating, foreign trends. Twentieth-century Brazilian cultural developments were increasingly public, allowing for wider circulation and larger audiences and resulting in a more confident domestic creation.

Tracing recent trends in popular culture, the epilogue leaves Brazil's future undefined, albeit in constant fluctuation, and shaped by the media. Highly politicised visual culture exerts a powerful influence on Brazilian and foreign audiences. Foreign persuasion was illustrated in the infamous 2002 'Blame it on Lisa' episode of *The Simpsons*, for instance – harkening back to the savage imaginary that has plagued the country, the episode mocked stereotypes of US tourists abroad and brought stereotypes of Brazilians to the forefront. The result was anger among citizens, tourist agencies and political leaders in Brazil.

Appropriate for college level, *Brazil Imagined* presents a country whose national identity has developed internally and has been influenced from the outside. Highlighting dominant artistic and literary trends, Sadlier analyses competing images and oscillating themes from the colonial period to the present. Concluding that the legacies of colonialism continue to affect creative movements, this text highlights the contradictions of order and progress, arguing that poverty and its accompanying predicaments have produced a distressed population. At the same time, citizens have greater opportunities to participate in the production of culture and to influence the continually evolving sense of Brazilianness.

Muhlenberg College CATHY MARIE OUELLETTE

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Frank M. Afflito and Paul Jessow, *The Quiet Revolutionaries: Seeking Justice in Guatemala* (Austin TX: University of Texas Press, 2007), pp. x + 206, $60.00, $24.95 pb.

Etelle Higonnet (ed.), *Quiet Genocide: Guatemala 1981–1983* (New Brunswick NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2009), pp. xx + 237, £42.50, hb.

It is certain that the intensity of the associated violence as well as the complexity of the social and political conflicts in Guatemala that reached genocidal levels during the 1980s will continue to attract the attention of scholars outside the ranks of Latin Americanists. As time moves on and more studies are conducted, however, new perspectives and new data will be needed to attract readers' interest. The compilation of excerpts from the report by Guatemala's truth commission (Commission for Historical Clarification, CEH) in the volume edited by Etelle Higonnet will remain useful for anyone who needs to consult what this particular truth commission actually wrote, irrespective of the quality of the rest of the book. However, I fear the study by Afflito and Jessow about how a new category of seekers

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of justice – even a social movement, if I read the authors correctly – that emerged in the wake of the war has little new to offer for those looking for new insights into Guatemalan history.

The Quiet Revolutionaries is a close-up study of the membership base of various organisations that appeared in Guatemala in the late 1980s and early 1990s, composed of people who got caught up in the war because they lost close relatives and decided to seek justice. Given the tense political atmosphere, pervasive violence and totally malfunctioning legal system that existed at the time, this was no easy task, yet by coming together and sharing frustrations these people managed to build a whole new social movement. At the same time, their work of lobbying and organization building functioned to alleviate personal pain in so far as this way of collective healing was consistent with the local culture. The book is based on extensive individual interviews with activists and on participant observation in several of the organisations in question, carried out by Frank Afflito in the early 1990s. Concluding that the legal redress these 'war survivors' and 'war resistors' sought amounted to a programme for rebuilding a justice-based and democratic Guatemala, and hence that these people might turn out to be the founders of such a state, history willing, the authors hail them as 'the quiet revolutionaries'.

In many ways this is a sympathetic book, written in simple, easily accessible prose that step by step tells the story of deceptively ordinary people who cared little for radical politics yet managed to formulate a programme for radical change just by demanding justice with respect to their children, husbands or other close relatives. It aims to show how such 'quiet revolutionaries' experienced and responded to their personal losses, and explores the social and psychological mechanisms they used to deal with situations of extreme uncertainty and eventually form a collective identity and a social movement. We hear a great deal about how Afflito collected the data, but much less about the actual workings of a psychological mechanism capable of reconciling grievances with the building of a social movement. An introductory chapter provides a politically correct 'army versus the people'-based historical introduction to the civil war, but in the main chapters Guatemala's political actors are almost completely absent, except for the military and 'the rich' in their roles as the malevolent agencies responsible for the sorry state of the country's institutions. We hear that the quiet revolutionaries work in various human rights and popular organisations, but nothing is said about how these groups were founded, the shifting strategies they pursued, or their role in national politics as factions in a complex landscape of one-man parties, short-term alliances and other political initiatives.

The unsaid premise is, I suspect, that it is difficult to think about Guatemala's apparently fragmented and unstructured society as anything other than an imperfect version of one's own well-integrated modern society, with its prominent and well-functioning legal system. Furthermore, 'our' – that is, North American and North European – propensity to imagine Latin American politics as primitive in one way or another easily enables the rapid identification of heroes and villains, the army versus the people, at the cost of more analytic approaches. This is a pity, because between the deceptively simple arguments presented in this book I suspect there is sufficient background material for what could be an interesting study of Guatemalan micro-level politics.

In his preface to *Quiet Genocide*, the former United Nations Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, Juan Méndez, writes that 'what is especially harmful to the success of the democratisation drive is the attitude towards these events by those

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who consider themselves "ordinary citizens" and "innocent bystanders". It is not a question of forcing people … to share the blame; it is … crucial that they confront the past and recognise the special plight of their fellow citizens'. A compilation of key texts, carefully framed by insightful forewords and historical essays, might be a good way of addressing this type of attitude, but the frames that are provided in this book are lacking in so far as the version of Guatemala's history (by Greg Grandin) and the summary of the work of the commission (in the form of an anonymously written appendix 1) that are provided most likely will not communicate with the sceptics and critics Méndez has in mind.

Grandin's condensed account of Guatemalan history focuses on the structural causes of the genocide: the country's colonial history, the counter-revolution of 1954 and a vicious circle of popular mobilisation and violent repression that brought the state to 'the point of collapse' in the late 1970s, whereupon the army launched a plan for rebuilding the state. This plan involved spectacular acts of violence, selective terror and finally massacres against various Mayan-speaking groups; this is the 'army versus the people' paradigm in its purest form, and nothing is suggested about alternative readings. In Grandin's chapter, the 'fine points' about whether this phase of the army's 'national war against subversion' was 'genocide' or 'only' contained 'genocidal acts', and about whether the atrocities in question had a racist motivation or were 'only' intentional – that is, that Mayas suffered a 'politicide' rather than a genocide – disappear.

For those who study genocide and how to prevent it, however, the points about intentionality versus motive and genocide versus 'politicide' (or 'ethnic' versus 'ideological cleansing') are far from fine. In the first place, using 'genocide' instead of 'genocidal acts' is crucial for determining issues of responsibility and power to take judicial action, and secondly the question of motive also raises the issue of how to understand the identities of individuals and groups who are brought together as 'co-citizens' within a nation-state. To its credit, the CEH's own report provides the clearest discussion of the first issue in this book; the attentive reader will note that it discusses 'acts of genocide', not genocide.

The selected passages from the report, then, show the way in which the CEH went about demonstrating that various groups of Mayas had suffered acts of genocide. They show that the overwhelming share of victims, even in multi-ethnic communities, were Mayas, and note that Mayan cultural traits (language, dress, way of living) determined who was branded as 'subversive' and hence targeted for extermination. They make chilling reading.

The following section by Naomi Roht-Arriaza contextualises the 'quiet genocide' from a very different angle by looking at the prospects for holding criminally responsible those who committed the brutalities in question – that is, the generals who led the Guatemalan army and state apparatus during the war. As far as I can determine the piece gives a good overview of, for example, how sovereignty and universal jurisdiction clash in transnational cases, and hence deserves its place in the book.

The presentation of the work of the CEH in appendix 1 is in many ways a useful summary, but not much more. It contains no references to what must have been difficult methodological choices, nor does it problematise the total figures of victims or the after-effects of the war that later became the subject of academic debate as well as protracted political struggle. Appendix 2 repeats the recommendations with which the CEH concluded its report. It would have been more useful to include a piece on whether these recommendations have been helpful or even implemented

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at all, analogous to Roht-Arriaza's piece on what has happened on the juridical front since the report's presentation in 1999.

The conclusion is therefore that while this volume about Guatemala's 'quiet genocide' is useful for containing easily accessible excerpts of key chapters from the report of the truth commission of that country, it could have been so much more useful if the framing had been different. The question is, to cite Méndez once more, how these chapters of Guatemalan history have been 'absorbed by the national culture'. To that end scholars and activists must open up the context within which that history was written rather than narrowing down the argument.

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Kristi Anne Stølen, *Guatemalans in the Aftermath of Violence: The Refugees' Return* (Philadelphia PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp. xi+236, £39.00, hb.

In *Guatemalans in the Aftermath of Violence*, Kristi Anne Stølen presents the results of some three years of research in one community, La Quetzal, on Guatemalan returnees (*retornados*). La Quetzal is a multi-ethnic community in the western Petén, within the boundaries of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, 24 kilometres from Mexico. The returnees arrived at La Quetzal in April 1995, after ten years in Mexican refugee camps. Stolen portrays the returnees as courageous, resourceful peasants, collectively re-creating their lives for the third time, now within the constraints of a bioreserve and with considerable pride in the 'organisation' that distinguishes them from other refugees and peasants; they are the Guatemalan exiles who negotiated a complex set of conditions with the Guatemalan government for their collective return. *JLAS* readers will be interested in Stølen's position that the Guatemalan guerrilla movement did not receive strong support from indigenous peasants (p. ix), which she reaches by extrapolating from her La Quetzal data. She further concludes that, as they reconstruct their lives in the new 'lands of hope', the returnees are developing new spaces for Guatemalan citizenship and democracy.

The book is organised in two parts and an introduction. In part 1, Stølen relies on returnee re-memories and secondary sources to reconstruct how community members ended up in La Quetzal. She begins with their lives in the highlands, their settlement in the Ixcán and Petén lowland frontiers, and the development of the armed conflict. The second part covers the years of exile and relocations in Mexico (and for some, displacement in Guatemala), preparations for return and construction of the new community in the Petén. Stølen explores factors of continuity and change, particularly in relation to ethnicity, gender and state relations.

Stølen conducted fieldwork In La Quetzal from April 1998 to March 2001, visiting three times a year for one to two months. In addition to participant observation, she conducted more than 100 interviews with returnees, all in Spanish, widely varying in formality. She also interviewed key actors in supporting international and government agencies, and in La Quetzal's neighbouring (non-returnee) communities. She arranged her fieldwork with community leaders who supported her project, she says, despite the lack of any material incentive, so that she could tell the world and their children their story.

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