

---

JAIME RODRÍGUEZ MATOS, *WRITING OF THE FORMLESS*.  
JOSÉ LEZAMA LIMA AND *THE END OF TIME*, NEW YORK,  
FORDHAM UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2017.

Djurđja Trajković

Rodríguez Matos first book is one of the rare theoretical events in today's Humanities that will appeal not only to Latinamericanists but should also be of interest to interdisciplinary audiences. The book is ambitious not only because it addresses the crucial theoretical debates concerning the status of the political in the wake of Modernity's decline into nihilism, but because it wishes to accomplish several objectives at once: to rethink the relation between politics, writing and literature. Taking a Cuban writer José Lezama Lima as a thinker and writer of the *informe*, the formless, Rodríguez Matos works through a series of topologies and figures in order to shed light on the problem of time. The book is divided into two parts. In the first part, four chapters explain the problem of time, as well as its' relation to formless, revolution and nihilism. The second part of the book moves into innovative reading of Lezama's writing that bear witness to the destruction of principal politics and opening toward the infrapolitics of void.

The point of departure is temporal question in Latin America that is generalizable to the relation of time to Modernity and Revolution. For Matos, the question of time and temporality is crucial not only because it shakes up the foundations of the philosophical (ontology) and the political

(representation) but because the formless as destruction of time as presence has an immense implications for rethinking history. On one hand, the linear time of Hegel's philosophy of history and on the other, the teleological time of messianic redemption show itself to be two sides of the same coin. If temporality of modernity is now seen to be constantly battling between linear and circular time, even if impossible to synthesize, this would mean that modernity is no longer the other of revolutionary interruption but rather constitutive of it. By way of the dual apparatus, linear time (as time of alienation) and circular time (as time of redemption) work as policing force and residual effect or the symptom of the emergence of order itself. Matos concludes that modernity is committed to the constant confrontation of disparate forms of time. The author offers a third thinking of time that he finds in Lezama's writing such as "intemporal", "time of the absence of time" and "muerte del tiempo". Such thinking of time, time as the lost time, or time of the void would fall beneath all the principal politics in retreat and outside of legitimizing Western modernity that governs both the time of the One and that of the multiple. The writer's confrontation with anti-representation modes of expression of time closes

off the mechanism through which time is mastered and disciplined. For Lezama, there can be no imposition of time, and such an understanding would open up the possibility of thinking history not as eternal but neither as infinite.

The second part of the book dwells in more detail on Lezama's conceptualization of the void against the politico-theological closure. Lezama's writing of the formless exposes the difference between those texts of the Western tradition that forget the question of being and those whose starting point is the challenge and the difficulty that the question poses – dealing with the ground that is and is not there in its absence. The crucial point is whether is it possible to imagine or not a writing and thought that do not simply fall silent in order to guarantee the continuity of the narrative of legitimacy and sovereign authority in poem or politics. However, the radicalization of deconstruction no longer fixed on the literary and textual playfulness poses the question if the writing of formless is simply a trace of politics in withdrawal?

Matos' book sets itself against the contemporary thinkers such as Badiou, Negri, Žižek and Agamben who remain deeply entangled in the political theology of Christianity unable to illustrate the militant subject except thought the figure of the saint.

Pushing against the dominant thought and dogma "everything is political", the book performs politics of separation and irreducibility of the *formless* to any discourse which would make new grounds for order, stasis and politics.

As a thought experiment, Matos' deconstruction is a remarkable contribution to the contemporary thinking of the problem of time. In its ambition it succeeds in bringing difficulty and complexity to thinking and theory. However, while rich on theoretical insights, the book does not address how change and transformation can be enacted. While Matos does away with the militant subject of politics, one wonders whether infrapolitics of void does not produce another subject. How is one to feel the absence of time if one is not already subjected to such a form, whether formless or not, it makes no difference? On the other hand, the book remains in the infinite dislocation and deferral without offering any insights into how such conception of time can be related to new writing of history. Furthermore, with the insistence of lack of foundation, Matos forgets that the lack of foundation is itself a foundation. In other words, it remains unclear as to whether this ambitious project is not simply a nostalgic return to the question of being or simply another postmodern metaphysics, albeit, in a different shape.