Review Essay: On Other Cubas: Cultural Studies after the Special Period

Duong, Paloma. *Portable Postsocialisms: New Cuban Mediascapes after the End of History*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2024. 296 pp. ISBN 9781-4773-2826-2

García, Christina M. *Corporeal Readings of Cuban Literature and Art: The Body, the Inhuman, and Ecological Thinking*. Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2024. 318 pp. ISBN 9781-6834-0441-5

Whitfield, Esther. *A New No-Man's-Land: Writing and Art at Guantánamo, Cuba*, 2024. 216 pp. ISBN 9789-8229-4815-5

Much of Cuban Studies since the 1990s has orbited around the Special Period, an economic and humanitarian crisis following the fall of the Soviet Union. Ariana Hernandez-Regaunt, perhaps the period's most attentive scholar, described its significance not only as a historical episode but as an indispensable category of lived experience. In the wake of the 1990s, scholars across the social sciences and humanities have addressed how Cubans reckoned with extreme material scarcity, the running aground of revolutionary politics, and the broader symbolic pressure that the declared end of socialism put on the possibilities for alternative forms of noncapitalist collective life, both real and imagined. So momentous was the Special Period for Cuban Studies that, in its wake, the events of earlier decades—the death of Ernesto Guevara in 1965, the 1970 sugar harvest, the Mariel Boatlift of 1980—seemed to rearrange themselves into a depressive arc culminating, seemingly inevitably, in disenchantment. Spurred both by the everyday collapse of buildings as well as the general preoccupation with crumbling structures, this scholarship has elected the ruin as its privileged metaphor, chosen for its ability to connect literal decay to the collapse of socialism. These lines of inquiry were destined to leave Cuban Studies at an impasse. On one hand, if the Special Period constitutes the death of socialism qua the death of history, then what have the decades that followed it meant as an idea, era, and experience? On the other, given the prominence of the revolutionary state to the field of Cuban Studies as well as the broad consensus around its failure in the scholarship following the Special Period, it seemed that in the twenty-first century a statist analytic had been thoroughly treated and even exhausted.

Some three decades after the worst of the crisis, work is well underway in the project of reconceptualizing a Cuban Studies so shaped by the Special Period. Already by 2011, Anke Birkenmaier and Esther Whitfield's anthology posited a "beyond" the ruin; more recently, Guillermina De Ferrari has offered the art of repair as response to precarity, which similarly marks a turn away from an earlier inevitability of brokenness and ruin. In particular, the publication of Rachel Price's 2015 *Planet/Cuba: Art, Culture, and the Future of the Island*, which is cited in the three monographs considered here, marked a watershed moment for studies of the island; in it Price simultaneously challenged the eminence of national form as a primary mode of analysis while also situating the local in a dyadic relation to the planetary. For Price, twenty-first-century Cuban culture suggests an exhaustion with the terms of Cubanness itself.

Following these works, a number of new monographs take up the work of refiguring Cuban studies as something less exceptional, less premised in the totalizing frame of the state, and less committed to apocalypse, ruin, and the end of history. They include Paloma Duong's *Portable Postsocialisms: New Cuban Mediascapes after the End of History*, Christina M. García's *Corporeal Readings of Cuban Literature and Art: The Body, the Inhuman, and Ecological Thinking*, and Esther Whitfield's *A New No-Man's-Land: Writing and Art at Guantánamo, Cuba*. These works, all written in English and by scholars based in the United States, propose new objects of analysis while insisting on interdisciplinary approaches. Indeed, it would be reasonable for

scholars without much familiarity or interest in Cuba to engage Duong, García, and Whitfield's works from the domains of posthumanism, media studies, visual studies, and comparative literature. Taken together they simultaneously deterritorialize the bounds of an earlier Cuban Studies while pursuing both undertreated topics like Guantánamo and emergent ones like media culture.

In *Portable Postsocialisms: New Cuban Mediascapes after the End of History*, Paloma Duong most directly grapples with Cuba's socialist legacy–and the legacy of discourse on Cuban socialism. As a context, postsocialism describes places like Cuba, China, and Vietnam where twentieth-century promises of socialisms have been variously compromised; as a condition, postsocialism describes "the historical time in which declarations of the death of socialism coexist with the emergence of new anticapitalist desires" (1). As such, the postsocialist condition constitutes a "global subjectivity," one in which we all participate (3). Duong approaches the postsocialist condition through blogs, social media, and screen cultures. Due both to the hypermobility of contemporary media as well as its entanglement within networks of travel and exchange, these postsocialisms are "portable." Even if nothing as field-defining as the ruin has yet emerged for the post-Special Period, Duong's attention to smart phones and screen cultures will be an indispensable vector for readers seeking to understand twenty-first century Cuba; indeed, insofar as the everyday and the ordinary are key analytics for lending coherence to the interminable presents that follow more decidedly historic episodes (see, for instance, Fukuyama's declaration of the end of history), there may no better object to study contemporary Cuba's everyday than through memes and mediascapes. Key to her formulation of the Cuban mediascape is Duong's insistence on a pluralism of disaggregated, competing narratives, "an explosion of images," in which top-down views of the state or the foreign tourist are shot through with those from below, like organizers and everyday internet users (114). Even if these disruptions are incomplete, asymmetrical, and at times seemingly apolitical or non-emancipatory, *Portable Postsocialisms* does vital work in expanding a media ecosystem that Cuban Studies has too often assumed to be comprised by the state alone.

Duong contends that the turn-of-the-twenty-first century postsocialist moment is attended by globally renewed interest in Cuba, and the first chapter tracks this emergent interest through the trip to socialism. Here, however, Duong performs an admirable redirection: though she opens addressing the twenty-first century tourist's desire to see a Cuba "before it changes" amidst the brief thaw in relations with the United States, she quickly pivots to an analysis of travelogs from the 1960s. Duong exercises great care throughout in unpacking the thinking of the New Left, which at points becomes the primary object of analysis of *Portable Postsocialisms*. In any case, her work here forms part of a broader argumentative arc that the left—both the New Left of the 1960s and 70s as well as today's—failed to fully account for actually existing Cuban socialism as among "systems defined not by opposition to capitalism but by a differently organized mode of capitalist production" (47). This earlier failure, in turn, resonates in misrecognition by today's foreigners who flock to the island to see, ostensibly, the last vestiges of socialism: "the trip to Cuba today is the space of mutual (mis)recognition in which historical disillusionment with one's own political context meets collective *hauntologies*—the persistent desire for another future against all odds, the refusal to give in to 'capitalist realism,' that is, the impossibility to imagine an alternative" (58).

The following chapters leave tourists behind to consider cultural production and circulation primarily on the island. Against the paradigm of ruinology, chapter two takes a cue from Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis* to propose a turn to the sonic domain of music, particularly in urban

spaces. Drawing on a mixture of son and merengue in the early years of the Revolution, Duong recasts the genre of pachanga as a trans-epochal term that comprises contemporary Cubatón, or Cuban reggaeton, and the anti-institutional punk of the band Porno para Ricardo. While the author's playlist lacks sonic cohesion, it booms with a shared ethos of hedonism and boisterousness. This chapter is particularly successful in conjuring a sense of otherwise in which Cuban politics might have been less concerned with the virtues of discipline and stoicism than partying, pleasure, and joy. From the musical to the sartorial, Duong's third chapter considers the Cuban "woman of fashion." Similar to Jacqueline Loss's interest in "socialism with bling" or Hope Bastian and Mary J. Berry's attention to the racialized line-waiters, chapter three approaches Cuban anxieties around consumption. For Duong, the circulation of the woman of fashion is both prompted by and promulgated through digital networks; she is, moreover, an emblem of the incongruencies of a hybrid economy in which an avowedly socialist state has increasingly deferred to market capitalism. This chapter advances Duong's broader interest in troubling the binaristic scripts, whether of moral panic and consumerist pleasure, that have often met the Cuban woman of fashion.

Duong's final chapter, "Cuban Screen Cultures" is her most ambitious exercise in pluralism. It is in part an infrastructural history—for example, the arrival of local wifi hotspots and internet of ever-increasing bandwidths—and in part a foray into how screen cultures have been used: from the development of blogs like *Generación Y* and *Octavo Cerco*, to the arrival of journalistic websites on and off the island and the contemporary resurgence of the chronicle through sites like elTOQUE, to the use of memes as a way of addressing apprehension before the coyuntura, the state's euphemism for the distributed, pandemic-era crisis. Both prismatic and vertiginous, Duong insists here on rigorous yet multi-modal accounting of screen culture's polyform dimensions. While more uneven than other recent engagements with mediascapes, Duong's range here may suggest a broader restlessness with a Cuban Studies that has more often approached media within the assertive frame of the state. The conclusion considers the transition from apocalypse to postapocalypse via the science fiction of Erik Mota as a map for the move from the Special Period to the postsocialist Cuba. In her final sentences, Duong closes by suggesting Cuban culture may best be understood through the *via negativa*, or a mode of knowing derived through negation—not that socialism, not this capitalism—without necessarily having a fixed alternative at the ready.

Toward a different kind of pluralism, Christina M. Garcia's first monograph, *Corporeal Readings of Cuban Literature and Art: The Body, the Inhuman, and Ecological Thinking*, departs from the multiple resonances provoked in the juxtaposition of text and body. At times, this proximity is physically intimate, as when Virgilio Piñera likens writing to defecation or Ahmel Echevarría's writer-protagonist describes snorting poetry; at others, their resonance is less literal, as when the act of reading becomes a metaphor for cannibalism, hospitality, and immunity, of inviting or incorporating certain bodies into others; and at other still, distinctions between the book object and human subject collapse altogether. Across close readings of visual art, film, and, most frequently, literature, García channels posthumanism, ecofeminism, and new materialist criticisms toward what she calls "ecological thinking," or "an awareness of complex networks of interdependencies and of the material as having its own transformative potential outside of human agency" (8). By "adopt[ing] ecology as an analytical lens" (9), García aims to disrupt an Enlightenment heritage that insists on separating those bodies conferred the privileged status of human from those denied it. This framing in turn allows her to group racial, sexual, and species

difference under a common theoretical banner. While there are notable asymmetries here and each group arguably deserves an analysis all its own, García channels this motley collective toward a broader critique of cartesian notions of the human, all from the vantage of one island. Put simply, "Cuban writers and artists have undermined regimes of seeing and organizing bodies" (17).

Against the horizons of representation and transcendence, the titular "corporeal readings" introduces not only a topic (i.e., the body), but a methodology of reading attuned to the porous membrane that separates, or fails to separate, bodies from texts and the human from the inhuman. The opening two chapters consider what García calls impenetrable materiality, understood as "the notion that under every layer, inside every cavity, there is another surface, another exterior, another point of touch. In other words, there is no absolute inside that is not already in relation to something else" (222). In the first chapter, she explores how racialized and queer subjectivities are rendered not through representation but phonic performance and aesthetic strategy. In an uncommonly elastic engagement with Cuban cannon, she pairs the Republican-era poems of latter-day revolutionary institutionalist and Afro-Cuban Nicolas Guillén with the deliriously queer prose of Severo Sarduy. In both cases, bodies emerge not as inherent, innate, and organic but as forged through literary *techne,* like the act of reading.

The second chapter engages Sarudy's fabulously queer and noxiously orientalist *Cobra* alongside Roberto Fabelo's human-animal hybrids through the lens of metamorphosis and transmateriality. Often likened to the medieval *horror vacui*, Sarduy's writing is frequently appraised as an endless string of references. Here, García challenges a postmodern reading of *Cobra* to instead "reimagine what others have previously designated as a loss or an empty center as a plentitude of indeterminate materiality" (73). Seen from this vantage, *Cobra* is not, or not only, a filigreed hall of mirrors but also a motley human, more than human, and transhuman assemblage that speaks to complex interdependencies. While alluded to earlier, García turns briefly at the end of this chapter to Ernesto Guevara's new man, which serves as a key foil for her overall project. Insofar as Guevara's new man is explicitly gendered as well as implicitly whitened, able-bodied, and autonomous, García explores here his racialized, queer, and transmaterial counterparts that fall outside the normative. Given this broader project, however, the outright absence of Sylvia Wyner's theorization of genres of Man feels conspicuously absent.

The subsequent chapters dig underneath the skin through explorations of the inhuman, practices of cannibal reading, and notions of immunity. Chapter three takes on "Inhuman Writings" in Ena Lucía Portela's *El pájaro: Pincel y tinta china* (1998) and José Antonio Ponte's *La fiesta vigilada* (2002), both significant texts of Cuba's Special Period. García reads the decision of Portela's narrator to scurry away as an ethics of rejecting the category of the human; similarly, Ponte's *La fiesta vigilada* demonstrates "the simultaneity of being […] 'politically dead, and being corporeally 'alive'" (143). The fourth chapter explores "cannibal readings" in two texts by Ahmel Echevarría, *Búfalos camino al matadero* (2013), a text that has next to no critical treatment, and *Caballo con arzones* (2017), both of which suggest "[a]n ethics of reading in which the Other is made perceptible, while resisting a politics of representation" (149). The final chapter continues to consider incorporation of Others, this time within the body politic through the lens of immunity and community. Following Roberto Esposito, García turns to Tomás Gutierrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's *Fresa y chocolate* (1993) and Ena Lucía Portela's *Cien botellas en la pared* (2002). With a clear debt to Guillermina De Ferrari's writing on community, hospitality, and vulnerability, García contends that, despite the logic of incorporation of formerly excluded others (i.e. the queer and the social outcast) into the body politic, there remains some unassimilable quotient that poses an enduring obstacle to the status quo.

Here, and across *Corporeal Readings*, García points to the limits of a liberal humanist politics of inclusion premised on recognition. Throughout, she resists a transcendental horizon of literary studies to instead insist on writing and reading as literal, visceral, and capable of rendering permeable the membrane between bodies virtual, discursive and physical. García channels this indeterminacy toward a broader undoing of conventional modes of understanding the human in order to foreground vulnerability and interdependency. Though ostensibly realized from the domain of Cuban Studies, the author herself closes with a call to expand posthumanist and new materialist thinking beyond Cuba and toward the broader Caribbean region.

Esther Whitfield wrote one of the defining monographs of the Special Period literature, one of whose more novel observations was the uncanny resonance of Cuban ruins with those in Syria. In her anticipated new monograph, she transforms that resonance into a methodologically rigorous and profoundly innovative comparative remapping of Cuba. Grounded in the island's easternmost province, the opening gambit of Whitfield's *A New No-Man's-Land: Writing and Art at Guantánamo, Cuba* is to approach the multiply militarized area as a borderland region. Following border studies, which have been increasingly engaged by Caribbeanists, Whitfield approaches the region's militarized border as discursive and porous, while remaining ever attentive to the enmities and hostilities that have structured it. In what follows, Whitfield meticulously outlines a thoroughly innovative, "peculiar form of regional culture" (41) that, very much in the spirit of Rachel Price's *Planet/Cuba*, is both honed to a relatively small geographic zone while being simultaneously held in profound resonance with global forces. As a comparative project, the author considers work made on the forty-five-square-mile naval-base-turned clandestine detention facility and the easternmost province in Cuba that surrounds it. One one side, Guantánamo Province and cities like Caimanera are six-hundred miles away from island's political and cultural center of Havana, yet are home to the elite "Brigada de la Frontera," which represent the "limit line of symbolic defense" in an ongoing and amorphous war on imperialism whose primary opponent has been the United States (20). On the other side, Guantanamo Bay became a United States naval base at the dawn of the twentieth century that, almost a century later, fit Donald Rumsfield's criterion of "the legal equivalent of outer space" (5). The base went on to become a detention facility in an amorphous global war on terror. It is no small feat to find common ground among prisoners of war, Caribbean contract laborers, U.S. military guards, and Cubans and Cuban detainees. Beyond the different languages and experiences that coalesce in the region, to which Whitfield is acutely attentive, in the introduction she enumerates asymmetries of scale, visibility, disciplinary treatment, and uneven suffering. At its best *A New No Man's Land* is a triumph of comparative analysis as writing across incommensurabilities. Across a thoroughly innovative corpus, Whitfield conjures an exquisite corpse of Guantánamo that is not, as the architects of its meaning on either side of its militarized border might have it, determined a priori.

Each chapter combines perspectives on both sides of the border across thematic chapters on translation, guards, home, and the future. In chapter one, Whitfield considers the writing of Guantanamo Bay prisoners Ibrahim al-Rubaish, Mohammed el-Gharani, and Mansoor Adayfi as well as Cubans José Ramón Sánchez, a resident of nearby Caimanera, and Néstor Rodríguez Lobaina, who has often written poetry as a Cuban detainee. She contends that certain elements like the sea and the movement of animals suggest a shared sensorium that transcends the imposition of geopolitical borders. Whitfield's reading is also attentive to the ways in which "vanquished" and "affliction" resonate differently across both the failures of a Cuban Revolution but also specifically within the lexicon of Guantanamo prisoners. In chapter two, she considers the guard as "an

interstitial figure—a representative of the military as an institution, but at the same time an individual engaged in a mundanely intimate friendship with the figure cast as enemy" (70). Her readings of memoirs by Mohamedou Ould Slahi, Moazzam Begg, Ahmed Errachidi emphasize common experiences of "imperial and racist aggression" that enable curiosity, respect, and care (75). The later section of the chapter pivots to consider a trove of narrative fiction and film, which attend to the guardedness of the Cuban border in a recent moment when Cubans have increasingly attempted to cross minefield-riddled lands for the possibility to leave the country. The third chapter proceeds to consider the region from the prism of "home" in its various resonances for four groups: prisoners of war, US military guards and their families, Special Category residents on the base like Cubans and Caribbean contract workers, and those who live on the Cuban side of the border. In these middle two chapters, Whitfield's intimation of possible guard-prisoner friendships or interest in broadly benevolent themes like home may read as aspirational to more cynically-minded readers.

The final chapter, which focuses on the future, helps to clarify this tension. Here, Whitfield turns toward what she calls "future perfect fictions" as conveyed by cultural texts that imagine a "post-present of conciliation" after the military base has closed and damages have been acknowledged and even repaired (140). These texts, which include an apocryphal online museum and a journal by Cuban refugees kept at Guantánamo, suggest the reparative potential of "anticipating future conciliation during a moment in which harm is still being done" (169). While Whitfield's emphasis on friendship and home in earlier chapters would seem to come at the expense of bearing witness to an ongoing and seemingly interminable present filled with inhuman torture, this final chapter in particular demonstrates her broader commitment to a scholarly practice aimed at evoking worlds otherwise. Indeed, most admirable here is Whitfield's transformative commitment to write toward a world in which the structural enmities might begin to be undone.

Luke Urbain, Cornell University

Review Essay: Narrativa femenina puertorriqueña actual: Subjetividades e hibridez cultural

Sierra, Ana Luisa. *Has vuelto, amor*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Publicaciones Gaviota. 2021. 272 pp. ISBN 9781-6150-5452-7

Santos Febres, Mayra. *Mujeres Violentas*. San Juan, Puerto Rico: Alayubia, 2023. 128 pp. ISBN 9798-8510-3546-3

Desde la década de los setenta, la literatura femenina puertorriqueña ha tenido un auge y una diversificación extraordinarios, recogiendo una variedad de voces matizadas por las experiencias y los logros obtenidos gracias, en gran parte, a los movimientos feministas. Dos publicaciones recientes: la novela *Has vuelto, amor* (2021) de Ana Luisa Sierra y la colección de cuentos *Mujeres Violentas* (2023) de Mayra Santos Febres se insertan en ese contexto de la literatura de la isla, contribuyendo a la expansión y a la resignificación de los aspectos característicos de la producción femenina. Una mirada a la narrativa puertorriqueña actual revela que aún son válidas muchas de las puntualizaciones que Ramón Luis Acevedo hiciera en *Del silencio al estallido: narrativa femenina puertorriqueña* (1991). En su estudio, Acevedo destaca como características de la literatura de las mujeres puertorriqueñas, el énfasis en la hibridez cultural, el interés en el estatus colonial, las referencias a conexiones transatlánticas, la inscripción

y la reescritura de lo afropuertorriqueño, la presencia de lo popular, y la incursión en nuevos géneros.

Mucha de la literatura puertorriqueña e hispanocaribeña les presta atención especial a las subjetividades históricamente marginadas y exploran la diversidad y la hibridez cultural. De igual manera, las instituciones culturales, museos y galerías también se interesan por los aportes de las identidades y las comunidades tradicionalmente ignoradas. Durante la primavera-verano del 2023, el Museo Metropolitano de Nueva York (MET) tuvo la primera gran exhibición de la obra del pintor hispano moro Juan de Pareja (ca. 1608–1670). Si su nombre era desconocido o casi desconocido, su rostro y su figura no lo eran por ser objeto de un retrato del español Diego Velázquez, el cual es parte de la colección permanente del Museo Metropolitano. Dicha exposición presentó más de cuarenta pinturas, esculturas, así como documentos históricos del Siglo de Oro español. El borramiento de la identidad y del talento artístico de Juan de Pareja, quien fuera esclavo de Velázquez, expone la sujeción y el ocultamiento que ciertas subjetividades han sufrido en el plano global y, específicamente, la omisión de sus aportes al legado cultural. Con el rescate del arte de Juan de Pareja, el Museo Metropolitano, como otras instituciones culturales, comienza, miles de años después, a considerar y valorar un rico legado que ha sido ignorado por siglos.

La novela *Has vuelto, amor*, publicada en el 2021, antes de que Juan de Pareja adquiriera notoriedad como pintor, de Ana Luisa Sierra, crítica literaria y escritora puertorriqueña, recupera el arte de Pareja y entrelaza una historia romántica imaginada, que tiene lugar en el siglo XVII, entre Juan de Pareja e Inés Al ahmar, escultora de origen moro y avatar de María Eugenia Riol Garay, una joven puertorriqueña afrodescendiente del siglo XX, estudiante de Medicina y residente en Madrid. Así, la autora articula y reelabora las subjetividades afrodescendientes, remarcando, por este medio, la centralidad de estas en las culturas iberoamericanas y caribeñas.

De este modo, la novela se inserta en las corrientes literarias puertorriqueñas presentes desde fines de los sesenta de restituir el lugar primigenio del componente africano en la construcción de la identidad caribeña. Como es sabido, en el contexto puertorriqueño, el esfuerzo de la recuperación y de la visibilización de la herencia silenciada—labor que se remonta a los icónicos cuentos de *En cuerpo de camisa* (1966) de Luis Rafael Sánchez—ha sido cultivado con éxito por las escritoras de la isla, Rosario Ferré, Ana Lydia Vega y Mayra Santos Febres, las más prominentes, así como la cubanopuertorriqueña Mayra Montero.

Con el título engañosamente romántico de *Has vuelto, amor* que remite a la cumbia "Has vuelto, mi amor" del grupo colombiano Los Leales, la novela enlaza dos historias amorosas en entornos históricos muy diferentes, marcando, por un lado, la hibridez cultural de la sociedad española del Siglo de Oro y de la actualidad, y por otro, la de Puerto Rico y la de Nueva York. Esta estructuración permite repensar las relaciones transatlánticas, entre España y Puerto Rico, y entre Nueva York y España. Aún más, favorece la exploración de los nexos entre Nueva York y Puerto Rico, manteniendo siempre la mirada en el carácter desigual de estos, ya que conllevan tensiones por el posicionamiento diferencial, como centro uno y como periferia el otro. De igual forma, la hibridez cultural y lingüística entra a la prosa esmerada de la novela, matizando los diálogos de algunos de sus personajes caribeños, lo cual, no solo aporta a la hibridez textual, sino que también apunta al tema de las migraciones caribeñas y a los vínculos culturales y económicos de Puerto Rico con otras islas del Caribe hispano. Aún más, la hibridez del idioma español y del imaginario puertorriqueño y latinoamericano están presentes en los títulos y las letras de las canciones a las que se aluden, las cuales, en ocasiones, dialogan con las letras de las canciones norteamericanas de moda, de los setenta y los ochenta. Este recurso o técnica que ha usado con éxito Mayra Montero en su novela *La última noche que pasé contigo* (1991), vehiculiza una serie

de asociaciones a la vez que refuerza el ambiente de fino erotismo y de sensualidad que definen los encuentros de María Eugenia Riol Garay y su novio Michel Doucet, joven francés.

El ambiente relajado de la música y las alusiones a los movimientos sensuales del baile de los jóvenes amantes, se contraponen al ritmo delirante de la carrera que María Eugenia emprende desde las afueras de Madrid hasta la Plaza Santa Ana, en el centro de la ciudad, para salvar a Michel Doucet. ¿De qué debe salvar María Eugenia a Michel? ¿Qué secreto ha descubierto María Eugenia? Las dudas que genera su carrera, junto a los elementos de sorpresa que ofrece la narración acercan la novela al género del *thriller*. Sin embargo, contrario a lo que es común en los *thrillers*, aquí, la protagonista es una mujer, quien tiene que salvar al hombre, su amante.

Las representaciones de los protagonistas, María Eugenia Riol Garay y Michel Doucet, rompen con las expectativas estereotipadas de las construcciones de género. Estudiante de Medicina, la protagonista es analítica, lógica y atlética—se dice que es corredora olímpica—mientras que Michel, por su parte, es emotivo, sensual y dulce. Abundan las referencias a los países de procedencia de los personajes, Puerto Rico y Francia, respectivamente, y al posicionamiento diferencial de estos. Las secciones sobre la vida de la joven protagonista recogen sus experiencias vitales en la isla, en la ciudad de Nueva York y en Madrid. Las referencias geográficas y, específicamente a las ciudades, crean un abanico de posibilidades permitiéndole a la autora indagar los temas del bilingüismo, así como de la migración puertorriqueña en EE. UU. y las migraciones globales.

En el ensamblaje narrativo híbrido de la novela, un suceso particular facilita la entrada de la historia de Juan de Pareja en el siglo XVII. Y de manera singular la historia amorosa de María Eugenia y Michel se vincula con la del pintor de Pareja y su enamorada, Inés Al ahmar, creando una trama compleja y llena de suspenso. ¿Cómo se entretejen estas historias y cómo se resuelven? La respuesta no es sencilla y precisamente, se trata de temas filosóficos sobre la trascendencia de tiempo y espacio, la transformación de la conciencia, así como de la concepción de vida y muerte como aspectos de un mismo proceso unidos por el amor, que se repite *ad infinitum*. De ahí el título: "Has vuelto, amor".

Por su estilo pulido y su prosa elegante y rigurosa, la novela *Has vuelto, amor* atrapa a las lectoras y lectores desde sus primeras páginas. El dominio de las técnicas narrativas por parte de la autora Ana Luisa Sierra, así como su rica y vital imaginación creadora, hacen que la novela sea lectura imprescindible para los amantes de la buena literatura.

En la Galleria Borghese de Roma se exhibe la "Venus Victrix" (Venus Victoriosa) del conocido escultor italiano neoclásico Antonio Canova, comisionada por Camillo Borghese como tributo a la hermosura de su esposa Pauline Bonaparte, quien se dice posó desnuda para dicha escultura. La hermana menor de Napoleón, Pauline, exaltada por su belleza y conocida por sus varios amoríos, es una figura compleja y controversial como estudia la autora inglesa Flora Fraser en su libro *Pauline Bonaparte: Venus of Empire* (2009). Asimismo, en "La nueva Paulina," uno de los relatos más intrigantes de la colección *Mujeres violentas*, Mayra Santos Febres rescata el personaje histórico de la Bonaparte y recoge elementos centrales de su biografía, como su tendencia a ejercer la seducción y la manipulación presentando estas estrategias como clave de las interacciones de los dos personajes femeninos de su relato. Las circunstancias vitales de los personajes contemporáneos de este texto, Paulina Morejón y la narradora (escritora y gestora cultural), se entretejen de forma paralela, pero opuesta, para crear un efecto de espejos enfrentados o un doble femenino. Aquí, el uso del recurrente recurso del doble femenino recuerda el empleo en los emblemáticos cuentos puertorriqueños, "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres" de

Rosario Ferré y "Milagros, Calle Mercurio" de Carmen Lugo Filippi. De igual forma que en "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres", Paulina Morejón y la narradora-escritora afrodescendiente (de la narración del presente) son de distinta extracción social y de diferente nivel cultural e intelectual. Su posicionamiento diferencial permite una serie de reflexiones sobre las construcciones de la identidad femenina.

A pesar de las diferencias, las tres mujeres, Pauline Bonaparte, Paulina Morejón y la narradora-escritora, tienen en común el ejercicio de la manipulación y de la seducción para conseguir sus propósitos. Se dice que Paulina (de la narración del presente) ha conseguido su estatus social gracias a la explotación de su atractivo físico, mientras que su contraparte, la narradora, una intelectual afrodescendiente, ha logrado su posición por sus méritos y por sus estudios académicos. La narradora escritora frecuenta a Paulina como medio para acercarse a gente que favorezca los proyectos culturales que ella promueve para el beneficio de su comunidad. Desde el principio, queda establecido que Paulina es un vehículo para acercarse a gente con poder económico: "Esa era la gente que yo buscaba. Y necesitaba a Paulina para allegarme a ellos" (106). Tal como aparece aquí el acceder a ciertos sujetos pudientes exige e implica un acto de seducción.

Una vez más, Santos Febres aborda el tema de la seducción femenina como ya había hecho en *Sirena Selena vestida de pena* (2000) y *Nuestra señora de la noche* (2006). Sin embargo, en "La nueva Paulina", no se trata de seducción sexual sino como un arma de manipulación de parte de la narradora escritora con el propósito de conseguir recursos que beneficien a su comunidad. Los acercamientos de los personajes culminan en un final sorpresivo y ambiguo, en que el posicionamiento de las mujeres evoca el final de "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres." Aún más, se aprecian ciertas tensiones y vínculos casi eróticos que funcionan de forma similar a como lo hacen en "Milagros, Calle Mercurio" de Carmen Lugo Filippi.

La disposición especular o de contrapunto del relato se elabora espléndidamente ya que crea interés, avivando la imaginación y abriendo un abanico de referencias metaliterarias. Las tramas de la Bonaparte y la de la Paulina contemporánea, articuladas paralelamente, potencian las estrategias de la metaficción y la intertextualidad, y se contaminan logrando dinamitar los significados. Los temas de las islas colonizadas, su relación con otras islas y con las metrópolis del imperio se destacan a través del relato. Mientras que las secciones I, III, V y VII se ocupan de la Paulina de hoy que proviene de otra isla caribeña sin especificar, las secciones II, IV y VI se ocupan de la Paulina histórica cuya vida transcurre también en una isla: Córcega, del Mediterráneo. Isleñas las dos Paulinas, hermanadas por su condición de sujetos colonizados, son vistas como exóticas y no civilizadas a la vez que ellas usan sus atributos físicos para negociar el acceso a esferas del poder. La exaltación de ciertos atributos físicos acorde con el canon de belleza europea se inscribe desde el primer párrafo en que se menciona la Venus de mármol de Carrara, de Antonio Canova, y cuya alusión reaparece, simbólicamente, al final del relato.

Otro de los aspectos más potenciadores en el relato es la presencia de referencias biográficas, históricas, y autobiográficas. Si en *Nuestra señora de la noche,* Santos Febres retoma la biografía de Isabel la Negra, en "La nueva Paulina" aparecen referencias biográficas a la Bonaparte y presenta también elementos autobiográficos en el personaje de la narradora, lo cual destaca una cualidad autorreferencial que activa una red de conexiones en la mente de los lectores conocedores de la biografía de Santos Febres.

De manera similar, el relato "La fotógrafa", uno de los más logrados de la colección, genera múltiples asociaciones al unir el ataque físico que sufre la protagonista con referencias al arte fotográfico. La articulación de la historia de una fotógrafa reportera de un periódico de la isla, junto a la problemática de la subsistencia diaria y de la violencia de las calles abre la posibilidad

de explorar la agresividad implícita en el acto de fotografiar. Como advierte Susan Sontag en "On Photography," el fotografiar supone un acto agresivo y de posesión de parte del fotógrafo hacia el objeto, pues el uso de la cámara implica una tensión y vehemencia particular. De este modo, imbricado al complejo sistema de ataques urbanos (de las calles y de la fotografía) se vislumbran reflexiones sobre la estética y la ética.

Las relaciones familiares conflictivas marcadas por microagresiones domésticas en el espacio de hostilidad urbana aparecen en varios de los doce relatos de esta colección. Se les da un tratamiento y una atención especial a las dinámicas entre madres e hijas o hijos en "La madre", "La hija", "Apareamientos" y "La pastora". En ocasiones las pulsiones de rencor y venganza llevan a los personajes femeninos anónimos a cometer actos violentos en "La madre" y "La hija". El anonimato de los personajes y el que se les nombre por su posición o función social universaliza sus experiencias mientras borra las identidades de los involucrados.

Corolario lógico de la violencia urbana es el tema del narcotráfico. Contrario a lo que ha sido común en la narrativa del narcotráfico, los sujetos femeninos no aparecen como víctimas, sino que muchas veces son victimarias o mujeres que deben vengarse de injusticias sufridas. En "Apareamientos" y "La pastora" (título que irónicamente alude a una mujer religiosa), la mujer es dueña de un punto de droga, pero curiosamente, su descripción física, dice la misma narradora, no corresponde a una persona violenta, capaz de cometer actos delictivos y hasta un crimen. Al describirla, la narradora enfatiza el olor sensual y seductor "suave y dulce"; también la describe como carnosa, y dice que olía a baño de especias, a eucalipto (69), siendo esta una descripción inusitada pues rompe con las imágenes usuales de una criminal.

Como se puede apreciar, hay gran diversidad en la representación de las mujeres que transitan por una ciudad que permanece innombrada, pero que se sabe es San Juan en la actualidad. Los relatos de *Mujeres violentas* inscriben tramas dinámicas y envolventes a la vez que indagan experiencias de sujetos en ambientes urbanos marcados por el consumismo, la droga y la competencia desmedida. En estos textos, como en toda la narrativa de Santos Febres, se examina la complejidad de la subjetividad femenina y su posicionamiento de acuerdo con coordenadas de clase y de raza. La misma Santos Febres apunta en un correo electrónico personal de junio del 2024: "Mi interés en escribir este libro es explorar la fractalidad y la multiplicidad del sujeto identitario 'mujer' a través de la historia y de las islas. Es una identidad múltiple, rica, compleja. De esta manera, intento descolonizar la definición de la identidad y complejizarla." Sólo resta hacer una advertencia: el título del libro es engañoso por su sencillez. *Mujeres violentas* ofrece estímulo a la imaginación e innumerables placeres estéticos con sus giros inesperados.

Elena M Martínez, Baruch College/CUNY and CUNY/Graduate Center

Barja, Ethel. *Poesía e insurrección: La Revolución cubana en el imaginario latinoamericano*
Madrid: Iberoamericano, Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2023. 339 pp. ISBN 9788-4919-2359-6

El nuevo libro de Ethel Barja, *Poesía e insurrección* (2023), es una contribución importante a los estudios cubanos, la crítica de la poesía latinoamericana y las conversaciones en torno a los llamados "largos años sesenta globales" y la Guerra Fría. El libro explora la relación entre la poesía y la revolución durante el periodo que Barja llama "el tiempo de promesa," que abarca desde el triunfo de la Revolución cubana hasta la inauguración de la Revolución sandinista. Para Barja, las décadas de 1960 y 1970 deben entenderse como marcados por la promesa de cambio radical,

"conformado por el proyecto de transformación social, los debates sobre su orientación y la lucha por realizarla" (103). Esta periodización y conceptualización se encuentran en diálogo con lo que han propuesto otros críticos de los largos sesenta latinoamericanos, entre ellos Claudia Gilman (2003) y Diana Sorensen (2007), que han subrayado la inevitabilidad revolucionaria como la estructura afectiva de la época. Lo que me parece particularmente atractivo de la terminología de Barja—el tiempo de promesa—es que se abra a una visión bifocal de la época: no sólo cómo se intentó hacer la revolución por medio de la poesía y el arte, sino también como se lidió con la promesa no cumplida, la promesa quizás traicionada, cooptada o demorada.

Desde esta visión de la época, Barja nos ofrece dos términos teóricos que se prestan al análisis de la poesía en relación con el tiempo de promesa y, más específicamente, las tareas artísticas e intelectuales que de él nacieron. El primer término—el anacronismo estratégico—se refiere a "las prácticas textuales con las que el impulso utópico reordena el pasado para estimular las expectativas de cambio radical" (13). Aquí hacen eco las palabras de Fidel Castro en *La historia me absolverá* (1953)—que José Martí fue el autor del movimiento 26 de julio—y la estratégica revitalización de la figura de Tupac Amaru II por parte del gobierno "peculiarmente" revolucionario de Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) en el Perú. Por medio del lente del anacronismo estratégico, y una rigorosa contextualización histórica, social y cultural que la acompaña, Barja muestra cómo la poesía también se comprometió con la tarea revolucionaria de la revisión histórica. El primer capítulo se enfoca en ejemplos poéticos cubanos mientras que el segundo se deriva de la isla caribeña para el continente latinoamericano. Lejos de un esfuerzo homogéneo, Barja nos llama la atención a una impresionante variedad de autores, textos y estrategias. Vemos, como precursor importante, la revitalización de la figura de Martí por parte del grupo cubano *Orígenes;* una versión transmedial de la historia cubana en *El diario que a diario* de Nicolás Guillén; la incorporación de figuras precolombinas y motivos coloniales en la poesía de Claribel Alegría, José María Arguedas, Ernesto Cardenal, Roque Dalton y Nancy Morejón, entre otros casos.

En el tercer capítulo, se pasa al segundo término teorizado por Barja: el anacronismo crítico. El término describe "las prácticas de escritura que señalan el desfase entre la virtualidad de la promesa revolucionaria y la incertidumbre de un presente atravesado por los efectos destructivos de la Guerra Fría" (13). El corpus que Barja lee por medio del anacronismo crítico es notablemente heterogéneo, tanto en términos de la intervención poética del texto como de la nacionalidad y postura política de los autores estudiados. Los ejemplos analizados abarcan desde el poemario sumamente polémico de Heberto Padilla y la visión distópica de la revolución cubana en *El Central* de Reinaldo Arenas hasta un grupo de textos de un destacado experimentalismo visual, como *Contra Natura* del Rodolfo Hinostroza, *Sabor a mí* de Cecilia Vicuña y los artefactos visuales de Nicanor Parra. A lo largo de estas enriquecedoras lecturas, Barja sostiene que los distintos poetas enfatizan una fragilidad asociada con el tiempo de promesa y que hacen visible un dislocamiento temporal. Es decir, ya sea en el contexto de la Cuba que se acerca al Quinquenio gris y adopta políticas neoestalinistas, la devastación del golpe de estado chileno que inaugura un nuevo imperialismo estadounidense especialmente brutal o la falta de creencia en la figura liberadora del poeta-profeta para resolver las crisis del momento, los poetas que investiga Barja usan el anacronismo críticamente para revelar que el ahora que viven es, en efecto, anacrónico para el proyecto de crear un futuro revolucionario.

Con la notable flexibilidad de los dos anacronismos que teoriza y desarrolla Barja a lo largo de su investigación, la idea del tiempo como lente perspicaz para analizar esta época y su poesía se justifica de forma convincente. Una de las aportaciones fundamentales de tal acercamiento es

que permite un análisis que no se limite a las clasificaciones poéticas ya existentes. Es decir, *Poesía e insurrección* no es una investigación de la llamada poesía comprometida ni del coloquialismo, ni del neovanguardismo, ni de las líneas nerudianas o vallejianas. Más bien, es un estudio de un esfuerzo historicizado que nos ayuda a entender cuál puede ser el papel de la poesía en los momentos de crisis y de esperanza. Al ser así, otra posibilidad crítica que surge, y que se actualiza en el trabajo de Barja es la siguiente: la expansión de los poetas y los textos comentados a una diversidad identitaria, poética y política más representativa de una época cuya monumentalidad y singularidad se sentía en todos lados y por todos. Para una época cuya escena poética se narra demasiado a menudo sin la consideración seria de las contribuciones de escritores de identidades minorizadas, como mujeres, afrodescendientes y personas de la disidencia sexual, ésta es una contribución inmensa. *Poesía e insurrección* es lectura obligatoria para los que trabajamos este par de décadas singulares desde Latinoamérica.

Olivia Lott, Yale University

Brown, Julia R., Radmila Stefkova, and Tamara R. Williams, eds. *Women Photographers and Mexican Modernity: Framing the Twentieth Century*. Routledge: New York. 2024. 170 pp. ISBN 9781-0323-1356-6.

El volumen *Women Photographers and Mexican Modernity: Framing the Twentieth Century*, editado por Julia R. Brown, Radmila Stefkova y Tamara R. Williams, es pionero en revisar la historia de la fotografía en México desde la perspectiva de fotógrafas que han vivido como mujeres y que, aunque ausentes en la historia oficial, contribuyeron significativamente a la explosión visual que caracterizó al país durante el siglo XX. La práctica fotográfica en México ha sido un campo históricamente dominado por hombres. La fotografía desempeñó un rol fundamental, proporcionó una gran visibilidad a eventos políticos importantes como la Revolución Mexicana y generó un repertorio de imágenes que acompañaron el proceso de modernización, alineadas con un proyecto de identidad nacional. Este proyecto también siguió los parámetros de una mirada triunfalista, progresista, heroica y masculina.

En el contexto de modernización, la definición de ser "mujer" y fotógrafa se plantea en relación con la narrativa visual que producen frente a la mirada hegemónica masculina. Una de las contribuciones más significativas del libro surge de estas interrogantes que destacan una historia alternativa de imágenes influenciadas por una mirada patriarcal. Desde la introducción, las editoras abordan el desafío de utilizar la categoría de género, retomando la teoría de Teresa de Lauretis. Según De Lauretis, el concepto de "mujer" se ancla en patrones históricos, más que culturales, de percepción, que definen no solo cómo se entiende el género, sino también el acto de "ver y ser vista". Claire Raymond subraya la relación ontológica entre fotografía y género, y sugiere que la pregunta sobre qué es una fotografía está vinculada a la definición del término *mujer*. Para Raymond, la fluidez y la capacidad proteica de la fotografía, junto con la determinación de una percepción particular, posibilitan esta relación con el género.

Dentro de este marco teórico, un punto clave para entender la práctica fotográfica realizada por mujeres es lo que las editoras definen como "gendered traces". Esta práctica manifiesta trazos de una condición femenina ubicada en un lugar de percepción, que informa la experiencia de género y la sitúa en una conciencia de otredad dentro de la cultura patriarcal, afectando así la forma artística que producen. El "lente femenino" crea un archivo fotográfico alternativo al dominio

cultural masculino. En manos de mujeres, la fotografía tuvo que ser reinventada fuera de los círculos privilegiados que dominaban la escena artística mexicana. Muchas de estas fotógrafas, autodidactas, divorciadas, con aspiraciones intelectuales y artísticas más allá de la economía familiar, formaron otros círculos o alianzas, insertando sus prácticas en una genealogía distinta a la historia fotográfica tradicional en México.

Los artículos del volumen están divididos en tres secciones temáticas. La primera, "Gendering the Gaze: Frame, Context, Collaboration", se enfoca en la experiencia de mujeres fotógrafas en el contexto postrevolucionario mexicano. Aborda los retos que enfrentaron como artistas, intelectuales, activistas y migrantes, y la creación de proyectos colaborativos que cuestionaron las desigualdades sistémicas. La segunda sección, "Counter-Perspectives: Ideology, Subjectivity and Corporeality", examina el trabajo de fotógrafas como Tina Modotti y Graciela Iturbide, ofreciendo nuevas perspectivas sobre sus obras y destacando trabajos menos conocidos. También explora cómo el lente femenino en México ha desestabilizado una economía visual eurocéntrica, patriarcal y heteronormativa. La tercera sección, "Re-Presenting Gender and Race", agrupa cuatro artículos que reconocen cómo las fotógrafas mexicanas han usado el medio para criticar y resistir la exclusión histórica de mujeres indígenas, afro-mestizas y campesinas en la fotografía y otros archivos visuales en México.

Aunque algunos artículos están más desarrollados que otros y presentan análisis más rigurosos, quiero destacar dos en particular por su innovación y aporte a este archivo visual. El primero es el de David William Foster sobre la serie fotográfica de Lourdes Grobet, *Lucha libre. Retratos de familia* (2009). El autor argumenta que, tras la legalización del matrimonio gay en México en 2010, los retratos de Grobet redefinen los límites del paradigma heteronormativo de la familia y la espectacularidad del luchador, y desarticula las nociones de una hipermasculinidad preconcebida. Lo más interesante es cómo el teatro de cuerpos luchadores deslocaliza el espacio doméstico y la normatividad familiar, reconfigurándolos en una estética queer que desafía las conductas normalizadas de la vida cotidiana.

El segundo artículo que quiero destacar es el de Viviane Mahieux, quien analiza las primeras fotografías de la fotoperiodista mexicana Marta Zarak, publicadas en el periódico *unomásuno* entre 1970 y 1980. Este diario, conocido por su contenido crítico y anti-oficial, promovió el nuevo fotoperiodismo mexicano y defendió los derechos de comunidades indígenas, gays, lesbianas y trabajadoras domésticas. Zarak, la primera mujer fotoperiodista en cubrir zonas de guerra como Nicaragua en 1978, fotografía la vida de las mujeres y familias marginales en su cotidianidad e intimidad. Mahieux contextualiza el trabajo de Zarak más allá de los símbolos de pobreza y victimización, y propone entender sus fotografías como parte de un "contrato civil" en términos de Ariella Azoulay, que destaca la agencia activa tanto de la fotógrafa como de lxs sujetxs fotografiados. La agencia del sujetx fotografiado, relacionada en el encuentro con la cámara, desafía, en mi opinión, la objetividad fotográfica que caracterizó los inicios de la fotografía en el siglo XIX. Zarak ofrece una perspectiva que atiende a los afectos y al fuera de campo, y se reapropia de un "lente femenino" para activar un cambio político colectivo.

El volumen no solo ofrece una revisión histórica, sino que también crea un archivo visual fundamental para considerar otras miradas y sujetxs. Este archivo revela las paradojas de la modernidad en México y presenta imágenes centradas en la corporalidad de mujeres, pueblos indígenas y comunidades urbanas marginadas, insertadas en un proyecto más amplio de visualización de una "trans-modernidad" solidaria. El volumen contiene valiosas contribuciones y se presenta como un trabajo en progreso. Aún así me invita a seguir pensando sobre el concepto de género. Me pregunto si la categoría de "fotógrafas" sigue siendo problemática, como lo fue la

idea de “escritura femenina” de finales de los años 80. Considero si esta categoría aún esencializa el ser mujer en torno a la fotografía como una práctica femenina versus masculina. Además, priorizar la subjetivación femenina como parte de un proceso histórico más que cultural, pone en riesgo la vida del arte como respuesta frente a las categorías de lo que es y no es “femenino”. Por ejemplo, si existe algo como un “lente femenino”, ¿qué sucede con la mirada de otras masculinidades trans o de mujeres que no se identifican como tales? ¿Pueden estas miradas agruparse de manera indiferenciada en una misma “otredad” sin un lugar propio? Al volumen, sumaría una mención al aporte fotográfico de Christine Arce en su libro *Mexico’s Nobodies* sobre las soldaderas mexicanas. Quizás una vía para abordar la heterogeneidad de las identidades sería no solo explorar el vínculo ontológico entre fotografía y género, sino también incluir espacios de sociabilidad, vínculos y alianzas afectivas tanto en las fotógrafas como en las personas fotografiadas.

Isabella Vergara C, Princeton University

Burdette, Hannah. *Revealing Rebellion in Abiayala: The Insurgent Poetics of Contemporary Indigenous Literature*. 2019. U of Arizona P, 2023. 286 pp. ISBN 9780-8165-5228-3

This insightful and beautifully written work foregrounds Native authors’ *insurgent poetics*, a mode of writing that “narrates and/or performs acts of resistance” and that imagines decolonial alternatives in “the struggle for political and intellectual sovereignty” (6). *Revealing Rebellion* renders vivid the links between Native literatures and social movements from the 1970s onward across the Americas, encompassed in the Guna term *Abiayala*. Burdette argues that “literature constitutes a key weapon in these political struggles, as it provides a means to render subjugated knowledges visible (*visibilizar*) and to envision alternatives to modernity/coloniality (*visualizar*)” (6). Native authors oppose colonialism (*se rebelan*) and propose solutions (*revelan*).

Burdette takes an interdisciplinary approach where texts and movements dictate the direction of her analysis. She draws on the meaning of *poeisis* as creation—literature as a tool to construct a more ethical society rather than only denounce injustices. Burdette joins the ranks of scholars of contemporary Abiayalan literatures such as Emil' Keme, Gloria Elizabeth Chacón, Rita M. Palacios, Paul M. Worley, Miguel Rocha Vivas, Arturo Arias, and Tiffany D. Creegan Miller by underscoring the wide implications of Indigenous literatures in effecting change and defending Indigenous perspectives. *Revealing Rebellion* heeds Chadwick Allen’s call for trans-Indigenous studies with its expansive arc addressing authors from across Abiayala.

Revealing Rebellion consists of two parts. In the first part, “Visibilizar” (Rendering Visible), Burdette explores the paradox of concealing Indigenous practices to expose in turn colonial practice. In Chapter 1, she analyzes publications and declarations by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) in Mexico. The EZLN uprising resignified the balaclava to reveal the *invisibilizing* colonial act of misrepresenting and exoticizing Indigenous Nations. Burdette challenges the assumption that there is some “deep elusive essence” behind the EZLN ski mask, the kind sought out by anthropologists (65). In this vein, she offers an in-depth analysis of Zapotec writer Javier Castellanos Martínez’s *Wila che be ze lhao / Cantares de los vientos primerizos* (Songs of the First Winds; 1994), in which a Zapotec ethnographer returns to his hometown. Tasked by the government with documenting his community’s practice, the ethnographer eventually refuses to write and to be coopted within dominant society’s expectations for

Indigenous peoples. This refusal is ironically written down in the novel itself, and this gesture simultaneously brings readers closer to Zapotec perspectives and warns them to eschew cooptation. Within Chapter 2, Burdette considers the Pan-Maya Movement's decolonial struggle in the aftermath of the Guatemalan Civil War (1960-1996). Authors such as Gaspar Pedro González and Luis de Lión advance Maya worldviews against a backdrop where their perspectives are obscured. González deploys the concept kotz'ib' ("our word" or "our text") to convey a broader sense of what constitutes literature beyond the Western canon. Similarly, de Lión appeals to Maya epistemologies within the *Popol wuj*'s creation story to recognize Maya knowledge production as capable of "suturing the colonial wound and revitalizing a perennially subjugated population" (84).

References to Maya worldings transition to *Revealing Rebellion*'s second part focused on visualization in the final three chapters. Burdette plays on the Spanish-language homonyms *revelar* (to reveal), *rebelarse* (to rebel), and *re-velar* (to re-conceal). In Chapter 3, she explores how Mapuche artists "contest hegemonic discourses about themselves as the nation-state's 'internal others'" (103). She contrasts Elicura Chihuailaf's conciliatory approach with David Aniñir's punk, urban ethos to show how Mapuches must paradoxically be flexible and adaptable while upholding tradition. In this setting, Mapuche musicians such as the collective Wetruwe Mapuche perform hip hop as a "polysemantic locus of resistance" to inscribe in urban landscapes the "vitality of mapuchidad" (132-33). Chapter 4 engages the literary production of Wayuu writer Estercilia Simanca Pushaina, Wayuu poet Miguel Ángel López Hernández, and Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko through the lenses of *literary contraband* and *dream trafficking* to "contest colonial uses of the written word" and offer "new affinities and decolonial possibilities" (150). Rather than seeking to "make it" in Western literary circles, these authors appropriate Latin graphemes to traverse and subvert traditional literary hubs. They help us conceive of multiple borders that move beyond a binary sense of opposition to embrace an insurgent poetics with a "constant push and pull, a complex interplay of positionalities in flux between centrality and periphery" (173). Chapter 5 examines how two Bolivian novels and two Northern Abiayalan novels by non-Indigenous authors rethink Indigenous subjectivities and the literary movement of *indigenismo* through speculative fiction. With the Aymara and Quechua perspective of pachakuti (world reversal), Burdette contends that an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" should entail the "irruption of indigenous knowledge into literary texts produced by non-Natives" (177). Juan Pablo Piñeiro's *Cuando Sara Chura despierta* (2003) and Alison Spedding's *De cuando en cuando Saturnina: Una historia del futuro* (2004) both "illustrate the increasing influence of Quechua-Aymara political thought in the Andean highlands and advance what Rivera Cusicanqui envisions as the reindigenization of Bolivia" (203). Burdette closes the chapter by addressing Asian American writer Sesshu Foster's critique of empire through Aztec practices in *Atomik Aztex* (2005) and Chicanx writers Rosaura Sánchez and Beatrice Pita's envisioning of a utopia in the Amazon Rainforest in *Lunar Braceros 2125-2148*. Burdette asserts that these four novels remind us that "decolonization requires the critical intervention of both Native and non-Native social actors in precipitating and prolonging the pachakuti" (209). These novels warn against misappropriations of indigeneity and open toward decolonization as a continual work in progress.

Burdette concludes *Revealing Rebellion* by stressing that "insurgency goes beyond simply inverting colonial hierarchies; in many cases, it strives instead to create new political and socioeconomic structures based on the principles of reciprocity, autonomy, and plurality" (219). Within these spaces Indigenous literatures posit a mode of intellectual sovereignty that puts in question Western conceptualizations of "resistance" and "anticolonialism." Burdette invites

readers to contemplate how they can engage in this work from their own positionalities, viewing the classroom and literary criticism as potential spaces for transformation.

Burdette does outstanding work in bridging Indigenous Studies across Abiayala. She has met head on the daunting task of a cross-continental analysis and succeeded. *Revealing Rebellion* helps lay the groundwork for researchers who learn to read and engage in trans-Indigenous dialogues across multiple Native languages. As scholars engage in this work, we will increasingly see how, as Burdette deftly states, "Suppressed voices penetrate that walled lettered city not to conquer it but rather to expand and disjoint it, twisting its narrow, angular streets and scrawling graffiti on its ivory towers in protest" (141-142). Her work elucidates how contemporary Abiayalan literatures rebel against hegemonic letters to reveal trans-Indigenous scholarship, politics, and worldings.

Adam W. Coon, University of Minnesota, Morris

Cacheiro, Adolfo. *Posthuman Worlds: Roberto Bolaño's Narrative and Virtual Reality*. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2022. 256 pp. ISBN 9781-7936-4987-4

Roberto Bolaño's oeuvre is complex and even contradictory at times, and in *Posthuman Worlds*, Adolfo Cacheiro embarks on a philosophical and psychoanalytic investigation of its representation of subjectivity and reality. Bolaño himself developed explanations of the connection between reality and literature in what he called "infrarealismo" and later "real visceralismo"—the interior and hallucinatory vision of man. Cacheiro centers his readings in texts such as *Distant Star*, "Labyrinth," *The Savage Detectives*, *Amulet*, and *2666*. Such an ambitious and high-stakes project is taken on with erudition, knowledge of intertexts for Bolaño's literature, and with a deep knowledge of Lacan's psychoanalytical theory and philosophy. However, the author fails to show how the virtual reality lens and posthumanist worlds he finds in Bolaño are present in the fiction. He concludes: "The thematic content of the works analyzed in this book trends in the direction of theology based on technology, a theology underpinned by philosophical concepts presented in Nick Bostrum's [sic] article on the world as a computer simulation" (215). This computer simulation is neither present nor hinted at in Bolaño's literature, and I am not sure that this metaphor or terminology adds to Bolaño's conception of fiction and reality.

For example, Cacheiro inserts Bolaño's *Amulet* into a science fiction framework, quoting the work of Vernon Vinge on artificial intelligence (60). So Auxilio, the protagonist of *Amulet*, is analyzed in chapter 4 to be alive as a "component of a computer simulation, since her existential parameters are determined by that simulation" (62). Ultimately, Cacheiro concludes that the main theme in the novel is the loss of faith in the Left in Mexico, which is a valid point. However, Cacheiro's explanation of Auxilio's traumatic memory of the past in the novel and the undermining of utopian thinking does not seem to require the virtual reality framework.

The author's impositions—sometimes, overreading—of Bolaños's works do not reach clear conclusions. Other times, the theory, even though well explained, does not appear connected to Bolaño's fiction. These two issues make the text arduous to read and, at times, the analysis confusing. Rather than establishing his creative perspective clearly from the beginning and explaining how it functions in the text, Cacheiro takes for granted that we will agree with this concept of virtual reality without adequate development.

Another example appears in Chapter 5, which seems to connect Brexit with "The Part about the Critics" of *2666*. Cacheiro concedes that "Bolaño died thirteen years before the referendum, and he could not have known about this political event" (74), yet he proceeds to analyze it in connection to "British resistance to domination by continental Europe" as represented by the young British academic Liz Norton's interaction with her academic continental colleagues (76) who further together the study of the fictional German writer named Archimboldi, who, for Cacheiro, symbolizes a unified Europe (83). When, finally, Norton departs the group, this is explained by Cacheiro as prefiguring Brexit. This allegorical reading stretches the text and captures Cacheiro's preoccupation with Bolaño's conception of Europe vs. the Americas.

Sometimes Cacheiro's arguments appear underexplained. For example: "The deployment of Heideggerian thought in *2666* leaves as a residue a right-wing tendency in Bolaño's text, of which the sublation of *O'Higgins is Araucanian* in *2666* is symptomatic" (103). Even though this idea requires further explanation and development, Cacheiro ends the argument there. How does that work in the text? What "residue" specifically? Is the right-wing tendency in the ideology put forth by the whole text or maybe refuted? The explanation of fascism in *Posthuman Worlds* concludes without a convincing argument. As readers trying to follow the ideas, we are left with unanswered questions.

In Chapter 8, Cacheiro seems to state that the feminicides are not a gender issue, but a class issue that brings out, according to him, "the revolutionary subject." The erasure of the reality of the murders seems doubly problematic: feminicides in Cacheiro's reading become virtual realities, and according to him, class is more important. Feminist readings of *2666* might have something to say on this, yet the book does not engage beyond the mentioned statement.

Cacheiro takes the term *posthuman* from Nick Bostrom. A posthuman world is defined as "a simulated world whose inhabitants are convinced they are alive in the biological sense of the word." However, Cacheiro expands this definition to anything fictional; for him, posthuman includes "worlds inhabited by simulated beings, whether the latter have reached the posthuman stage or not" (150). For example, in the context of *2666*, Cacheiro proposes that the unreal vehicles that appear and disappear with the kidnapped women in Santa Teresa represent this simulated reality and part of posthuman reality (157), and that the computer motifs also confirm virtuality, since the suspect murderer, Klaus Haas, owns a computer store and has computer parts everywhere (146). He also reads the copious urine of the Penitent in his vandalizing of the churches as "only possible in a simulated reality" (158); again, when Harry Magaña reads a document with indecipherable language, it is deducted that "is not taking place on earth and is of extraterrestrial origin" (162). Even though at times Cacheiro recognizes intertextuality between Bolaño's narratives with the fantasy worlds of Jorge Luis Borges, he ultimately settles on virtual reality as the main way to explain Bolaño's interior worlds creations such as dreams, traumas, and imperfect memories, when there are many other ways to interpret them. It seems that reality and fiction are all computer simulations, or maybe none are.

Posthuman Worlds offers a creative take on Bolaño's fiction that uses themes such as virtual reality, the posthuman, the possibility of a transcendental being and lack of human agency, revolution and class struggle, violence in society, among others. Bolaño's literature provides alternative realities. After reading Cacheiro's book, I have just not been convinced that they are virtual or, for that matter, posthuman.

Miguel A. Cabañas, Michigan State University

García Muñoz, Gerardo. *Norte negro. Catorce miradas a una narrativa criminal mexicana.* México: Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, Universidad Iberoamericana, Torreón. 2023. 274 pp. ISBN 9786-0727-2003-9

Si bien es cierto que la literatura del norte de México de unos años para acá ha sido tema de numerosos análisis enfocados al estudio de dicho territorio, especialmente en lo referente al espacio y problemática de la frontera, el libro *Norte negro. Catorce miradas a una narrativa criminal* de Gerardo García es el primer estudio crítico dedicado exclusivamente al análisis de obras de la narrativa norteña contemporánea cuyo tema específico son las actividades criminales y cuyas historias se desarrollan en los estados de la frontera norte del país: Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora y Baja California. Además de su originalidad y riguroso examen, el libro ofrece nuevas perspectivas en el modo de estudiar dicha producción y nuevas conclusiones al respecto.

El libro se constituye por catorce ensayos y un epílogo en los cuales el autor, un académico especializado en el género negro, se adentra profundamente en el estudio de las ficciones narrativas de catorce escritores, once nativos de esta región norte del país y tres que residen desde hace años, por lo cual conocen bien la realidad de dicho territorio. Otro acierto de este estudio es que en el corpus examinado el autor incluye obras de diferentes denominaciones genéricas: novelas negras, narconovelas, narcoficciones, postpoliciacas, lo que muestra una gran variedad de temas, recursos narrativos y discursivos con los cuales los autores han decidido narrar y representar la problemática de la violencia, el crimen y el narcotráfico en el norte de México.

Otro aspecto destacado de este estudio es que, con el fin de analizar más a fondo esta narrativa negra, el autor utiliza distintos enfoques teóricos y metodológicos: sus ensayos dialogan con reconocidos teóricos o especialistas del género para mostrar cómo algunas de las obras analizadas se apegan a los formatos clásicos del relato detectivesco y otras rompen con la estructura del policiaco tradicional para adoptar nuevas formas del género negro. Incluso algunas de estas narraciones conforman estructuras híbridas que combinan el relato criminal con la ciencia ficción, el gótico, la novela gráfica y el cómic.

En los diferentes capítulos, el autor examina minuciosamente las producciones literarias, novelas o cuentos según sea el caso, de los escritores Martín Solares, Vicente Alfonso, Jaime Muñoz Vargas, Eduardo Antonio Parra, Hugo Valdés, Orfa Alarcón, Norma Yamille Cuéllar, Gabriel Trujillo Muñoz, Daniel Salinas Basave, José Salvador Ruiz, Ricardo Vigueras, César Silva Márquez, Imanol Caneyada y Carlos René Padilla. En cada uno de ensayos se aborda el análisis tanto de los aspectos formales de los relatos (estructura, espacio, tiempo, personajes); los temáticos (narcotráfico, corrupción, psicología criminal, la ciudad, los feminicidios, espiritismo) y los ideológicos, como la confabulación del Estado mexicano con las organizaciones criminales, la corrupción de la justicia y la impunidad en el país. Esta forma de acercarse al estudio de la obra literaria, considerando aspectos de contenido, formales y contextuales, proporciona una comprensión más profunda de los textos y fomenta el interés no sólo de estudiosos de la literatura sino también de otras disciplinas como la sociología, la psicología y los estudios culturales permitiendo nuevas interpretaciones de esta problemática.

Otro aspecto importante de este libro es el capítulo titulado “Epílogo” en el cual el autor establece algunas relaciones en las nueve líneas temáticas identificadas en el estudio de las obras. La primera la encuentra en los relatos que tienen en común el personaje de un asesino o asesina serial como es el caso de *Los minutos negros* (2010) de Martín Solares y *La balada de los arcos*

(2014) de César Silva. Una segunda temática es aquella en la cual las obras subvierten la imagen tradicional de la mujer pasiva, ya que sus protagonistas, al contacto con el ambiente del crimen, se vuelven sicarias o asesinas como en *Perra brava* (2021) de Orfa Alarcón y el cuento "El laurel del sol" (2014) de Ricardo Vigueras. El fanatismo religioso es el tercer tema que une a *Círculo de fuego* (2014) de Gabriel Trujillo y "El Señor es mi pastor" (2018) de José Salvador Ruiz. Una línea de investigación poco revisada en los estudios literarios es la inmigración China a México. García examina dicho tema en las novelas *El asesinato de Paulina Lee* (2016) de Hugo Valdés y el cuento de José Salvador Ruiz, "Just another lawless bordertown" (2018).

Las consecuencias devastadoras del contubernio entre el narcotráfico y el Estado mexicano es tema de las ficciones *No manden flores* (2015) de Martin Solares, *Laberinto* (2019) de Eduardo Antonio Parra y *Yo soy el Araña* (2019) de Carlos Padilla. Esta última novela se relaciona, también, con los cuentos de Jaime Muñoz Vargas reunidos en *Leyenda Morgan* (2008). Aunque con diferencias, ambas obras construyen relatos híbridos influenciados por el cómic.

El sistema policiaco ilegal y corrupto es tema de *No manden flores, Leyenda Morgan* y *Hotel de arraigo* (2015) de Imano Caneyada, relatos cuyos protagonistas son policías que, con diferentes fines, incurren en el delito del secuestro. Por último, la mutilación del cuerpo humano a manos de criminales es el tema de la novela de Parra, *Laberinto* y del cuento "La sonrisa en una cabeza robada" (2017) de Daniel Salinas Basave. Todas estas líneas temáticas abren el camino para futuras investigaciones literarias y de otras disciplinas afines.

El libro de Gerardo García es una lectura pertinente en el ambiente académico, especialmente para quienes están interesados en estudiar la compleja problemática que trae consigo el creciente auge de la criminalidad. También, como la investigación se presenta de manera clara, dicha obra es accesible y atractiva para una audiencia más amplia, incluyendo al lector común.

Ilda Elizabeth Moreno Rojas. Universidad Autónoma de Sinaloa

Hey-Colón, Rebeca L. *Channeling Knowledges: Water and Afro-Diasporic Spirits in Latinx and Caribbean Worlds*. Austin: U of Texas P, 2023. 280 pp. ISBN 9781-4773-2725-8

Water is animated by spirit, imbued with sacred knowledge, and a powerful force in Afro-Caribbean religions. It is also at the center of Rebeca L. Hey-Colón's interdisciplinary study, *Channeling Knowledges: Water and Afro-Diasporic Spirits in Latinx and Caribbean Worlds*. While her guiding religious and cosmological vision is Santería/Regla de Ocha, Hey-Colón also analyzes representations of Haitian Vodou and La 21 División, highlighting the confluences among these Afro-diasporic religions. Harnessing "water's capacity to challenge the boundedness of geography," Hey-Colón demonstrates how water and Afro-diasporic religions are instrumental in countering the violence processes of academic, political, linguistic, and geographic bordering (16).

The interdisciplinary nature of this study is one of its greatest strengths, as it pushes the boundaries of disciplines, geography, and language. Analyzing the work of Firelei Báez, Mayra Santos-Febres, Rita Indiana, Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, and the Border of Lights Collective, Hey-Colón engages with the work by people from Hispanophone Latin America. The positionality of the authors, artists, and activists discussed do not easily fit into nationalist borders. Thus, Hey-Colón questions and pushes against who and what is included in this idea of Latin America. She

intentionally uses the terms *diaspora* and *Latinx* together to highlight the gaps and call for more overlap between Latinx studies and Black studies. Hey-Colón importantly acknowledges the absence of Haiti and Brazil in Afro-Latinx studies and stresses the importance of their inclusion. She pointedly counters Haiti's exclusion through her analysis of Haitian migrants in the Santos-Febres and Indiana's works, the activism of the Border of Lights Collective, and engagement with the work of Firelei Báez. Hey-Colón's choice to open and close her book with Báez, a Dominican-born and US based artist of Haitian descent, is significant because it exemplifies the permeability of borders and the importance of Haiti in Latinx and Latin American studies. She also urges her readers to consider how scholarship is a spiritual process that not only communes with the dead, but also serves as a praxis for honoring the knowledge produced by marginalized peoples.

Chapter 1 analyzes Mayra Santos-Febres' poetry collection *boat people* (2005). While most criticism of the collection focuses on its visibilization of undocumented migration to Puerto Rico, Hey-Colón expands upon these readings by analyzing its Afro-Caribbean religious references. She argues that the collection links the Middle Passage to more contemporary displacements of Black people and harnesses water's power to blur time and space and life and death. She reads the poetry collection as a literary representation of Afro-diasporic religious initiation, infused with the spiritual knowledge of Santería/Regla de Ocha, Haitian Vodou, and La 21 División. Thus, she interprets the migrants' drowning as a reflection of the very real horrors of undocumented migration as well as an articulation of the symbolic death required in Afro-religious initiation rituals.

While most readings of Rita Indiana's novel *La mucama de Omicunlé* (2015) are through the lens of science fiction or ecological disaster, in Chapter 2, Hey-Colón's analysis centers the significant role that Afro-Caribbean spirituality plays throughout the book. She proposes the concept of "techno-resonance" to articulate how the novel collapses the borders between spiritual and secular worlds and challenges the conception that Afro-diasporic religions are incongruent with technology and the contemporary world. She contends that the novel draws a parallel between spiritual practices such as divination and initiation and virtual and scientific technology. Furthermore, Hey-Colón emphasizes how Santería/Regla de Ocha allows space for queerness through the transgender protagonist's affinity with Olokun, the androgynous *orisha* of the ocean's depths. Ultimately, Hey-Colón argues that while the novel demonstrates the potentiality of Afro-spiritual knowledge to create better futures, these futures require the appropriate human action by those with such knowledge.

Based on the research Hey-Colón conducted in the Anzaldúa archive at the University of Texas Austin, Chapter 3 analyzes the role of Afro-Caribbean religion in Gloria Anzaldúa's unpublished writings. She primarily focuses on Anzaldúa's near-drowning as a young girl in South Padre Island as a source of her spiritual transformation and relationship with the *orisha* Yemayá. Thus, Hey-Colón traces the development of Anzaldúa's spiritual relationship with Yemayá and the ocean and how this relationship informed her commitment to "bridging" different communities and ideas. Hey-Colón details how this commitment led to Anzaldúa's theorization of spiritual *mestizaje* which demonstrates how her understanding of *mestizaje* is not purely racial, but rather a way to articulate a spirituality nourished from various sources.

Chapter 4 continues the analysis of the role of Yemayá in Anzaldúa's writing, offering a reading of Afro-religious elements in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987). She indicates it is important to note that the book opens and closes with water and, consequently, explores borderwaters in addition to borderlands. Hey-Colón argues that while the significance of La Virgen de Guadelupe, Coatlicue, and Coyolxauhqui has received much critical attention, the lack of

critical engagement with Anzaldúa's use of Yemayá signals a wider issue of invisibility of Afro-Latinx epistemologies in Chicanx and Latinx studies. Though Hey-Colón importantly demonstrates the role of Yemayá and other *orishas* in Anzaldúa's work, and thus, how she draws inspiration from Afro-diasporic religions, she does not fully engage with contemporary criticisms of how Blackness and the slave trade are absent in Anzaldúa's writings.

In the epilogue, Hey-Colón theorizes the Border of Light Collective's binational candlelight vigil to honor the victims of the 1937 Massacre as a *bóveda* (altar). Held on the banks of Hispaniola's Massacre River/Dajabón River, the vigil attests to the curative power of Afro-diasporic religions. Finally, she closes with a discussion of the political consequences of revocation of citizenship in the Dominican Republic in 2013 and the current water dispute due to the construction of the canal in 2021 in Haiti, demonstrating how this violence continues into the present.

Channeling Knowledges offers a needed perspective on the role and importance of Afro-Caribbean religions in Caribbean and Latinx literature, art, and activism. The interdisciplinary nature of Hey-Colón's analysis offers a rich and nuanced reading of the works and provides a model for future research, particularly in Caribbean, Afro-Latinx, Latin American, and Religious studies.

Meaghan Jeanne Coogan, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

López-Cabrales, María del Mar, and María R. Matz. *Carmen Boullosa: In Between Brooklyn and Coyoacán*. Wilmington, DE: Vernon P, 2024. 174 pp. ISBN 9781-6488-9907-2

Sin duda alguna, la mexicana Carmen Boullosa es una de las escritoras más prolíficas y exitosas de nuestros tiempos, por lo que esta antología constituye un aporte significativo y a tiempo para los estudiosos de la literatura mexicana y latinoamericana contemporánea escrita por mujeres. Un grupo de expertos cuidadosamente seleccionados analizan distintos aspectos de la polifacética obra de una autora que ha dado vida a gran número de obras en poesía, novela, teatro, ensayo, y cuento, además de su más reciente incursión como productora de televisión en Nueva York.

Boullosa afirma que su obra se inició con mucho dolor cuando perdió a sus progenitores—su padre primero, su madre después—pero floreció como escritora en esa meca cultural que México ha sido para tantas generaciones de artista, un "medio literario opulento (de opulencia literaria) que juguetón nos abría puertas y nos invitaba a conversar, a dialogar" (185). La autora se formó en ese ambiente donde podía encontrarse en cualquier espacio público—una librería, un café, una biblioteca—con grandes escritoras/es, como por ejemplo Octavio Paz o Elena Poniatowska, y recuerda con nostalgia ese periodo en que la creación artística contó con gran apoyo por parte de la infraestructura cultural del estado.

Según Boullosa su obra ha sido inspirada desde siempre por sus interacciones con otros seres humanos: la amistad, el trabajo en equipo, la maternidad, y hasta la muerte de su madre, fueron en su conjunto incentivos para desplegar en distintos momentos de su carrera una imaginación pródiga acompañada de una curiosidad insaciable que no se satisface nunca con lo conocido sino que siempre quiere saber más. Por eso sus obras son atrevidas, tiernas, violentas, imaginativas y nos adentran en mundos desconocidos del pasado y del presente, en donde las mujeres son personajes activos y fundamentales. De la mano de Carmen Boullosa los lectores recorremos los vericuetos de la historia mexicana para descubrir poderosas voces femeninas que

desafían la historia que nos ha sido contada, y viajamos por espacios insólitos e historias personales que, de no ser por su sagaz escritura, jamás hubiéramos imaginado como posibles –porque esas heroínas y sus días no están en los libros de Historia, con mayúscula, escrita por hombres.

Si bien es cierto que la obra de Boullosa ha capturado el interés de los académicos en dos antologías anteriores, *Acercamientos a Carmen Boullosa* (1999) de Barbara Dröscher y Carlos Rincón, y *Pensar en activo* (2019) de Assia Mohssine, es importante destacar los aportes novedosos de la presente edición para aquilatar en su justa medida esta nueva contribución. El volumen reúne seis ensayos críticos que analizan los trabajos más recientes de Boullosa en distintos géneros narrativos y presentan cuestionamientos provocadores sobre el alcance y las dimensiones de su obra. El primer capítulo, de Michael Paul Abeita, nos presenta un análisis del concepto de "frontera" en las novelas *La otra mano de Lepanto* (2005) y *Texas: La Gran Ladronería en el Lejano Norte* (2012) a la luz de la discusión sobre desterritorialización y (des)colonialismo como lo propone Walter Mignolo. El segundo capítulo, de Emily Hind, indaga en siete trabajos de ficción de Boullosa y en la colección de ensayos personales *Cuando me volví mortal* (2010), ofreciendo un planteamiento novedoso sobre la obra de Boullosa en relación con la cultura del petróleo mexicano, la biopolítica de combustibles fósiles; en éste la crítica analiza la conexión de la obra de la autora con las estructuras de poder estatal basadas en la explotación del petróleo, y propone el término "petroprivilegio" para referirse a los literatos apoyados por los dineros producidos por el petróleo estatal. El tercer capítulo, de Assia Mohssine, utiliza los conceptos de Walter Mignolo sobre (de)colonización para indagar en la novela *Llanto. Novelas imposibles* (1992), examinando la manera en que Carmen Boullosa utiliza la figura del emperador azteca Moctezuma II (tradicionalmente presentado en una luz negativa en los relatos oficiales), como un personaje capaz de legitimar el conocimiento acumulado de los aztecas, desplazado por el discurso colonial; según la crítica, en esta novela Boullosa abre fisuras en el discurso de la modernidad impuesto por los colonizadores, debilitándolo al poner en primer plano las voces de los subalterizados.

El cuarto capítulo, de Ercika H. Parra Téllez, explora el deseo, sexual y material, de los personajes femeninos tal como aparecen en ocho obras dramáticas de Boullosa publicadas en el volumen *Teatro herético* (1987), en antologías y en publicaciones individuales, todas ellas centradas en el tema de la mujer y sus espacios; la crítica tiene un interés específico en las representaciones de las brujas, las vírgenes y las cocineras en estas obras y utiliza teoría post-freudiana y conceptos de posmodernidad para elucidar sobre el deseo femenino en estos textos. El capítulo quinto, de María R. Matz, nos ofrece un análisis sobre el uso de la historia de México como paisaje ficticio, entretejiendo historias de amores imaginarios con los hechos históricos para darnos una perspectiva femenina sobre esa historia en la novela *Las paredes hablan* (2010) en donde la voz narrativa es una casa. El sexto y último capítulo, de María Inés Canto, nos lleva a pensar críticamente en la representación del placer y la escritura femenina en una de las más recientes novelas de Carmen Boullosa, *El libro de Ana* (2016), en donde la autora recrea la escritura creativa de Ana Karenina; en este capítulo la crítica utiliza teorías sobre el placer y la sexualidad propuestas por la filósofa mexicana Graciela Hierro, y por las teóricas Kate Millet y Audre Lorde para su análisis del tema.

La antología, como su título lo anuncia, aborda también el impacto de la migrancia entre Coyoacán, ciudad de México y Brooklyn, Nueva York, en la escritura de Carmen Boullosa. Sobre su continuo transitar entre ambas ciudades Boullosa identifica Coyoacán como el lugar donde vive, y Brooklyn como el lugar donde trabaja (13). A pesar de su continuo viajar de una nación a otra, de una ciudad a otra, de un idioma a otro, Boullosa no se percibe a sí misma como un ser en

constante movimiento, sino más bien como una frontera constante, como una herida abierta parafraseando a Gloria Anzaldúa, y afirma que aunque viaja de un lado a otro mantiene fijas sus raíces en ese universo complejo que es la frontera entre el primer mundo y el tercero, entre el idioma inglés y el español, con los pies firmemente plantados del lado mexicano y en el idioma español (13). Afirma apreciar de Brooklyn la gran diversidad cultural que día a día incita su imaginación, pero insiste: "No vivo a caballo. Vivo en la frontera siempre" (198).

El presente volumen crítico incluye además la primera traducción al inglés por Abbey Ervin del texto "Épica mía" (2019) en el que Boullosa propone con exquisito lenguaje poético e imágenes que se antojan como pinturas, el escribir ella misma una nueva obra épica en donde las mujeres que participaron ocultamente en obras acreditadas a autores hombres, desde *La Ilíada* y *La Odisea* hasta nuestros días, sean las "heroínas" épicas, y reconocer así su legado y su valor al cuestionar el mundo que les rodeaba y su búsqueda de uno mejor en el que las mujeres fueran actoras de sus propio destino; su lista de heroínas comprende a varias a autoras en lengua española: Teresa de Ávila, María de Zayas, Juana de Asbaje (Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz), Dolores Veintimilla, Gertrudis de Avellaneda, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Juana Manuela Gorriti, Laura Méndez de Cuenca, Marietta de Veintemilla, Clorinda Matto de Turner, Dolores Jiménez y Muro, Nelly Campobello, Alaíde Foppa, Violeta Parra, Chabuca Granda, Yolanda Oreamuno, Eunice Odio, Delmira Agustini, Gabriela Mistral, Teresa de la Parra, Alfonsina Storni, Rosario Castellanos, Inés Arredondo, Victoria Ocampo, Silvina Ocampo.

Para cerrar con broche de oro, tenemos una entrevista con la autora, en inglés y en español, que nos presenta en primerísimo primer plano la entrañable humanidad de Carmen Boullosa. En esta conversación podemos percibir no solo a la reconocida escritora, sino también a la persona extremadamente sensible, que viaja, que observa, que piensa, que imagina, y que crea en respuesta a sus interacciones con ese mundo cambiante. La antología también contiene anécdotas personales sobre el proceso creativo de la autora y así nos enteramos por ejemplo de que su primera obra de teatro, *Vacío* (1980), le gustó tanto al director de cine alemán, Reiner Werner Fassbinder, que incluyó una escena de la misma en una de sus películas.

Esta antología es una contribución muy a tiempo, muy significativa e innovadora, que da qué pensar, y que contribuye a comprender mejor el universo creativo de una autora que no podemos dejar de leer, y que tampoco podemos dejar de admirar.

Hilda Chacón, Nazareth University

Meléndez-Badillo, Jorell. *Puerto Rico: A National History*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2024. 290 pp. ISBN 9780-6912-3127-3.

A few years ago Puerto Rico was constantly in the news after Hurricane María hit the island in 2017. It has been the most fatal hurricane to reach the island, leaving most of the people in the country in the dark and taking more than 2,000 lives. Two years later, in 2019, there was a massive protest against Governor Ricky Rosello. A leaked telegram chat revealed that Rosello, with others of his cabinet, made fun of what had happened with the hurricane, in addition to launching homophobic and misogynistic comments. Rosello resigned. To understand why Puerto Rico was not prepared for the hurricane and to comprehend the surrounding problems on the island, Jorell Meléndez-Badillo's *Puerto Rico: A National History* is a work of great importance. Meléndez-Badillo, an assistant professor of Latin American and Caribbean history at the University of

Wisconsin-Madison, offers a fresh overview of Puerto Rico's history. It begins with its Taíno people and ends with the recent events of hurricane María, the protests of 2019 that ejected Rosello, and the problem that the island has had with electricity.

One of the main things to appreciate about Meléndez-Badillo's book is the way he shows history repeating itself and how politicians fail to learn from this history. For example, *Puerto Rico: A National History* seems to point out that a significant problem is politicians' dependence on foreign investments. For example, in 1976, section 936 was implemented in Puerto Rico to attract foreign investments. This shift made Puerto Rico dependent on foreign investment, something warned about by others, like those who served on the Tobin Committee. Section 936 ended in 2006. This cessation resulted in the loss of 67,800 jobs between 2009 and 2015, according to Meléndez-Badillo. The governors of Puerto Rico did not learn from what had happened. In 2012 with Acts 20, the Export Service Act, and 22, the Individual Investors Act, Governor Luis Fortuño renewed the dependence of Puerto Rico on foreign investments.

Meléndez-Badillo also shows that there has always been resistance in the island of Borikén. Taínos resisted the Spaniards, while Puerto Ricans resisted the influence of Spain and independentists continue to resist the United States. With topics like this attention to resistance, the reader can appreciate Meléndez-Badillo's reconsideration of traditional histories. For example, the book rejects the misconception that Indigenous people went extinct and instead examines how they fled to the mountains, where they survived and continued with their culture, "eventually permeating into Puerto Rico's social fabric with Taíno names, foods and agricultural practices that survived for centuries (and still survive)" (20).

From the first few chapters of the book the reader will see a connection between the ways that the United States and Spain act toward Puerto Rico. For example, Puerto Rico was of military importance to Spain, just like it has been to the United States; Spain did not allow merchants to trade with foreign countries, just like as the United States prohibits this trade. One last quality to appreciate from the book, connecting it with recent events, is the lash of hurricanes on the island and the way that the sitting governors, and a president of the US, react to this devastation. In sum, this is a greatly needed book on Puerto Rico for Puerto Ricans and other readers interested in knowing the political history of the island.

Amado Marte Taveras, Temple University

Quintana Navarrete, Jorge. *Biocosmism: Vitality and the Utopian Imagination in Postrevolutionary Mexico.* Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt UP, 2024, 236 pp. ISBN 9780-8265-0651-1

For decades, studies of postrevolutionary Mexico and the cultural processes that followed have focused on the nation-building efforts of the new political class, along with the establishment of mestizaje as a shared national identity. Jorge Quintana Navarrete's book, *Biocosmism: Vitality and the Utopian Imagination in Postrevolutionary Mexico*, sheds new light on biocosmism as an overlooked philosophical, scientific, and artistic ideology that persuaded key actors of the postrevolutionary moment. *Biocosmism* examines the cultural and scientific thought of followers of this cultural current such as Alfonso L. Herrera, José Vasconcelos, Dr. Atl, and Nahui Olin. These actors shared ideas around humanity, the cosmos, space exploration and life extension. The analysis also gives further insight into other early twentieth-century intellectuals who were

influenced by biocosmic thought, such as Alfonso Reyes and Antonio Caso, or artists, such as Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and David Alfaro Siqueiros. Throughout the book, Quintana Navarrete underlines the tensions between the anthropocentric, and oftentimes eugenic, emphasis of biocosmism with its tendency to produce a posthuman theory that recognizes the agency of plants, animals, the cosmos, and inorganic matter. The author focuses on the latter to show the potential of biocosmism to disrupt the human and nonhuman binary in philosophical, scientific, and artistic thought.

The book begins with an investigation of the intellectual and scientist Alfonso L. Herrera's work on plasmogeny. In Chapter One, Quintana Navarrete describes plasmogeny as a complex experimental project that comprised a scientific theory of the origin of life and a reflection on life across the cosmos. While Herrera has received much scholarly attention in the sciences, *Biocosmism* provides a unique perspective of his cultural work and its implications on postrevolutionary political and philosophical thought. This chapter explores the profound contradictions at the center of Herrera's intellectual project, which represents that of biocosmism at large. That is, Herrera struggles to ameliorate the seemingly unresolvable tension between a eugenicist theory that strives to find the perfect model of a human ("superman") at the center of the cosmos and to champion the notion of "universal life," a profoundly anti-eugenicist and anti-anthropocentric idea that rejects the possibility of creating a hierarchy among the species.

Chapter Two continues the examination of Herrera's work, shifting to his utopian projects for resurrecting past forms of life and his theorizations concerning the "chemical ethics" of universal life. Herrera believed that because matter is neither created nor destroyed but only transformed, it must be possible to bring back biological species of the past. His hubristic project assumed the power of humanity, with the help of technology, to manipulate nature and time. This chapter, like the rest of the book, reveals the conflicts present in biocosmic thought, here in the case of Herrera. For instance, he experimented with apes and humans to showcase the biological proximity between both species to validate Darwin's theory. But his findings ended up, on one hand, reifying animality and, on the other, displaying the affinity of non-Western races with apes. These classifications potentially reinforced the idea of a racial hierarchy among humans. In contrast, Herrera's notion of chemical ethics proposes a "radically materialist" conception of nature. His ideas opened up a contingent and open-ended understanding of nature that undermined anthropocentrism by showing the continuity among all forms of matter.

Leaving Herrera behind, Chapter Three delves into the thought of José Vasconcelos, a major figure of postrevolutionary Mexico whose idea of mestizaje as a cosmic race and the future of his country determined much of the public policy of the twentieth century. Most scholars of Vasconcelos have focused on the racial and racist repercussions of his work. However, Quintana Navarrete provides a new reading of *La raza cósmica* in the context of biocosmism, its environmental implications, and its *cosmic* aspects. This chapter considers Vasconcelos's concept of universal life and his nonhuman ethics, which suggest that animals, plants, and minerals display ethical behavior. These ideas have often been dismissed as an extravagance within Vasconcelos's thought and, therefore, they have discounted the potential of their influence on his considerations of human ethics. Quintana Navarrete discusses Vasconcelos's writings on plants and animals broadly and in connection with art by Frida Kahlo, who also espoused biocosmic ideas and a concern with the life of plants and their interconnection with the Earth, human beings, and the cosmos.

The final chapter reflects on Dr. Atl's volcanism as an expression of universal life and on Nahui Olin's notion of cosmic vitality. While Dr. Atl is widely recognized as one of the most

important landscape painters of twentieth-century Mexico, *Biocosmism* provides a novel approach to his work by putting his paintings in the context of his writing about volcanism and cosmology. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the new analysis of Dr. Atl's thinking with Nahui Olin's belief in the power of the human brain to connect and destabilize the cosmos demonstrates the biocosmic perspective that unites the micro and the macrocosm in a single theory, which also represents the source of so many of its internal incongruities.

A little over one hundred years after the Mexican Revolution, Quintana Navarrete's exposition and close examination of biocosmism shows how the theory remains more relevant than ever. From a renewed interest in space exploration in times of the climate crisis, including Elon Musk's hubristic projects of colonizing other planets, to the rise of AI, recent decades have once more produced a wild enthusiasm for technology. In the realm of academia, biocosmism shares an interest in materiality and vitality with theoretical trends such as new materialisms and posthumanism, as well as plant and animal studies. Quintana Navarrete places biocosmism as an antecedent of contemporary thought as well as a paradigm to elucidate the contradictions and possible solutions to twenty-first-century approximations to the nonhuman in the academy and beyond.

Regina Pieck, Stanford University

Sánchez, Sayuri. *Bas Jan Ader: retrato de un gusano blanco*. León, GTO, México: Talleres de Sindicato Sentimental, 2021. 73 pp.

Encontré la poesía de Sayuri Sánchez por primera vez en la Feria de Lectura, Puerto Vallarta, 2024. Sánchez, actual subdirectora de la Oficina de Proyectos Culturales en Puerto Vallarta, no es pata salada de origen, sino tapatía. La ciudad donde Sánchez escribió su poemario, Guadalajara, no alcanza el mar, pero a pesar de sus orígenes en Guadalajara, los poemas de Sánchez, cuando no se concentran en las experiencias en los museos, se atañen al mar como los performances del artista holandés cuyo nombre aparece en el título del poemario, Bas Jan Ader. Y como el mismo Ader, Sánchez intuye que el museo también sirve como sitio ideal para reflejar la brecha entre la vida cotidiana y los procesos naturales.

El poemario, *Bas Jan Ader: retrato de un gusano blanco* recibió el Premio Estatal de Literatura Hugo Gutiérrez Vega en 2018 y fue publicado por la editorial Sindicato Sentimental en junio de 2021. En los dos primeros poemas de *Bas Jan Ader*, se encuentran imágenes creadas con materiales sorprendentes: un mundo hecho de caucho, los estómagos llenos de aserrín, la estatua en el museo que roba los órganos de los visitantes para escapar de su pedestal. Parece que, para Sánchez, el arte es como un mar que no se ve ni se abraza sino que, como escribe Gastón Bachelard en el epígrafe del poemario, "es un medio dinámico que responde a la dinámica de nuestras ofensas."

Estas imágenes producen los mismos efectos de desasosiego que el surrealismo: ¿los materiales existen para estos propósitos? ¿Existen propósitos de uso no alejados que unen lo humano, incluso el arte, con la naturaleza que lo rodea? ¿Existirá para siempre una grieta metabólica entre los procesos de la sociedad y los procesos medioambientales, incluso en la superación del capital? ¿El arte existe para desenmascarar esta brecha?

El geógrafo Neil Smith dice que bajo el desarrollo capitalista la naturaleza que experimentamos, o la que debemos experimentar, está *producida*. O sea, la naturaleza también

pertenece al dominio de la producción. Según estos geógrafos no existe una salida de los procesos del capital; sólo existen terrenos que todavía no están despojados, recursos que aún no están devorados, y vistas de la naturaleza que nosotros ya hemos visto en fotos de Instagram. La naturaleza está ahí para ser consumida, convertida en algo útil o intercambiable, y arrastrada al otro lado de la brecha donde vivimos.

Aquí algunos poemas parecen pertenecer a la escuela del giro ontológico, poemas con el fin de complicar o burlarse de la grieta entre la experiencia de lo humano y lo animal. En estos años han salido muchos libros de este estilo como *La extraña incandescencia azul de los ácaros* (2021) por Diego Espiritu y *Todas las ballenas* (2021) por Renato Tinajero cuyas raíces tal vez se encuentran en "Un gato en un piso vacío" (1991) por Wisława Szymborska. Sin embargo, los poemas de Sayuri Sánchez en *Bas Jan Ader: retrato de un gusano blanco* se distinguen por el contacto con los materiales sintéticos, como la pintura y el plástico, insinuando que toda la experiencia se contamina, tanto la experiencia humana como la vida animal. A través de la contaminación, los animales y los seres humanos ahora participamos en muchos de los mismos procesos de vida: lo humano también se puede convertir en lo reptiliano por medio del uso de materiales sintéticos:

Si pusiéramos popotes
en nuestros orificios nasales
rezaríamos por tener
la paciencia
        de un reptil. (24)

Esta reflexión sobre el uso de materiales sintéticos para realizar actos no esperados se dirige a la segunda parte del poemario, en que este surrealismo se refleja en las obras de un colectivo de performance artístico llamado "Colectivo Gusano Blanco." En esta parte, se encuentran poemas divididos en distintas salas de exposición donde el Colectivo Gusano Blanco inventado por Sánchez pretende desarrollar una interpretación de "Muerte sin fin" por José Gorostiza a través de sus *performances*. Aparte de su fascinación con la corporalidad encontrada en el arte de lxs artistas performáticxs del mundo contemporáneo, como Marina Abramović, Joseph Beuys y el mismo Bas Jan Ader, Sánchez toma el poeta mexicano, Gorostiza, como otro referente del conflicto entre materialidad (incluso las palabras) y consciencia. Después de leer los performances del Colectivo, se comienza a reconocer que en los juegos de materiales de los primeros poemas existe también la agonía que se puede marcar en versos gorostizianos como "¡qué desnudez de agua tan intensa, qué agua tan agua…!" En vez de la ansiedad dirigida al contenedor (el vaso, el cuerpo) y lo contenido (el alma, los productos) que se encuentran en *Muerte sin fin,* en Sánchez esta problemática del lenguaje y la experiencia está dirigida a la porosidad y la no distinción entre salida y entrada:

Las primeras puertas son realizadas
        con bisturí;
no se distingue
la entrada   la salida

de espacio.

Nuestra herida

sabe a tierra.

Aquí

empieza el lenguaje. (43)

Aunque *Bas Jan Ader* no fue escrito en Puerto Vallarta, el surrealismo de Sánchez sirve para reflejar las contradicciones de su nuevo hogar. Estos poemas revelan cómo la brecha entra en la producción de nuestra sociedad y los procesos de la naturaleza de que dependemos, incluso la producción de playas "vírgenes" cada vez más remotas. No sólo lleva consecuencias para la naturaleza, sino que también llevamos nosotros los efectos de tal brecha en nuestros cuerpos. Viajando en lancha a Yelapa, una playa remota hacia el sur de Vallarta, uno pasa por los proyectos de construcción destruidos por las olas que invaden la orilla cada año más: la porosidad que no distingue entre entrada y salida. Tales vistas exponen la diferencia entre el mar de involuciones infinitas de Gorostiza y el mar de Sánchez, nuestro mar.

Ross Hernández, La Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla

Thornton, Niamh. *María Félix: A Mexican Film Star and Her Legacy*. Rochester, NY: Tamesis Books, 2023. 279 pp. ISBN 9781-8556-6372-5

An academic study of La Doña, the iconic María Félix, is long overdue. Simultaneously charting new methodological paths for the study of Mexican cinema *and* delving deeply into aspects of Félix's life, performances, and afterlife through meticulous close readings, Thornton's study does not disappoint. *María Félix* situates itself among the subfield of star studies, part of film and media studies, in addition to Mexican film and cultural studies and gender and queer studies. Thornton masterfully rides the line of aiming for a general, yet academic, readership by never taking Mexican film and cultural knowledge for granted, and still satisfying the niche Mexicanist reader who already knows Félix. As Thornton very clearly states, this book is not a "conventional biography," but rather "this is my version of Félix, the icon framing her star self as performer across a variety of platforms and media with a primary focus on her films" (2-3). Thornton's depth of knowledge surrounding the star is palpable and, unsurprisingly, the result of over a decade of research.

Thornton utilizes the first chapter to situate their work in theories of star studies and performance style, but also to establish Félix in her breakout role of *Doña Bárbara* (1943). This character earned Félix "a lifelong nickname, 'La Doña'", despite only being twenty-nine when playing the role (35). Thornton makes the critical observation that Félix had more independence and agency than Hollywood actors because "Mexico did not have the same closed studio system for stars" (39). And, thus, Félix had the capacity to invent and manage her own star self, on- and off-screen. Félix as Doña Bárbara blends masculine and feminine codes, allowing for a transgressive gender reading. An outstanding section of this chapter is Thornton's analysis of Félix's wardrobe (in particular, the culotte) and gesturing in *Doña Bárbara*, with a level of detail and finesse that sets a new standard in Mexican film studies (54-8).

Chapter two is easily the standout chapter wherein Thornton examines the physicality of Félix's performance style via "expansive and signature gestures" (the slap, the long stride) and

"micro-gestures" (the eyebrow arch) in relation to industrial constraints and their bucking of gender norms (67). Thornton's close readings here are as enrapturing as Félix's performances and make a strong case for more detailed analyses of performance in addition to "the need for more work on the history of acting in the Golden Age," *especially* women actors (244). Thornton connects Félix's expansive acting style to the excess of melodrama, but also "the shooting pace and aesthetics of Mexican cinema" at the time, which encouraged "highly physical embodied performances" (80). This chapter takes infrequently studied Emilio Fernández films, *Reportaje* (1953) and *El rapto* (1954), to examine Félix's gestural repertoire, while making reference to classics like *Enamorada* (1946).

Chapter three considers Félix's performance as "the sexual woman"—sometimes called the *femme fatale* or *devoradora*—that Thornton prefers to call the *mujer sin alma*. This chapter offers a transnational (Mexico, Spain, France) tracing of the archetype with a varied corpus, demonstrating the value of star studies to lead us to deeper cuts of well-known directors like Gavaldón, Bracho, Buñuel, Rafael Gil, and Jean Renoir. Thornton argues that, as opposed to a singular role, the *mujer sin alma* was determined by local industrial contexts and subject to creative collaborations with individuals beyond the director, explicitly pushing against the auteur approach. Thornton reads camp and queerness into the *mujer sin alma*, for it allowed Félix to be "outside of conventional gender binaries" (108).

The fourth chapter turns the "muse" narrative on its head, transforming Félix from passive object of beauty to active tastemaker, agent, patron, and collector. Objects studied in this chapter include: the animal-inspired jewelry Félix commissioned from Cartier, portraits of the star by Leonor Fini, Leonora Carrington, Diego Rivera, and Antoine Tzapoff, and the song, "María Bonita," by ex-husband Agustín Lara. While, of course, copyright makes including images of this art costly, illustrations would have enhanced Thornton's analysis here. Thornton additionally examines the Christie's auction catalog of Félix's estate to discuss her taste, but also to underscore the Anglo tendency to exoticize Félix and undervalue her stardom (164-71).

The last chapter brings together case studies from "a rich ecosystem of fandom, transformations, and remediations" that take inspiration from Félix's unique look, performance, and life (193). These range from the play *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* (Carlos Fuentes, 1982) and its various stagings, the character La Roña (featured on the book's cover), created by Darío T. Pie, and a series of digital content, including Félix make-up transformation videos by beauty vloggers and a YouTube channel dedicated to the star. Rather than simple imitation, Thornton understands these interventions to be forms of "co-creation," whereby these creators dip into the power, control, agency, and gender-bending autonomy that Félix offered (226). This focus on Félix's multi-faceted afterlife pushes against star studies' tendency to confine analysis to the star's life (3).

This book is ambitious in its scope and covers a lot of ground. Some external theoretical frameworks could have been pared down, simply because Thornton's ideas are more interesting. While the introduction suggests that "life writing" will be theoretically prominent, this framing is fortunately not carried throughout the book (8-9). Given the series, Icons of the Luso-Hispanic World, where studied icons thus far have been writers like García Lorca, Machado de Assis, and María de Zayas, I tend to wonder if/how the always already privileging of literature over popular culture and film in Luso-Hispanic studies—and the need to make concessions to peer reviewers—affected Thornton's final product.

All in all, Thornton's incredibly rich *María Félix* joins Seraina Rohrer's *La India María* (2017) as part of a move to revindicate popular stars and culture and to expand typical objects of study in the field-shifting canon of new Mexican star studies.

Olivia Cosentino, University of South Florida

La sociedad de la nieve. Dir. J. A. Bayona. Spain, 2023. 144 min.

"*Es un lugar donde vivir es imposible. Lo extraño acá somos nosotros*" (25:40)

As a Uruguayan who grew up imbibing stories about the 1972 Andes tragedy from an early age, the news about J. A. Bayona's project to retell the spectacular true story of a group of young rugby players who survived 72 days in a lifeless glacial desert after their plane crashed filled me with unease. Those of us in Uruguay have consumed a long litany of books, podcasts, documentaries, films, news reports, and interviews on this topic, bolstered in 2022 to commemorate its fiftieth anniversary. What could Bayona—best-known for the *The Impossible* (2012), a disaster thriller about the 2004 Thai tsunami—say in this Netflix-backed blockbuster which had not been said before?

There are three main reasons why my scepticism was unwarranted and why *La sociedad de la nieve* constitutes a cinematic triumph, without even touching on its technical prowess. Firstly, the point of view from which the film is told; secondly, its mindful depiction of anthropophagy; and finally, it being a transnational film which unlike its Hollywoodesque predecessor – *Alive* (1993) – is still sensitive to the local nuances of the story.

This film is based on the eponymous book published by the Uruguayan journalist Pablo Vierci in 2008, for which he interviewed the sixteen survivors. The choral nature of the book, where multiple perspectives are recounted in the first person, serves to produce a detailed and vivid account of the facts whilst preserving its polyphonic essence. A similar strategy is palpable in the film: whereas Frank Marshall's *Alive* focused predominantly on the heroism of Roberto Canessa and Nando Parrado, the two rugby players who undertook a 10-day preternatural odyssey across the Andes to be rescued, Bayona distributes protagonism across the whole society of the snow. This may not allow for much character development or narrative arcs, but it portrays the collective and practical effort of survival whilst honouring all those lost and nearly lost lives: 45 passengers overall, of whom 33 survived the crash and only 16 left the Andes. As the film progresses, the name and age of each character who dies appears onscreen, a moment of silent tribute for those who pass away. Bayona's twist is to include a voice-over narrated by Numa Turcatti (played exceptionally well by newcomer Enzo Vogrincic), a character who dies in the second half of the film. The film therefore engages with the central conundrum of Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*: how do you speak for those who did not survive? A dead narrator speaking in the present tense has an uncanny and phantasmagorical effect, recentring the dead at the heart of this story. Akin to an oral diary, the voice-over adds a poetic and confessional edge to the narrative which might have been clumsier to render via dialogue. At the same time, these monologues veil expositional descriptions that help propel the plot forward and overcome the heavy-handed nature of the script in *Alive*. As Julieta Greco eloquently puts it in *Revista Anfibia*, *Alive* focused from its very title on those who survived, but Bayona's film centres on the society forged between those who lived and those who died ("La conquista de lo inútil").

Part of this connection is tied to the fact that those who lived had to eat their dead friends and family to avoid starvation. Given that the Old Christian's rugby club for which most of the passengers played is an offshoot of a private Catholic high school, the characters' deeply held religious beliefs added a theological layer to their ethical compunction. It is through its cinematography that Bayona's film captures this pivotal turning point in the narrative. In its opening half hour, many of the scenes include long and extreme long shots, sometimes from a bird's view angle, which show the minuscule size of the fuselage and the characters in the vast, beautiful, empty Andes. As the debate about cannibalism sets in, extreme-close ups of what the characters try to eat – a plant, a scab, a shoelace, tobacco—predominate. The close-ups of their hungry faces, often shot using disorientating camera angles, conveys the claustrophobia and entropy that becomes installed in the fuselage. Whereas *Alive* followed a macabre and gruesome route, showing characters cutting their friends up and eating next to the bodies, *La sociedad* never includes a corpse being butchered and through ellipses depicts what actually happened: the Strauch cousins volunteered throughout to cut thin slices of meat outside of everyone's view.

It may seem unfair and simplistic to criticize a 90s film in light of a better version produced twenty years later. Yet, the comparison helps to illustrate the difference between a global film in the Hollywood mould which appropriates a foreign story and—to borrow from the term Will Higby introduced in *Transnational Screens*—what could be described as "rooted transnational film," which is sensitive to the national, regional, and international resonances of the story ("Moroccan diasporic cinema: the 'rooted transnationalism' of the *cinéastes de passage"*). The Andes tragedy itself has transnational elements: a story about a group of Uruguayan passengers, who had departed from Argentina and were stranded in Chile, which is well-known across the Hispanic world, recognizable to a global audience, and touches on universal themes about what it is to be human. It is fitting that the film's production also had a transnational dimension: the casting consisted mostly of Uruguayan and Argentinean actors, the filming took place in Uruguay, Chile and Spain, the director himself is Spanish, it was Spain's entry to the U.S. 2024 Academy Awards, and it streamed on Netflix to a global audience. To say that in Marshall's English-language film starring Ethan Hawke some things are lost in translation is an understatement—the film transposes the trite dynamics of an American high school popularity contest to the Andes. "Rooted transnationalism", on the other hand, describes a style suffused with local cultural nuances which also has cinematic and thematic concerns beyond the national. The casting of *La sociedad de la nieve* is an excellent example: the actors are mainly from the River Plate region and well-known faces were deliberately avoided in favour of relative novices. The goal was to foster a team – or society—among the actors inspired by that of the survivors, which was instrumental to overcome challenging filming conditions. The cameos are another nod to the original story: real-life survivors like Fernando Parrado, Carlitos Paéz, and Roberto Canessa interact as extras with their fictional younger selves in the film.

Iconic Uruguayan films such as *Whisky*, *25 Watts* and *El baño del Papa* had a trademark identity: low-budget, slow burners, unconventional in terms of genre, favouring realistic, gritty portrayals of ordinary life. Recent productions available on Netflix such as *La noche de doce años*, *Togo*, and now *La sociedad de la nieve* are much more explosive in their scale and conventional in their adherence to established genres. This set of films are forging a new path: finding the sweet spot between attracting international investment, catering to a global audience, and still telling a distinctly Uruguayan story. While it's a Spanish production, Bayona's film marks another—

somewhat surprising—step in this exciting direction of Uruguayan cinema, which only a few years ago seemed impossible.

Jorge Sarasola Herrera, University of Warwick

Los agitadores. Dir. Marco Berger. Argentina, 2022. 102 min.

Argentinian filmmaker Marco Berger has long proved that he is a master at filming male sexual tension and homoeroticism, and his oeuvre is regularly recognized by queer theorists—most notably, David William Foster—and popular culture alike. Particularly, his ability to showcase filmic techniques that signal Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's seminal concepts of homosociality and homoaffectivity that perilously teeter on the verge of homoeroticism regularly engage his viewers. Additionally, his thematic inversions and close angle shots create ephemeral, visual subtleties that facilitate a variety of homoerotic responses in his viewers.

One of his latest films, *Los agitadores* (2022), *Horseplay* in English, is no exception, and as the co-producer, writer, and director of the film, Berger quite significantly makes a poignant statement by opening the film with a cameo. Berger the actor carries a washbasin to a young man named Artur, who is hosting a group of male friends at his mother's home for the Christmas holidays. Upon returning the washbasin, Berger's character unwittingly sets in motion a long series of homoerotic scenes, each one more blatantly crude. The basin is immediately used to prank two sleeping men with cold water, resulting in nude, wet bodies and ample laughter. With this, Berger the writer and director literally regales us with a storyline that is orgiastically homoerotic, proving once again that a room full of semi-naked, masculine, Argentinian male bodies are only a pair of flimsy shorts away from full-on homoerotic romping.

Nearly every conversation is homoerotic in nature and the sexuality of each man is unclear. This is certainly welcome, since the fine lines between gender and sexual binaries that we normally observe in films are blurred, at least at the beginning of the plot. However, we immediately notice that something is not quite right within this homoaffective paradise. As the film proceeds, Berger ensures that we are acutely aware that homophobia and homophobic violence are not issues of the past. Indeed, despite recent developments in Argentinian society and parts of the world overall regarding the perceived acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage, anti-LGBTQ+ movements and violence are rising alarmingly.

As spectators, we begin viewing this film with the sense—and hope—that homoeroticism is no longer taboo. Since we want this to be the case, we celebrate such progress, perceiving jokes that would have in the past served as a test of heterosexual dominance over homoaffectivity to keep homoerotic potentiality in check. With this celebration, we infer that Berger is portraying the current era of gender fluidity and true queerness, with subjective sexual and gender identities supplanting fixed ones. After all, the men enjoy both homoaffective and homoerotic horseplay in a strikingly uninhibited manner. However, the celebration abruptly ends as we realize that the only reason this is made possible is because this is a large grouping of males whose concept of the homoerotic is blatantly explicit. That is, it is out in the open where each of them can keep a close eye on it. This, of course, means that when homoeroticism becomes implicit and shared intimately between individuals, it threatens the underlying heterosexual norm.

The first clue that heteronormativity and homophobia are alive and well in this film is revealed by Poli, who demonstrates a profound fear of Nico. Poli separates himself from the group at times throughout the film to suffer his fear in silence. Nico is the dominant male of the group and Poli is the one everyone else picks on. Even so, Poli is one of them, to an extent, and participates in the group's activities. The explicit homoeroticism continues unwaveringly enticing, and it includes Poli. As viewers, we initially hope that this is another Bergerian performative inversion: a trope that queers the heteronormative policing of homoaffectivity from becoming truly homoerotic. However, despite most of the film consisting of a series of opportunities to take "gay photos," the film ends tragically, as heteronormativity resets itself.

Leading up to this, we are enticed throughout the film by the potentiality of the homoaffective becoming the consummated homoerotic. One morning, two of the men wake up earlier than the others and decide to play a prank on Nico. They notice that he is sleeping closely to another man, and they position his hand to caress his genitalia. Photos are taken and posted on their social media chat group. Nico's girlfriend eventually sees it and is upset because, although "she gets it," she is worried about what their family and friends will think. In another scene, Andy, who we learn is bisexual, decides he wants to take yet another gay photo, posing as a bottom for a line of men pantomiming the desire to penetrate him. Once the photo is taken, they all huddle around to see how it turned out and howl in triumph. Our first reaction is that heterosexuality among the men appears to be mimetic at best, yet we soon discover that it is the homoeroticism that is purely performative. By constantly pushing the boundaries of homoeroticism within the group, they—and we—wonder where the homoerotic performativity ends and the consummation begins, if at all.

Despite building desire for a homonormative denouement, the film ends with Nico visiting a site by the river where Poli and Andy have spent the night. He finds a used condom, and when Andy returns, Nico kills him by striking him in the head with a baseball bat. With this, Berger signals a frightful reality. Despite relatively positive strides in social acceptance of LGBTQ+ communities, homophobia and homophobic violence continue to enforce heteronormativity. As Foster once noted, homophobia never disappears, it simply goes into the closet. While the film at first appears not to contain social criticism, the ending forces us to reflect upon the entire plot, reevaluating the homoerotic romps enjoyed just minutes earlier as what they really are: performance as a means of heteronormative control.

Daniel Holcombe, Georgia College & State University

Tótem. Dir. Lila Avilés. Mexico, 2024. 95 min.

A young girl sits in a public restroom, singing and laughing with her mother. Thus begins *Tótem* (2024), the second feature-length film by director Lila Avilés (1982, Mexico City) and the winner of several festival awards, including an Ariel for Best Film, Best Director, as well as an Audience Award. The pair rehearse an opera song they later perform at her dying father's last birthday party. Avilés' film—through its content, dialogue, and camera positions—explores the theme of death through the eyes of the seven-year-old protagonist Sol [Naími Sentíes].

From Sol's point of view, we observe how her aunts struggle to organize a birthday party for their brother, Tonatiuh [Mateo García]. Through images of Tonatiuh with a nurse and dialogue between the characters, the audience learns that he is dying of cancer. The film creates tension through the family members' anxiety in preparing for the party and the varying degrees of support for the gathering. For example, Tonatiuh's father exclaims through an electro-larynx, "Él no quiere la pinche fiesta," and the aunts argue about the idea of the party. The film portrays the typical stresses of having guests; however, the underlying tragedy of Tonatiuh's impending death colors the characters' interactions. Moreover, each character finds unique ways to process the situation—having the house cleansed of bad aura, practicing meditation, or drinking. When Tonatiuh finally joins the guests, they celebrate his birthday and perform skits for him into the night. The last skit features Sol on her mother Lucía's [Iazua Larios] shoulders, lip-syncing to an opera song and wearing a clown wig and cape. In this culminating moment, Tonatiuh watches his daughter and cries while his friends and family offer him comfort. The last scene is of his empty room, bed stripped of coverings, and a breeze fluttering the white curtains.

In *Tótem,* the names of the characters are full of significance. The protagonist's name is Sol, the Spanish word for sun. Her mother's name, Lucía, denotes 'light' or 'shining,' while her father's name is Tonatiuh, which in Náhuatl is composed of 'tona,' or 'heat from the sun,' and 'tiuh,' or 'movement away.' Tonatiuh is the fifth sun god in the Mesoamerican Nahua peoples' belief system, including the Aztecs, ruling over the fifth and final era. The Aztec codices and sun stone (housed in the National Anthropology Museum in Mexico City) depict Tonatiuh's connection with the Aztec calendar and the sun god's daily rebirth, journey across the sky, and death. In *Tótem,* Tonatiuh's struggles throughout this day and his final passing mirror these depictions. With reason, Sol asks Siri through her phone when the world will end, because her father's death is such a painful ending in her young life. Sol's deep connection with the natural world also parallels the Mesoamerican belief in an inspirited world in which natural objects and forces have spirits and are intertwined in the lives of humans. The film's title, *Tótem,* is adjacent to the idea of a nahual, or an animal spirit that accompanies and protects a person from birth. When Tonatiuh gifts the animal painting to his daughter, he passes on his protection, even after death. In this scene, he explains to Sol that sometimes there are things you want to see but cannot, however, they are still there.

While many of the family members prefer to gather and create community, Sol chooses to experience the time leading up to her father's death alone. The young girl creates forts out of couch pillows, hides in a room asking Siri existential questions, sits on a rooftop looking down at the backyard party, and visits her father in his sick room. Avilés is particularly skillful at portraying a young child's point of view on death, but also the usual complications of communal life. For example, her aunts try to accommodate her feelings, yet they chastise her for the fort and are generally too busy to attend to her, and the party guests bother her on the rooftop with a drone, to which she yells "¡Ya déjenme!" Until her mother returns, Cruz [Teresa Sánchez], the nurse caring for Tonatiuh, is the only character who looks for her and offers comfort. When Sol questions whether her father loves her, Cruz gently replies that he loves and adores her. This gentle love also appears when Sol visits her father in his room and her mother arrives; the three of them hug and share a moment together. In these scenes, Avilés explores a child's perspective on death and the parent-child relationship.

Throughout the film, the camera centers on Sol, leading the audience to understand we are seeing events unfold from her perspective. Moreover, there are instances where Avilés positions the camera at a small child's height, for example, in the kitchen, when we see the aunt's legs and a small children's table tucked under the counter. Other examples include the camera capturing Sol through the pillows of her fort or through a semi-closed door, showing how she sees the world. The scene most emblematic of the film's perspective is when Sol sits by her father behind the birthday cake as the guests sing to him. Rather than focus on Tonatiuh's face, the camera holds on Sol's face as she stares into the candle flames and then closes her eyes to make a wish, an ominous sound in the background. The scene mirrors one early in the film when Sol and Lucía pass under a bridge; they hold their breath, and Sol makes a wish, sharing that hers was for her father not to die. The wish at the end can be read as less optimistic, as Sol looks straight at the camera and insinuates the futility of her wish. Once again, the audience experiences the emotions of Tonatiuh's imminent death from Sol's perspective. Similar to Claudia Sainte-Luce's *Los insólitos peces gato* (2013), Natalia Beristáin's *No quiero dormir sola* (2012), and María Novaro's *Las buenas hierbas* (2010), *Tótem* examines illness, family, and small acts of community and solidarity in the face of death.

Traci Roberts-Camps, University of the Pacific