Arteletra

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Published by Purdue University Press

Bartles, Jason A.
Arteletra: The Sixties in Latin America and the Politics of Going Unnoticed.
Purdue University Press, 2021.
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Notes

Introduction

1. See Jamila Medina Ríos, *Diseminaciones de Calvert Casey*, for a thorough bibliography on Casey’s writings and the scattered criticism that has been written on him to date.

2. See María Cristina Dalmagro, *Desde los umbrales de la memoria. Ficción autobiográfica en Armonía Somers*. Dalmagro has compiled a bibliography that is indispensable for studying Somers.


5. The examples Ángel Rama gives include: in Uruguay, Alfa and Arca; in Buenos Aires, Losada, Emecé, Sudamericana, Compañía General Fabril Editora, Jorge Álvarez, La Flor, and Galerna; in Chile, Nascimento and Zig Zag; in Venezuela, Monte Ávila; in Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Era, and Joaquín Mortiz; and in Barcelona, Seix Barral, Lumen, and Anagrama (“El ‘Boom” 66–67).


7. In Chapter 1, I make one exception to this in my analysis of Calvert Casey and the essays he wrote while still living in Cuba. However, my argument does not rely on whether or not his essays were read, but the extent to which he maneuvered the revolutionary public sphere in order to publish ideas that could have been considered counter-revolutionary.


11. Between 1968 and 1971, the well-publicized polemic between Julio Cortázar and José María Arguedas took place within this context in which writers constantly had to defend their commitment to the revolutionary cause. Both authors attempted to defend themselves from a series of broader attacks leveraged against writers in the era, but they ended up attacking one another. Cortázar felt the need to prove his cosmopolitan commitment to revolutionary causes in Latin America from Paris, and Arguedas had committed to writing from the Andes but did not achieve the same popularity and commercial success as the Boom writers. For Arguedas, Cortázar’s comments only further underscored the Eurocentric dismissal of so-called
peripheral literatures—to which even Cortázar belongs—as nothing more than nationalist folklore. Laura Demaría argues that in the case of this polemic “cada autor se queda pegado a uno de los dos términos excluyentes de la oposición” (Buenos Aires y las provincias 51). Neither was capable of stepping fully outside of this division between cosmopolitan and peripheral literatures to reconfigure the structure of the debate itself, and so this polemic faded without achieving much at all.

**PART ONE**

1. The metaphors of destroying, remodeling, or constructing new buildings or houses in times of revolution are not new in the Sixties; see Víctor Goldgel-Carballo, *Cuando lo nuevo conquistó América. Prensa, moda y literatura en el siglo XIX.*

2. The Padilla Affair has been well-documented and analyzed in various studies. The multiplicity of texts in which authors publicly weighed in on the situation has been collected in Lourdes Casal, *El caso Padilla: Literatura y Revolución en Cuba. Documentos.* Heberto Padilla’s collection of poetry is also compiled alongside a selection of these public texts surrounding the affair in *Fuera del juego.* For an analysis of the Affair, see Martín Chadad, “Testimonio de partes, o quién es quién,” in *Polémicas intelectuales en América Latina. Del “meridiano intelectual” al caso Padilla (1927–1971)* (207–12).

**Chapter One**


**Chapter Three**

1. See the chapter on Somers, “Armonía Somers y el carácter obsceno del mundo,” that appears in the expanded edition of Mario Benedetti’s *Literatura uruguaya siglo XX.*

2. The good press brought by Rama marked a small step toward the positive reception of her works, carried out primarily by feminist critics and those studying fantastic literary traditions since the 1980s. For a thorough summary of the reception of Somers’s works through the 2000s, see Cristina Dalmagro, “Armonía Somers/Etchepare: las huellas biográficas,” in *Desde los umbrales de la memoria* (45–98). These articles by Monegal, Benedetti, and Rama, as well as many others, are documented in her exhaustive archival research.

3. In chapter 8, I focus on Somers’s critique of the logic of immunization underlying her various metaphors of contamination in *Un retrato para Dickens* and *Sólo los elefantes encuentran mandrágora.*

4. See Rebecca E. Biron, *Murder and Masculinity: Violent Fictions of Twentieth-Century Latin America,* which includes a masterful study of masculinity in Somers’s “El despojo.”
PART TWO


2. See Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics.” He forcefully expands the temporal scope of the state of exception before the camps of World War II to include the technologies of killing that existed within European colonies and on plantations that reduced native and enslaved bodies through the violence of necropower.

3. “Bare life” is the translation of Agamben’s phrase, “nuda vita,” as proposed by Daniel Heller-Roazen in *Homo Sacer*. In Giorgio Agamben, *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics*, the translators prefer the phrase “naked life” (5). It is worth noting the two possibilities, since the former connotes a certain biological simplicity and being divested of legal status, whereas the latter highlights the lack of covering or protection and being utterly exposed in addition to evoking the negative moral values associated with nudity and sexuality.

Chapter Four

1. See also, William Luis, *Lunes de Revolución: Literatura y cultura en los primeros años de la Revolución Cubana*, which provides a detailed index of each number of the journal.

2. See Manuel Díaz Martínez, “La pistola sobre la mesa,” *Revista Encuentro de la Cultura Cubana* 43 (154). While the general proceedings of these conferences are well-known and frequently summarized, I have paraphrased the outcome of these events based on Díaz Martínez’s essay and William Luis’s previously cited work.

3. See *Conducta impropia*, directed by Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal. This documentary has proven controversial. For a measured criticism of the film’s facile comparisons between the UMAPs and the violence of Pinochet’s dictatorship or the Nazi concentration camps, see Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality*. Despite this criticism, Lumsden explains, “These were terrifying times for many homosexuals, particularly those in entertainment, culture, and education” (70).

4. According to Guillermo Cabrera Infante, it was out of fear of being sent to the UMAPs for being gay that finally prompted Casey to go into exile in 1965. Cabrera Infante relates how Casey, who did not try to hide his sexuality, had confessed his fears of these camps to Emmanuel Carballo, a Mexican writer who was invited to Cuba by *Casa de las Américas*. The next day, Carballo reported back to Haydée Santamaría, then director of *Casa*. When he learned of this, Casey took advantage of the translation of his short
stories into Polish to apply for permission to travel to Poland and from there went to Italy. See Cabrera Infante, “¿Quién mató a Calvert Casey?”

5. Castro only stated his regret of this homophobia from his death bed in the early 2000s, too little too late, and Guevara openly discriminated against queer subjects until his death. For example, Juan Goytisolo tells the story of Guevara at the Cuban embassy in Algiers hurling one of Virgilio Piñera’s books across the room while shouting, “How dare you have in our embassy a book by this foul faggot” (Quiroga, “Fleshing” 168). The institutionalized homophobia of the radical left—a homophobia that was certainly not limited to Cuba—has been well documented. See Lumsden’s *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality*.


7. For a detailed analysis of the various positions taken in these debates ranging from Castro’s “Palabras” to the polemic Padilla Affair in 1971, see Ana Serra, *The “New Man” in Cuba: Culture and Identity in the Revolution*.

8. In a May 1961 article in *Lunes*, “Los caminos a Playa Girón,” Casey further proves his genuine commitment to the Revolution by collecting and presenting a series of testimonies from ten soldiers who fought in the Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs invasion. The bulk of the article is comprised of these testimonies, but he briefly introduces them explaining that these are “hombres tan complicados y armados de verdades tan simples” (34). Then, he explains that telling all of their stories would be “físicamente imposible” (34). Instead, these few, fragmented stories become for him the “pequeña muestra humana, espléndidamente humana” that allow others to begin to understand this key moment in the defense of the Cuban Revolution (34). This essay upholds Casey’s broader political and aesthetic program.

9. Mouffe uses the term “politics” to refer to these consensus-building practices of various institutions and “the political” to name dissensus (101). However, I only borrow her distinction between consensus and dissensus.  

10. In Part Four on ethics and the formation of a political community, I explore how Mouffe theorizes the transformation of antagonism into agonism by which an enemy is transformed into an adversary within a radical democratic politics.

**Chapter Five**

1. These “monodialogues,” as I have chosen to translate Filloy’s neologism, “monodiálogos,” constitute a rhetorical structure that I will explore further in Chapter 11 in its relation to ethics, that is, to engaging in dialogue across unfathomable distances with others to form a community. While each of the seven monodialogues slightly varies in its number of speakers and interlocutors, the general structure is comprised of one person, always a man, who dominates the entire discussion while ignoring most of
what is said by the rest. The monodialogues often end in an ironic turn of events that undermines the force of the speaker who will not cede to or even acknowledge the others near him, as will be the case in “Yo y los intrusos.”

2. Detailing the political landscape from 1973–76 in particular, Maristella Svampa shows that in 1973, the Peronist Héctor Cámpora is elected President and appears to make room for “la Juventud maravillosa” within Peronism (“Populismo” 395). However, upon Perón’s return that same year, the situation changes drastically with the massacre of those youth at Ezeiza and Perón’s speech in which the same youth are cast aside as “imberbes” and “estúpidos” (403–04). The entire drama surrounding the reappearance of the Peronists in the political arena, Perón’s return to Argentina, those who dismiss Perón’s ideological turn to the right with the “teoría del cerco” that assumes that Perón was being poorly advised by those around him, the violence committed by the Montoneros in order to spark a revolution, and the violence committed under Perón’s orders to eliminate this “internal enemy” is not only complex, but difficult to historicize objectively. See Daniel James, ed., Violencia, proscripción y autoritarismo (1955–1976).

3. See the documentary, Ecce homo: una autobiografía de Juan Filloy, directed by Eduardo Montes-Bradley—the last interview with Juan Filloy in which he recounts his own biography and publishing history.


5. Derrida advances a related argument in “Plato’s Pharmacy” about the impossibility of arriving at any origin outside of logos, and writing becomes more closely associated with myth than it does with knowledge or the truth: “And at the same time, through writing or through myth, the genealogical break and the estrangement from the origin are sounded” (74). The pharmakon, which in the Phaedrus is associated with writing, is both a remedy and a poison; it is necessary for seeking “the origin or cause of logos,” but that external origin or cause can never be investigated outside of logos, that is, outside of writing (80).

6. It is not my intention here to add further commentary to the exhaustive debate provoked by David Stoll, Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans, in which he claims to disprove certain aspects of Rigoberta Menchú’s testimony, ultimately reminding readers of any text’s narrative construction.

7. See Tulio Halperín Donghi, Una nación para el desierto argentino (143).

Chapter Six


2. Iglesias records eighteen cases in which the medidas prontas de seguridad were invoked in Uruguay in each of the following years: 1902, 1903, 1904, 1906, 1909, 1910, 1914, 1917, 1919, 1920, 1932, 1933, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1942, 1943, and 1945 (142).
Chapter Seven

1. See Carlos Hernán Sosa’s “Ecos paródicos. Resonancias de la gauchesca en La potra de Juan Filloy” for an exploration of the links between the Ochoa Family Saga and the gaucho genre in the second text of the Saga.

2. Domingo F. Sarmiento’s approach to the gaucho malo is more complex than that of Ascasubi. In Chapter II of Facundo, the gaucho malo figures in the author’s gaucho taxonomy alongside three other types: el rastreador, el baqueano, and el cantor. Though Sarmiento develops a moral complexity in his descriptions, in particular relating to the detailed knowledge each of these gaucho types possess about the territory they roam, what characterizes the gaucho malo is that he steals, even if not out of malice: “roba es cierto; pero esta es su profesión, su tráfico, su ciencia” (89).

3. Filloy’s Saga further dismantles Ascasubi’s binary logic by including multiple sets of twins within the Ochoa family. The prologue to Los Ochoa mentions Octavo and Noveno (b. 1894) and Decena and Docena (b. 1921), and in “Carbunclo,” Segundo and Secundina, “dos sabandijas” who assume the responsibility of caring for their ageing grandfather, but they are not moral opposites as in the case of Ascasubi’s twins (35).

4. Borges and Bioy Casares also direct their critique toward Ricardo Rojas for deriving the gaucho genre from the oral tradition of the gauchos: “Rojas quiere derivar el género gauchesco de la poesía popular de los payadores; creemos que esa genealogía es errónea” (viii–ix).

5. In Canto VIII, the Martín Fierro reads: “Él anda siempre juyendo. / Siempre pobre y perseguido; / no tiene cueva ni nido, / como si juera maldito; / porque el ser gaucho … ¡barajo!, / el ser gaucho es un delito” (Hernández 157).

6. Even before fleeing the army, Proto explains in “El juído (El patriarca)” that he spent much of his life walking back and forth between the Postas of the Camino Real that connected, in part, Buenos Aires to Córdoba in the late colonial period and served as military posts throughout much of the nineteenth century: “Hasta me parece que n’hubiese sufrido nada yendo una y mil veces de Esquina del Lobatón a Saladillo de Ruiz Diaz, a Zanjón, a Fraile Muerto, a Trés Cruces, a Capilla de Dolores, a Esquina del Corral de Barrancas, a Arroyo Chucul y la Concepción del Río Cuarto. Saltos de langosta. Tas, tas, tas …” (9). Proto flits from one place to another, never laying down roots; even his place of birth becomes unimportant for this “satafareño, satafesino que le dicen, de Esquina de la Guardia, acordobesao en Cruz Alta y Cabeza del Tigre” (9).

7. In “Biografía de Tadeo Isidoro Cruz (1829–1874),” Borges describes Cruz’s adventures in La ida as a story that “es capaz de casi inagotables repeticiones, versiones, perversiones” (862). It can be copied, translated, and adapted, because it is full of gaps: “En su oscura y valerosa historia abundan los hiatos” (863). See Jason A. Bartles, “Gauchos at the Origins: Lugones, Borges, Filloy.”
Chapter Eight

1. Dalmagro’s article also situates Somers’s novel in the context of twentieth-century Montevideo “en donde la preocupación por la delincuencia juvenil y la marginalidad del niño fue motivo de interés generalizado y abordado especialmente por ella en sus trabajos como educadora” (“El revés” 177). See also in the same collection of essays Alicia Torres, “El Oliver dickensiano y la huérfana de Somers: tráfico de identidades.”

2. Consult the 1969 edition of *La mujer desnuda* by Arca. Many, but not all, of these errors were mistakenly removed in the 2012 edition by *El cuenco de plata*.

3. As I explained in the introduction, Foucault’s early writings on biopolitics demonstrate that the technologies of power are expanded from their disciplinary function toward the perpetuation of life at the collective or species level. This allows the sovereign to kill individual bodies—now little more than bare, biological material—because their so-called impurity, degeneracy, or abnormality threatens the survival of the species as a whole (*Society*).

4. See Roberto Esposito *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Esposito offers a brief survey of the metaphor of the body politic that I will not rehearse here as it exceeds the scope of my argument, but he explains that “it has been by far the most influential metaphor used in political discourse to represent life in society” (113).

Chapter Nine

1. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*. Benjamin speaks of images that form constellations as follows: “image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation” (462).

2. “Piazza Margana” is Casey’s only story to explicitly mention homosexuality, and it is only one of two texts written in English. See Gustavo Pérez Firmat, “Bilingual Blues, Bilingual Bliss.” Jamila Medina Ríos further explains the strangeness of the text, and how it has been read alternately as book chapter, short story, and poem (50).

3. Cohen also provides a detailed bibliography on the subject, including a wide range of anthropological, psychoanalytical, economic, and cultural analyses of filth.

4. There is something paradoxical in Guevara’s attempt to cleave unarmed intellectuals from the revolutionary process. In *El último lector*, Ricardo Piglia reflects on the photo taken of Guevara in Bolivia in which he is sitting in a tree reading and on the story of him reading a book in a hammock while waiting to begin an ambush (“Ernesto” 106–07). Piglia recalls that Guevara states his own “tendencia a aislarse, separarse, construyéndose un espacio aparte” (107). It is in this separate space where he spends his time reading, a space and an activity that shares an undeniable similarity to the paradigm of
the ivory tower intellectual. It should be recalled that the journals that were found on Guevara’s body after being captured and killed in Bolivia include a long list of books that Guevara either read or planned to read, including books by G. W. F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, William Faulkner, Graham Greene, Rubén Darío, and Julio Cortázar, among many others (Guevara, Diario n.p.). In Piglia’s assessment, Guevara becomes yet another intellectual in a long literary tradition who desperately wants to know “cómo salir de la biblioteca, cómo pasar a la vida, cómo entrar en acción, cómo ir a la experiencia, cómo salir del mundo libresco, cómo cor-
tar con la lectura en tanto lugar de encierro” (“Ernesto” 127). In this way, Guevara himself is caught somewhere between the ideal armed revolutionary that he appears to embody and the intellectual that he cannot quite shed from his own life who reads and writes incessantly.

5. Recall Guevara’s oft-cited phrase: “Podemos intentar injertar el olmo para que dé peras; pero simultáneamente hay que sembrar perales. Las nuevas generaciones vendrán libres del pecado original” (“El socialismo” 381). Of course, the disdain for intellectuals within the Cuban Revolution was well known before this essay. In “Guerrilla Warfare,” Guevara underscores that “intensive popular work must be undertaken to explain the motives of the revolution, its ends, and to spread the incontrovertible truth that victory of the enemy against the people is finally impossible” (56). This apparently intellectual labor is not assigned to the traditional intellectuals. However, women combatants can readily fill the role of guerrilla teacher, though education remains a gendered activity to be carried out by other guerrilla fighters already within the armed struggle.

6. Reinaldo Arenas similarly praises Mi tío el empleado, because Meza offers “una crítica a la visión turística y romanticoide de la realidad latinoa-
mericana” (“Meza, el precursor” 778).

7. Critics disagree as to whether the cuna is representative of a proto-democratic space or whether Villaverde’s intention is to show that unmitigated democracy leads directly to sacrilege and the destruction of civilized society, since this is where the incestuous relationship between Leonardo and Cecilia begins. As Christina Civantos explains: “la obra exhibe la tensión entre el anhelo de proclamar una nación unida, o por lo menos fac-
tible aunque sea muy jerárquica, y el deseo de mantener muy lejos el disgusto de la mezcla, del vínculo, y hasta de la identificación, entre el yo y el otro” (“Pechos” 517–18). For her, the value of Villaverde’s Realism lies precisely in representing this social tension.

8. Explaining the social significance of these different dances, Peter Manuel demonstrates that the Cuban contradanza stands as an example of “a popular dance form that was democratic, informal, and free from the hierarchy and rigidity of the minuet”; the contradanza temporarily opened some social divisions before being “undermined by the triumph of bourgeois individualism” and the popularity of “danza and danzón in Cuba, with their couples dancing independently, even intimately” (“Cuba” 103).
9. See Chapter 4 for the context in which this debate took place.
10. See Rafael Martínez Nadal, “Calvert Casey: notas a una lectura de ‘Piazza Margana.’” He recounts his final meeting with Casey and how he came to be entrusted with this manuscript.
11. In “Is the Rectum a Grave?” Leo Bersani cautions against idealizing sexual practices of any sort as intrinsically democratic or ethical acts in which hierarchical distinctions fully disappear, offering the gay bathhouse as one example “of the most ruthlessly ranked, hierarchized, and competitive environments imaginable” (206). Notably, Casey’s narrator does not choose sex as the event that allows for the encounter with his lover, the other man. This ethics of such an interaction with the other is elaborated in Chapter 12.
12. Cynthia L. Sears explains, “Comprised of 500 to 1000 bacterial species with two to four million genes, the microbiome contains about 100-fold more genes than the human genome and the estimated $10^{13}$ bacterial cells in the gut exceeds by 10-fold the total ensemble of human cells” (247).

PART FOUR

1. Virtue ethics is founded primarily upon the works of Aristotle, especially his *Nicomachean Ethics* in which he explores virtue of character as that which guides moral action. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes postulates mankind’s “state of nature” as the proclivity toward violence and war, the opposite of the virtuous character. In *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, David Hume insists, on the contrary, on the innate goodness of humankind, thus reviving the possibility of virtue ethics in the eighteenth century. See Rosalind Hursthouse, “Virtue Ethics.”

2. Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, as the founders of utilitarianism, stand as the classical figures of consequentialism. Bentham’s *An Introduction to the Principles of Moral Legislation* underscores mankind’s search for pleasure over pain, while Mill’s *Utilitarianism* seeks to establish a sort of hierarchy among those pleasures. For both philosophers, moral actions are those which bring about the greatest pleasures for the greatest good; the consequences of actions, not the virtue of character or the intentions of the moral agent, are what determine the ethical value of an action. See Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “Consequentialism.”

3. Kant’s “categorical imperative” is the classic example of deontology; moral action is a duty, an imperative, that must be carried out, and it is categorical insofar as “my maxim should become a universal law” (*Grounding* 14). In contradistinction to the previous two branches, Kant’s is not founded on the innate, virtuous character of the agent, nor does it depend solely on the outcome of an agent’s decisions, since neither the immediate nor the long-term effects of any actions can ever be known at the moment one makes a decision. For Kant, only the moment one makes a decision can be judged morally. See Larry Alexander and Michael Moore, “Deontological Ethics.”
Chapter Ten

1. In the Introduction, I analyze this scene in more detail related to the desire of the narrator to go unnoticed. See Nicasio Perera San Martín “La intuición y los papeles. En torno a De miedo en miedo (los manuscritos del río).” He argues for this setting, despite the lack of stereotypical Parisian references, through a study of the original manuscript.

2. See Núria Calafell Sala, Armonía Somers. Por una ética de lo ex-céntrico. She has studied what she calls an ethics of the ex-centric in Armonía Somers’s literature, which centers on the erotic and mystic elements of her works through a primarily psychoanalytic framework. Despite both of our attempts to construct an ethics from Somers’s works, Calafell Sala’s analysis shares little with my own approach, in particular for focusing on the “ex-céntrico,” which means in Spanish both “eccentric, odd” and “peripheral, outside of the center.”

3. See María Cristina Dalmagro, Desde los umbrales de la memoria. Ficción autobiográfica en Armonía Somers. She interprets the narrator’s anxieties, his “vacío interior,” as representative of the existentialist character through a comparison with Ernesto Sabato’s El túnel and Jean Paul Sartre’s Being and Nothingness (294).

Chapter Eleven

1. As I explained in Chapter 6, in “On Potentiality” Agamben defines “potentiality” as an opening for both darkness and light, for both good and evil: “To be capable of good and evil is not simply to be capable of doing this or that good or bad action (every particular good or bad action is, in this sense, banal). Radical evil is not this or that bad deed but the potentiality for darkness. And yet this potentiality is also the potentiality for light” (181). If both darkness and light are not guaranteed as potential actions or decisions, then there is no action or decision to be made, but only forced compliance with a mandate.

Chapter Twelve

1. An earlier version of Casey’s “La ejecución” appeared in 1964 in UNEAC in Cuba. For a comparison of the two manuscripts, see the archival work carried out by Jamila Medina Ríos in the Argentine edition of El regreso y otros relatos.

2. The original version of “La ejecución” includes a passage that was removed in which the precinct is described as having multiple hallways filled with constant, but distant sounds: “un zumbido monótono y enorme (nada desagradable, pensó Mayer)” (187). As in other of Casey’s narratives, the narrator is drawn toward the threshold spaces of swirling lights and shadows, noises and silences.

Conclusion

1. Transcribed from my personal notes, April 4, 2017.