Book Reviews


La obra de Suárez Radillo es una valiosa contribución a la divulgación del hasta ahora poco conocido teatro venezolano contemporáneo. Se conjugan en ella los múltiples esfuerzos por teatralizar cuanto trasciende en la vida venezolana actual. En el libro se incluye la pieza que, a juicio del editor, es quizá la más representativa de las recientes creaciones de los trece autores que allí aparecen, a saber:


A pesar de pertenecer estos dramaturgos a varias generaciones, esto no es sin embargo ningún obstáculo en la unidad estructural antológica; antes bien, dicha variedad sirve allí de fuerza de equilibrio que evita un total rompimiento con las formas tradicionales del teatro criollo nacional.

Podemos notar también que la actividad teatral en Venezuela, tal como se manifiesta en esta obra, es una preocupación constante para los autores incluidos (y para los que no se incluyen, diríamos con certeza), que son, al mismo tiempo, directores, empresarios y hasta actores, ya que buscan el reconocimiento consciente del público.

No obstante a lo que nos dice Suárez Radillo en el prólogo de su obra en cuanto al criterio seguido para la selección de tales autores, algunos reparos de forma son imprescindibles de hacer, particularmente en el orden en que aparecen los escritores y sus piezas. ¿Por qué ese orden? No hay consistencia alguna ni por la edad de los autores, ni por las fechas de representación o de publicación de tales piezas. Ese vacío es de importancia llenarlo, sobre todo cuando se quiera historiar la evolución del drama contemporáneo en Venezuela.

Entre un prólogo del editor, en donde esquematiza el desarrollo del teatro nacional desde sus orígenes en la época colonial hasta el presente, y trece piezas de autores activos en el arte escénico, Suárez Radillo nos da una visión panorámica de lo que ocurre entre, debajo y detrás de las bambalinas venezolanas de la hora actual. Es por esta razón por lo que *13 autores del nuevo teatro venezolano* debiera merecer un estudio crítico que interpretara objetivamente el valor teatral de cada una de las obras que trae esta interesante antología.

Ernesto M. Barrera
*San Diego State University*

The influence of the theatre of Luigi Pirandello upon the drama of the Río de la Plata region (the author insists, and rightly it would seem, that for critical purposes, it is difficult to distinguish between the drama of Uruguay and Argentina during the early stages of their development) has been the subject of several short critical studies, notably that of Angela Blanco Amores de Pagella in *Nuevos temas en el teatro argentino* (Buenos Aires, 1965). This appears, however, to be the first attempt to trace in detail the influence of Pirandello on Argentine and Uruguayan drama. The work achieves its purpose and, accordingly, this study is a valuable contribution to the criticism of the modern Latin American drama. Professor Neglia shows how the Italian theatre has long held sway over the tastes of the Argentine theatre-going public, noting that between 1869 and 1899 the number of Italian works shown in Buenos Aires and the number of serious dramatic companies visiting the capital were superior in number to those from France or Spain. Furthermore, the numerous Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires felt an obvious affinity with the passionate temperament of the protagonists of the Italian “grotescos” such as *La maschera e il volto* by Luigi Chiarelli and those by Pirandello himself (Neglia notes that Pirandello anticipated, in effect, the “grotesco” of other Italian authors in his earlier works). The “grotesco” was modern in its tone so that it may be said that the vanguardistic influences of the modern Italian drama came in, as it were, through the back door of public taste incorporating as they did, the cynicism of the contemporary taste with the traditional humor of the “género chico criollo” or “sainete” so popular in Buenos Aires during the “época de oro” of the Argentine theatre.

Treating the influence of Pirandello’s most revolutionary and well-known works such as *Sei personaggi in cerca d’autore* and *Enrique IV*, the author studies the structural and thematic influences in numerous Argentine and Uruguayan plays. The presentation is convincing and the reader comes away feeling that the critic has made his point. Following the opening of the repeated thematic obsessions which Pirandello employed in his most famous works, Neglia explains how each of his technical innovations reflects a philosophic change in perspective. There follows a detailed study of works showing an obvious indebtedness to Pirandello from the “grotescos” of the Argentine Armando Discépolo such as *El movimiento continuo* (1916) to the works of contemporary dramatists such as Néstor Kraly who presented his *No hay función* in 1967.

In attempting to trace the influence of Pirandello in the “teatro rioplatense” Neglia has taken on a formidable task which he has carried off with admirable skill and stylistic clarity.

Arthur A. Natella Jr.
*University of Maryland*


“Until there is a theatre based on a drama rooted in Trinidad,” asserts Errol
Hill, professor of drama at Dartmouth, "the theatre and drama in Trinidad will remain essentially artificial, colonial things, interesting chiefly as symptoms of the psychological sickness of a fragmented, confused people—a people who contain the possibility of a unique cultural synthesis and inventiveness, but who prevent the fulfillment of this possibility by not having the courage or the intelligence to become what they in fact are" (p. 114).

The words, of course, are paraphrases of those of Herder, and raise once again the ideal of art as the expression of cultural nationalism, of the "soul of the people"—an ideal that from Herder's time to the present has come up over and over as different peoples throughout the world become independent and begin asking themselves, "Who are we?"

Professor Hill believes that a national theatre can best be founded on the artistic elements of the Trinidad Carnival, and in support of this belief he presents an overall history and a description of the components of the festival.

Carnival plays an extraordinarily large part in the life of the people of Trinidad. The population of the island is about a million, of which about 100,000 take active part in masquerade bands. This is an extremely high percentage, at least in terms of European and South American festivals. It may be assumed that most of the rest of the population is involved as audience and in unorganized revelry. Of course, the two days of the Carnival represent only a very small part of the time involved: rehearsals and planning can take months; indeed, they may occupy most of the participant's spare time throughout the year. And the financial investment may be just as high, what with paying dues to a band, buying instruments and material for costumes, and spending on food and drink during the festival. Given this commitment by the people, the festival, according to Hill, has through history presented essentially theatrical forms, the indigenous culture of the island.

The Carnival in Trinidad began as a celebration for the wealthy and ended as essentially of the working class. After the transformation took place there were violent episodes of repression, on the grounds that the festival was becoming licentious, vulgar, disorderly; but the authorities could never stamp it out. Through the years its various elements developed. The Canboulay apparently derives from a bringing together of slaves after a sugar-cane burning ("cannes brulées"), later became an emancipation celebration, and finally turned into the opening event of Carnival. The steel band, originating in the 1930's with a few musicians beating pans and tubs, developed into ensembles capable of playing classical selections. The Calypso has its origin in legend, according to which an 18th century French plantation owner had his African slaves improvise songs of praise or satire for his guests. The songs developed into the calinda, an accompaniment to stick-fighting duels; the belair, more lyrical and embracing a great range of topics; and the ode or oratorical calypso, developed at the turn of the century, marked by great flourishes of rhetoric and patriotic feelings toward Britain. The masquerade is, of course, the visual highlight of Carnival. The topical and traditional masks (Wild Indians, Devils, Clowns, etc.) and the role-playing that goes with them is obviously closely related to theatre. Indeed, one
may ask whether Trinidad does not already have a national theatre in the Carni­val itself.

Professor Hill thinks not. Carnival may, however, suggest principles for such a theatre: a sense of rhythm should be pervasive, language metrical. Speech, song, dance and music should be inseparable components. Verbal imagery and metaphor should be prominent. Masks should be employed. Audiences should be involved.

The primary value of the book, however, is not in its ideas about a national theatre, nor even in its description of the Carnival itself (which is nowhere to be found!), but rather in its careful study of the festival’s components. The book is a handsome one, with wide margins, attractive type, and many fine illustrations, both in color and black-and-white.

Robert J. Smith

University of Kansas

Play Synopses


2 acts; 2 men, 1 woman; 1 interior set.

This short and delightful comedy presents the story of three dissatisfied people. Luisa, a forty year old woman, leads an uneventful life at home while her forty-two year old husband is at work. In the evenings, when he returns home, no authentic conversations exist since Osvaldo is the kind of man who has always copped out and brought home his frustrations and anxieties. Horacio, a twenty-two year old romantic, falls in love with Luisa and after semi-painful-comic attempts at communication blurts out his feelings toward her. Luisa agrees to go to bed with him, partly because of her boredom, loneliness, and dependency on her husband, partly because some feminine vanity has been touched, and partly because she feels sorry for this big and immature boy. Osvaldo comes home earlier than usual and meets Horacio as he is taking leave of his wife. At first Osvaldo does not give much importance to the fact of finding another man in his bedroom but as the comedy progresses, he becomes more and more suspicious, interrogates Luisa angrily, and finds out finally what had happened that afternoon. On account of the bad experiences he has had in the past with his job and now Luisa’s confession, he wants to abandon everything. He achieves insight into his problems, nevertheless, as Luisa forces him to question himself and his past attitudes. For the first time in his life, Osvaldo comes to a full realization of himself and of the freedom he has to make choices. Instead of continuing to cop out, he decides to be a different man and to remain with his wife, who still loves him and who predicts that things in the future will be better for the two of them. (Ron Lewin)


3 acts; 8 women, 6 men; 2 interiors.

Following a naturalistic scheme this play deals with the hypocritical values of bourgeois society. Alfredo and Isabel have been married for a long time, and both of them look for love and understanding outside their marriage. They have to leave their lovers in order to entertain their guests in the family gathering to celebrate the acquisition of a new house. But neither he nor she really cares about it. The dinner ends as a cruel combination of social event and family quarrel. The situation is rather ironical. The variety of stereotyped characters and their comments apparently develop in several directions, while the tension between the appearance and the reality of the situation grows stronger. The arrival of Alicia, Alfredo’s daughter, introduces an important change. The action is now reduced to the main characters: Alfredo, his wife and daughter. The latter declares her decision to leave the house and go to live with her boyfriend. The conflict between Alicia’s authenticity and the hypocritical relation of her
parents is evident. The daughter makes them realize their falsehood, and consequently the marriage crumbles completely. The play ends with Alfredo accepting Alicia's decision to leave the house, a recognition of his own mistakes. The daughter represents a new conception of love relation, less false and free from social pressures. The contrast between parents and daughter—a generation gap—is depicted strongly and points to a critical view of the values of a materialistic society. (Santiago Daydi)


The play has no plot in the conventional sense but rather consists of a rapid succession of scenes in two parts. The set is a large wall on one side of an otherwise empty stage. The play opens with 57-year-old Lucas straddled upon the wall playing alternately with his hands and a comb and handkerchief. Subsequent scenes present various levels of social interplay, but these relationships are each marked by an abnormal or absurd quality. The main characters (Lucas, Elsa, Ricardo) are not clearly delineated by their roles or actions as their social relationships and certain features of their physical appearance change from scene to scene. For example, Ricardo, the lover of Elsa, later becomes her son. Nevertheless, the characters are still recognizable since their faces and names remain invariable and this aspect further underscores the element of the absurd. The dialogue employed is colloquial and at times the vocabulary seems illogical since the viewer cannot be sure what is being discussed. Yet because of this, the language acquires highly suggestive overtones which become quite diffused; this does not permit immediate intellectualization. In part two, the family discards its acquisitions in an attempt to return to the primordial state. The last scene finds Ricardo, Elsa and Lucas rapturous over the birth that has taken place. As the curtain falls, they attempt to name this new existence. At this point, the viewer ascertains that the title, Dropaj, functions as the possible designation for the new life force. Thus, the combination of the prologue, the dialogue and the actions make him aware of the central theme—the need to reject the absurd present situation and consequently establish a new order. (Antonia Pigno)


Both thematically and structurally this play is based on the idea of the vicious circle as is suggested by the title. The play revolves around the central character called simply "el personaje," who is presented on two levels. First he exists above the action by holding an intermittent dialogue with the audience in which he implies that he will manipulate the other characters into a trap. On the second level, he actually enters into the action, serving as the main catalyst in the development of the plot. The other characters who represent a single family (husband, wife, teenage daughter and seven year old son), come to a sea-side cottage to spend their two week vacation. "El personaje," assuming each time a different name and personal bearing, meets successively with the three adult characters. To each of them he represents a chance to escape from their boring and frustrated existence. He asks only that they meet him at an appointed time. They each keep the appointment, but "el personaje" does not. Realizing that they have been similarly tricked, they set out together to find their deceiver. They are followed at a distance by Juanito, the young son, who comes along for the adventure. Along the way, Juanito finds the revolver which his father has discarded. At the same moment "el personaje" enters the scene. Thinking that he is "el hombre malo," Juanito shoots him. With very mixed emotions, the three adults witness the scene, realizing that their chance for escape has just dissolved. The circular structure of the play is reemphasized in the final scene. Juanito is playing in the sand, when "el personaje," now resuscitated, approaches him. He promises to take Juanito to see his ship if the boy will only meet him that evening. Juanito accepts, and thus also falls into "la trampa eterna." "El personaje" clarifies the play's message in his final words to the audience: only children can escape the "trampa" for they only play with dreams. When they grow up and really try to attain their dreams, they will also fall permanently into his trap. (Dennis Parle)


Seemingly a burlesque of theatre of the absurd, this drama depicts the relationship between Duque and Donata on the eve of the return of the husband of the latter. Both characters are
blind; each believes that the other takes care of him. Their relationship changes from a cold mistress-servant severity to live and mutual dependence as the return of the husband becomes more and more doubtful. Definitely using absurdist techniques, the play comes to an enigmatic end when Duque returns as the husband. He is the prodigal husband returned from the roulette tables a winner, bearing a necklace of seashells for his faithful wife. To his dismay, the house is empty, only to be invaded moments later by guerrilleros who kill him and destroy the house with a salvo of machine-gun fire. As a genuine example of theatre of the absurd, the play contributes nothing new. Although there are several instances which suggest a take-off on this type of theatre, over-abundant symbolism obscures the ridicule to the extent that the play fails to create an experience of any kind for the audience. The ending seems symbolic of the death of this theatre. Ironically, Fuentes has chosen an absurd way to communicate this message. (Mike Mudrovic)


Vicente Leñero now brings to the theatre a dramatic version of his well-known novel Los albañiles. The intrigue of this play centers around the investigation of the murder of don Jesús, a senile, degenerate and lonely night-watchman of a building under construction in Mexico City. Isidro, a young laborer, discovers the body and attributes the crime to "los endemoniados." The suggested presence of some intrinsic malevolent forces intensifies the mystery and adds an element of fantasy which allows the development of the multiple levels on which the play operates. Through a sequence of interrogatory scenes, an intricate net of equally possible incriminating motivations is established around the characters in the play by the detective Munguía who insists on finding the truth and not just someone to blame for the murder. Munguía goes beyond the search for facts and digs deeply into the minds of the characters. Federico, the pitiful young architect, Sergio, the ex-seminarian, Chapo, the foreman, Jacinto, his second, Isidro and Patotas, the lowest of the bricklayers, all reveal in their dealings with don Jesus a serious moral weakness which would explain why they would want him dead. The climax is reached when Munguía, in a desperate mental attempt to put all facts together, accuses each and all of the characters while the crime is enacted on the scene. In the last scene Munguía enters for the first time in the area of the stage reserved for the construction site and there meets an old man who declares himself to be the night-watchman. This plunges the audience into a search for the solutions of the deep mysteries that exist within this brilliant play. (Leo Maza)


Power corrupts men because it destroys love, the force which binds them together. The biblical and historical setting for the treatment of this theme centers around the relationship of Jonathan, David, and Jonathan's sister Mikol. Of the three aspects in this unusual treatment of love, only one is conventional, that between David and Mikol. The other two are the incestuous love of Jonathan and his sister, and finally, the most important to the plot, the homosexual attraction of Jonathan and David. Neither is treated within the framework of the play as degrading, but somewhat as primitive manifestations of the natural bond between men. The growing antagonism between Samuel, the priest-judge, and Saul, the King of Israel, provides the conflict in the play and their ambitious motives soon overshadow the pure relationship of the two young men. Samuel has become dissatisfied with Saul and plots to place David on the throne instead of Jonathan when the king dies. Saul's efforts to prevent that and David's reluctant acceptance—at Samuel's insistence—to unseat him causes the tragic ending. By becoming instruments of the machinations of their seniors, the two young men are drawn into combat and one dies at the hand of the other. The strong relationship which had united them became impossible once they were both tainted with the desires of political ambition. (John Greene)


This play shows the effect that the threat of annihilation by the atomic bomb has had on a group of eight moral and social degenerates. For three years they have met annually to enact
the final judgment and corrupt an unsuspecting virgin brought by an old blackguard, Carolina. The mood is suggested for the event to occur that night by a passing hunter's observation of the strange old house where they meet and its odd name, "Walpurgis" ("witch" in German). There are no principal characters. The group shares a firm denial of the survival of mankind and his future. They see the order of things set in an inevitable march to destruction. In the meantime they seek means of immediate gratification by exploiting each other sexually or by becoming abulic and indifferent. The new victim, Monica, is conned into playing their "game" and accepts the role of God's lawyer. The mock judgment scene proceeds with the trials of Death, a prostitute, and the prince of the abulics, ending in a ridiculous litany to a picture of the atomic mushroom cloud. As the group continues drinking and drugging itself, one member tries to persuade Monica that virginity is passé. Two men of the group try to rape Monica, but the hunter of the first scene and two companions save her. He proclaims the group to be in need of spiritual therapy and threatens to bring the law. They counter that it was only a diversion and that they were only trying to rid the girl of dogma, prejudice, and conventions. The play fades to an end as two men of the group complain about the misery of living and the horrible doubt of what they believe. Pinto employs a good deal of vulgarity and bad taste to produce a counter-reaction to the bomb scare and man's spiritual deterioration in the mechanized world. (Deborah Clapp)

**Works in Progress**

Luzuriaga, Gerardo. (University of California, Los Angeles)
Articles: Margarita Xirgu en América. El teatro de José Martínez Queirolo.

Bancroft, Robert L. (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
Article: Tema, personajes y estructura dramática en cuatro obras teatrales de Maruxa Vilálta.

Fernández, Oscar. (University of Iowa)

Neglia, Erminio G. (University of Toronto)
Articles: Una recapitulación de la renovación del teatro hispanoamericano del siglo XX.

Schanzer, George D. (State University of New York at Buffalo)
Articles: El teatro hispanoamericano de Post Mortem. El teatro épico de Vicente Leñero.

Radcliff-Umstead, Douglas. (University of Pittsburgh)
Article: Study of Carballido's recent productions.

Sarnacki, John. (Port Huron, Michigan)
Bibliography: Latin American Literature in Polish translation. Includes plays, novels, etc. Translated from Spanish and Portuguese into Polish; novels and books in Polish dealing with Latin America; Literary criticism and review articles written originally in Polish or translated into Polish. Approximately 1300 entries.

Schoenbach, Peter J. (University of Minnesota)
Book: Modern Brazilian Social Theatre—Art and Social Document.

Hernández, Oscar F. (Kansas State Teachers College)
Article: El teatro de Matías Montes Huidobro.
Lyday, Leon F. (Pennsylvania State University)
  Articles: A study of Egon Wolff’s *Los invasores*; Theme and Structure in Dias Gomes’ *O Berço do Herói*, accepted by *South Atlantic Bulletin*.
Scott, Wilder P. “A Note on Rodolfo Usigli and the Nickname ‘Visconde’,” *Romance Notes*. Accepted for publication.

**Works by Students**

New York University

Kansas University

University of California, Irvine

Cornell University

University of California, Los Angeles

Indiana University

New York University

**Translations**

Falino, Lou. (Tempe University)
  *La vigilia del degüello, El velero en la botella, y Requiem por un Girasol* of Jorge Díaz (Chile).

Bancroft, Robert L. (University of Massachusetts, Amherst)
  *La última letra* of Maruxa Vilalta (Mexico).

Clark, Annabel B.
  *El gesticulador, Jana es una muchacha, and Corona de luz* of Rodolfo Usigli (Mexico); *El color de nuestra piel* of Celestino Gorostiza (Mexico); *Colla-
cocha of Enrique Solari Swayne (Peru); Vejigantes of Francisco Arrivi (Puerto Rico).

Wilson, Dennis. (Illinois State University)
El hechicero of Carlos Solórzano (Guatemala-Mexico); Funeral Home of Walter Béneke (El Salvador).

Plays in Performance

Michigan State University

Northern Illinois University

Temple University

University of California, Los Angeles

Hiram College

Indiana University at Fort Wayne

Kansas State Teachers College (Emporia)
Several Argentine plays directed by Carlos Trigo, presented May 8-12, 1971. Julio Mauricio, El señor Eduardo; Marco Denevi, La idiota, No hay que complicar la felicidad; Pablo Palant, Freud; Osvaldo Dragún, El flemón, Historia de un hombre que se convirtió en perro; Alberto Adellach, Marcha, El setenta, Esa canción es un pájaro lastimado.

The Latin American Opinion Fair (St. Clement’s Church, New York City), March-April, 1972. Augusto Boal’s Torquemada and Guardian Angel (Brazil); The Cock by Victor Zavala (Peru); Enrique Buenaventura’s The Autopsy (Colombia); The Black Airplane, by Roberto Cossa, German Rosenmacher, Carlos Somigliana and Ricardo Talesnik (Argentina); Jorge Díaz’s Man Does Not Die by Bread Alone (Chile); and Gianfrancesco Guarnieri’s Animalia (Brazil).
Recent Publications, Materials Received and Current Bibliography

[The following items may prove to be of interest to readers of the Latin American Theatre Review. Inclusion here does not preclude subsequent review.]


Reyes, Carlos José. *Soldados* [Según la novela de Alvaro Cepeda Samudio, *La casa grande*]. Typescript submitted by Fernando González Cajiao.


Serna V., José María. *Canción de héroes* and *Malditas sean las botellas* [ensayo dramático en tres actos en prosa y verso]. Typescript submitted by Fernando González Cajiao.


Revista Cultura, No. 1 (janeiro a março de 1971). Brazilian Cultural magazine containing articles, photos and general information on the arts. Includes an article by Barbara Heliodora “A influência estrangeira no teatro Brasileiro.”


Revista TUC, No. 1 (Abril, 1971). Revista a cargo del Centro de Investigacion Sociológica de Teatro de la Universidad de Carabobo. La revista contiene artículos sobre el teatro nacional venezolano y sobre el teatro en general.


Woodyard, George, ed. The Modern Stage in Latin America: Six Plays. Contains translations of The Fanlights, René Marqués (Puerto Rico); Payment as Pledged, Alfredo Dias Gomes (Brazil); And They Told Us We Were Immortal by Osvaldo Dragún (Argentina); The Place Where the Mammals Die by Jorge Díaz (Chile); The Criminals by José Triana (Cuba); I too Speak of the Rose by Emilio Carballido (Mexico).


Revista La Cabra Nos. 9, 10, 11 (agosto, 1971). Periódico de teatro universitario de la UNAM. Contiene artículos por Héctor Azar, Juan José Gurrola, Oscar Zorrilla, etc.


Sipario (Rome), No. 308 (Gennaio 1972). An authoritative Italian review of the spectacle: theatre, cinema, television, opera and ballet. Includes Jose Monleon’s "Polémiche in Spagna per la carica sociale di Valle-Inclán."


Yofré, Sara. En el jardín de Mónica. Cuento alrededor de un círculo de espuma. Lima, s.f. Two plays presented in the Club de Teatro of Lima in 1962; direction by Alonso Alegría.


Estudios Escénicos (Barcelona). No. 14 (s.f.). Cuadernos del Instituto de Teatro.


Revista de Teatro (Río: SBAT): No. 384 (Novembro-Dezembro de 1971). Contains: Pedro Bloch, LSD and O Contrato Azul (Comédias em 1 ato); José Valuzi, Três Peraltas na Praça, peça infantil.


Rolando Sillé (Willemstad, Curação), "Lograremos realizar un teatro autóctono en Curazao?" Reprint.


La Cabra (Mexico), Año 1, Núm. 17/18 (Diciembre de 1971); Núm. 19/20 (Enero de 1972). Periódico de Teatro Universitario, Centro Universitario de Teatro, Sullivan 43, México, D.F.