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The Place of Poetry:
Poesis and Political Theology in 20th and 21st Century Latin America

The Place of Poetry: Poesis and Political Theology in 20th and 21st Century Latin America explores the notions of community that emerge in Mexican, Cuban, Brazilian, Peruvian, and Puerto Rican poetry at the crossroads of poetic practice, religion, and politics.

From Plato's politeia to the Cuban Revolution, poets have often been seen as threatening state order. But what does poetry say about community? How does lyric poetry, specifically, allow for an alternative notion of the common that does not coincide with the nation-state's boundaries or a theological optic? And how does the poet's marginal social status inscribe a place from which political orders are questioned?

The central hypothesis of this discussion is that the theological-political framework of certain twentieth-century poetics reveals not a romantic nostalgia for a lost original and harmonious community -for homogeneity, closeness, sameness- but instead, a profound skepticism toward any appeal to the idea of community as a holistic and exclusive unity of being, and a prefiguration of a novel dimension of belonging, rooted on singularity and finitude.

In crucial moments of political crisis and transition -the Mexican Revolution, the Fulgencio Batista regime in Cuba, the 1964 military coup in Brazil, the 1980s and 1990s Internal Conflict in Peru, and the creation of the Estado Libre Asociado of Puerto Rico in 1952 - lyric poetry presents itself as a site of resistance to nationalism, authoritarianism, and imperialism.