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*Performances of Suffering in Latin American Migration:  
Heroes, Martyrs and Saints* by Ana Elena Puga and Víctor M.  
Espinosa (review)

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with his performance in this play. In particular, he makes a distinction between *transloca approximation* and *transloca incorporation* to account for Merced's engagement with drag as a spectator and later as a performer, respectively (174–75). Focusing on trans performers, chapter 7 analyzes drag performer and beauty pageant winner Lady Catiria's 1990s lip-sync performances and Barbra Herr's one-woman show *Trans-mission* (2017) in their ability to speak through the body, "and its profound interplay with voice and with the politics of everyday life as well as pressing social issues" (227). La Fountain-Stokes shows how lip-syncing privileges embodiment over voice by reading Catiria's performances as works of art, including one where she disclosed her HIV-positive status. In the case of Herr, it is the spoken word that becomes the main communicative act in her testimonial piece, where she touches on themes like domestic violence, self-knowledge, and political activism.

Each chapter exemplifies critical and generous scholarship that is accessible to a wide range of readers. La Fountain-Stokes not only analyzes works and frames theoretical debates, but also meticulously introduces artist biographies, popular culture references, and sociopolitical contexts. Although this makes *Translocas* an impressive scholarly contribution at the archival level, at times this level of detail detracts attention from the book's core arguments. Moreover, in the book's introduction, La Fountain-Stokes introduces us to Lola von Miramar, his drag persona, which was one of the ways he became "a coperformative witness of sorts" in relation to his methodology and researcher positionality (23). As the author also regrets in the epilogue, von Miramar is virtually absent for the rest of the book, which represented a missed opportunity to strengthen La Fountain-Stokes's self-reflexive analyses as a light-skinned *transloca* himself. Despite these minor limitations, *Translocas* is an interdisciplinary study that stresses the importance of a translocal and decolonial analysis of performance as embodied communication. La Fountain-Stokes compellingly builds *transloca* performance as a theoretical framework that will shape future research on queer and trans performance in Puerto Rico and beyond.

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**PERFORMANCES OF SUFFERING IN LATIN AMERICAN MIGRATION: HEROES, MARTYRS AND SAINTS.** By Ana Elena Puga and Víctor M. Espinosa. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020; pp. 372.

Migrants' suffering is frequently highlighted in the media and has garnered increasing political attention in the past several years, underscoring violent dramas, "border wall" rhetoric, and family separation. Puga and Espinosa investigate "melodramatic strategies" that "artists, advocates, journalists, . . . scholars," and migrants themselves employ to shape recognizable stories of victims, villains, heroes, or martyrs in an effort to obtain human rights and more tangible benefits (3). The scholars adopt an interdisciplinary lens, meshing sociology, performance studies, ethnography, and cultural studies to postulate that migrants' accounts are scripted and "cast" and to show how those dramas are often repeated. The book examines the ways in which circulating migrant melodramas might be helpful or harmful, suggesting that *mises en scène* of suffering might undermine migrants' agency and lure the public into ignoring the underlying, systemic roots that disempower and exclude migrants. The study specifically foregrounds Mexican and Central American migrants to the United States and interweaves "real" stories of advocates and migrants at various stages in their journey with artistic representations of migrant suffering to consider the impact and potential danger of reducing migrants' tales to scripted, emotional dramas of "virtuous suffering as the price of inclusion in the nation-state" (17).

Following a detailed introduction, the book is divided into three parts, each including two chapters with case studies that explore character archetypes, "the power dynamics of casting in both cultural production and daily life," and the tensions surrounding what the authors call "the political economy of suffering": the commodification of suffering as "a system of exchanges that has significant political consequences" (22–23). Part 1 scrutinizes diverse "Rescuers" as archetypes, such as the "empathic companion, saintly angel mother, and potential martyr" (32). Chapter 2 proposes that religious leaders play a central role as script writers and "directors" of migrant narratives. To delve into this, the scholars compare the "writings and social performances" of nineteenth-century Italian migrant advocate Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini and twenty-first-century Mexican migrant shelter

director Father Flor María Rigoni to showcase the melodramatic underpinnings of their "Christian" acts. Scalabrini's writings and actions supporting Italian migration to the Americas divide the world into good versus evil, victims versus villains, depicting migrants as "suffering, wretched, weeping," in need of the young, bold, courageous, and empathic male priests who rescue them (52–56). More than a century later, Rigoni's poetry continues portraying migrants as pitiful; however, his excessive empathy positions himself alongside them "less as a protector and more as a witness or a friend who feels his equal's pain" (66). The authors draw out the tensions and contradictions in Rigoni's writings and behaviors, showing how he exploits melodrama's tropes sometimes to romanticize migrant suffering, thus blaming migrants' afflictions on "individuals rather than economic or political systems" (76) in counterproductive ways. Chapter 3 juxtaposes two shelter directors: the laywoman Olga Sánchez Martínez, and the priest Alejandro Solalinde. Positing that Sánchez projects herself "as a guardian angel to the poor and 'afflicted,'" a "saintly figure" who saves injured migrants, the authors claim that Sánchez's self-image strategically helps fund and support her shelter (90–92). Beyond just saintly, Solalinde, on the other hand, is depicted as a martyr and revolutionary. As with their other migrant and rescuer portrayals, Puga and Espinosa investigate the priest's story from multiple perspectives: his depiction in media and by human rights advocates; his own performance; and "how he has cast and staged migrants" (111).

Part 2, "Mothers and Fathers," contrasts the myths surrounding migrant mother activist Elvira Arellano with those of coalitions of men physically maimed during attempted migrations. The authors explore these characters' castings and "corrective castings" about identity, femininity, motherhood, and masculinity to examine "individual agency in the construction of the role, affective responses to the casting, and the history that provokes such affective responses" (145). Chapter 4 presents Arellano as a "madre dolorosa," a traditional suffering mother who, depending upon the setting and circumstances, moves from courageous, self-sacrificing protector to cruel, selfish villain charged with exploiting her "anchor baby" to fight her own deportation. Chapter 5 analyzes the ways in which some mutilated migrant men from the Association of Returned Migrants with Disabilities who caravan between their native Honduras through Mexico to the United States, transform their casting as "embodiments of tragically feminized masculinity" to

that of "wounded warriors" to "protest the nation-state policies, practices, and laws of three countries" and demand reparation for their injuries (188).

The final section features "Children and Youth." Chapter 6 examines "the rich literary and dramatic tradition of 'functional orphans'" as they play out in the documentary narratives of Sonia Nazario, the 2007 fictional film *Under the Same Moon* and a 2005 play. The analysis of two performances of *Our Dad Is in Atlantis*—one in Mexico and one in the United States, both with different endings—is particularly strong, detailed, and enlightening. The authors claim that "in the United States, the play was staged and perceived primarily as a critique of U.S. immigration laws," whereas in Mexico it was "a lament for the disintegration of the Mexican family" (257). Chapter 7 researches the performances of "Dreamers" who use their art to "come out" of the shadows or the closet about their undocumented status, their sexuality, or both. Highlighting two artists—Julio Alvarez and Julio Salgado—"queer migrant melodramas," the authors propose that "subverting" some of melodrama's "conventions to challenge normative ideals, loosens the strictures of melodramas that would confine undocumented migrants to the role of pitiful victims who deserve respect for their rights on the basis of how much they have suffered" (283).

The book convincingly portrays melodrama's powerful pull to depict migrants' stories, and it attempts to remain neutral regarding the "limitations and opportunities offered by melodramatic imagination" (321). Rich in examples and detailed analyses, even the epilogue drives home the book's message in an impactful way. Seamless shifts between meticulously researched participant–observer accounts and poetic, visual, or theatrical representations of migrants' stories contribute real knowledge alongside a more nuanced understanding about migrants. Also, full credit to the authors for integrating multiple voices, perspectives, and disciplines so fluidly while still exposing the tensions and contradictions that these sometimes bring forth. However, since the project is centered on melodramatic techniques, it might have been helpful to theorize melodrama in a more thorough and systematic way in the introduction. Nonetheless, if the sign of an excellent book is that it adds valuable knowledge, promotes critical reflection, and inspires deep questions and future explorations than answers, then *Performances of Suffering in Latin American Migration* is outstanding.

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