

The Theatre of Sebastian Salazar Bondy

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Until less than a decade ago, Sebastián Salazar Bondy was a relatively unknown Peruvian poet, essayist, and dramatist. His reputation as a dramatist has justifiably increased during the past ten years, however, and now there is little doubt that since the time of Manuel Asencio Segura (1805-1871), no one has been able to equal Salazar's achievements and contributions to the national theatre.

Salazar was born in Lima in 1924, and in 1938 his first verses were published in his high school magazine. Just six years later, while a student at the University of San Marcos, he began his professional career with the publication of two collections of verse, *Rótulo de la esfinge* (1943) and *Bahía del dolor* (1943). Before the end of the second World War, a number of his short stories and literary essays had appeared in local newspapers and literary magazines. Then, in 1946, Salazar made his debut as a dramatist in Lima with the presentation of *Amor, gran laberinto*. That same year he married the Argentine actress Inda Ledesma, and from 1948 to 1950 lived in Buenos Aires as a correspondent for *La Nación*, one of that capital's foremost dailies. Salazar returned to Lima in 1950, and by 1955 had firmly established himself as a prominent dramatist with a number of successful plays: in 1950 he wrote *La soltera y el ladrón* and *La oficina del Arlequín*, both brief one-act pieces; *Como vienen se van*, which was revised as *Dos viejas van por la calle* in 1959; and in 1952 he won the Premio Nacional de Teatro for *Rodil*, a three-act historical drama. These plays were followed by a reworking of the Peruvian classic *Ollantay*, done in collaboration with César Miró Quesada in 1953; several of his best known one-act pieces such as *El de la valija* (1953), *El espejo no hace milagros* (1953), *En el cielo no*

hay petróleo (1954); and *No hay isla feliz* (1954), a social drama in three acts.

In 1956 Salazar received a scholarship given by the French government to study in the Conservatoire National d'Arte in Paris. From this brief experience he was impressed by the vitality of the French vaudeville and boulevard theatres and, especially, by their popular, satirical, and local elements. Of secondary interest to him was the popular operetta, with its choreographic and lyric appeal. The period following Salazar's return to Lima in 1956 was a transitional one as he began to depart from his earlier realistic social drama, such as *No hay isla feliz*, toward a satirical-*costumbrista* type of creation tempered by the addition of colorful criollo elements. In this new stage of development he was still concerned with the social problems in Peru, but his condemnation on stage was not as bitter as before. Works representative of this change of interest are the one-act comedy *Un cierto tic tac* (1956) and Salazar's second social drama, *Algo que quiere morir* (1956).

Salazar was fomenting popular interest in the national theatre even before the 1960's. He began to combine his refined skills and new interests, such as those he gathered in France, to produce a theatre which was more modern and appealing, yet still local in nature. As a result, his drama became more impartial socially, almost concessive, with simple conflicts and sensational solutions. With only one exception, that being *Flora Tristán* (1956), an historical "estampa," the characters in his plays continued to be types which were ostensibly local in their speech, outward appearance, and social reactions. In fact, Salazar's plays during these years, from 1958 to 1965, are reminiscent of the nineteenth-century realistic-*costumbrista* works as written by Segura, yet they still maintain a direct relation with twentieth-century Peruvian society by way of their contemporary interests. Those works which are most representative of the changes which Salazar introduced are *Dos viejas van por la calle* (1959), which, as previously mentioned, was a revision of *Como vienen se van* (1950); *El fabricante de deudas* (1962); and *La escuela de los chismes* (1965), a three-act thesis drama.

In the early 1960's Salazar's political and non-theatrical involvements increased, and he temporarily curtailed his dramatic production. During 1960, for instance, he was invited to visit China, spent a brief time in Moscow, was awarded the Premio León de Greiff for poetry in Caracas, the annual Premio Cabotín as the outstanding journalist in Lima, and finished his book on the various artistic expressions in Peru, *Del hueso tallado al arte abstracto*. Two years later *El fabricante de deudas*, a three-act drama, was premiered in Lima and was awarded the important Premio Anita Fernandini de Naranjo as the best Peruvian drama of the year. Salazar also travelled to Havana in 1962 as a drama critic for Casa de las Américas. Upon his return

to Lima, he was appointed a representative for his political party, La Frente Democrática Nacional, and devoted considerable time to the fulfillment of this obligation.

Salazar's interest in the theatre again quickened in the latter years of his life and, despite his other activities, he travelled to Japan, where he was invited to study the theatrical situation in that country. By the early months of 1965, his health was failing rapidly, yet his energies were still directed toward the theatre in Peru. He aided in the production of *La escuela de los chismes*; wrote his first musical comedy, *Ifigenia en el mercado*; and put the finishing touches to *El Rabadomante*, a one-act drama which was awarded the 1965 Premio Nacional de Teatro, his third. Salazar was composing *El tacto de la araña* (1966), a collection of verse, when he died on July 4, 1965, from the complications of an hepatic ailment which had affected his health for several years.

Shortly after Salazar's death, Peru's playwrights and theatre critics began to assess the significance of their loss. They realized that the national theatre had lost not only an able counselor, director, and producer, but also its most accomplished dramatist. Particularly painful for many was the fact that there was no immediate hope that Salazar's vacancy would be filled. The situation was especially threatening to the recent, and still unstable, spirit of theatrical renewal that had begun shortly before 1950. As of this writing, such is the state of the Peruvian theatre.¹

Salazar's total dramatic production is comprised of ten major works and eleven brief one-act pieces. The first of these minor works was *Los novios*, which was written in 1947, shortly after the premiere of *Amor, gran laberinto*. Salazar assigned his short pieces a variety of names, such as *juego*, *juguete*, and *mojiganga*, but they are all similar in the farcical atmosphere, the portrayal of Pirandellian characters, the mixture of tragedy and comedy, their thematic universality, and the absence of a refined, artificial language. Like Salazar's longer plays, the short works are of an uneven quality, with some of them being noticeably superior to others. Unlike the longer compositions, they do not clearly reflect Salazar's varied interests and capabilities, and they are not generally limited by *costumbrista* or regionalistic elements.

The following is a chronological listing of Salazar's principal dramatic works, along with a brief summary and evaluation of each entry. This listing, in turn, is followed by comment on Salazar's career as a dramatist. These final remarks are based on the analysis of his major works only, since the brief pieces afford little insight into the author's over-all achievements and tendencies as a playwright.

*Amor, gran laberinto*² represents Salazar's first step toward a career in the theatre and, as such, was an enviable success because it brought him Peru's second annual Premio Nacional de Teatro in 1947. This work is a poetic farce divided into two acts and an epilogue, and is written in a prose

reminiscent of Spain's eighteenth-century drama. The obvious theme, that suggested by the title, would seem to be the danger of Man's reason being incapacitated by passion, namely love; yet in the preface, Salazar assured the reader that his true theme and purpose was to satirize Man and his social institutions. It is a benign satire, nonetheless, because the farce demonstrates an optimistic faith in Man and society.

Amor, gran laberinto, which shows the distortion of a social reality, is sometimes comic and sometimes grotesque. This distortion, in combination with the puppet-like characters and the fantastic atmosphere which prevails, suggests the possible influence of authors such as Valle-Inclán and García Lorca. There seems to be no real influence from Sor Juana Inés' seventeenth-century drama, *Amor, más laberinto*, excepting titular similarity and implied thematic interpretations.

Despite the initial success of *Amor, gran laberinto*, it is not a reliable indication of the skills and interests which Salazar was to display later on. One criticism which can be leveled against the farce is the poor handling of the dialogues. They are frequently artificial and stilted, or riddled with exaggerated archaic constructions which fail to complement the baroque atmosphere. Yet, in all fairness and without denial of this weakness, Salazar's first drama is an intensely dramatic composition, and among his other works there is no better example of his artistic sensitivity.

Rodil is Salazar's first three-act drama,³ but more importantly, it is the first of his realistic and regionalistic works. It was also awarded the 1952 Premio Nacional de Teatro.

Specifically, *Rodil* is an historical drama which indirectly eulogizes the Peruvian independence movement by emphasizing the efforts of Rodil, a Spanish military officer, to resist the nationalistic siege of Fort Real Felipe in Callao. Salazar based much of the drama on factual information he culled from the diary which Commander José Ramón Rodil kept throughout the siege, which lasted from December 9, 1824, to January 22, 1826.⁴ The fictitious characterization of Rodil, however, was apparently inspired by that of the protagonist in Ricardo Palma's *Rodil* (1852). Palma's drama is the usual romantic fare, somewhat sensational emotionally, and has practically no historical relation with the Peruvian independence movement. This latter work, incidentally, was never presented publically, and was edited until 1952,⁵ the same year in which Salazar's *Rodil* was first staged in Lima. Regardless of Salazar's probable source of inspiration, his portrayal of Rodil is unquestionably superior to Palma's.

In *Rodil*, Salazar made marked improvement with regard to his manipulation of language and dialogue. Since his purpose was to compose a realistic historical drama, he wisely abandoned the artificial poetic anachronisms of *Amor, gran laberinto*, and resorted to the natural and spontaneous expressions which the work demanded. Only in this way could he assure

a convincing reenactment of the siege and a penetrating portrayal of Rodil's character. *Rodil* is one of Salazar's most evenly balanced and carefully structured creations, and it is particularly admirable for the skillful mingling of fact and fiction.

No hay isla feliz, Salazar's first major social drama, was first presented in 1954 in Lima.⁶ It is divided into three acts, with the first and third acts composed of two *cuadros* each. Like all of Salazar's dramatic pieces, it is in prose. The drama was apparently written with the Peruvian public in mind, because it is the first work in which Salazar specified his personal concern for the social welfare of his people, particularly for the emerging middle class. As a result, foreign interest in the work is severely restricted by insistence on certain regionalistic elements such as dialectal variants, local setting, characterizations, and, especially, social preoccupations.

Like many of Salazar's compositions, this work is based, in part, on fact. A few years previous to the writing of this play, the Peruvian government altered its plan to build a highway extension through an undisclosed southern coastal village,⁷ and this drama is a fictitious version of the manner in which this change of plans shattered the dreams of the villagers. Specifically, Salazar elaborated on the factual base in his original portrayal of a family conflict meant to symbolize the modern social crisis in Peru. He plainly suggests that the Peruvian people must struggle against awesome forces, even against their own government and prejudices at times, if they are to achieve a higher social and economic level of existence.

In addition to certain artistic limitations, *No hay isla feliz* is weak technically due to a disturbing vacillation in the dramatic progression of time and action. This flaw in the basic structure of the play obstructs the desirable flow of the thematic development. Despite the fact that this play is not exemplary of Salazar's usual artistic standards, it is valuable because it clearly exposes his concern with the national social dilemma. Within a few years after the release of this work, Salazar's political interests, as expressed in his drama, were to become more liberal, if not radical, to many of his compatriots. In this regard, *No hay isla feliz* was an impressive initial statement.

Salazar continued his presentation of contemporary middle-class problems in Peru with *Algo que quiere morir*,⁸ a three-act drama premiered in Lima in 1956. In this work he focused on several manifestations of the so-called "generation gap," a sociological phenomenon which he related to man's innate egotism and selfishness. The drama concerns the manner in which three middle-class children remain wayward and unwilling to accept the traditional values of their parents until, when matured, they fail to attain their exaggerated youthful goals and expectations.

Thematically, the play offers nothing new, and, as *No hay isla feliz*, its appeal is somewhat restricted to the Peruvian audience due to its *costum-*

brista and nationalistic preoccupations. Technically, however, *Algo que quiere morir* is superior to the former work due to its streamlined, improved structure. It is not bound by Salazar's usual episodic arrangement, and there is a noticeable absence of those extraneous elements which frequently blemished some of his best works. Despite its technical improvements, *Algo que quiere morir* should not be overly praised. It has won no awards and has not been staged for any significant length of time, in Lima or elsewhere, because its familiar story fails to sustain public interest.

Flora Tristán, Salazar's second historical drama, is in three acts. It was written in 1958, premiered on a radio broadcast in Lima in 1959, and published in 1961 along with *Rodil*, *No hay isla feliz*, and *Algo que quiere morir*.⁹ The work is based on the life and political struggles of Flora Tristán, founder of the nineteenth-century Workers' Union in France.

The drama is not entirely a product of Salazar's imagination. He categorized the work as an "estampa dramática" and in this case the label denotes an attempt to dramatize facts without departing appreciably from historical truth and recorded documents. Yet while Salazar never formally acknowledged his factual sources, investigations by this writer have led to the conclusion that they are twofold. The first consists of numerous biographical texts such as *Una mujer sola contra el mundo* by Luís Alberto Sánchez,¹⁰ and *Flora Tristán, precursora* by Magda Portal.¹¹

The second, and in all probability the source which proved most valuable to Salazar, is *Peregrinaciones de una paria*, translated by Luis Alberto Sánchez in 1941 from the original, *Peregrinations d'une paria*, written in 1837 by Flora Tristán. This book is her record of the impressions and experiences she had during a trip to South America in 1833 and 1834. The dramatist was also influenced to some extent by *L'Union Ouvrière*, a pamphlet in which Flora Tristán outlined her socio-political considerations.

Salazar intended the work to be a succinct dramatization of Flora Tristán's personal struggles, and for this reason he refrained from including extraneous characters and events. In fact, there is practically no action on stage, and each act is simply a dialogue between Flora Tristán and one other person, each of whom represents an important period of her life. In contrast to Salazar's previous dramas, the language used in this work is concise and unencumbered by regionalisms. It is also worthy of note that, as a result of the absence of action and the exclusive dependence on dialogue, this play is as meaningful when read as when viewed on stage. For the first time in his career, Salazar's use of language is the focal point of his dramatic, as well as his artistic, expression.

Flora Tristán does not merit an award for creative excellence. The "estampa" is to a considerable extent only a recapitulation of documented sources. Salazar made no attempt to disguise the work as an entirely original composition. He obviously depended on the content of Flora Tristán's

own most influential publications (*Peregrinations d'une paria* and *L'Union Ouvrière*) and reflected them as accurately as possible in his play. In this regard, the close similarity between the previously existing sources and the dramatic creation is justifiable.

*Dos viejas van por la calle*¹² was originally staged by the theatrical group "Histrión" in Lima in 1955. The play is historically important because it marks Salazar's departure from his previously realistic orientation and his movement toward an emphasis on satiric-*costumbrista* elements. The works written during this, his third stage of development, are reminiscent of the nineteenth-century theatre in Lima, and particularly of the *drama criollo* as written by Manuel Asencio Segura.

Dos viejas van por la calle is a revision of *Como vienen se van*, which Salazar wrote in 1950. He was apparently dissatisfied with his original artistic treatment of the play and never released it for presentation. He was, however, convinced of the dramatic possibilities of the initial version, and in the late 1950's he decided to rework it as an expression of his new dramatic interests. As it is now published, the play consists of a prologue, three short acts, and an epilogue. It concerns the efforts of two elderly spinster sisters to mold and influence their young adopted nephew so that he will reflect their own traditional social standards. Their tragic failure is ultimately due to their own hypocrisy, to their double standard of decency, and to their inability to understand the attitude of modern society, which is reflected in the actions of the nephew. He is a pathetic character, weak and irresponsible. He is unwilling even to oppose his domineering bride and her avaricious demand that his two aunts be driven from the home.

The events of these three acts take place in the past, but they are structurally framed by the prologue and the epilogue, each of which is a brief moment in the present time. In the prologue the two ladies are seen passing through the streets of Lima to the place where they receive free food. They are destitute, and one is demented, as suggested by her repetitive speech patterns. In the epilogue, the sisters cross the stage going in the opposite direction. They have only one container of food because the demented sister accidentally spilled hers in the street. It is obvious now that their life is a miserable, degrading experience, and that they are totally dependent on charity for their existence.

The theme of this work is the ruinous effect wrought by hypocritical prejudice and greed. Their social criticism, in combination with Salazar's caricatural portrayals and his *costumbrista* emphasis, is indicative of the extent to which this work parallels the satiric theatre of social intent as written in the latter half of the past century in Peru. *Dos viejas van por la calle*, however, is not one of Salazar's better compositions, and it is the least appealing of the plays which he wrote during his third stage of development. The major disadvantage of the play is the unconvincing manner in

which the dramatic action and tension are developed in the three acts. This is, to a degree, a result of the poor, almost disruptive transition between the acts. The episodic nature of each act suggests that Salazar wrote three loosely-knit *costumbrista* sketches and then attempted to endow them with a sense of dramatic unity and purpose by adding the prologue and the epilogue. It is obvious that without this addition the structural continuity of the entire work would be even weaker, the dramatization of events would lose much of its satirical and dramatic appeal, and the thematic significance of the entire work would be seriously impaired.

This play does have a few redeeming features which substantiate the reputation it still commands in Lima. Among these are Salazar's elaboration and emphasis on those elements characteristic of Lima. The local speech peculiarities and social environment are foremost in this respect. Other factors of positive import are the simplicity of the plot, the rapid succession of events, and the originality with which Salazar has reworked an age-old theme.

As was previously mentioned, Salazar's personal observations of the French theatre in 1956 eventually led to a stylistic change in his dramas. *El fabricante de deudas*¹³ is the first of his works to evidence the French influence, the first he purposely cast in a light-hearted mold, and the first of his works to include songs and intentional comic relief. Finally, the play is unique, because for the first time Salazar avoided the somewhat bitter social denunciations characteristic of his previous works. Yet even with these innovations, the work is of an obvious didactic nature, and is based on the popular adage that "Money is the root of all evil." Salazar makes the true meaning of this wise counsel come to life in his portrayal of Obedot, a man whose very existence is regulated by an insatiable thirst for material gain and the consequences of his own avaricious schemes.

El fabricante de deudas, however, does not represent a radical departure from Salazar's dramatic production up to 1963. For instance, the moral intentions, as found in *No hay isla feliz* and *Algo que quiere morir*, are also present here; the secondary characterizations are regionalistic archetypes; and this work is also based on that of another writer. On the title page of the edition cited above Salazar states that his play was inspired by Honoré de Balzac's short story *Le Faiseur*. Regardless of his debt to Balzac, Salazar's arrangement is deeply rooted in Peruvian tradition. The basic structure and many of the dramatic elements, primarily the dialogue and the description of local social customs, are reminiscent of the tenets defended in the earlier *comedia costumbrista* in Peru. Yet while *El fabricante de deudas* is a reflection of the thesis drama of nineteenth-century Peru, as well as an unmistakable satire of modern Liman society, it has proven to be Salazar's most popular play among his compatriots.

La escuela de los chismes,¹⁴ the third major composition of Salazar's

period of satirical and *costumbrista* interests, was finished in 1963 and premiered in Lima in 1965. It was admittedly inspired by Richard Brinsley Sheridan's (1771-1816) *School for Scandal*, but, unfortunately, is a superficial, confusing, and lengthy (five long acts) adaptation of the famous original. Even Salazar's satirical attack on the baneful effects of gossip is weak and conventional.

The play is structurally weak due to its over-extension and due to the intrusion of several secondary dramatic complications which have no bearing on the principal current of action. Another weakness of note is that the language is inconsistent and often reduced to clichés, ready-made formulas, and other such linguistic crutches which seriously hamper the desirable naturalness and fluidity. Since there is little action on stage, this last weakness is especially acute in view of the fact that *La escuela de los chismes* depends heavily on the drawing room atmosphere and particularly on the dialogues.

In comparison with most of Salazar's other works, *La escuela de los chismes* is considerably more universal in scope. There are, for example, few indications that the scene is laid in Lima, and there is a noticeable absence of Salazar's usual nationalistic social preoccupations. Since the characters are of a contemporary nature and represent the typical members of the middle class who have sufficient time to engage in noxious slander, the play is best judged as a criticism of universal bourgeoisie society. When considered on the basis of its artistic value, however, *La escuela de los chismes* is an ineffective creation, one which does not demonstrate Salazar's capabilities as a polished dramatist.

The last work which Salazar wrote during his third period of development was *Ifigenia en el mercado*.¹⁵ He finished the play during the early months of 1965, and it was premiered posthumously in 1966 in Lima by the theatrical group "Compañía Lucía Irurita." This is Salazar's only musical comedy, yet he did not compose the musical scores. They are arranged by Enrique Iturriaga, one of Lima's better known song writers.

The entire piece is a light-hearted dramatization of the experiences of a young provincial girl in Lima. Ifigenia has come to live in the market with her aunt in order to escape the restrictive confines of a rural society. Like many new arrivals to the city, Ifigenia is naive about the pernicious intentions of the three men who romance her shortly after her arrival. It is not until the final moments of the play that she discovers the dishonorable intentions of her suitors. As a result, Ifigenia's faith in the benevolence of mankind is shattered. More devastating to her is the realization that the cosmopolitan society is not only more restrictive than that of the sierra, but also even inherently dangerous.

Ifigenia en el mercado has been one of Salazar's most successful *costumbrista* and satirical works. It has enjoyed a particularly favorable ac-

ceptance by the audiences in Lima. Partial explanation of this popularity is due to the humorous and benign manner in which Salazar satirizes life in the capital. A second justification of the success of the play is the author's elaboration of such local elements as the setting, a typical market area in Lima; the characters, essentially of the emergent middle class in cosmopolitan Peru; and the language, representatively Liman in its construction and spirit. Even the songs are traditional in their appeal to the audience in Lima.

Structurally, *Ifigenia en el mercado* is similar to Salazar's preceding major dramatic works, particularly those written since the late 1950's. Each of the four *cuadros* is episodic in nature, and each one offers a different vignette or view of the daily life of the ordinary inhabitants of Lima. The most important innovation, as suggested before, is the inclusion of two or more musical numbers in each division. These brief interludes serve a dual purpose. Technically they afford a lively and often humorous change of pace from the rapid development of the dramatic events. Secondly, Salazar took advantage of these interruptions to emphasize, though subtly, his thematic interests in the play. These are the social evils and weaknesses which Ifigenia's suitors represent, and her increasing discontent with the restrictions imposed by the urban society.

Salazar's ultimate motive in composing this musical comedy has been generally overlooked by his critics. For the majority of them the work is no more than an experimental deviation from his usual dramatic fare. When the play is viewed with regard to Salazar's entire dramatic production, however, it is much more significant. More than any other of his works, it stands out as Salazar's effort to revive the theatre in Peru as a popular form of entertainment.

Shortly before his death in 1965, Salazar wrote an extended one-act play which is generally taken to be a renunciation of the popular, less serious theatre which he had written in the final years of his life. This play was an instant box-office success in Lima and won the 1965 Premio Nacional de Teatro, awarded posthumously. If Salazar had lived, *El Rabdomante*¹⁸ might have marked the definite beginning of a fourth stage of development in his career as a dramatist. More specifically, and with his last work as a hypothetical point of departure, it seems likely that the new stage would have been of a symbolic nature, with touches of the absurd tempered by a restrained criticism of social injustices. Yet, even though Salazar's "new" interests are suggested by *El Rabdomante*, it is also important to point out that the work can be construed as a refined fusion of the author's previously existing dramatic themes, since it contains the kind of social bitterness and condemnation found in his preceding works.

To those who are acquainted with any portion of Salazar's dramatic production, the composition and artistic effect of *El Rabdomante* will appear atypical. The work is unique for several reasons, not the least of which is

that it does not have an acknowledged source of inspiration. It is important that this work constitutes Salazar's first attempt to create a Latin American drama rather than one of restricted nationalistic proportions and appeal. He was able to avoid the limitations of nationalism because the problems he presents in *El Rabdomante* are not exclusively local in nature. Even the satirical implications are unique because they are universally applicable and more vitriolic than those in his other works. Finally, the absence of Salazar's usual *costumbrista* interest is marked by the avoidance of strictly Peruvian speech peculiarities, dress, and setting.

El Rabdomante is also unique because of the allegorization of such elements as the *paramo*, its inhabitants, their revolutionary tendencies, and even death, in order to emphasize social and personal ingratitude. At the same time, the dramatization of the futility of existence and of man's efforts to improve his lot suggests that Salazar was possibly leaning toward the more contemporary theatre of the absurd. This notion is corroborated by his personal interest in those contemporary French dramatists who have cultivated absurd and paradoxical elements in their works.

In summation, *El Rabdomante* is the culmination of Salazar's total artistry. This work most clearly substantiates the belief that his death was a serious blow to Peru's recent efforts to improve its theatrical situation. One can only conjecture what the future might have brought if Salazar had lived to mature fully as a playwright.

Salazar's principal dramatic works are based on a variety of themes and subjects which are intimately related to the different styles or stages of development which he experienced during his eighteen-year career as a dramatist. There are four distinct stages of development in Salazar's dramatic production. The first stage of development is essentially a poetic one in which Salazar combined somber, satirical, and sometimes grotesque elements. His socio-political comments were somewhat caustic during this period, yet they were also of general intent and free of any nationalistic prejudice. Of his major works, only *Amor, gran laberinto* falls entirely into this initial stage, probably because Salazar was just beginning to realize his own interests and capabilities as a dramatist. Nonetheless, many of the socio-political interests and dramatic techniques in *Amor, gran laberinto* were not forsaken and later reappeared in other dramas. For instance, Salazar's satirical vein and his intention to expose social foibles form the allegorical basis of *El Rabdomante*.

A marked interest in the national scene is the salient theme of Salazar's second stage of development. In the works of this period, during the middle 1950's, his satirical attack on national problems is more poignant, but not as bitter. It is also during this period that Salazar became known as an articulate spokesman for the masses, particularly for the emerging middle class, with such works as *No hay isla feliz* and *Algo que quiere morir*.

By the end of the 1950's, and in the late 1960's, Salazar's expressed interest in promoting a truly modern and representative Peruvian theatre had its real beginning. He began to include gay *costumbrista* touches, and his drama approached the humorous without forfeiting its satirical appeal. The outstanding creation during this third stage of development is *El fabricante de deudas*.

The final stage of Salazar's career is not clearly discernible, and it can not be proven that he was dissatisfied with the results of his third-stage production. Even so, *El Rabdomante* must be considered unique because none of his works is similar to it artistically or technically. If Salazar had lived longer, and if *El Rabdomante* were truly a first step toward breaking away from tradition, it seems likely that later works would have been more universal in their appeal and subject matter. It is also reasonable to infer that the satirical-social themes would have been tinged with symbolism and absurd elements.

The most disturbing feature of Salazar's total dramatic output is the author's own inconsistency. While a number of his works are dramatically sound, or artistically and technically polished, there are several which are noticeably weak in this respect. A major cause of this phenomenon, which continually plagued him, was his inability to overcome certain structural weaknesses. This is seen in the disparity of the episodic arrangement in several principal works (*Amor, gran laberinto, Rodil, and Algo que quiere morir*). Salazar is nevertheless to be commended for his over-all use of language and his elaboration of dialogues—whether the language is of a regional or universal appeal, serious or humorous, it is generally consistent with the situation at hand.

It does not seem superfluous to assert that, until his death in 1965, Salazar was generally considered Peru's most talented playwright. Even now, several years later, no one has been able to challenge his achievements as a dramatist. Salazar's death has proven a setback to the progress of the contemporary Peruvian theatre, and only the passing of time will determine his total contribution to the recent renaissance of the theatre in Peru.

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Notes

1. For further discussion of the present day Peruvian theatre, see Daniel R. Reedy and Robert J. Morris, "The Lima Theatre, 1966-67," *Latin American Theatre Review*, I, No. 1 (Fall 1967), 26-38.

2. *Teatro peruano contemporáneo* (Lima, 1948), pp. 251-322.

3. Sebastián Salazar Bondy, *Teatro* (Buenos Aires, 1961), pp. 7-61. This work is hereafter referred to as *Teatro*.

4. José Ramón Rodil y Gayoso, *La defensa del Callao por don José Ramón Rodil durante el periodo comprendido entre la capitulación de Ayacucho y el embarque en la "Britón"* (Madrid: Imprenta Palomeque, 1930).

5. José Jiménez Borja, "Un hallazgo inesperado," *Mar del sur*, No. 23 (set-oct 1952), 34.

6. *Teatro*, pp. 63-119.
7. José Miguel Oviedo, "Sebastián Salazar Bondy en su teatro," *Revista Peruana de Cultura*, VII-VIII (junio 1966), 88.
8. *Teatro*, pp. 121-79.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 181-216.
10. Luis Alberto Sánchez, *Una mujer sola contra el mundo* (Buenos Aires, 1937).
11. Magda Portal, *Flora Tristán, precursora* (Santiago, 1944).
12. Sebastián Salazar Bondy, *Comedias y juguetes*, in *Obras*, I (Lima, 1967), 201-62. This work is hereafter referred to as *Obras*.
13. Sebastián Salazar Bondy, *El fabricante de deudas. Flora Tristán* (Lima, 1964), pp. 8-87.
14. This presentation is based on a mimeographed copy of *La escuela de los chismes* prepared by the theatrical group "Histrión" in 1963.
15. *Obras*, pp. 407-58.
16. This presentation is based on a mimeographed copy of *El Rabdomante* prepared by Casa de la Cultura Peruana in 1965.