

LILIA MORITZ SCHWARCZ. *BRAZILIAN AUTHORITARIANISM: PAST AND PRESENT.* PRINCETON: PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS 2022, 328 P. ISBN: 9780691210919

SEBASTIAN ANTOINE¹

Brazilians, dogged by their past, are still engaged in the task of expelling ghosts that continue stubbornly to cast their shadows (p. 29).

In *Brazilian authoritarianism*, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz presents eight types of ghosts haunting contemporary Brazil. She describes how these ghosts came into being and morphed through the nation's short history, finally outlining the shadows they continue to cast. Schwarcz wrote *Brazilian authoritarianism* in the wake of far-right candidate Jair Bolsonaro's election victory in 2018 which symbolised a hard shift to authoritarianism in Brazil. Her aim was to survey Brazil's histories of oppression and authoritarianism to begin to contextualise his win. After nearly four years of President Bolsonaro, the publication of Eric M.B. Becker's English translation (2022) is similarly timely, as the leftist Lula Inácio Lula da Silva won the Brazilian Presidential election in October 2022. The ghosts of authoritarianism will continue to shape Brazilian society and politics into Lula's presidential term and beyond, and Schwarcz's text will remain highly relevant. *Brazilian authoritarianism* offers a compelling narrative of the historical roots of authoritarianism in Brazil and of how they influence its contemporary forms. Schwarcz moves deftly between complex issues, drawing on a raft of evidence to craft a highly readable and accessible text.

Schwarcz is professor of anthropology at the University of São Paulo and a visiting professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at Princeton University. *Brazilian authoritarianism* has a more historical bent than conventional ethnography, drawing on historical documents, engagements with historians, statistics, and contemporary social commentary to support her arguments rather than traditional ethnographic data. This approach provides a broad summary of the ghosts of authoritarianism, giving context to the many interwoven social forces shaping people's lives in Brazil. Throughout her analysis, Schwarcz's tone is always analytically incisive and sometimes polemic. In some beautiful passages, Schwarcz's prose is highly poetic and sensitively translated. Any writing about a topic as troubling as authoritarianism would be forgiven for being depressing or dense, but Schwarcz's energetic analysis and arguments for hope make for a gripping read. She reminds us that authoritarianism in Brazil is 'not a story of continuities alone' (p. 99) and includes examples where people have disrupted authoritarian attempts (p. 98).

Schwarcz identifies eight dynamics of authoritarianism in Brazil and covers each in a chapter: racism, bossism, patrimonialism, corruption, inequality, violence, gender issues, and

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intolerance. Each chapter explores the long history of these trends to help contextualise their continued relevance in Brazilian society today. Their sequence provides for a great sense of momentum; each chapter builds on the arguments, evidence, and social dynamics of the previous. There is so much to say about each of the eight dimensions that each chapter could easily be expanded into a monograph-length text. By bundling them together and presenting them as parts of a larger whole, Schwarcz's analysis shows how each theme interacts with others, mapping the broad interconnections between them. On the other hand, the inclusion of such a broad range of ideas and types of evidence may give the reader the sensation of whiplash. The text moves quickly across time and between different ideas and types of evidence. Readers interested in a deep analysis of just one element of Schwarcz's puzzle might be disappointed, but the decision to include the many facets of authoritarianism has resulted in a comprehensive summary and an effective introduction to readers interested in a broad perspective.

Brazilian authoritarianism would appeal to aspiring ethnographers of inequality, authoritarianism, and oppression in Brazil, as well as those with an interest in the complexities and historical origins of its contemporary political and social dynamics. Schwarcz's focus on historical currents and their ghosts is illustrative for students of Brazilian society and politics. Indeed, her interest in the historical and interwoven threads of authoritarianism, as well as her focus on the *longue durée*, are analytically illuminating and should inspire similar studies of other contexts.

Schwarcz (p. 13) explicitly frames her text as disrupting the crafted history of Brazil espoused by nationalists which suggests that Brazil has dealt with issues of injustice and authoritarianism. In response, Schwarcz aims to highlight the connections between Brazil's history of authoritarianism and its enduring current form. She writes to address inequality and authoritarianism:

'[T]o question is a form of resistance. I am of the mind that a critical historical practice is one that knows how to 'de-normalize' that which seems ordained by biology and is consequently presented as immutable' (p. 13).

Schwarcz's intention is laudable, and she certainly succeeds in demonstrating the historical roots of authoritarian social forces and structures and that they should not be taken for granted. While she does include some references to cases where this status quo has been disrupted, her analysis suggests that while authoritarianism has been intentionally constructed, its hold on the social and political landscape in Brazil is powerful. It remains to be seen whether Brazil's change in leader, from the far-right Bolsonaro to the leftist Lula, will influence the dynamics of authoritarianism. Schwarcz's analysis suggests that while leadership might change, the ghosts will continue to cast their shadow.

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