Sara Warner. *Acts of Gaiety: LGBT Performance and the Politics of Pleasure*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013. xxvi + 263 pp.

Reviewed by Rebecca Hewett, ACLS Public Fellow, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs

Acts of Gaiety celebrates raucously humorous, sex-enjoying queer and feminist performance of the 1960s through the early 2000s, while remaining deeply ambivalent about an emerging form of self-monitoring on the part of gays and lesbians that keeps this sort of bawdy, festive performance from appearing on our contemporary stages. As Warner introduces them, acts of gaiety are "playful methods of social activism and mirthful modes of political performance that inspire and sustain deadly serious struggles for revolutionary change" (xi). Acts of gaiety insist on revolution via disarming humor and frank depictions of queer sexualities in order to play with the boundaries of mainstream social acceptability, and intended to illustrate larger critiques of the very notions of "mainstream" and "acceptable" behavior.

Warner issues a caveat even as she introduces her original rubric: acts of gaiety are increasingly harder to find in contemporary queer performance. She attributes this recent dearth of gleefully sexual, hilariously eviscerating performance to what she calls homoliberalism: "the economic, political, and social enfranchisement of certain normative-leaning, straight-acting homosexuals at the expense of other, inassimilable sexual minorities" (xi). Homoliberalism is rooted in a desire to belong in a mainstream, "well behaved," assimilated queer culture, in part by dismissing campy, explicit queer humor that may disrupt assimilation. Warner asserts that homoliberalism constantly influences how acts of gaiety are received: "The purpose of *Acts of Gaiety* is to investigate the historical emergence of homoliberalism and to reanimate gaiety as a political value for progressive social activism" (xii-xiii). Throughout the book, Warner achieves these goals through extensive archival research, interviews, and close readings of performance texts.

The book's five case studies explore acts of gaiety by mapping out definitions of Warner's term and demonstrating homoliberalism's insidious influence, tracking complicated intersections of equal rights, class, citizenship, and sexualities across each spotlighted historical moment. Warner's first case study considers Valerie Solanas's *Up Your Ass* as an act of gaiety belonging to a genre the author labels Theater of the Ludicrous,

which is characterized by "parodic structure, heroicomical posturing, sardonic wit, and overt feminist sensibility" (37). Solanas's earliest work was believed lost; through her research, Warner discovered *Up Your Ass* in the Library of Congress. Solanas wrote the play with an episodic structure, explicit sexuality, and a clear dismissal of capitalism; Warner argues that the play is a precursor to feminist theatre of the late 1960s and early 1970s, but homoliberalist anxiety prevents Solanas and her work from being fully welcomed into previous historiographies.

Chapter two considers The Feminists' 1969 performance protests decrying the institution of marriage. Staged in the New York City Marriage Licensing Bureau, these protests qualify as an act of gaiety called a "zap action." Zap actions are a "highly performative, nonviolent mode of social protest that uses guerilla theater, irony, and satire to expose the ruses of power. . ." (x). Warner compares these highly performative, queer feminist events to 2009 protests responding to the passage of California's Proposition 8, banning same-sex marriage. She argues that whereas the 1969 protests embraced lesbian sexualities, the Prop 8 protests largely erased women and lesbians from protests and public conversations, as homoliberalist agendas favored financially and professionally powerful gay men.

Village Voice columnist Jill Johnston and her 1960s and 1970s performance of "joker citizenship" takes up chapter three. Warner defines joker citizenship as "an anarchic and antiassimilationist gesture of civil disobedience that provides an opportunity and occasion for subaltern agency" (107). She analyses Johnston's columns and public appearances at events such as a 1971 panel discussion about women's liberation through this lens, here linking homoliberalism to claims of citizenship. Johnston's frank discussion of lesbian sexualities, offered with the sort of pointed wit characteristic of individual acts of gaiety, demanded critical reflection on national sentimentality. Johnston rejected a homoliberalist agenda focused on "wounded subjectivity," instead finding critique through incisive humor.

Chapter four considers an unsuccessful act of gaiety: a staged performance of *Hothead Paisan: Homicidal Lesbian Terrorist* at the 2004 annual Michigan Womyn's Music Festival. Based on a darkly comic zine from the 1990s written by Diane DiMassa about a lesbian bent on eradicating the patriarchy, the production was staged by Animal Prufrock from the band Bitch and Animal. Warner argues that the stage production lacked the zine's crucial self-parody; as such, the musical unintentionally performed a cautionary tale of homonationalism—a "normalizing rhetoric of patrio-

tism and citizenship" (141)—that portrayed Hothead Paisan as a solitary anarchist, especially given the performance's timing so soon after pictures of a lesbian soldier taking part in torture tactics at Abu Ghraib had surfaced in U.S. media.

In chapter five, Warner analyses the initially negative critical responses to the Five Lesbian Brothers in their 2005 performance of *Oedipus at Palm Springs* at New York Theater Workshop. In this production based on the classic tragedy and premiered at a major off-Broadway New York theater venue, critics felt the Five Lesbian Brothers were "going straight." Warner reclaims the work as an act of gaiety designed to *play* it straight in order to criticize emergent homonormativity. Warner's language, as she relishes each act of gaiety in the book, titillates and reminds us of the pleasures inherent in subversively sexualized protests. Ultimately, Warner advocates a turn away from homonormativity towards acts of gaiety as both pleasurable performance and effective advocacy, that we might all belly laugh as we struggle towards equality.

Ramón H. Rivera-Servera. *Performing Queer Latinidad: Dance, Sexuality, Politics*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012. 257 pp.

Reviewed by Clare Croft, University of Michigan

Dance studies often promises to make movement central to its analysis of performance and culture. In *Performing Queer Latinidad*, performance studies ethnographer Ramón H. Rivera-Servera expertly fulfills this promise by combining dance studies tools of movement analysis and performance studies' emphasis on embodiment to make two key arguments. First, by focusing on bodies in motion in arts organizations and in social club spaces, Rivera-Servera marshals compelling ethnographic observations and effectively argues that identity and practice cannot be separated. The practices of queer Latina/o communities and individuals constitute queer Latina/o as a public identity in this book. Second, Rivera-Servera compellingly argues that studying the simultaneous impact of race and sexuality is not a scholarly trend, but an imperative. As Rivera-Servera charts the rise in visibility and subsequent backlash experienced by both Latina/os and queers in the 1990s and 2000s, he demonstrates that "what