

Memory, Transitional Justice, and Theatre in Postdictatorship Argentina

Noe Montez

“This book offers an important update to studies on Argentina’s postdictatorship theatre, documenting the ways it has registered contested approaches to transitional justice strategies, which themselves embed changing understandings of the role of individual and collective memory.”—**Tamara L. Underiner**, author of *Contemporary Theatre in Mayan Mexico: Death-Defying Acts*

The impact of theatre on collective memory and politics

Author Noe Montez considers how theatre, as a site of activism, produces memory narratives that change public reception to a government’s transitional justice policies. Drawing on contemporary research in memory studies and transitional justice, Montez examines the Argentine theatre’s responses to the country’s transitional justice policies—truth and reconciliation hearings, trials, amnesties and pardons, and memorial events and spaces—that have taken place in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first century.

Montez explores how the sociohistorical phenomenon of the *Teatro la identidad*—an annual showcase staged with the support of Argentina’s Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo—acted as a vehicle for drawing attention to the hundreds of children kidnapped from their families during the dictatorship and looks at why the memory narratives regarding the Malvinas Islands (also known as the Falklands) range from ideological appropriations of the islands, to absurdist commentaries about the failed war that signaled the dictatorship’s end, to the islands’ heavily contested status today.

Memory, Transitional Justice, and Theatre in Postdictatorship Argentina explores the vibrant role of theatrical engagement in the country recently, analyzes plays by artists long neglected in English-language articles and books, and explores the practicalities of staging performances in Latin America.

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Argentina

NOE MONTEZ



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Noe Montez is an associate professor and the director of graduate studies in theatre and performance studies at Tufts University. His essays have been published in *Theatre Topics*, *Latin American Theatre Review*, *Texas Theatre Journal*, *New England Theatre Journal*, the *Journal of Religion and Theatre*, *Theatre History Studies*, *American Theatre*, and the edited collection *Public Theatres and Theatre Publics*.

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List of Illustrations

Acknowledgments

Introduction: Shaping Memory and Performance in Postdictatorship Argentina

Draws on contemporary research in transitional justice strategies, memory studies, and theatre history. The author frames Argentina's importance as a global protagonist in devising new legal and extralegal strategies for transitional justice and commemorating victims of human rights atrocities.

1. Resisting the Menem Administration's Narratives of Reconciliation and Forgetting

Focuses on theatre's opposition to the amnesty policies enacted by newly elected President Carlos Menem. The author posits that plays and performances staged during this period facilitated understanding of the ways that memory is malleable and subject to manipulation.

2. *Teatroxlaidentidad*: The Right to Memory and Identity

Recounts the sociohistorical phenomenon of Argentina's *Teatroxlaidentidad*. This annual showcase is staged with the support of Argentina's Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo as a vehicle for drawing attention to the hundreds of children kidnapped from their families during the dictatorship.

3. Reparation, Commemoration, and Memory Construction in the Postdictatorship Generation

Looks to performance and transitional justice policies under the Kirchner's presidential administrations. Following Néstor's 2003 election, the president spoke out against the dictatorship's notoriety in order to build trust with Argentines who had grown increasingly skeptical of the government.

4. Performing Public Memorialization of the Malvinas War

Assesses memory narratives regarding the Malvinas Islands ranging from ideological appropriations of the islands to absurdist commentaries about the failed war that signaled the dictatorship's end while considering the islands' heavily contested status in the present day.

Conclusion: The Next Stages of Theatrical Production, Postdictatorship Memory, and Transitional Justice

Articulates ways in which the Argentine theatre might continue to be a site of public engagement for shaping memory narratives about the dictatorship that will influence transitional justice policies.

Notes

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