

argumentos resultan muy atinados, puesto que ejemplifican y argumentan concretamente la articulación pretendida respecto de los procesos de transformación social y urbanística. En este sentido, es de resaltar cuando el libro se posa sobre aquella dramaturgia que cita a la ciudad en sus textos, es decir, cuando retoma fragmentos de textos dramáticos en los que es posible vislumbrar calles, zonas y espacios puntuales de la Buenos Aires de ese momento. Nos detenemos en mencionar, al respecto, dos obras teatrales retomadas en el capítulo 2 y 4, respectivamente: *Don Quijote en Buenos Aires* de Eduardo Sojo (de 1885) y *Mientras la ciudad duerme: cuatro brochazos de la noche bonaerense* de Manuel Romero (de 1919) ya que en ambas los espacios referenciados eran espacios reales de la ciudad que se podían visitar, incluso, al salir del teatro. Este aspecto nos resulta más que interesante pues, por mi parte, he trabajado en diversas oportunidades el vínculo entre arte teatral y ciudad desde la dramaturgia (principalmente en el artículo, “Buenos Aires como escenario: hacia un decálogo de vínculos entre lo urbano y lo teatral”, *Telondefondo*, Año XV, No. 29) y estos textos, sin duda, engrosarían el corpus para seguir pensando dicho vínculo.

Por otro lado, huelga decir que, a partir de los agradecimientos iniciales, se intuye el paso y trabajo de campo que la autora realizó por la ciudad de Buenos Aires, donde se vislumbran las consultas a especialistas en investigación teatral y las visitas a centros de documentación pertinentes, tales como el Instituto Nacional de Estudios de Teatro, la Asociación Argentina de Autores o el Archivo General de la Nación. Algo que se valora muy satisfactoriamente.

Finalmente, nos resta decir que el libro colabora en historizar parte de nuestra actividad teatral, contextualizándola y articulándola con aspectos de la historia sociopolítica y económica, observando esa configuración social que deviene en paralelo a los cambios urbanísticos. Un fin de siglo XIX y un principio de siglo XX que fueron muy álgidos en protestas sociales, en reivindicación de derechos, en modos de gestar y pensar a la ciudadanía desde su arte teatral, y que supieron forjar a esta ciudad, hoy vuelta símbolo de teatro a nivel mundial.

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SILVIA PEDRAZA AND CARLOS A. ROMERO. *Revolutions in Cuba and Venezuela: One Hope, Two Realities*. University Press of Florida, 2023.

Silvia Pedraza and Carlos Romero have published a good book. Silvia Pedraza dedicates this book to a cousin who lost his life in Santa Clara, Cuba, in 1957, while fighting for democracy. She is professor of sociology and American culture at the University of Michigan. Carlos Romero is professor emeritus in

the Institute of Political Studies at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and dedicates this research to his former mentor Cole Blasier who passed away in 2021.

I was a guest at the Universidad Central de Venezuela in 2017, and the last time I visited Cuba was in 2018 for the launch of a book that I had co-authored about the consequences of the implosion of the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding the scarcity of food and consumer goods, the atmosphere of improvement between the United States and Cuba in 2015 was still present, and I even remember my surprise at seeing young people on the streets using their Chinese smartphones.

The study by Silvia Pedraza and Carlos Romero, published in 2023, adds several new insights to those in my book *Cuba and Revolutionary Latin America. An Oral History*, published in January 2017 by Zed Books. When I finished my comparison of the Cuban and the Venezuelan Revolutions, the second of the two major economic crises in Cuba (1991-1998 and 2021) had still not erupted. However, staff members of the Cuban Departamento América had already taken note of the confidential relationship of some Cuban officials with Venezuelan officers with leftist sympathies. They also had followed the rising popularity of Lieutenant-Colonel Hugo Chávez after his coup in 1992. But even in 1994, notwithstanding the severe economic crisis after the implosion of the Soviet Union, Fidel told his representative Arbesú to invent a reason for Chávez to visit Cuba. “Cuba could not even buy him a box of matches,” he was told, and Chávez, still a rising figure in politics, decided to buy his own ticket. But this trip was not in vain.

Fidel Castro welcomed Chávez in person when he descended from the airplane. Although he was visiting Cuba for the first time, he was received as a long-awaited foreign statesman and Fidel toured him across the island. It was the beginning of a permanent political and personal friendship.

The authors divide their book in three parts, each comprising several chapters. The First Part is about the origins, processes, and outcomes of the revolutions and their consolidation. It has three chapters: (1) “The Study of Revolutions”; (2) “The Cuban Revolution: Democracy Betrayed”; and (3) “The Bolivian Revolution on Trial”.

The first chapter offers a sketch of Cuba as a relatively prosperous economy and society, despite there being large pockets of poverty and racism. During the first years of their respective revolutions, both Castro and Chávez were popular. Since the early 1970s, Fidel Castro had befriended progressive army leaders turned progressive presidents, especially Peruvian president Velasco and Panamanian leader Torrijos, both born poor and both patriotic nationalist-reformists. They had emphasized the role of the armed forces as fulfilling a “revolutionary calling.” Hugo Chávez became an enthusiastic follower of theirs

when he was a cadet during the memorial festivities of the battle of Ayacucho which had occurred 200 years prior.

Following Goldstone (p. 26), Pedraza and Romero formulate three basic conditions for revolutionary processes: (1) the loss of effectiveness of the state; (2) the alienation of elites and intellectuals; and (3) mobilization of the population for social protest actions. They add three further conditions of their own inference while analyzing Cuba and Venezuela: (4) a charismatic leader adhering to an attractive mass ideology; (5) an international historical context in its own hemisphere; and (6) for Cuba, a significant segment of exodus of the population emerging as a new diaspora that becomes a new actor and an ally found in the Soviet Union and an enemy in the United States, and, for Venezuela, a considerable exodus towards Latin America while maintaining a sizable opposition.

Analyzing the Cuban and the Venezuelan revolutions, the two authors also mention the serious population decline in the last five years, Cuba with a population of 13 million at its highest and an emigration of 1.7 million, and Venezuela with 28.9 million and an exodus of 5.4 million in 2019. The Cuban crises of 1991-1998 and 2017-2021 triggered a new wave of exodus, the fifth of the exodus patterns, as the authors remark. During Cuba's last social and economic crisis under Raúl Castro, the government announced some economic reforms all the while restricting freedom of expression. The large-scale exodus is now expanding in Venezuela, especially under Maduro and his military and civilian vice-presidents.

The first half of the next chapter is rather descriptive, with a short sketch of the principal actors: part of the elite, the middle classes, the organizational talent of Frank País who passed away at a young age but garnered enormous sympathy among the population of Santiago de Cuba, the charisma of Fidel Castro in two decisive moments (1953 and 1956-1958), the women's organizations, and the courageous actions of Che Guevara as a revolutionary hero. His death after his failed guerrilla movements transformed him into a revolutionary martyr, still venerated every year as a kind of secular saint by the Cuban school youth. The second part begins with the evolution of the consolidation of the Communist Party after the fusion of the three constituent parties and movements in the early years, the disastrous transformation of the island as it became ruled by a one-party state in the first 15 years of the Revolution. Although the authors dedicate a couple of pages to the significance of Che Guevara at the INRA and as president of the State Bank, his actual significance was diminished in the decades that followed his death. All industrial plans were cancelled, his many essays and books about economics and society were removed and recently reprinted in early 2013 by his former viceminister Borrego. The final part of the chapter analyzes the five

waves of exodus, their internal and external consequences, and the tragic fate of more than 2 million first- and second-generation Cubans on the island and elsewhere whose family ties were interrupted for years, when not for decades.

Part two is a double chapter about Cuba's and Venezuela's foreign relations and aspirations on the international stage. In the chapter about Cuba, Pedraza and Romero sum up four interrelated objectives (p. 102): (1) anti-imperialism; (2) Third Worldism; (3) socialism in alliance with the Soviet Union and the "Socialist Block"; and (4) promoting revolutions abroad. In practice, this means influencing support to revolutionary movements in Latin America (especially in the 1960s) and in Africa (in the 1970s and 1980s). The support from the Soviet Union was matched by both the traumatic antagonism with the United States, evidenced by efforts to restrict access to diplomatic and commercial relations, and five exit waves, of which the *balseiros* (people trying to escape from the island in self-made rafts or small boats) was the most tragic and appealing.

Although the United States considered Cuba as a leading force of the World Left, in an economic, technological, and military sense it remained de facto dependent. In his *The Soviet Union and Cuba. Interests and Influences* (1995), Raymond Duncan estimates that the contingent of Soviet specialists increased from 1,000 to 6,000, and that half of them were military experts. At one point, all faculties of Cuba's universities had a Soviet adviser. Until the mid-1980s, it was habitual that the PhD theses of trusted party members were written and defended in Moscow. All ranking Cuban military were trained in Moscow or Petrograd and military relations were in general very smooth. In 1972 Cuba had become a member of the COMECON. The Soviet Union acted as a mono-supplier of essential oil and industrial and transport commodities. The Soviet Union received sugar and nickel with "special price setting." Repayment was always postponed and in 1990 the official debt reached nearly \$25 billion. As former Soviet intelligence official in charge of Cuba Yuri Pavlov writes: "The vicious circle of increased Soviet aid only escalated Cuba's 'needs' and became a permanent headache for the officials of the Soviet State Planning Commission (GOSPLAN)."

Cuba participated actively in the Luso-Portuguese colonial warfare zones by sending large military contingents to all existing guerrilla territories, especially in the case of Angola where it deployed thousands of military and civilian "internationalists" "who went directly from the aircraft to the front. In all existing war theatres in Southern Africa, Cuba demonstrated presence and, after the Portuguese-African peace negotiations in 1974 and 1975, Cuba sent troops, in an increasing number. In 1975 Cuba had already deployed large military units to assist the MPLA. In fact it continued to send voluminous military and civilian "internationalists"—the civilian ones taking on tasks in construction and building

capacities after having completed their mission—to Angola until 1992, when Cuba retired its troops and *internacionalistas* after negotiated peace agreements.

Cuba's economy plummeted due to the implosion of the Soviet Union and was in complete disarray. Officially this period was named the "special period in peacetime," a period of austerity, scarcity of food, medical services exclusively for foreigners (an offering later expanded to tourism in general), and getting by on the remittances of family members in the United States, Latin America, Spain, and other countries. A barter economy evolved: cigarettes operated almost like hard currency. A system of informal economy and a "parallel market" of stolen cell phones, copied DVDs, home-made rum, later USB-sticks, rock music, and Miami-Cuban dance music flourished in the cities.

At the turn of the century, the presidency of Hugo Chávez meant a kind of immediate salvation. The Departamento América had already ascertained that military officers were much easier to understand than the civilian advisers of Salvador Allende. Also that their nationalism and the poor background of many army officers could evolve into progressive pro-poor tendencies. El Comandante (lieutenant-colonel) Chávez was their ideal ally and both Fidel and Raúl were still mostly seen in military uniform. They fraternized quickly and a personal and political friendship was formed soon after. In the early 1990s the Cubans had already sent 1,500 medical personnel when Venezuela suffered a devastating flood.

In 2000, Chávez and Castro cemented their relationship with a mutual agreement: doctors, nurses and paramedics, literacy teachers, trainers, educational experts, sport instructors in exchange for oil, to bolster the social programmes of Chávez. Chávez had survived a coup and a national strike. As in the case of Allende, Castro provided him with Cuban bodyguards. In 2003, there were 10,000 medical and paramedical officers in Venezuela. By 2005, their number had risen to 30,000. In 2013, the year of Chávez's death, there were 50,000. These trades show how Chávez had graduated from being Castro's disciple to his equal.

From 2004 on, Chávez instigated a series of social reforms or "missions," in part implemented by trusted military officers and loyalist civilians. In close coordination with his Cuban ally, he founded a party (the PSUV, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela). In 2004, both Cuba and Venezuela founded the ALBA (in English, the Bolivarian Alliance for the People of Our América). In 2007, they thought about a kind of union like the United Arab Republic under Nasser, but the cultural, social, religious, political, and military differences were too large.

At the international level, Chávez launched a Bolivarian policy, providing oil at friendly prices and extending the ALBA to Bolivia (2006), Nicaragua (2007),

and Ecuador (2010) and five smaller Caribbean island-states, in general, under discretionary conditions set by the participating presidents. When Honduras's president opted for a similar path, the army staged a coup. The international policy of delivering sponsored oil to the friendly governments of poor countries and poor cities was to be branded as "Venezuela's oil diplomacy." Until his death due to cancer in 2013 (he had been treated by Cuban medical specialists) the alliance between Chávez and Fidel remained a "special relation." When Fidel narrowly eluded death by intestinal hemorrhage in 2006, his brother took over most of his functions. In 2008, the reassignment of political power (including the post of First Secretary) was completed. Fidel was present on TV where he was shown during visits by his brother Raúl and his best friend Hugo Chávez.

In his first years of government, Chávez tried to reconcile the expansion of his internal missions and his international policy of petro-diplomacy. At home he maintained his popularity (although in diminishing degrees, he won all his presidential contests). At his death, he was succeeded by his committed follower Nicolás Maduro. Two processes occurred at the same time. In geopolitical terms, Maduro distanced himself and his coterie of devoted civilians and military officers from the United States while General Vladimir Padrino López served as a kind of eternal minister of defense. In terms of equipment, Maduro sought an alliance with Russia after the presidency of Putin in 2000. Venezuela and Russia became mutual supporters, with Russia as provider and creditor of oil installations and military hardware, and Russia accepting crude oil in return. Before Maduro, Chávez had bought French war planes. Maduro sought technical assistance from Canada and, regarding weaponry, he also sought the expertise of Iran and other countries outside the Global West.

A second development was the dramatic exodus of Venezuelan people: first technicians, then medical specialists, engineers, but also middle-class entrepreneurs and all those who had (distant) relatives in other countries. In 2019, when I interviewed the staff of the Colombian presidential delegate for refugees, their number was already larger than two million. Other countries in Latin America showed their generosity by welcoming between ten to hundred thousand emigrants. At one point the number of Venezuelan refugees was comparable to that of Ukrainian refugees in 2023.

This process is simultaneous to the formation of a serious internal opposition. Juan Guaidó, a parliamentarian who won the majority of votes in the Assembly, is considered by many countries and organizations to be the interim president of the country.

The first chapter of Part III, chapter six, is a collection of chapters about the (impossibility of a) triangular relation between Cuba, Venezuela, and the United States. It is largely taken up by a short survey of the Cuban-Venezuelan

“doctors for oil” program and its unexpected consequence: doctors returning to Cuba with new household goods and for a meagre salary and defecting medical personnel and their reasons for doing so (economic immigrants and refugees). The authors dedicate twelve pages to qualitative research, giving voice to a later generation of migrants to the United States. (The United States also created a program for defecting doctors and other medical and paramedical personnel).

Chapter seven is about the age and generations of Cubans and Venezuelans in the United States, their political preferences (largely Republican) and voting patterns, their own organizations, and their economic support in terms of remittances. While 60 percent of the incoming Cubans prior to 1995 did not send remittances or medicines, 66 percent of the “newcomers” after 1995 did (p. 191). Also of interest is the quick survey of the (older) Political Exile Organizations (in general anticommunist) and the growing number of people who have family members on the island and provide active support, mostly by sending cash. A small typology of the Venezuelans in the United States completes the chapter.

Chapters eight and nine describe the internal deterioration in Cuba and Venezuela, expressed in the 1994 and 2021 street protests. Tourism sharply diminished during the COVID years. The formerly informal sector (now re-named *cuentapropistas*) is stymied with bureaucratic issues and rules. Data from Venezuela’s yearly ENCOVI survey ranks the country under the five poorest countries where 80 percent of the population is unable to secure basic access to food and 30 percent of the children suffer from malnutrition.

The final chapter, “One Hope, Two Realities” is a synthesis of the previous chapters. In terms of similarities and differences. The time span of Cuba’s Revolution is from 1959 to the present. At present, that of the Venezuelan Revolution is 25 years. Both revolutions were inspired by socialist-populist leaders, thriving on anti-elite sentiments, implementing reforms benefitting the poor segments of their population. Fidel Castro was a brilliant orator, sometimes galvanizing an audience of more than one million. Chávez’s eloquence became part of his popularity. In both countries, the active support of the military higher echelons, the organizational potential of the party, and in the first fifteen years of the popularity of the leadership consolidated the preeminence of the regime. Their successors, Raúl Castro and Nicolás Maduro, did not possess that kind of broad popularity. Raúl Castro established his economic-military dominance as a consequence of the role of generals Arnoldo Ochoa and José Abarantes of 1989 that changed the MININT into another bastion of Raúl Castro. A quiet but certain “Raúlization” took place, establishing the economic and managerial tasks of the military establishment and the running of the essential state enterprises by the military. However, the military higher echelons have never demonstrated the conspicuous consumption pattern typical of the oligarchy that

emerged in the post-Soviet Union. On the contrary, retired senior military officers live a quiet, simple life. The PCC established a monopoly of state power and controlled (and controls) the weak opposition. Pedraza and Romero emphasize the exodus waves in both Cuba and Venezuela.

After a first year of insecurity, Nicolás Maduro established a regime of military top echelons, devotees of Chávez, and civilian loyalists or supporters of Chávez's party, the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (United Socialist Party of Venezuela, PSUD). Its internal opposition opted for several waves of exodus but a significant part of the internal opposition remains in the country, though not in a comfortable position. In 2024, after an election that by many internal and external observers was considered a rigged one, the real winner, president-elect Edmundo González Urrutia had to hide and go into exile.

The book is easy reading and can be used in undergraduate and graduate courses.

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ANDREA GIUNTA. *The Political Body. Stories on Art, Feminism, and Emancipation in Latin America*. Translated by Jane Brodie. University of California Press, 2023.

Why review a book published seven years ago? This is perhaps one of the first questions that arise when we come across a late review, such as this present review of *The Political Body. Stories on Art, Feminism, and Emancipation in Latin America* by Andrea Giunta, published in English in 2023, but first published in Spanish in 2018 under the title *Feminismo y arte latinoamericano. Historias de artistas que emanciparon el cuerpo* by Siglo veintiuno editores in Argentina and reissued in a revised version. The publication of the book in Spanish was an editorial success with its mostly academic audience, which resulted in a “translation” into English within the University of California Press collection “Studies in Latin American Art.” As various reviews have been published about the work that contemplate its main points, this analysis chooses to focus on the editorial differences between the editions and, in light of these, speculate on how Giunta's research has “aged” since its launch.

Before discussing the publications, I would like to emphasize the relevance of Argentine researcher Andrea Giunta in the field of Latin American visual arts (an inherently colonial political-geographical category). A retired Professor from the University of Buenos Aires and with teaching experience at the University of Texas and several research centers, Giunta's intellectual trajectory has been