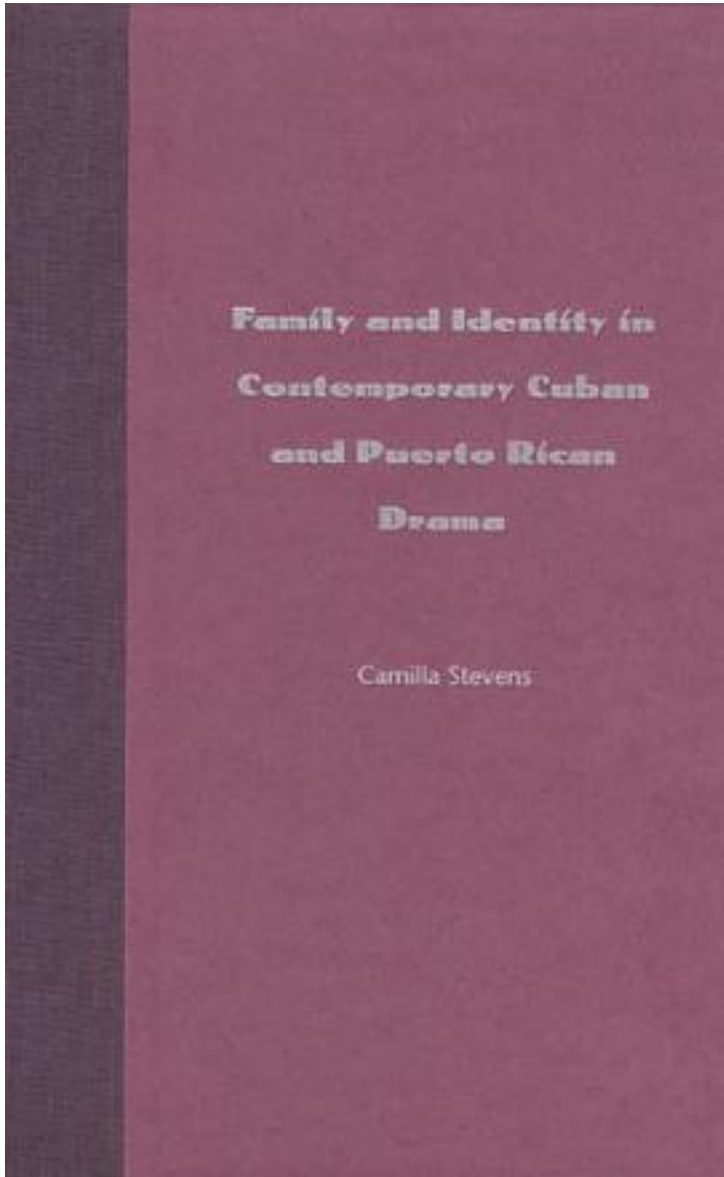


Family and Identity in Contemporary Cuban and Puerto Rican Drama



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Camilla Stevens illuminates the link between the pervasive image of the family in the theater and the struggle for national and cultural identity in Cuba and Puerto Rico. By focusing on two key periods of family drama productions--the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s--she traces the historical articulation of the concepts of family and nation in the theater. Through the close readings of 16 plays, Stevens demonstrates how onstage family quarrels between husbands and wives, parents and children, and siblings allegorize divergent views of national experience and provide insight into how and by whom communities are defined, as well as how visions of national culture change over time. While it has become commonplace to expect any cultural history of Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean to identify the role of writing in the project of constructing and defining nationhood, the place of performance in the cultural politics of representing the nation has been less rigorously investigated. Stevens's genealogy of modern Cuban and Puerto Rican drama reveals theater and performance to be a special site and activity for imagining communities. She breaks new ground in bringing a broad range of playwrights--from Rene Marques and Myrna Casas to Luis Rafael Sanchez and Roberto Ramos-Perea in Puerto Rico, and from Jose Triana and Virgilio Pinera to Abelardo Estorino and Alberto Pedro Torriente in Cuba--into a single thematic focus. Moreover, read comparatively across geographical and temporal borders and in the historical and cultural contexts in which they were produced, the plays yield a broad picture of the unique role of theater and performance in well-known debates on collective identity in these countries. The playwrights under study represent many voices in the Cuban and Puerto Rican intellectual tradition that have confronted their nations' destinies. By bringing them into dialogue with one another, Stevens shows how the spoken word and other sounds, the visual image, and the body and its gestures in theatrical performance register views of national identity that would otherwise remain obscured.

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