

Book Reviews

Amich, Candice. *Precarious Forms: Performing Utopia in the Neoliberal Americas*, Northwestern UP, 2020. 232 pp.

What forms of resistance can artistic practices, poetry, and performance art, in particular, stage within a space swallowed by neoliberal governance—a global system that creates exploitative and precarious forms of work and sociability and that hinders collective organization and political transformation? This is one of the main questions that Candice Amich attempts to tackle in *Precarious Forms: Performing Utopia in the Neoliberal Americas*.

The book sets out to analyze an important body of work from consecrated artists across the Americas, ranging from Canadian-based poet Dionne Brand to multifaceted Chilean artist Cecilia Vicuña. Amich uses ‘utopia’ as the main conceptual tool to understand how these artists, the majority of whom are women, confront neoliberal precarious contexts. Their strategies, Amich contends, do not stage other possible worlds directly (in the more affirmative sense we tend to give classic forms of utopia) but rather, through an Adornian turn, affirm the negation of the “neoliberal sensorium,” thus staging the blatant contradictions and tensions in the ways of life determined by neoliberalism. These works respond to precarity by creating forms that, through the affirmation of a negation, point to the possibility of transforming the base structure of neoliberal realities across the continent. This utopian wager can take the form of “utopian longing” (Nancy Morejón and Brand), “precarious forms of bonding” (Ana Mendieta and Coco Fusco), or “state ritual violence,” as Amich proposes in the case of Regina José Galindo’s performances.

With this book, Amich has created a fruitful space for dialogue among practices from different artists during different periods of the neoliberal historical sequence. The book will appeal to those interested in performance art and poetry and in the relation between artistic practices and pressing issues such as migration, exile, precarious forms of labor, and post-revolutionary and post-dictatorship struggles for justice and visibilization. Her close readings are illuminating and some of them offer novel ways of entering or re-entering classic works. Among these is the reading of Fusco and

Domínguez's *Dolores from 10 to 22*, in which Amich dives into the tensions within the neoliberal gaze. The crossing of this work with performative strategies of the Zapatistas is revealing, as is the insertion of Debordian ideas to develop these arguments, if at times the author over-emphasizes the "staging" strategies of the Mexican revolutionary movement over other important facets. One also wonders if Amich's utopian wager can be so seamlessly applied to indigenous world-making practices. One of the most illuminating parts of the book is her reflection on *testimonio* as a way of entering Galindo's work.

Precarious Forms creates productive dialogues among artistic practices that imagine paths of resistance during these unjust, carceral, and deadly times. Some chapters would benefit from a clearer characterization of the realities they confront. For instance, the critique of masculinist revolutionary narratives that Brand, Morejón and Daisy Zamora react to in their works, a critique central in Amich's reading, could have been developed in more detail. The same could be said of the very interesting point of the neoliberal individualization of subjectivities—how does this come to be and to what ends are these processes of subjectification deployed? The breadth and scope of the book is nonetheless impressive and *Precarious Forms* is a novel contribution to a corpus of critical works that center utopia in the struggle against neoliberalism.

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Acree, William Garrett, Jr. *Staging Frontiers: The Making of Modern Popular Culture in Argentina and Uruguay*. Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 2019. 279 pp.

Staging Frontiers: The Making of Modern Popular Culture in Argentina and Uruguay presents a carefully researched history of Creole drama, from the late 19th century into the first decades of the 20th, throughout the River Plate region of Latin America. Acree's study offers an overview and analysis of a performance phenomenon that "effectively put the countryside onstage and represented the transformations the region's export boom and economic modernization were exacting not just on traditional ways of life but also on broader understandings of community" (3). This history of "popular culture on the move" (171) describes the musical presentation of dramas featuring gauchos and rural themes. These shows fostered the development of a theater-going entertainment culture in Argentina and Uruguay and left a legacy that has carried into radio shows, film, and television, among other forms of contemporary popular culture.

Written in a clear and accessible style, Acree's study is divided into three parts: the history of drama and the emergence of Creole themes during the 17th-19th centu-

ries; the flourishing of Creole drama during the late 19th-early 20th centuries; and the legacy of Creole and nativist themes in Argentine and Uruguayan popular cultures. As the author describes in detail, Creole dramas grew out of the pomp and ceremony of Colonial viceregal and religious theater traditions and grew in popularity as inexpensive, popular entertainment that articulated social tensions around urbanization and immigration to Latin America during the late 19th century. Creole theater troupes often featured immigrants as the principal actors as well as the entrepreneurs who ran such groups, resulting in a curiously performative concept of *lo criollo* as a nostalgic and yet fairly inclusive evocation of Creole culture (85, 99). After the decline of Creole drama due to the increasing popularity of other forms of entertainment, the influence of its themes could be seen in Creole clubs where men “play gaucho” (109), some of which continue to exist to this day, as well as films, radio shows, and even a brand of *mate* that translates Creole themes into entertainment forms for the region’s growing middle class.

This study’s archival depth highlights popular cultural phenomena that remain inaccessible to traditional literary studies, thus capturing the rise and continued influence of a genre that exists only partially in textual form. Within this expansive investigation, Acree might have further contrasted the late-century, gaucho-themed Creole dramas studied here with the canonical mid-century Romantic strains of the *literatura gauchesca* that was also popular in that region, as he does with the gauchesque drama at the beginning of the 19th century. Nonetheless, *Staging Frontiers*’ greatest strength lies in the archival work that reveals the heterogeneity of cultural production and the regional nature of the Creole circuses and dramas that played to crowds numbering in the thousands, as acting troupes moved around the coastline of the Río de la Plata. Indeed, this volume’s emphasis on a regional context and the mobility of cultural practices will inform future cultural studies in the field. Acree’s work is a compelling portrait of the birth of modern popular culture in the Río de la Plata and an invaluable contribution to 19th and early 20th-century studies.

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Dubatti, Ricardo, comp. *Malvinas. La guerra en el teatro, el teatro de la guerra*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del CCC, 2017. 226 pp.

Dubatti, Ricardo, comp. *Malvinas II. La guerra del teatro, el teatro de la guerra*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del CCC, 2019. 270 pp.

En los últimos años, las relaciones entre escena y memoria han convocado la atención de quienes se dedican tanto a las Ciencias Sociales como a las Humanidades. El teatro constituye un instrumento de construcción, transmisión y conservación de la memoria, como se observa en las dos antologías organizadas por Ricardo Dubatti

(CONICET) en torno de las representaciones dramáticas de la Guerra de Malvinas (1982).

En la primera antología, *Malvinas. La guerra en el teatro, el teatro de la guerra* (2017), la serie de poéticas dramáticas y escénicas construye dispositivos teatrales de estimulación de la memoria; piensa los vínculos entre guerra y teatro a través de episodios concretos. Señala Ricardo Dubatti en el prólogo (pp. 7-34) que el corpus de obras sobre la Guerra de Malvinas —un centenar— puede ser organizado en tres series: representaciones centrales y explícitas del tema; referencias tangenciales al conflicto bélico; y escrituras anteriores a la guerra resignificadas *a posteriori*. *Malvinas...* reúne obras de la primera serie: *Malvinas. Canto al sentimiento de un pueblo* de Osvaldo Buzzo y Néstor Zapata (1992); *74 días de otoño* de Laura Garaglia (2017); *Carne de juguete* de Gustavo Guirado (2015); *Sin adiós / El corazón en Madryn* de Carlos Horacio Herrera (1985); *Facfolc, un manto de neblina* de Fernando Locatelli (2016) y *Los padres* de Luigi Serradori (2014). El valioso gesto de rastrear y editar estos textos dramáticos revela las particularidades de cada una de sus poéticas, a la vez que ilumina puntos de contacto entre ellas y contribuye a complejizar el vínculo entre guerra y teatro desde un enfoque comparado. Las seis piezas fueron escritas en diferentes ciudades de Argentina en un intervalo de más de tres décadas. Se suman breves ensayos de Mariana Gardey, Jorge Dubatti, Jimena Trombetta, María Natacha Koss y Facundo Beret.

El segundo tomo, *Malvinas II. La guerra en el teatro, el teatro de la guerra* (2019), fue compilado por Ricardo Dubatti con el objetivo de continuar las líneas trazadas por su predecesor —contribuir a la visibilización y circulación de textos teatrales cuyo eje temático sea la Guerra de Malvinas—, y de actualizar la investigación que lo funda. *Malvinas II...* reúne siete textos pertenecientes al grupo de obras que refieren directamente a la guerra: *¡Arriba hermano!* de Omar Aíta (1992); *El Prado del Ganso Verde* de Eugenia Cabral (2013); *Rodillas negras* de Andrea Campos (2015); *Islas de la Memoria. Historias de guerra en la posguerra* de Julio Cardoso (2011); *Silencio ficticio* de Julio Cardoso y Andrés Fernández Cabral (2010), *1982 Obertura solemne* de Lisandro Fiks (2012) y *El león y nosotros* de Alejandro Flynn (2004). Ricardo Dubatti acompaña las obras con un extenso prólogo (pp. 7-38) y con el análisis de especialistas invitados: Laura Cilento, Agustina Trupia, Valeria Mozzoni, María Fukelman y Jorge Dubatti.

Ambas antologías tienen como correlato necesario el trabajo de rastreo, sistematización y divulgación de las obras relacionadas con la Guerra de Malvinas, muchas de difícil acceso para el público general. En ese sentido, devienen archivo. Pero no se trata del archivo como complejo físico que guarda, almacena y selecciona documentos, sino como un repositorio para el futuro: “un punto de partida, no un punto final”, como afirma Anna María Guasch (*Arte y archivo, 1920-2010. Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades*, 303). A casi cuatro décadas del conflicto bélico, resulta aún problemático proponer una lectura orgánica de la guerra, como afirma Ricardo

Dubatti en los dos volúmenes. La Guerra de Malvinas es un acontecimiento que todavía se mantiene abierto y resuena constante e insistentemente en la vida cotidiana argentina. Produjo y produce ensayos, novelas, cuentos, poemas, películas y obras de teatro que, a su vez, ofrecen su visión de la guerra y de las islas. Los volúmenes *Malvinas...* y *Malvinas II...*, relevante contribución a la materia, tienen también como finalidad complementar y ser complementados por otras publicaciones, insertarse en el derrotero de lecturas de la guerra y contribuir a formular una “historia de tercer grado”, como sostiene Ricardo Dubatti (2019, 15) siguiendo a Michel-Rolph Trouillot (*Silenciando el pasado. El poder y la producción de la Historia*, Comares, 2017). En resumen, un aporte fundamental al mejor conocimiento del teatro argentino de las últimas décadas.

Bettina Girotti

CONICET / Universidad de Buenos Aires

Ansaldo, Paula, María Fukelman, Bettina Girotti y Jimena Trombetta (compiladoras). *Teatro independiente. Historia y actualidad*. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Ediciones del CCC e Instituto de Artes del Espectáculo “Dr. Raúl H. Castagnino” de la Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2017. 226 pp.

Teatro independiente. Historia y actualidad reúne catorce trabajos presentados en las Primeras Jornadas de Estudios sobre Teatro Independiente organizadas en 2016 por el Instituto de Artes del Espectáculo “Dr. Raúl H. Castagnino” de la Universidad de Buenos Aires. El libro aborda desde diversas cartografías y contextos históricos el concepto de teatro independiente y sus prácticas durante ya casi un siglo. La especialista María Fukelman propone un programa para la investigación en este campo; resulta necesario volver a las fuentes, indagar la historia cristalizada y “dimensionar la territorialidad de cada caso” (21). Magalí Devés, en cambio, estudia la breve trayectoria del Teatro Experimental de Arte como oposición al teatro comercial en 1928 y la influencia de las concepciones pedagógicas de Romain Rolland y su *Teatro del pueblo*. Nuevamente Fukelman indaga en términos históricos, estéticos y políticos el primer teatro independiente de Buenos Aires: Teatro del Pueblo, fundado por Leónidas Barletta. La crítica realiza una caracterización que no pretende homogeneizar el movimiento del teatro independiente, sino que señala sus complejidades y múltiples manifestaciones.

Mientras que el estudio de Paula Ansaldo analiza la actividad teatral independiente en relación con el teatro judío de Buenos Aires, Bettina Girotti reseña las experiencias con títeres como prácticas que fundan espectadores, realizadas por miembros de los grupos del Teatro del Pueblo y Fray Mocho. Por su parte, Pablo Salas Tonello amplía la cartografía nacional en su análisis de la vinculación entre las dinámicas de consagración artística del teatro independiente y el lugar del estado

en San Miguel de Tucumán. En cambio, Dayra Restrepo retoma a Enrique Buena-ventura como generador de nuevas estéticas, espacios y públicos en el Nuevo Teatro en Colombia, luego de su vinculación con el teatro independiente en Argentina. Teresita Fuentes y Diana Barreyra se enfocan en la trayectoria artística de elencos independientes en la ciudad de Tandil durante la última dictadura argentina. Este mismo momento histórico es retomado por el trabajo de Ramiro Manduca, quien se detiene en el caso de Teatro Abierto y las tensiones que se generan con los “independientes”. Jorge Dubatti estudia el valor micropolítico del teatro independiente en el contexto de una homogeneización cultural globalizadora y caracteriza la poética desde las condiciones de producción. El siglo XXI es también indagado por Marcos Perearnau en términos de una crisis de representación que ubica al teatro como una alternativa frente a las lógicas del mercado. Asimismo, Marianela Merlino retoma la escena contemporánea a partir de los proyectos teatrales de graduación para indagar los cambios que se presentan a la noción inicial de teatro independiente. La actividad de la ciudad de La Plata es trabajada por Leonardo Basanta y Mariana del Mármol, quienes problematizan la búsqueda de actores y actrices de una profesionalización como un discurso indiscutible. Por último, Lorena Verzero plantea las prácticas memorialistas en torno a las dictaduras en la escena independiente de Argentina, Uruguay y Chile a partir de tres casos. El libro, de consulta indispensable por su actualización en la materia, ratifica la relevancia histórica y la vigencia actual del teatro independiente así como la necesidad de repensar categorías historiográficas a partir de las nuevas manifestaciones en la Argentina y el resto de Latinoamérica.

Agustina Trupia

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Fragoso, Víctor. *Not the Time to Stay: The Unpublished Plays of Víctor Fragoso*. Edited, translated and with an introduction by Consuelo Martínez-Reyes. New York: Centro Press, 2018. 244 pp.

Not the Time to Stay is an anthology featuring eight unpublished plays by Puerto Rican writer and scholar Víctor Fragoso. His theatre remains somewhat elusive to the cultural canon of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the US in spite of his active role in the emergence of a Latino cultural scene in New York City and New Jersey during the 1970s. Fragoso's seemingly unknown skill as a playwright inspires Consuelo Martínez-Reyes, editor and translator, “to set a basis from which to explore his works further” (24). Readers of this collection can expect to find background information on Fragoso's personal life as well as a description of the themes, styles, and obsessions of his theatre in an introduction written by Martínez-Reyes. Although any process of translation grapples with an inevitable loss of meaning, the translator carefully captures the playwright's playfulness with language. These twists and turns show

evidence of a shrewd writing style that portrays the struggles of a collective identity in search of meaning amidst its recurrent displacement and marginalization. Fragoso's aesthetic deployment of social realism, as in "*Undecided*, from Carey," "Newark, 1974," or "First Night Out," focuses on themes like violence against women, Puerto Rican protests in the 70s, and female homelessness, while revealing the playwright's positionality toward social justice issues. Aware of his condition as a gay Puerto Rican, Fragoso's plays tackle the contradictions of heterosexuality as a mode of belonging, especially when depicting a double standard that binds women to violent mistreatment in the name of religious mores. Paired with an obsession with musicals, his critical lens on social issues related to Puerto Ricans and Latinos in the US compels him to rework the nostalgia inherent to diaspora. For instance, in "Santaclos in Boriken," Fragoso offers a comic revision of the Spanish Caribbean stereotypes that form part of the US nationalist imaginary, while in "The Latino Era," co-written with Dolores Prida, Fragoso offers a critique of mainstream Broadway and its exclusion of Latino theater, echoing what Chicano gay playwright Ricardo Bracho has called "golden-balled privilege." "Call My Number" stands out for its histrionic lyricism and affectivity in an evocation of poet Julia de Burgos' life, recast as an epitome of the Puerto Rican diaspora. Fragoso's iteration of the absurd is vividly present in "Not the Time to Stay" and "Don't Get Nervous," both of which prompt an undeniable connection with the work of José Triana, Bertolt Brecht, and Antonin Artaud in the use of psychological thrills, minimalist staging, and violence. Throughout, elements of code-switching, specifically the presence of Spanglish, are central to approaching Víctor Fragoso's theater. In this line of thought, a bilingual edition of his plays would have been optimal in repositioning his creative use of language and further an understanding of his legacy within the vast genealogy of Latinx American theater.

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White, Bretton. *Staging Discomfort: Performance and Queerness in Contemporary Cuba*. Gainesville: U of Florida P, 2020. 258 pp.

Queerness is a complex and treacherous topic in Cuba. In *Staging Discomfort: Performance and Queerness in Contemporary Cuba*, Bretton White focuses on how theater in the Caribbean socialist nation is marked by economic precarity and challenging conditions for audiences and performers. White compellingly analyzes dramatic works in the context of "the Cuban state's project of masculine heteronormativity" (3), focusing on five post-1959 examples that highlight the challenges and tensions related to queerness, cognizant that "queer Cubans have long been targets of state control" (3). As the author states, "The performances studied here concentrate on an aesthetics of fluidity, and thus upset traditional understandings of performer and

spectator, as well as what constitutes the ideal Cuban citizenry” (2), further asking: “How is Cuban theater agile in its critiques considering the state’s limitations on expression? How do queer performances allow for new understandings about the effects of the state’s failing socialist utopian contract with its citizens? And, can Cuban bodies that come together in queer ways reimagine Cuban citizenship?” (2).

In the introduction, White contextualizes post-Soviet life in Cuba, drawing on the work of Jill Lane, Rine Leal, Camilla Stevens, and Norge Espinosa to illuminate Cuban theatre history. In each chapter, White pairs Cuban plays and productions with U.S.-centered queer theorists. Chapter 1 (“Instigating Intimacies: *Las relaciones de Clara* and Uncomfortable Closeness”) focuses on the director Carlos Díaz’s creative 2002 staging of a 1999 play by the German playwright Dea Loher, specifically “the blurring of distinctions between audience and actor” (23). White’s reading of Díaz’s production is informed by Leo Bersani and Adam Phillips’s *Intimacies*. In chapter 2 (“Sharing Shame: Reimagining Entrepreneurship in *Baños públicos, S.A.*”), White focuses on a play by Esther Suárez Durán that received the UNEAC Playwrighting award in Havana in 1998. Dialoguing with Michael Warner, White “shows how a more liquid connection between shame and dignity might allow for the introduction of queerness into dialogues about national identity” (23). Chapter 3 (“Frustrating Futurity: Beauty and Pain in *Pájaros de la playa*”) focuses on a 2004 theatrical adaptation by El Ciervo Encantado of Severo Sarduy’s homonymous novel, which focuses on AIDS. White reads the negotiation between suffering and beauty in relation to Lee Edelman’s sinthomosexuality theory, which “postulates that reproductive futurity is not representative of possibility, but of restrictive linearity” (24). Chapter 4 (“Vexing Visibilities: Space and Queerness in *Chamaco*”) analyzes a 2005 play by Abel González Melo that was directed by Carlos Celdrán in dialogue with works by José Esteban Muñoz and John Paul Ricco to see “how the play references the characters’ cruising of the minor architectural spaces of Central Havana by staging visual nothingness” (24). Finally, in Chapter 5 (“Fronting Failure: Testing Continuity in *Perros que jamás ladraron*”), White analyzes a 2013 play by Rogelio Orizondo to show how “disabled, queer, black, and female bodies redefine words, images, and legacies of the revolution while courting audience participation” (25), engaging Jack Halberstam’s *The Queer Art of Failure*. White’s *Staging Discomfort* is an elegantly argued, intellectually-stimulating, and necessary read for any scholar interested in the Cuban scene and in theorizations of affect and performance. Its main limitation is its failure to engage the queer of color critique in a more substantive way.

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