

Fiction's Turn: 'Post-Testimonial' Novels in Central America

A TALK BY MARTÍN GASPAR, LECTURER IN SPANISH & PORTUGUESE, UW-MADISON

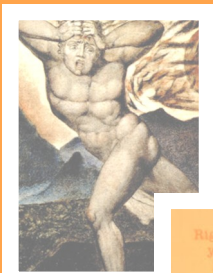
WEDNESDAY
NOVEMBER 28

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UW-MILWAUKEE
CURTIN HALL
ROOM 739

11:30 AM—1:00 PM

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Since the mid-1980s and for a twenty year period, no Latin American text received more attention than Rigoberta Menchú's *testimonio* of the plight of the Quiches during the Guatemalan civil war. Her *testimonio*, and *testimonios* in general, communicated with urgency the reality of oppression, offering Latin American literary and cultural studies a path for political action and spurring debates on the relationship between literature and the "real thing."

This talk examines Central American novels whose fictional materials are textual outcomes of the region's civil wars: *testimonios* and archives. In these novels, by Horacio Castellanos-Moya (El Salvador) and Rodrigo Rey Rosa (Nicaragua), the excessive enumeration of victims of atrocity tests the limit of the economy of empathy. Their most striking innovation, which is to aestheticize the testimonial and archival in fiction, intimates a way of moving past the impasse of the "real" in critical discussions of *testimonio*.