

Book Reviews

Cordones-Cook, Juanamaría and María Mercedes Jaramillo, eds. *Del palenque a la escena: Antología crítica de teatro afrolatinoamericano*. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 2012: 782 pp.

This book is a welcome addition to the limited number of anthologies that focus on the experience of Latin Americans of African descent and the imaginary constructed through Afro-Latin American theatre. The selected plays bring visibility to the social impact of racism, slavery, and exploitation and to the ongoing condemnation of African spirituality, languages, traditions, and cultural practices. Cordones-Cook and Jaramillo have selected fifteen representative plays from eleven Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Uruguay. Preceding each play is a critical article, note, or interview that describes and contextualizes the play within a local and regional setting and provides thematic points of analysis and consideration. One of this publication's many virtues is that it highlights various strategies used by playwrights to bring visibility to the Afro-Latin American experience and cultures. The plays document African myths, ancestral practices, and beliefs and reveal how cultural domination and processes of assimilation threaten these traditions. Many of the plays emphasize how Afro-Latin American women are particularly vulnerable to daily conflicts rooted in discriminatory racial and gender constructs. Notably, the editors avoid reproducing a colonial gaze by inviting the participation of critics who are based in Latin America and directly engaged in theatre, performance, and visual arts.

The collection opens with Cristina Escofet's *Mugres de la María y El Negro: Espectáculo en siete cuadros* (2004), an Argentine tragicomedy that examines the subjectivity of María, a marginalized mestizo prostitute, and her relationship with a man named El Negro. The estrangement of the mestizo from dominant society is highlighted in Escofet's depictions of María's body as an apron-like object that is washed, ironed, put on, and shaken off. Overall, this play exposes racial and gender archetypes that dominate Argentine society, such as *mestizaje* and *negritud*, and portrays the impact of these constructs on marginalized bodies.

The second play in the collection, Abdias do Nascimento's *Sortilegio II. Misterio negro de Zumbi redivivo* (written in 1951, revised and performed in 2008), also touches on issues of race and gender. The story of a love triangle between Emanuel, Ifigenia, and Margarida, this Brazilian play blends classical dramatic tradition with aspects of Afro-Brazilian dance, tradition, religions, and rituals. Through the metaphor of the love triangle, Nascimento's play explores a central racial conflict in Brazilian society: the practice of climbing the social ladder by breaking with African culture and heritage. *Sortilegio II* stages active retaliation against the social attitudes and norms that perpetuate racism and inequality in Brazilian society.

The anthology includes Central American playwright Rosa Maria Britton's *Esa esquina del paraíso* (1986, 1999), which focuses on identity, racial attitudes, and segregation in Panama, specifically in the Canal Zone. The plot focuses on Rosa and her daughter Eugenia, who doubles as Jenny throughout the play. Rosa passes on to her daughter the dream of obtaining a "piece of paradise" by marrying a white North American man. She believes that marrying a white man will improve the family's racial and social standing. Rosa teaches her daughter to devalue African ethnicity and heritage and sets Eugenia/Jenny on a course of self-denigration and self-destruction. By the end of the play, Eugenia breaks off all contact with her mother, knowing that she will have to avoid having children in the future so as not to give birth to children with black characteristics that would give away her ethnicity and heritage. Through Eugenia's transformation into Jenny, Britton's play reveals the destructiveness of denying one's origins. Eugenia cannot fully transform into Jenny without cutting off her relationship with the past and forgoing the possibility of a future.

Carlos López Schmidt's *Mi Zanahari: cosa de negros. Comedia musical en dos actos* is a tragicomedy that documents Afro-Peruvian traditions. Traditionally inspired African songs, dances, and rituals are incorporated directly into the play. Through their fast-paced and humoristic dialogues, the actors illustrate the challenges of racism, sexism, discrimination, and poverty in their daily lives. While making visible the presence of African traditions in Peru, López Schmidt's play questions the problematic cultural dominance of the United States and the construction of Latin American drama as "exotic" and "other."

In sum, *Del palenque a la escena: Antología crítica de teatro afrolatinoamericano* stands out as a skillfully executed compendium of Afro-Latin American plays. The editors' presentation provides an excellent overview of the socio-historical factors that have shaped the experience of the African diaspora in Latin America. Additionally, the editors have selected plays that cover a variety of regional contexts, but with themes that dialogue with one other, such as the concept of marriage and social ascension in Nascimento's *Sortilegio II* and Britton's *Esa esquina del paraíso*. Finally, while the critical pieces are unassuming, they provide vital information about the performances and playwrights. This anthology would be well-suited for undergraduate theatre stu-

dents or for a Latin American Studies course with a special focus on themes related to the Afro-Latin American diaspora.

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García Barrientos, José-Luis. *La razón pertinaz. Teoría y teatro actual en español*. Bilbao, España: Artezblai, 2014: 333 pp.

Ganador del VI Premio Internacional Artez Blai de Investigación sobre las Artes Escénicas, *La razón pertinaz* es un libro conceptualmente profundo, pero a la vez didáctico, que el lector puede encontrar útil al menos para tres objetivos. Primero, sirve para (re)encontrarse con la sólida teoría del drama que su autor, investigador del Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas de España, viene construyendo desde hace años: la dramatología. El lector también puede conocer nuevas derivaciones de ese sistema teórico. Finalmente, es útil para acercarse a nombres importantes de la dramaturgia española y latinoamericana actual. La teoría despliega allí su potencial metodológico, aplicándose al estudio de dramaturgas y dramaturgos vivos, con excepción de Federico García Lorca, Ramón del Valle-Inclán y Antonio Buero Vallejo.

El título es provocador y manifiesta desde el principio una actitud que García Barrientos sostiene con sinceridad a lo largo de las páginas. Tomando distancia de los parámetros de valor posestructuralistas y posmodernos, sostiene la necesidad de una teoría fuerte, dotada de sistematicidad entre sus enunciados, validada empíricamente por su confrontación con un nutrido corpus de obras y concebida con vocación metodológica, es decir, destinada a ofrecer una serie de herramientas para la práctica crítica y la enseñanza. Sin embargo, a diferencia de trabajos anteriores como *Drama y tiempo* (1991) y *Cómo se comenta una obra de teatro* —que lleva ya cinco ediciones— este no es un libro enteramente teórico. De las tres partes que componen el volumen, solo es teórica la primera, donde se exponen los fundamentos de la dramatología.

Tras un panorama crítico de la teoría literaria del siglo XX, García Barrientos se posiciona en la poética, cuyos objetos de estudio son tanto la dicción como la ficción y cuya manifestación contemporánea más visible es la narratología. Aplicada al teatro, la poética se ocupa del drama, es decir, de la historia ficticia (plano del contenido) tal como queda determinada por el modo dramático de representación en sentido aristotélico y por la realidad escénica representante, efectiva y actualizada en la puesta en escena, virtual en el texto. Así entendida, la poética recibe el nombre de “dramatología” y resulta capaz de apropiarse, por vía comparativa, de las herramientas que proporciona la narratología específica del modo narrativo (Genette a la cabeza) con el fin de explicar la singularidad del modo dramático. En contraste con la mediación de un sujeto-narrador propia del relato, el drama se caracteriza por la relación de

in-mediatez que el público establece con la historia, y puede describirse, haciendo uso de sus unidades fundamentales de análisis, como unos *actores-personajes* que realizan *acciones* en un *espacio* y un *tiempo*, frente a la *visión* de un público.

La segunda y tercera partes del libro, tituladas “Problemas de dramaturgía” y “Dramaturgias”, se sirven de esos principios teóricos para abordar objetos variables. En algunos capítulos, el propósito es la solución de dilemas teóricos y solo con ese fin se recurre al análisis de obras. Así ocurre, por ejemplo, en el capítulo 8 con la discusión sobre el “teatro posdramático” de Hans-Thies Lehmann —hacia el que García Barrientos mantiene una actitud decididamente polémica— y con el deslinde de las posibles mezclas entre la narración y el drama. Así ocurre también en el Capítulo 9, dedicado al tratamiento (muy estimulante, por cierto) del problema del sujeto de la enunciación en el teatro, lo que equivale a preguntarse por la presencia o ausencia del autor y el público en la ficción teatral. Apelando a un modelo no-lineal de la comunicación, García Barrientos afirma que, en la enunciación dramática, el autor está ausente, mientras que el público debe estar presente. Si de alguna manera aparece el dramaturgo en el acto concreto de una representación escénica, es de forma virtual e implícita. El dramaturgo es el “aparato conceptual” implicado por lo que ve el público:

Porque el verdadero sujeto de la visión dramática es el público y es el dramaturgo el que se ve obligado a identificarse con él como alguien que hubiera pre-visto lo que efectivamente sólo el público ve. Podría decirse que en el teatro es el ‘tú’ del público el que construye el modelo del ‘yo’ virtual al que llamamos dramaturgo. (175)

En otros capítulos, la dramaturgía se transforma en instrumento al servicio de la crítica y se utiliza para indagar diversas dramaturgias, sobre todo de autoras y autores españoles e hispanoamericanos del presente, unos cuantos muy jóvenes. El libro también examina las consecuencias dramaturgias de la labor de algunos directores y del escenógrafo español Carlos Pineda. A veces, estos capítulos críticos se orientan a estudiar un solo aspecto dramaturgológico, como el manejo del tiempo en ocho autoras españolas y mexicanas. Otras veces, el objetivo es ofrecer una visión integral de una obra, tal como ¿Para cuándo son las reclamaciones diplomáticas? de Valle-Inclán, o del conjunto de una producción dramática, la del mexicano Jaime Chabaud, por ejemplo. Siguiendo esta lógica, se estudian a lo largo de las páginas dramas de los españoles Juan Mayorga, Paloma Pedrero, Ana Diosdado; del cubano Abel González Melo; del argentino Javier Daulte; y de los mexicanos Ximena Escalante, Adriana Duch y Amezcua Arenas, entre muchos otros.

A pesar de esta diversidad, la impresión que arroja la lectura del libro es orgánica. La unidad está proporcionada por la dramaturgía, que opera como horizonte de indagación y valoración, incluso en el comentario de obras particulares. El autor sostiene, sin negar la legitimidad de contextualizaciones históricas o sociológicas, la validez de la lectura teórica, es decir, de aquella que elige la teoría del drama como contexto.

En el fondo de este planteo, hay una intención que García Barrientos declara en las primeras páginas y que confiere organicidad al libro: la de contrarrestar una paradoja histórica. Aunque el estudio del teatro haya sido el encargado de inaugurar la poética, hace ya muchos siglos, la poética contemporánea se ha dedicado principalmente a la narrativa y ha desatendido olímpicamente el drama.

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Guterman, Gad. *Performance, Identity, and Immigration Law: A Theatre of Undocumentedness*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014: 225 pp.

The slogan “no human being is illegal” has been repeated so often in recent years that it has attained the status of a cliché. Yet as Gad Guterman’s perceptive study of fifteen contemporary plays about immigrants from around the world amply demonstrates, the task of de-criminalizing immigrant identities is far from done. Rather than focus exclusively on one ethnicity or another, as many studies do, Guterman’s study ably compares plays that feature immigrant protagonists who hail from China, Ireland, Italy, and Uganda as well as Mexico, Ecuador, and other parts of Latin America. Instead of dividing chapters by national origin, the book’s organizational framework corresponds to various crucial elements of the legal construction of immigrant identity, as indicated by chapter titles taken from sections of the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act. My personal favorite is the absurdly bureaucratic title, “Act 212(a)(9)(B)(iii)(III),” subtitled “Family Unity.” The other five chapter titles indicate the book’s legal span: “Act 237 (a) (1) (B)—Present in Violation of Law,” “Act 275 (a)—Improper Entry by Alien,” “Act 274 A—Unlawful Employment of Aliens,” “Act 331—Alien Enemies,” and “Act 505—Appeals.” Skillfully interweaving pertinent information about immigration law throughout his critical interpretations of theatrical works, Guterman does more than create a context for the plays; he creates a dialogue between the law and theatre.

Guterman draws fruitful connections between dramatic protagonists constructed as subjects of the law, the theatricality of the law itself (as underscored by the dual meaning of “act”), performances that the legal system requires of immigrants, and the treatment of law as a theme in many plays that feature immigrant protagonists. His methodology offers new insights into how the violence of immigration law has both deformed lives and prompted artistic resistance. Such resistance exposes legal violence, although at times it falls short of its full emancipatory intent. Throughout the volume, Guterman builds primarily on the theoretical work of anthropologist Susan Bibler Coutin, profitably applying to the field of Theatre/Performance Studies many of her groundbreaking observations on how the undocumented manage the contradictions of “non-existence.”

Chapter One juxtaposes two mid-twentieth-century works: Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* (1956) and the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Flower Drum Song* (1958). Whether depicting Italian male immigrants or a Chinese female protagonist, Guterman persuasively argues, both works suggest that illegality can be erased through marriage, thus promoting an "exit strategy" that relies entirely on individual efforts rather than on more lasting social change. Moreover, Guterman delineates how both the publicity surrounding the 1961 film version of *Flower Drum Song* and David Henry Hwang's 2001 stage also effectively erase the young Chinese woman's status as "illegal." Guterman concludes that "[a]n unauthorized immigrant might no longer prove as viable a protagonist for a major commercial endeavor as might have been the case in the late 1950s" (30). Chapter Two follows a similar Latino-Asian American comparative strategy, with analyses of Culture Clash's *Bordertown* (1998) and Josefina Lopez's Latina classic *Real Women Have Curves* (1990), set alongside an analysis of Chinese-American Genny Lim's *Paper Angels* (1980). Here, Guterman explores what he calls "border scenarios"—whether they take place in Tijuana, Mexico, in the San Francisco Bay area, or in a character's own imagination.

Only Chapter Three focuses exclusively on plays with Latina protagonists, specifically domestic workers: Milcha Sánchez-Scott's *Latina*, Lisa Loomer's *Living Out*, and Octavio Solis's *Lydia*. The plays are analyzed in relationship to legal and historical events, such as the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA) and "Nannygate," the 1993 child-care scandal that forced then-President Bill Clinton to withdraw the name of his nominee for attorney general, Zoë Baird, from consideration in the wake of the revelation that she had hired undocumented immigrants. One of Guterman's most innovative theoretical contributions is the ingenious concept of "undocumentedface," which he defines as "a certain ventriloquism ... wherein the undocumented are representable and represented but not present in the theatre" (93). Guterman wryly notes the irony of how the very theaters that stage the troubles of the undocumented for the entertainment of primarily white, middle-class audiences regularly fail to acknowledge the labor of their cleaning staffs, which disproportionately employ undocumented workers.

Guterman's analyses of Teatro de la Esperanza's *La Víctima* (1976), Janet Noble's *Away Alone* (1989), and Guillermo Reyes's *Deporting the Divas* (1996) in Chapter Four highlight the contradiction of how immigration law, ostensibly intended to promote family unity, in fact often forces the separation of family members. Rather than simply celebrate these plays, Guterman shows how the theatrical works' melodramatic strategies serve to reinforce rather than challenge the legal privileging of heteronormative and biological family units. If U.S. law defines "family," at least in theory, as a desirable entity, it creates the category of "alien enemy" as the ultimate outsider. The plays Guterman analyzes in Chapter Five—Michael John Garcés's *Fuente Ovejuna*, *Los Illegals* (2007), Ntare Mwine's *Biro* (2003), and Yussef El

Guindi's *Back of the Throat* (2005)—attempt to counter what Guterman, perhaps engaging in a bit of melodrama himself, calls the law's "unforgiving gaze" on those deemed alien enemies. Here, Guterman comes close to personifying a whole class of federal and state immigration laws intended to expose and deport the undocumented as a villainous force that persecutes migrant-victims.

If he flirts with melodrama in Chapter Five, Guterman's more characteristically dry humor and ironic sensibility re-assert themselves in the conclusion, as Guterman turns to the contradictions between the hyper-visibility and invisibility of immigrant bodies, which simultaneously claim and cede urban space. Much of Guterman's study elucidates how theatre can heighten our awareness of performance in everyday life—trials, political protests, even employer-employee interactions. Thus, it seems appropriate that his conclusion takes us to performance on the streets of New York City, in Times Square, where it turns out that many of the performers who don full-body Disney character costumes to entertain tourists are actually undocumented immigrants from Peru, Guatemala, Mexico, or Colombia. Even as they bring to life icons of U.S. capitalism, the actual bodies under the costumes are in danger of deportation. Guterman reads their performances as a clandestine international flow that ruptures and collapses a quintessentially U.S. space into a more truly American, in the continent-wide sense of the word, crossroads: "With each photo, tourists unknowingly take with them not just a part of New York City, but a part of Peru, of Ecuador, of Guatemala as well. And with each wave, Mickey asserts a right to exist where he is persistently denied existence" (175). What a brilliantly ironic end to an excellent monograph.

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Moncada, Luis Mario. *Así pasan...efemérides teatrales 1900-2000*. México, D.F.: Escenología, 2007: 575 pp.

Así pasan...efemérides teatrales 1900-2000, as the title implies, is an exhaustive work that details Mexico's theatre history over the previous century. Organized in chronological order by decade, the book is more like a series of encyclopedic entries for every month of every year for the past 100 years. With titles like "En tiempos de Don Porfirio," "El sainete de la democracia," or "Víctimas del pecado liberal," it is clear that the author situates theatre within a broader understanding of national political events. In his entries, Moncada pays close attention to the way the changing political landscape has contributed to or hindered the development of institutions such as the University Center of Theatre (CUT), the Department of Theatre at the National Institute of Fine Arts (INBA), the School of Theatre Arts (Escuela de Arte Teatral), and the formation of the National Theatre Company, to name a few.

Moreover, the work makes mention of various instances when the political climate resulted in the censoring of what were deemed particularly critical or subversive works. For example, Rodolfo Usigli's *El gesticulador* was published in 1938 but not performed until 1943 because of its critique of the Mexican Revolution (173). Similarly, Pilar Campesino's piece *Octubre terminó hace mucho tiempo* (1971) had to be performed in the United States because of its critical examination of the still-recent 1968 student massacre (293).

Aside from the political players, Moncada provides detailed information about the spaces, writers, directors, and actors that played fundamental roles in shaping the theatre of their time. Beginning with the Porfiriato, the work details the shift from the patronizing of Spanish *zarzuelas* or Italian operas to the supporting of a specifically Mexican theatre, which emerged during the Revolution and solidified throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Chronicling the construction and rivalries of famous theaters such as Teatro Principal, Teatro Lírico, Teatro Virginia Fábregas and Teatro Esperanza Iris, Moncada also provides a thorough list of actors of the era—such as Virginia Fábregas, Lupe Rivas Cacho, Mimi Derba, Roberto Soto, María Conesa, Jorge Negrete, Tin Tán, and Cantinflas—who undeniably cemented the growing star-system of theatre performers. While performers appeared to be more of a focal point for theatre during these early decades, in the mid-twentieth century directors and writers took center stage and gave birth to Mexico's national theatre: Salvador Novo, Rodolfo Usigli, Celestino Gorostiza, Carlos Solórzano, Sergio Magaña, Emilio Carballido, Xavier Villaurrutia, and Xavier Rojas, to name a few.

During the second half of the twentieth century, international theatre movements began to have an impact. With the 1930s and 1940s arrival of Japanese-born Seki Sano, Antonin Artaud, and Brechtian plays, Mexico was introduced to some of these movements. From the 1950s and beyond, with Sano's translation of Constantin Stanislavski's seminal work on actor training and the arrival of Alejandro Jodorowsky and his "happenings," non-Mexican concepts regarding the limits and social purpose of theatre irrevocably influenced the kinds of plays produced in Mexico. Moncada's thorough listing of produced works makes clear that Edward Albee, Samuel Beckett, and Bertolt Brecht were among the leading foreign playwrights represented on the Mexican stage. Moreover, as Mexico's political corruption reached an all-time high in the 1980s, the theatre responded with an increasing interest in pushing its boundaries to cope with the reality of Mexican life. Dramaturgs and directors such as Vicente Leñero, Sabina Berman, Nancy Cárdenas, Víctor Hugo Rascón Banda, and Jesusa Rodríguez began to create works that not only questioned Mexico's socio-political situation, but also re-fashioned the limits of scene design by including non-traditional elements such as video projections and documentary theatre techniques.

Así pasan...efemérides teatrales 1900-2000, despite its exhaustive study of Mexican theatre, is a difficult work to read. The format does not lend itself to a quick search for information unless the reader is already acquainted with specific works or

figures. To begin with, Moncada's organization of information by month, year, and decade, while extensive, takes for granted that the reader is familiar with Mexico's theatre scene. More importantly, though, the work does not provide an understanding of how Mexican theatre evolved in terms of content or style, as the descriptions are generally as follows: "El 5 se estrena *El cielo nuestro que se va a caer*, espectáculo para niños de Miguel Ángel Tenorio, con música de Alicia Urreta..." (373). Aside from providing names, dates, and places, Moncada rarely describes the content of the works or the visual elements of their stage design, although the book does provide a visual idea of changes over the years by showing, for example, transitions from detailed to sparse stage designs and from conservative costuming to naked bodies. Despite the wealth of information that the author provides about the development of theatre instruction, publications, and intellectual interest, there is no concrete connection between these advances and the productions themselves. Moreover, Moncada on very few occasions actually refers to theatre styles, which means that it is up to the reader to understand the references to such things as "happenings," *teatro-cabaret*, and post-dramatic theatre. In essence, this work is one that assumes the reader is already versed in not only Mexican theatre, but also in theatre theory. Though Moncada relates broad political trends to the theatre, he overlooks crucial social events that have impacted theatre, such as the rise in cinema and television, border violence, femicide, LGBT movements, and the more recent *narco*-related turmoil.

Though not ideal for readers who desire an introduction to Mexican theatre, this work is a valuable reference tool that will equip readers with a formidable list of important names, dates, and institutions. It also achieves the author's dedication to the goal of preserving, in meticulous detail, the nation's theatre history.

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Rivera, Carlos Manuel. *Para que no se nos olvide: Ensayos de interpretación sobre un teatro puertorriqueño marginal*. San Juan, PR: Editorial del Instituto de Cultura, 2014: 258 pp.

Este libro, ganador de los Premios de Literatura del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (2013), recoge siete ensayos de algunos de los más destacados teatreros puertorriqueños de la segunda mitad del siglo pasado: Myrna Casas, Lydia Milagros González, Víctor Frago, Antonio Pantojas, Zora Moreno, Abniel Marat y Oscar Giner. Estos autores crearon un teatro que rompe con el teatro "oficial". El canon considera marginal a este teatro por no tener relevancia, ya que sus temas y creadores provienen de esa gran población invisible con respecto a los símbolos e imágenes que definen lo que es ser puertorriqueño. Rivera rescata y analiza esta manera de ver

y presentar lo puertorriqueño en el teatro desde lo marginal por su humilde origen, desarrollo y presencia en la clase trabajadora del país. Según Rivera, la opinión teleológica y univoca de la élite puertorriqueña ha resultado en el rechazo de obras que rompen con la visión de un Puerto Rico heterosexual/heteronormativo y patriarcal.

En su estudio, Rivera pregunta si los ejemplos del teatro marginal que incluye en el libro contienen o no la teatralidad del ser puertorriqueño. El autor empieza con exponer su oposición a la concepción canónica de esta teatralidad. La confronta con el objetivo de dejar nula esta imagen, el producto de la perspectiva de la clase puertorriqueña privilegiada, recogida por los intelectuales reconocidos de la primera mitad del siglo XX. El autor basa sus argumentos en estudios sociológicos, filosóficos y estéticos contemporáneos. Rivera rescata y pone de manifiesto el valor de un teatro que ha sido despreciado por la élite puertorriqueña, comenzando con *Insularismo* de Antonio S. Pedreira. La idea de una idiosincrasia desde el punto de vista hispanófilo es la única presente, la cual excluye las aportaciones de otras vertientes étnicas que forman la identidad puertorriqueña. Estos ensayos anulan la idea de un Puerto Rico donde la clase burguesa y blanca es la que hace y decide la cultura oficial que define lo que es ser puertorriqueño. En el prólogo, el autor nos comunica que sus intenciones son la interpretación de ejemplos del teatro marginal y, "...la búsqueda de una aproximación teórica que refleje la realidad cambiante de una producción cultural de bases ideológicas y estéticas, con el objetivo de historizar" (10).

El autor dedica este libro a Victoria Espinosa, directora, dramaturga y maestra del teatro para generaciones de puertorriqueños y puertorriqueñas y al teatrero Pedro Santaliz, que con su *Nuevo Teatro Pobre de América*, enseñó e hizo teatro en Puerto Rico y en las comunidades puertorriqueñas que no tenían acceso al teatro en la ciudad de Nueva York, permitiendo así el propagar del arte teatral más allá de lo que la tradición había establecido.

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Rivera-Servera, Ramón H., Harvey Young, eds. *Performance in the Borderlands*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 283 pp.

In this interdisciplinary collection of essays, scholars from a variety of backgrounds—literary studies, musicology, theatre, and history, to name a few—consider the contemporary relationship between borders and performance. Michal Kobialka's *Borders and Thresholds* serves as a catalyst for the thematic thread that connects the diverse chapters. Editors Ramón Rivera-Servera and Harvey Young note that in contrast to Kobialka's project, which focuses on real versus imaginary borders, *Performance in the Borderlands* revisits "how to think of/in the borders" (7), while highlighting the border as both a geographical site and a condition of constant move-

ment. Each chapter engages with this conceptualization of borders, bringing it to bear on a unique kind of performance practice, be it dance, theatre, musical performance, or everyday life.

Rivera-Servera and Young establish a tension between stasis and movement throughout their rigorous historical and theoretical introduction, drawing attention to the “sensorial and affective components” (4) of encounters at the border. Paying special attention to contemporary economic policies (NAFTA, CAFTA, etc.) and transformative world events (post-Cold War, post-9/11, etc.), they respond to a long tradition of scholarship that addresses the exchange of cultures, defining the border as an imaginary construct characterized by a tendency toward stasis, a propensity for “controlled movement,” (2) and a source of pressure for the bodies and commodities that find themselves at odds with these impulses. With this definition in mind, Rivera-Servera and Young privilege an innovative performance-based approach that is attuned to embodied interpersonal communications across both space and time. This innovative “multi-sensorial” (3) and relational conceptualization of performance is exemplified throughout the collection.

Perhaps nowhere is this emphasis on multiple senses stronger than in Josh Kun’s chapter, “Playing the Fence, Listening to the Line,” and in Patrick Anderson’s “‘Architecture is Not Justice’: Seeing Guantánamo Bay.” Kun investigates what he calls the “aural border” (21) through several sound art projects that draw attention to a differing set of politics and ethics than does the visual domain of the same border crossings. Anderson’s focus is, in contrast, on the visual politics of the contemporary military detention camp. He analyzes an installation art piece that consisted of a replica of the camp at Guantánamo Bay, emphasizing the performative nature of the walls of the prison camp as they reproduce the sovereignty of the U.S. nation-state on an affective level through fear and the control of the visible.

Other contributors use a performance-based approach to borders to rethink previously accepted assessments of border sites and border crossers, anchoring their analyses in affective and relational encounters. In her intriguing essay, “Havana Isn’t Waiting,” Patricia Ybarra takes a revisionary look at arguments that see the Cuba/U.S. border as exceptional, placing the plays considered in her chapter under the more general rubric of “neoliberal (im)mobilities” (76). In an especially compelling contribution, “Crossing Hispaniola,” Rivera-Servera traces an erotics of encounter and exchange at the Haitian/Dominican border that crosses artistic genres and calls into question discourses about racial and cultural division. In contrast, questioning Benítez-Rojo’s *La isla que se repite* (1989), Lowell Fiet considers, in “New Tropicalism,” boundaries in the contemporary Caribbean that complicate a purely fluid and resistant notion of performance. Ana Elena Puga, in “Poor Enrique and Poor Maria,” questions the representation of another kind of mobility, analyzing the way that film and narrative can be sympathetic to the cause of the immigrant while also naturalizing migrant suffering within a melodramatic plot structure. Similarly, challenging

a normative discursive framework, Eng-Beng Lim shares a theoretically nuanced reassessment of the figure of the native in his contribution “The Minor Native,” in which he proposes the concept of “transcolonial border zones” (204), where minorities and former colonies are defined in relation to each other rather than to metropolitan centers confined to the western nation-state system.

Another handful of chapters delve into the temporal implications of border performances. In “Transnational Cultural Translations and the Meaning of *Danzón* across Borders,” Alejandro L. Madrid outlines the cultural exchange of the *danzón* between Cuba and Mexico, using it as a case study that demonstrates the losses, resignifications, and new limits that develop over a sustained period of transnational flow. Paige A. McGinley’s chapter, “The Magic of Song!” explores a similar pattern of circulation over time, but in this case, it is archivist John Lomax’s theatrical staging and framing of Southern black folk songs that he has gathered by crossing the interior racial, cultural, and even penal boundaries. A different version of the circulation of memory emerges in Harvey Young’s essay, which emphasizes the cultural importance of embodied performances of the memory of the Trail of Tears in response to a lack of archivable objects, as well as of a specific site where the trauma of displacement occurred.

Finally, there is another interesting group of chapters that focus on autobiographical and individually embodied experiences of the border. José Manuel Valenzuela Arce’s contribution, “Transborder Dance,” features the first-person interview responses of Minerva Tapia, which illustrate the way that both her choreography and her experiences are situated at the border. Similarly, in “Border Intellectual,” E. Patrick Johnson illustrates the everyday borders he crosses between home and academia, between segregated communities, and between the discourses that define these spaces. Ric Knowles diverges from this purely autobiographical approach in “Calling off the Border Patrol,” incorporating an auto-ethnographic section that discusses his own role as a dramaturg and outlines an effective guide for cross-cultural dramaturgy.

Always returning to a central “multi-sensorial,” relational, and circulatory focus, the contributions to this project successfully open up a dialogue that is mirrored in the transcribed discussion among several of the participants included at the end of the book. The collection as a whole will appeal to a wide variety of scholars interested in engaging with and relating in the borderlands that have become increasingly prominent and multiplied in our contemporary moment.

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Selman, Leyla. *El pájaro de Chile y otra gente posible*. Concepción, Chile: LAR, 2013: 140 pp.

El pájaro de Chile y otra gente posible es la primera antología dramática publicada por la dramaturga chilena Leyla Selman. El texto, que recibió el 2014 Premio Municipal de Arte y Literatura de Santiago en mención teatro, muestra la versatilidad de la autora y constata su importancia en el teatro contemporáneo.

Selman pertenece a un grupo de autores jóvenes que surge a comienzos del siglo XXI, específicamente al creciente grupo de autoras, directoras y actrices que lideran grupos teatrales independientes, la mayoría en Santiago. Sin embargo, Selman conscientemente ha elegido desarrollar su trabajo en la ciudad de Concepción, junto a TeatroReconstrucción, una compañía teatral creada en el año 2005. Como dramaturga, su trabajo es abstracto y se ubica fuera de la lógica aristotélica. Sus obras activan la puesta en escena y conceptualizan el teatro como una actividad colectiva en la que el texto escrito es solo un elemento más en el proceso de creación de significado.

El volumen incluye tres obras dramáticas: *El pájaro de Chile*, *El día que un colibrí se posó en mi ventana* y *Rómpeme*. La autora las eligió basándose en criterios de unidad y armonía. Las tres piezas presentan el abandono y la marginalidad como temas fundamentales, mostrando además la tortura constante que estos dos sentimientos conllevan en los personajes. Tres protagonistas adolescentes —dos mujeres y un hombre— están instalados en la marginalidad social y sufren el abandono de sus madres. *El pájaro de Chile* habla de las consecuencias de la partida de la madre en el padre y su hijo; en *El día que un colibrí se posó sobre mi ventana*, una joven, abandonada por su madre y marginada socialmente, trata de subsistir inventando su propia realidad; y, finalmente, *Rómpeme* muestra cómo la soledad de una adolescente desvaloriza principios morales arraigados en la sociedad. Todas las piezas enfatizan las circunstancias límites en que viven los protagonistas, algo que la propia Selman ha denominado “super abandono, meta abandono o abandono absoluto”, resultado de la desgarradura permanente que sufren los seres humanos. Es por eso que Selman rehúsa referirse a personajes y habla de personajes-personas porque, para ella, sus personajes son más que representaciones de otros, son los otros y, en este contexto, “cualquiera puede ser personaje de una obra”.

Sus tres protagonistas —Luis, Kimberly y Amalia— poseen sentimientos negativos que rayan en trastornos de personalidad: no ser queridos, ser defectuosos, no estar aptos para la vida en comunidad, terror a ser engañados, autocastigo y desconfianza de los otros. Estas percepciones y sentimientos los llevan finalmente a la destrucción absoluta. El director, Rodrigo Pérez, en su carta/prólogo del volumen, afirma que estos textos “duelen” porque “[en ellos] nos devuelves la imagen de nuestra perversión (colectiva y personal), es decir, nos haces chocar de frente y sin adornos con la versión más cercana a nuestra propia realidad (social y personal)” (9). En realidad, Selman se aleja del realismo tradicional, pero, aun así, estas piezas

son una crítica a la ética. La dramaturga no quiere plantear una crítica social, pero en un intento por humanizarle, da un guiño al espectador para que perciba problemas sociales comunes. A través de temas como el abandono, la pobreza y preguntas como qué cultura privilegiamos y qué constituye a un ser exitoso, los personajes de Selman nos revelan seres humanos que son producto de construcciones culturales. Ella afirma que no existe ser humano que no sienta abandono en algún momento de la vida y este sentimiento llega a ser más que la soledad, pues es desposesión incluso de uno mismo. En una serie de entrevistas desarrolladas en Concepción de Chile entre septiembre y noviembre del año 2013, Selman expresó que el abandono es inherente al ser humano “[ya] sea una persona muy exitosa, o una persona que nadie escucha, pero yo les hago hablar en el arte; son personas que no tienen la posibilidad de ser escuchadas en el mundo” (13). De allí el título del libro y el que en cada una de las piezas se recalque que “la historia está inspirada en el abandono común” de los seres humanos (118).

Las tres obras dramáticas de esta antología visibilizan y recrean la contemporaneidad del Chile de hoy, muy importante para entender la idiosincrasia de nuestro país y la trascendencia de la obra de esta dramaturga. *El pájaro de Chile*, la pieza más larga de la antología, posee un desarrollo lineal y fusiona distintos géneros performativos como la música, la danza, la percusión y el folklore. Estos aparecen estrechamente aliados al texto, ya sea para demostrar el costumbrismo local, reforzar ciertas escenas e incluso como elemento de separación entre ellas. *Rómpeme* es la obra más breve e íntima. Constituida como una narración, es una gran reflexión sobre la desesperanza. Finalmente, *El día que un colibrí se posó en mi ventana* es la más desgarradora de las tres, puesto que en ella el abandono se transforma en celos y violencia.

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Sosa, Cecilia. *Queering Acts of Mourning in the Aftermath of Argentina's Dictatorship. The Performances of Blood*. Suffolk, UK: Tamesis, 2014: 190 pp.

Cecilia Sosa's *Queering Acts of Mourning in the Aftermath of Argentina's Dictatorship. The Performances of Blood* begins with a series of enduring questions of universal interest and importance: “In what ways are we ‘touched’ by the past? Are those who have personally experienced the effects of violence the only ones entitled to contest them? Can the rehearsal of trauma bring us pleasure in the present?” (1). What follows is an original and sophisticated investigation of those questions in the context of Argentina's constantly evolving post-dictatorial memory politics.

Sosa's book envisions non-normative modes of belonging that shift attention away from what she has termed the “wounded family” narrative, upheld by those family members directly affected by dictatorial violence. Renowned memory theorists

have discussed blood kinship and the powerful role of family members (in Argentina long considered “the guardians of mourning”) in articulating memory politics. Sosa, too, identifies the potential closures prescribed by the “wounded family.” Her bold contribution, however, is to propose a new lexicon for approaching mourning and loss that does not reinforce the conservative familial tropes that traditionally have consolidated the culture of memory and mourning along bloodlines in post-dictatorial Argentina. Drawing on performance, kinship, and queer studies, she elaborates this vision with nuance, questioning the exclusive legitimacy of voice historically attributed to those with blood ties while at the same time calling for a “creative politics of memory, which does not compromise the need to establish the biological identity of the abducted children” (26).

Sosa’s engagement with queer studies initiates a major shift in existing dialogue on memory, human rights, trauma, and mourning in Argentina. Throughout the book she establishes fluid dialogue with key theorists such as Judith Butler, Ann Cvetkovich, David Eng, Lee Edelman, Sara Blackman, Carolyn Dinshaw, Eve Sedgwick, and Sara Ahmed, among others. Sosa writes, “I will conceive as ‘queer bonds’ those forms of relationality that contest the biological narratives of injury accounted for by the relatives of the victims in Argentina. By bringing those queer bonds to the foreground, I want to examine the alternative forms of support, love and care that have become possible in the aftermath of violence” (4). There are always risks involved in introducing a novel approach to an already charged topic such as memory. When done well, as Sosa does in her book, a smartly conceived and insightful new approach can reshape scholarly debates and leave a lasting imprint on the field.

In Chapter One, “Paradoxes of Blood: From the *Madres*’ Queer Mourning to the Kirchnerist Era,” Sosa begins by explaining the ways in which the practices of mourning, loss, and human rights activism since the dictatorship have been associated almost exclusively with family. Sosa discusses how biological normativity was constructed over the course of this period, its role in founding and perpetuating the “wounded family,” and how governmental and legal decisions reinforced this normativity. Engaging critically with the work of Diana Taylor, Butler, and Ahmed, Sosa demonstrates ways in which key public figures, including the *Madres*, former President Néstor Kirchner, and others, have contested these normative bloodlines and made possible the foundation of more expansive, non-normative affiliations.

Chapter Two, “Black Humor and the Children of the Disappeared,” focuses on the activist group H.I.J.O.S. as a case study for exploring the “non-normative pleasures from the experience of loss” (28). Sosa examines the complex codes, limits, rights, and notions of pedigree that defined group membership from its inception to the late nineties. She then goes on to show how the definition of ‘belonging’ shifted as the era of impunity that had characterized the nineties came to a close and the Kirchner government integrated many of the group’s principles into its public policy. Sosa argues that due to this shift, H.I.J.O.S. ultimately expanded the experience of

mourning to include those who had not been considered “true” victims. Sosa draws on Freud, Bergson, and Derrida to examine the role of dark humor in providing members of the organization with a new language to cope with loss.

In Chapter Three, “Undoing the Cult of the Victim: *Los Rubios*, *M* and *La mujer sin cabeza*,” Sosa examines the role of film in changing perspectives of memory, performance, and heritage in contemporary Argentina. She does this by juxtaposing two “postmemory” films, *Los Rubios* (2003) and *M* (2007), with *La mujer sin cabeza* (2008), a fictional film belonging to the New Argentine Cinema Movement. Taking a cue from Derrida and his notion of countersignature, Sosa first performs a nuanced analysis of *Los rubios* and *M*, showing the ways in which these films “challenge the compulsory demand for genealogical inscription that became mainstream within human rights discourse” (52). Sosa argues compellingly that *La mujer* evokes feelings of complicity, guilt, and denial that still circulate in spite of the official narrative of grief of the Kirchner government.

Chapter Four, “The Cooking Mother: Hebe de Bonafini and the Conversion of the Former ESMA,” is based on a remarkable case study. In 2009, the president of the radical faction of the *Madres*, Hebe de Bonafini, held cooking classes at the ESMA, the former detention and torture center in Buenos Aires. In this chapter, Sosa examines these classes on “cooking and politics” and argues that through cooking and family dining rituals these classes “queer the table of victims” and propose “collective ‘digestion’ of mourning and making it *palatable* for new audiences” (82). Sosa engages in dialogue with performance theorists and the “politics of conversion,” and shares with readers a fascinating interview with de Bonafini, in which she discusses with the activist the power of practice to transform an atmosphere formerly associated with death into one of renewed community and conviviality.

Sosa’s fifth chapter, “The Attire of (Post-)Memory: *Mi vida después*,” centers on one of Argentina’s most influential recent plays, *Mi vida después*, by Lola Arias. Based on real life stories of a cast of performers belonging to the second generation, the play employs documentary techniques, testimonies, and props to orchestrate a powerful deconstruction of official narratives of grief. The play begins with the actors putting on their parents’ clothing. Sosa argues that this gesture allows the actors to reenact their parents’ youth and revise their own heritage, which ultimately “can be read as a provocative attempt at cross-dressing the parental figures that defies time” (108). One of Sosa’s major contributions to this chapter is the critical dialogue she establishes with evolving notions of post-memory. Sosa describes the use of photography in the play and shows how photographs attain autonomy from the strictly familial realm when employed in the intersubjective space of theatre.

The last chapter, “Kinship, Loss and Political Heritage: *Los topos* and Kirchner’s Death,” centers on the novella, *Los topos* (2008), by Argentine author and son of disappeared parents, Félix Bruzzone. Although Bruzzone was never interested in belonging to H.I.J.O.S., his novella nonetheless takes the dark humor employed by

H.I.J.O.S. to an extreme level, becoming in Sosa's words, "an excruciating caricature of the wretched characters of the 'wounded family'" (130). Focusing on the love story between a transvestite sex worker and a son of the disappeared, Sosa shows how the novella provides "a queer, insurgent and ironic version of the performance of blood, one that suggests a more fluid entanglement among kinship, loss and political heritage" (129). Here Sosa elaborates insightful connections between children of the disappeared and other marginalized communities, which, though once repudiated, have since the election of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, found vindication through official governmental policy and public acknowledgment.

In sum, not only is Sosa's *Queering Acts of Mourning* riveting and immensely readable, it also constitutes a breakthrough in changing the direction of studies of memory, trauma, mourning, and kinship in post-dictatorship Argentina.

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Verzero, Lorena. *Teatro militante. Radicalización artística y política en los años '70*. Buenos Aires: Biblos, 2013: 414 pp.

Teatro militante. Radicalización artística y política en los años '70, de Lorena Verzero es el resultado de la maestría y el doctorado presentado en la Universidad Carlos III de Madrid y la Universidad de Buenos Aires. En ella toma como período histórico los años 1966-76. El punto de partida responde al teatro que ella denomina militante y que Norman Briski en aquella época mencionaba como teatro villero. La necesaria lectura de este trabajo radica en comprender la importancia de este teatro emergente.

Dentro de estos grupos nacientes, la autora estudia Octubre (Norman Briski), el Centro de Cultura Nacional José Podestá (Juan Carlos Gené), Machete y Grupo de Teatro Periodístico (ambos dirigidos por Augusto Boal), Cumpa (Mauricio Kartun), Libre Teatro Libre (María Escudero) y Once al Sur (Oscar Ciccone), todos anclados en los cambios políticos-sociales, en la puja del peronismo por resurgir de la proscripción y en el cambio del intelectual sartreano al intelectual revolucionario. A su vez, señala Verzero, estos grupos teatrales se ubican en un contexto histórico de ideologías contrarias, como la Argentina que atravesaba la dictadura de Onganía por un lado y se organizaba políticamente con el modelo revolucionario cubano por el otro, teniendo como figura simbólica al Che.

A su vez las experiencias del teatro militante, explica la autora, se desarrollaron en sintonía con otras propuestas provenientes del cine, la literatura, la música y las artes visuales. Dichos movimientos responden a la figura del intelectual-artista revolucionario. En pos de desarrollar y comprender cómo se forma la progresiva politización de la sociedad, y cómo funcionaron los grupos teatrales mencionados,

Verzero explica y define en su tesis el concepto del teatro militante y cómo este movimiento se interrelacionó con el teatro independiente, el teatro comercial-popular, la experimentación vanguardista de los '60 y el teatro oficial. La tesis no duda en afirmar que este movimiento teatral emergente propició el compromiso del cuerpo, una idea de compañerismo y de colectividad que construyó una identidad subjetiva preocupada por lo local, lo nacional y lo latinoamericano como punto de partida para la actividad teatral, conceptos que posteriormente se problematizarán.

El libro se estructura en siete capítulos. El primero estudia el campo teatral de la época y el proceso de politización de la larga década del 60, durante la cual se instala la cultura de izquierda. En el segundo capítulo, con la intención de comprender la tradición del teatro de izquierda, se explica la modalidad del Teatro del Pueblo hasta su fecha de cierre en 1975. El capítulo introduce al intelectual sartreano al explorar el trabajo del Grupo de Autores, creadores de *El avión negro*, y profundiza sobre la apertura ideológica hacia el intelectual revolucionario. A su vez incorpora, a modo de completar la perspectiva histórica del período, la importancia y la participación de la literatura con Rodolfo Walsh y la plástica de artistas como los del Instituto Di Tella. En el capítulo tres, se da paso al estudio pormenorizado de los grupos teatrales mencionados, mientras que el capítulo cuatro comprende el impacto cultural de estos grupos en la sociedad. El quinto capítulo explica la relación entre el teatro militante y otras prácticas artísticas como la del Grupo Cine Liberación y Cine de la Base y el grupo Canto Popular Urbano. El capítulo seis se concentra en la conformación de una identidad del teatro militante, anclada en los conceptos de lo nacional y lo latinoamericano y atravesada por hitos históricos de todo el mundo, retomados en pos de la búsqueda de la Patria Grande. En este último punto, Verzero plantea una problematización de la conformación de la identidad en Argentina, en tanto que se muestra como una “cultura de mezclas” donde conviven, de modo conflictivo, elementos autóctonos con materiales culturales propios de los centros de poder.

A lo largo de su estudio, Verzero explica el arco de ascenso y descenso “en la politización de todas las esferas sociales y en las luchas por alcanzar la liberación de los distintos factores de dominación hasta la mitad de 1973 cuando, habiendo sido alcanzado el gobierno por parte del peronismo, no se vieron satisfechas las demandas de la izquierda y se comenzó, entonces, la curva de descenso” (381).

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