El libro concluye con un breve capítulo, “Concluding with Pedagogy: Father and Teacher as Abject Hero”, que se centra en la relación entre pedagogía y heroísmo en Suelo natal, el libro de texto co-escrito por Quiroga y publicado en 1931. Según Garth, este libro escolar termina siendo una curiosa mezcla de resistencia, contra-acción y conformidad con el proyecto educativo nacional diseñado por el positivismo sarmientino. Esta conclusión tiene la virtud de mostrarnos esos intersticios por donde se cuela la weltanschauung quiroguiana dentro de la propaganda patriótica de todo libro escolar y concluye un exhaustivo examen del heroísmo como la fundación ética de la obra de Quiroga.

En este libro Garth lleva a cabo la tarea igualmente heroica de confrontar y rebatir, con rigor crítico y un trabajo exhaustivo de documentación, los paradigmas mitificantes que han determinado la recepción de Quiroga. Garth nos invita, con la provocación de toda propuesta radicalmente original, a pensar el heroísmo y lo monstruoso como dos fenómenos complementarios capaces de reconciliar las apparentes contradicciones de la poética narrativa de Quiroga y la variedad de géneros y estilos que marca su obra. El resultado es un texto de obligada referencia para entender la soledad de Quiroga en relación a las grandes narrativas de la literatura latinoamericana y reconstruir su ubicación entre los diagramas simbólicos del modernismo y el realismo de la novela de la tierra.

Carlos Abreu Mendoza
Texas State University


Recent Hispanic Studies scholarship and criticism has shown growing interest in problems inherent to modern ways of thinking about ethics, politics, and the relationship between these two conceptual spheres. With the publication of her edited volume The Ethics of Latin American Literary Criticism: Reading Otherwise (Palgrave, 2007) and her first monograph, The Wandering Signifier: Rhetoric of Jew­ishness in the Latin American Imaginary (Duke University Press, 2008), Erin Graff Zivin established her reputation as a leading critical voice on these concerns. With her latest monograph, Figurative Inquisitions: Conversion, Torture, and Truth in the Luso-Hispanic Atlantic, Graff Zivin helps to open up what may be taking shape as a new conceptual vocabulary for thinking about the singular and collective forms of relationality that we call ethics and politics, and thus also for the relation between the singular and the universal as such.

The protagonist of Graff Zivin’s wonderfully-written book is the marrano, a term used in early-modern Spain and its colonies to designate those newly converted Christians who were suspected of holding onto the practices and beliefs associated with their old religion. Before delving into the marrano, a brief description of the book’s organization is in order. Figurative Inquisitions contains four central chapters along with a Preface and an Introduction. In dialogue with the work of
Paige DuBois, Elaine Scarry, and Slavoj Žižek, the Introduction poses critical questions for standard ways of understanding torture: namely, that its primary objective is the extraction of information or truth. Drawing on Scarry’s *The Body in Pain*, Graff Zivin proposes that violent interrogation does not extract truth so much as it makes truth through the “conversion” of bodily pain into the semblance of uncontestable power. It is in this sense of making truth that the practice of torture shares something with the practice of literature, of writing and reading. Each of the four central chapters explores a key conceptual term or terms: the *marrano* understood as aporia at the heart of the subject (chapter one); allegory as undermining prevailing ways of thinking about time and representation (chapter two); the secret as fantasy object that drives Inquisitional practices and as absolute limit for what can be grasped (chapter three); and literary discourse as reproducing and calling into question Inquisitional logic. In each chapter, the discussion returns to a core group of primary works that include film (Gillo Pontecorvo’s *The Battle of Algiers* [1966], Arturo Ripstein’s *El Santo Oficio* [1974], and Jom Tob Azulay’s *O Judeu* [1996]), theater (Gonçalves de Magalhães’s *O poeta e a inquisição* [1838], Sabina Berman’s *En el nombre de Dios* [1991], and Bernardo Santareno’s *O Judeu* [1966]), and one novel (José Saramago’s 2004 *Ensaio sobre a Lucidez*). While Pontecorvo and Saramago provide the impetus for questions about interrogation and truth, each of the other primary works returns to the colonial past and to one of two historical figures associated with the history of conversion and *marranismo*: Luis de Carvajal (1537-91) (Ripstein and Berman) and Antônio José da Silva (1705-39) (de Magalhães, Santareno, Tob Azulay). In one respect, this organizational scheme allows for a progression beginning with a film—Pontecorvo’s—that denounces torture while reinforcing what we might call the ontology of interrogation (its primary motive understood as extraction of a preexisting truth) and ending with a novel that calls into question the idea that truth is a content that can be hidden and disclosed. At the same time, *Figurative Inquisitions* returns in the final chapter to the ambiguities and obscurities of the *marrano* and thereby ruins any misplaced expectation that this book might restore what the genealogical figure of the *marrano* has provoked us to doubt and question. If the book leaves us with a number of unsettling questions, this is not a fault but rather a form of combatting the urge for certainty that is at the heart of what Graff Zivin calls Inquisitional logic.

In recent years, the *marrano* has emerged as a theme for Latin Americanist and Hispanist critical practices, as evidenced in the work of Jacques Lezra, Alberto Moreiras, José Luis Villacañas, and others. Graff Zivin’s treatment of the *marrano* is neither historical nor biographical. *Figurative Inquisitions* is not a book about real *marranos*, and the historical or literary historical *marranos* that it takes up serve, it would seem, to set the stage for the book’s real concern, which is the exploration of a theoretical proposition: that what we call the subject in its various articulations (Cartesian, Kantian, and Schmittian, to name just a few) turns out to harbor an unspoken and perhaps unspeakable secret, a secret that not only remains hidden from public view but which may not even be available to the subject itself qua subject. The *marrano* names a retreat from public view that is co-originary with the advent of everything that we associate with the modern subject: self-consciousness,
representation, responsibility, presence, and so on. Universality (subject) constitutes itself through the disavowal of a part that can only be assigned an improper name: *marrano*, from the Arabic *mubarram*, which means “forbidden” or “anathematized” and presumably alludes to Muslim and Jewish proscriptions against eating pork. The secrecy associated with the name *marrano* is not a concealed identity; the secret has no phenomenal status and cannot be revealed, not because it is too traumatic for words but because it designates the separation or subtraction (*secretus*) through which visibility and representation are constituted. The *marrano* thus names, among other things, a limit for what Jacques Derrida calls the “absolute hegemony of political reason [and] a limitless extension of the region of the political” (“History of a Lie,” in *Without Alibi*, trans. Peggy Kamuf, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002, p. 63).

Before we conclude that the historical framework of *Figurative Inquisitions* is just a pretext that enables Graff Zivin to delve into abstract considerations of the subject and its deconstruction, it should be noted that in her book these registers—history and thought, past and present—have a way of acting on one another that cannot easily be reduced to the distinction between what is essential and what is superfluous. While the *marrano* provides Graff Zivin’s critical practice with a name for what cannot be reduced to or accounted for by the concept of the subject, this thought of the singular and its antagonistic relation to totality is irremediably entangled in the web of historical circumstances the shaped Iberian imperial projects in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, which also just happens to be the historical period in which modern thinking about the subject began to gain strength. Just as the historical term *marrano* is an improper name for those who have no place in post-1492 Spain (but also: an improper name that provides the pretext for the expansion of Inquisitional power), theoretical reflection needs the “resistance” that it encounters in the material, empirical world in order to illuminate. Without such resistance, thought can only reproduce what it already knows.

Among the many valuable contributions that *Figurative Inquisitions* has to offer us, this lesson about the encounter between non-identical, irreducible registers may be the most important insight to which Graff Zivin’s book leads us, and precisely against the initial perception that the historical subject matter was mere window dressing for theory. What *Figurative Inquisitions* eloquently teaches us is that there is no such thing as pure theory just as there is no avoiding theory. Like it or not, we always already find ourselves in it, and thus any attempt to engage in a thoughtful deconstructive practice of recovering the singular realities that resist subjugation under the concept of the subject must begin by confronting the conjunctural structure of history. Just as many of the cinematic and theatrical works that Graff Zivin studies turn to the past in order to confront problems in the present (e.g., treatments of religious conversion and repression in colonial times provide a screen for reflecting on problems of political violence and repression in the 1970s), *Figurative Inquisitions* is a book in which present and past implicate and illuminate one another.

Patrick Dove Indiana University
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