

Continuity in Evolution: Juan José Arreola as Dramatist

THEDA M. HERZ

Despite his renown as a writer of fiction, Juan José Arreola's predilection for the theatre spans a period of approximately forty years. He first studied drama with Rodolfo Usigli and Xavier Villaurrutia, performing as an actor under the latter's direction. From 1945 to 1946 he held a scholarship which permitted him to travel to Paris where he acted in the *Comédie Française*. During this formative period, he came under the influence of two innovative director-producers, Louis Jouvet and Jean-Louis Barrault.¹ At least tangentially Arreola has also ventured into the theory of stagecraft with his translation of *Vie de l'art théâtral, des origines a nos jours* (1932).² Although between 1939 and 1940 he composed three one-act farces (*La sombra de la sombra*, *Rojo y negro*, and *Tierras de Dios*),³ they have never been produced or published and to date his endeavors as a playwright consist of two one-act dramas: *La hora de todos* (1954) and *Tercera llamada ¡Tercera! o empezamos sin usted* (1971).

It is not surprising that Arreola opts for the brief dramatic form since conciseness characterizes his entire artistic production. However, it does seem striking that he chooses to write plays since many essential qualities of his creativity are markedly non-dramatic. In *Confabulario*⁴ Arreola tends toward an expository rather than a narrative focus. This collection reflects a preference for static compositions with little preoccupation for plot, in-depth characterization, or dialogue. Communication is often reduced to the self-revelatory persona monologue. The aforementioned traits adequately suit the author's satirical intention but they do not correspond to traditional theatrical technique (emotion, story, conflict, change, chiseled dialogue, and dynamic personalities) nor do they suggest a nascent playwright. Nevertheless, Arreola's dramatic compositions should not be isolated from his prose. They form a continuum of subject matter, characters, and tone. The technical links between the two modes include the use of caricature, the unexpected blending of elements, the manipulation of external references from

the realms of the plastic arts, literature, music, and everyday life. Despite this similarity, the plays signal an aesthetic shift. Arreola's stationary world becomes charged with vitality when he enters the medium of the theatre. At the same time he matures as a dramatist during the seventeen years which elapse between the appearance of *La hora de todos* and *Tercera llamada*.

La hora de todos reveals a Continental orientation which is easily explained by Arreola's stay in France and his cosmopolitan leanings. Pirandellian devices proliferate. The structure centers upon a "director" who maneuvers the other characters as if they were puppets. Harras fulfills a narrative function, particularly during the prologue which serves as a résumé of the action. His staged program, a typical play within a play,⁵ provides the retrospective exposition of the plot—a dissection of the Horatio Alger myth. Arreola's exposé resembles the *commedia dell'arte* in its pretense to improvisation and to a play in preparation. Diverse internal references classify *La hora de todos* as theatre and many attempts are made to draw the audience into the action. Similar both to Pirandello's formal organization and satirical procedure, a striking antithesis exists between the external, comical tone and the inner, profound problem.⁶

Arreola himself terms *La hora de todos*, which in 1955 won first place in the *Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes* competition, an "auto sacramental de la muerte y del asco."⁷ Although not a one-act allegory on the Eucharist,⁸ his designation underlines an attempt to renovate a pre-existent form. This is a common device of Arreola's prose, particularly in his revamping of the medieval bestiary and his pseudo-newspaper items. His classification calls to mind the renewed interest on the part of Latin American dramatists in an old Peninsular mold. Arreola's play resembles two recent versions of final judgment, a traditional *auto* topic in which the characters are confronted with their own lives and judged.⁹ These "*autos*," which also concentrate on the question of spiritual authenticity and the falsification of life, are Emilio Carballido's *Auto sacramental de la zona intermedia* (1950) and José de Jesús Martínez's *Juicio final* (1962). Both new renditions propose that life after death equals a mere continuation of nothingness. The characters' amoral, voided existence leads only to limbo, an empty reflection of their lives. The plays have in common with Arreola's treatment the absence of salvation or perdition in the conventional sense. The only true parallel between *La hora de todos* and the Day of Judgment stems from the fact that the protagonist's figuratively dead soul awakens to the truth during the program, his examination of conscience. Like Martínez's protagonist, Hombre, Arreola's Harrison Fish must assess himself instead of passively receiving divine evaluation. Martínez and Arreola center their condemnation of modern man on a single businessman. Like the recurrent flute notes of *Juicio final* and Hombre's forgotten dream of becoming a musician, Arreola employs the motif of a romantic song, composed by Fish during his youth, to represent a dormant potential for the spiritual which he subsequently perverts and abandons.

Arreola's penchant for reworking literary antecedents¹⁰ makes it essential to note a work to which his play has several parallels in design. The title suggests Francisco de Quevedo's prose vision, *La hora de todos y la Fortuna con seso* (1635), where each individual receives his due according to the yardstick of poetic justice. During one hour on earth, Fortune turns the tables on the char-

acters and Quevedo ridicules Spanish types of the period. Both he and Arreola present satirical versions of final judgment suffered in life. Even though the sound of a trumpet opens and closes Arreola's play, this framework of death remains secondary to the action. The instrument does not emit celestial music but jazz, an indication of the total lack of divine bearing on the process. The play actually takes on the proportions of a human courtroom with defendant, witnesses, a formal indictment, objections, and a prosecuting attorney-surrogate judge.

Quevedo and Arreola proceed by unmasking both communal and personal hypocrisy. The various episodes of Harras' program juxtapose the reality hidden behind the pretense of the figure of Fish. Despite concentration on a single individual, like the Baroque Master's vision, Arreola's censure becomes wide in scope taking in all of society through the caricaturesque assemblage of witnesses against the central defendant. Gloria, the ingénue, typifies the secretary-boss liaison and personal prostitution for material gain. The collectors represent the vulgarization of art for practical or ostentatious purposes.¹¹ The sudden appearance of "connoisseurs" among the spectators at the performance of *La hora de todos* sustains an air of verisimilitude and tags the regular members of the audience by association. Not even the unexpecting playgoer escapes Arreola's farcical attack. Roscoe Hamilton turns out to be the most repugnant character. An automaton, he repeats a set phrase six times—"Yo siempre soñé con instalarme en Nueva York."¹² Since he would take Fish's place if he could, Hamilton's self-righteousness thinly camouflages his envy and impotence. All of these secondary characters succumb to an inauthentic system which is taken to task for its dehumanizing bigotry in "El episodio de Joe," a scene dealing with racial prejudice in a stereotyped South. Even though Fish remains the catalyst, an entire town sacrifices the innocent Black victim and ignores the true culprits simply because they are White. Thus, not only the financial magnate but most of the characters and actions embody an unjust way of life which degrades individual existence and ethical values.

Quevedo's work offers one other important point of contact with Arreola's play. The former's preface suggests an underlying didactic motivation. His exposé on earth serves as a lesson directed at the reader and intended to foreshadow the inevitability of death and the absolute justice to follow for all men: "A todos llega la hora siempre temprano, porque es dama muy madrugona y nada perezosa. Y así, cuando veas la del vecino, no te creas lejano de la tuya, que te está echando la zarpa y entretejiendo el lazo con que ha de ahogarte."¹³ Arreola mirrors Quevedo's all-inclusive stance in the final scene when Harras, who like Fortune inverts normal order, asks the members of the audience if they have felt the moral rejection of self that Fish experiences immediately before death: "A propósito. . . ¿ustedes no han sentido alguna vez. . . asco? No se olviden de mí, me llamo Harras, y soy especialista en sorpresas. . . para servir a ustedes" (pp. 141-42).

The figure of Harras can be traced to Franz Kafka. The Czech writer has been a primary influence on Arreola's prose and the latter often sprinkles his work with erudite references to his sources. The epigraph of *La hora de todos*, "el joven ese ya se ha instalado allí. Su nombre es Harras" (p. 76), intrigues

because of its obscurity. Arreola refrains from identifying his exact source. Investigation reveals that the passage occurs in one of Kafka's short stories entitled "Der Nachbar" ("My Neighbor"). Kafka's subjective narrator, also a businessman, relates a brief tale devoid of action. He suffers a neurotic obsession about a mysterious man (Harras) who has rented the adjoining office. Powerless before a "spy" stealing financial secrets, the "I" feels he involuntarily transmits valuable information through the wall which appears to separate the two. He infers that Harras deviously works against him by making use of this hidden material. Kafka's skeletal outline lends itself to various interpretations. More than a person, Harras becomes a fearsome, irresistible force which gradually converts the protagonist into a marionette. In typically enigmatic fashion, the writer suggests that the narrator suffers a feeling of guilt because he senses himself a façade laid bare before Harras, who is perhaps a mere manifestation of imagination or conscience. Arreola carries this open-ended situation one step forward. In *La hora de todos* Harras conserves all the slyness of Kafka's creation but he becomes a living materialization of Fish's superego. Harras forces Fish to confront himself through various re-enactments of his immoral, yet concealed past. The mask crumbles and the cathartic experience of the program causes Fish to gain self-awareness and, as a consequence, to feel disgust. The true implication of the final question Harras poses to the audience is that each individual will have to answer for the morality of his life to himself, the inescapable judge one carries within his own being.

The setting of *La hora de todos* is an office on the seventieth floor of the Empire State Building on July 28, 1945. At the time, this edifice was the Mecca of economic affairs and the world's tallest man-made structure. Its height and resultant dominance of the surrounding area reflect the predominance of material values.¹⁴ The airplane which crashes into it in the final scene represents the vulnerability of this symbol of mundane success and, thus, the meaninglessness of the physical world. As with the majority of Arreola's concrete references, the catastrophe was inspired by external reading and memory, not artistic imagination. A bomber hit the Empire State Building causing death and destruction precisely on the morning of July 28, 1945.¹⁵ The play's ending, which on the surface appears objectionably far-fetched, takes on a different perspective because of its factual basis. Harras reappears with a newspaper from which he reads aloud an initial account of the crash. The article lends a realistic tone and ominous character to Harras' insinuation that the audience will be subjected to the same type of examination that has just been seen and heard. This closing scene justifies the earlier attempts to break with dramatic distance and to bring the spectators into the action. More than capricious adherence to a technique in vogue, the speeches directed at the audience and the art collectors represent efforts to universalize the particular action taking place on the stage and they prepare the way for the final question.

Arreola's celebrated capacity for mixing reality and imagination is also substantiated by Harras' indictment which resembles a dream that projects a still-living past into a present in which time and logic no longer hold sway. Every other scene uses pure theatrical elements to eliminate the melodramatic and to mitigate ponderous denunciation. Arreola stages the hackneyed story of Joe "Tap

Tap" Smith through a mimed reconstruction *à la* Al Jolson. By converting the flashback into a silent tap dance of a marionette-like figure backed by music out of Jolson's era, Arreola avoids the pitfalls of pedestrian oversimplification. In "El desaparecido del Hudson," the dead come back to haunt Fish in the form of Dennis O'Hara. Similar to almost all names of secondary characters, this one's commonness suggests a masked player and, at the same time, relies on the stereotype of the Irish policeman. Although the episode focuses on an actual crime, in essence it represents betrayal and sacrifice of the innocent. O'Hara appropriately appears blindfolded against violet lighting. To avoid histrionics, Arreola promptly directs O'Hara's disappearance in slow motion through a trap door, as if it were part of the re-enactment. To the audience's and the drama critics' relief, Harras decides to incorporate the invalid mother's untimely death offstage into all future productions. "Danza final" updates the medieval *danse macabre*. Harras forces Fish to foxtrot with his lover, Verónica, a costumed image of decomposition and death. The dance provides a fitting preface to the "holocaustic" end of Fish. Like the manipulation of the *auto* concept, the scene's effect arises from its novel twisting of a classical literary topic.

Two other elements interwoven into the play's pattern are of special interest. The abstract character called Megáfono, who will reappear in *Tercera llamada* under the guise of Micrófono, usually provides objective truth. As a mechanical object, it counterbalances the fantastic Harras, giving weight and substance to his moral revelations. However, in certain instances it speaks with verbal irony about Fish. Megáfono comments that "la clave de su fortuna fue el contrabando en licores. En cierto modo, Harrison empezó su carrera con un acto de caridad, dando de beber a los sedientos. . ." (p. 98). This passage magnifies, true to the function of such an apparatus, the protagonist's failure to adhere to the Christian ethic. Likewise, the painting which first appears as scenery and later forms part of the action serves to underline the play's moral message. Arreola carefully chooses this "Eva" by Lucas Cranach the Elder. A Renaissance artist whose series of nudes and portraits reveals a vital interest in man,¹⁶ Cranach stands in direct opposition to Fish's monetary mentality. Moreover, this particular painting symbolically notes the moment when man first suffered the duality of the flesh and the spirit. Of course, Fish evidences contemporary man's submission to the former. The disharmony caused by the conflict between the material and the transcendental will become the focal point of *Tercera llamada*.

The artistic value of *La hora de todos* does not reside in its rather prosaic plot nor in its characterization. Most of the French criticism of its 1963 performance in Paris during the International Theater Festival was adverse; the reviewers termed it boring—an insipid examination of conscience.¹⁷ But, narration has never been Arreola's forte and since his design is primarily satirical, the characters of the play must be flat and unattractive. At the same time, the French critics failed to recognize Arreola's universalization of profound moral problems faced by all men: the question of guilt as an element of existence, the contrast between façade and self, and the confrontation of self with its judge. Likewise, the play shows conceptual ingenuity in its modernization of a classical subject in the context of present-day psychology. Arreola's subtle mixing of the old and the new, his felicitous blending of imagination and reality not only

characterize *Confabulario* but also sustain the dramatic momentum of *La hora de todos*. Arreola exhibits particular talent for the creation of the non-verbal aspects of the stage, as demonstrated by the sound effects, lighting, music, pantomime, and choreography of the retrospective episodes. Although somewhat weak when viewed as literature, the play would be much more successful as a theatrical experience. The most effective element, even in script form, is the character of Harras. He weaves a mesmerizing spell and manifests the same devilish personality and linguistic manipulation which are the fascinating and bewitching qualities of Arreola's prose.

"Farsa de circo," the subtitle of *Tercera llamada*,¹⁸ suggests the play's affinity to the "pure," scenic effects of the Theatre of the Absurd, and two internal references (pp. 96, 139) classify the work within this mode. Various elements serve to corroborate the validity of this designation.¹⁹ As a montage, *Tercera llamada* exhibits no coherent plot line; emphasis falls on the discordant human condition rather than on a series of narrative events in logical progression. The oppressive, circular structure offers no positive moral nor any solution to the distressed situation which the play portrays. Arreola eschews rationality in the spheres of action and dialogue. Much of the activity becomes a meaningless, purposeless, and futile gesture—the best extended example being the mad photograph-target practice scene (pp. 88-94). The unexpected satire on the medical profession includes several passages which devalue language as a means of expression. These sections consist of lengthy plays on words, suffixes, accentuation patterns, and several pornographic, nonsensical, and set phrases (pp. 130-31, 134-35). The destructive use of mental clichés, particularly those of Biblical origin, comprises a principal source of farce. Comical effects also arise from the physical representation of the psychological world of fantasies and myth, exemplified by such episodes as the cuckold's metamorphosis into a bull. The mock-epic finale symbolizes the birth trauma of man's emergence from the Mother Archetype, a take-off on the "drainage pipe" dream of separation anxiety recorded by present-day psychiatrists.²⁰ However, this superficial slapstick clothes a somber vision which the laughter serves to mitigate.

The epigraph provides an enlightening point of departure for interpretation of the "chaotic" character of *Tercera llamada*. It takes the form of a palindrome, "Adán sé ave, Eva es nada" (p. 74). This epigram synthesizes the themes and techniques that define the dramatic movement of the work. Far from a flippant manipulation of words, Arreola's palindrome consists of a witty play on concepts. Both it and *Tercera llamada* focus on being as isolation and incompleteness; the vehicle in each instance is the couple locked in the age-old conflict of the sexes in which woman represents the corporeal and man, the spiritual. Likewise, the rhetorical device evokes the milieu of Genesis and the patriarchs of mankind, thus introducing the background of the drama.²¹ From a contemporary perspective, *Tercera llamada* reinterprets human history²² according to ancient scriptural legend minus the positive aspect of future redemption and fulfillment. The palindrome foreshadows the negative tonality of *Tercera llamada* in that the first "hemistich" rises by mentioning a winged animal and implying elevation to the celestial plane, whereas the second segment falls since the final stress lies on *nada*. At the same time, the word *ave* prefigures the play's central motif—the

paloma. This last symbol cannot be tied to one meaning; it varyingly stands for divine presence, salvation in the sense of completion, the male's high-flying spirit, the ideal, the loved one, conjugal affection and fidelity.

Besides reading the same backwards as forwards, Arreola's palindrome shows a markedly balanced structure because it is doubly reversible, both in the total phrase and in each "hemistich." This formal organization correlates to the circular, contrapuntal, and duplicating nature of *Tercera llamada*. In the play, multiple meanings of various words, symbols, and actions converge to produce a complex and often hermetic pattern. Almost all scenes begin in the same fashion and the final image echoes with only slight modification the initial vision. Each internal division prefigures future units and usually reverts to previous segments as the play constantly shifts back and forth between a series of verbal and non-verbal elements. Angel's brief ad speech (p. 102) previews his extensive sales pitch (pp. 109-112) as a modern Lucifer. Marido fondly recalls the innocent game in which he posed as the bull Angel fought in the Garden of Eden. Several units later, a radio series transmits a portion of "Pueblerina" (*Confabulario*, pp. 97-99). The next segment takes up the thread of the burlesque bullfight as the male characters mime "Pueblerina" and Marido becomes the metamorphosed lawyer of the story. During the early stages of *Tercera llamada*, Angel recites "El soñado" (*Confabulario*, pp. 80-81) in abbreviated form. Narrated in first person by an unborn child who symbolizes the monstrous, formless animosity produced by married life, the story anticipates the birth of Marido and Blanca's offspring in the closing moments. The most important internal duplication occurs approximately midway through the drama. During the third division which pretends to center on reality, the actors performing *Tercera llamada* use their own names although they conserve the personality and condition of the characters they portray. "Life" reproduces the fiction that the audience has been observing up to this point. Angel and Blanca even take seats among the spectators and she appears to watch as the action returns to the stage. Blurring the distinction between the real and the artificial, this duplication makes the farce on stage more acceptable.

The preceding discussion demonstrates that the disjointedness of *Tercera llamada* is merely superficial. As patterns, the palindrome and the play approximate mirrors which invert but reflect sameness. The dramatic tension exists between the tenor (the theme of disharmony) and the vehicle (the unity of impression in chaos). As a composite characterized by obsessive repetition, *Tercera llamada* suggests that all beings are synonymous and that human history is a pathetic cycle of futility and isolation. In this sense the title takes on meaningful proportions: regardless of the individual the chain remains constant and inevitable.²³

Tercera llamada animates an essential conflict which in one form or another predominates Arreola's creative endeavors. It integrates into one artistic work his diverse theoretical assessments and imaginative portrayals of man's defective lot based on the Platonic myth.²⁴ The dramatist has speculated that individual imperfection derives from an irreconcilable separation of the sexes. He contends that "el ser humano era un bien común unitario, completo y bisexual. . . biológicamente la mujer lleva una carga mucho mayor que el hombre; el hombre

parece, digo parece, haberse quedado en el espíritu, en el lote de la materia que vuela. De allí existe esta especie de necesidad de arrebatarse uno a otra la parte que le ha tocado después de la división."²⁵ However, Arreola consistently takes a witty approach when translating dry concept into art. "Cláusula III," "soy un Adán que sueña en el paraíso, pero siempre despierto con las costillas intactas" (*Confabulario*, p. 21),²⁶ could have replaced the palindrome as epigraph to the play. Three stories suggesting the intimate connection between the relationship of the sexes and the problem of being are direct, miniature precursors of *Tercera llamada*. In "Eva" (*Confabulario*, pp. 94-95) the contemporary representative of the ancient prototype forgives man and accepts the seducer by envisioning the matriarchal hypothesis in grossly common terms. Eve states that man, be he husband or lover, is the Son who has mistreated his Mother throughout history. "Tú y yo" (*Confabulario*, pp. 133-34), recited at the conclusion of the play, situates the origin of the sexual confrontation in the Biblical progenitors. Contrary to Genesis, the terrestrial paradise was not a place, but Eve, from whom Adam expelled himself so that his spirit could exist. Love and reproduction are deemed frustrated attempts to restore the lost state of perfection. "Homenaje a Johann Jacobi Bachofen" (*Confabulario*, pp. 17-18) infers that male dominance and spirit have no chance for triumphant survival over the female's earthy nature.

Tercera llamada projects into physical terms the correlation between sex and metaphysics. The geometric design uniting Blanca, Marido, and Angel superficially assumes the shape of the classical love triangle. Since names or designations identify the characters, they are obviously masks, not individuals of flesh and blood. Blanca represents the Biblical Eve of man's fall from grace and the Mother Archetype. Arreola evokes various visual and musical analogies between her and George Bizet's Carmen,²⁷ thus suggesting the female *par excellence* characterized by seduction, earthiness, and treachery. Nonetheless, the chromatic link between her name and the concept of purity plus her intermittent identification with the *paloma* cause the coalescence of the ultimate and ordinary levels of reality within Blanca. Her name also lends itself to innumerable plays on the noun *blanco*, usually connected with Marido's attempts to literally and figuratively hit the bull's-eye.²⁸ Marido consistently fails in every endeavor to attain his goal, be it amorous or spiritual fulfillment. His efforts are often symbolized as shooting at a dove. Envisioned as the Hunter, Marido attempts ritualistic, blood sacrifices of expiation. He achieves an apparent triumph when he impregnates Blanca. Although mysteriously a virgin, she receives the announcement of impending birth from Angel, converted into a fatuous gynecologist who vulgarly mocks Saint Gabriel. The babe's similarity to Christ associates Marido with Joseph but has one ominous flaw. Angel proposes that the child be called Abel. The implied cyclical pattern crushes the hope that a new generation offers evolution and eminence.

The absence of a true name and a shifting identity reduce Marido to a dependent function. His childishness serves to establish Blanca as his Parent. Besides Joseph, Arreola incarnates other weak Biblical patriarchs in Marido. The introductory handshake between the protagonist and his rival becomes an infantile contest of strength. However, this parody resounds with deep implications. Jacob's struggle with the angel (Genesis 32:22-32), in which the divinity assailed

him without apparent reason, results in a victory for mankind. As a consequence of his symbolic struggle, Jacob won grace as the transmitter of the spiritual heritage.²⁹ On the other hand, Marido physically loses his confrontation. In Arreola's rendition, pardon and favor continue to elude Marido, and through him, all humans. Tempted by Angel's appearance as a charlatan peddling "Vita-Anima," an erotic potion of apple juice concocted from the sap of the Tree of Life, Blanca persuades Marido to "sin" and try the wonder drug. This burlesque New Fall causes Marido's disillusionment since the liquid turns out to be a worthless chemical compound. Whereas Adam attained damning knowledge, Marido and his progeny cannot partake of the fruit of immortality.

Angel, Marido's Nemesis, actually fulfills seven different roles and his various personalities serve as makeshift divisions of *Tercera Ullamada*. His protean nature derives in part from a humorous mixing of the usages of the word *ángel* as a term of endearment, as a masculine name, and as a messenger of divine communication. Arreola employs a mathematical symbol in conjunction with the adversary as a vague reference to the archangels of the celestial hierarchy. However, his intention is ironical since the number seven is a mythological allusion to integration. Angel's demonic personality isolates him from literary and religious tradition. The only element he shares with the classical portrayal is his masculine essence. Far from protective or sublime, Angel appears as extremely pedestrian.³⁰ However, he approximates the divinity conceived of as Jehovah when he orchestrates the birth of the child. Marido and Blanca, converted into statues, observe the event from their pedestals. By this inversion of the sculptor's art, Arreola turns life into stone and suggests the permanency of the human lot. Through the immobility of form, Marido and Blanca become an exemplary couple, just like their Biblical counterparts. While Blanca suffers Eve's punishment of difficult and painful childbirth, Marido models his pose on Giovanni da Bologna's "Flying Mercury." Nonetheless, he fails to sustain Mercury's balanced, graceful stance insinuating flight.³¹ Marido's pathetic lack of equilibrium emphasizes man's inability to reach the perfection of spirituality.

Because of the stage directions, the child implicitly takes on the characteristics of Rodin's "Age of Bronze," which symbolizes the awakening of human conscience and the initial triumph of reason over bestiality.³² In this respect the newborn one represents the potential for excellence and his hands form an open, perfect rose. Nevertheless, he depicts man's inevitable failure and is directly compared to Rodin's "Prodigal Son." The boy frees an invisible dove but another child, perhaps a mere projection of his future self, shoots at the bird with a slingshot. The drama comes full swing as this final action repeats the beginning when a child from the audience (Angel, still unidentified) distracted Marido with the same weapon. The coalescence of Angel and child implies that both divine and human elements intervene to convert Marido into an impotent pawn. As before, circularity drives home a very bleak view of human destiny. As Saint Michael, Angel ends the play by closing the gates to the Garden of Eden and taking on the true function of an archangel, that is, revelation. Man remains cut-off without the means of integrating himself into a totality which gives meaning and purpose to existence.

Arreola attempts in the prefatory directions to devalue his script and thereby

establishes the pre-eminence of the tonal effect. These instructions introduce the aura of improvisation and the recurrent efforts to break down the pretense of art and link the action on stage with the experience of life. The pattern of internal duplication, the impression of a series of mirrors inevitably repeating the same conflict, suggests that the present is a fatal reflection of the past and that all individuals share the same limitations. The sporadic references to annihilation as a consequence of man's inhumanity to man, the verbal nonsense, and the cliché-twisting all fit into the primary framework of disharmony and disintegration.

Tercera llamada reveals some striking dramatic gains when compared to *La hora de todos*, above all, an evolution toward a more universally valid image. Harrison Fish, while definitely a type, has little to say to us as a representative of man. Particularity of place and time deforms and limits him as a character. The trite criticism of twentieth-century materialism based on the American way of life is not adequately counterbalanced by the permanence of the ancient *auto* mold. Marido, while unable to provoke our sympathy, has much more consistency as a symbol of man's metaphysical reality. In *Tercera llamada* Arreola moves toward an essential, atemporal, and aspatial conflict faced in daily life and in existence as a whole. He attempts a sense of being, a portrayal of man's unfulfilled state. Both of the plays draw the audience into the development, but *Tercera llamada* requires more active participation on the part of the public. It is not a given entity but a puzzle to be pieced together through total immersion in the composite. Simplicity gives way to complex symbolism and a multifaceted design of the play, "life," and metaphysics. Furthermore, Arreola has perfected his potential for non-verbal drama, particularly in such theatrical episodes as the mimed bullfight, the epic gestures of the finale, and the madcap scenes of the doctors and the photograph. The farcical vein serves the therapeutic effect of making the vital experience endurable and it underlines the madness of man's illusion of perfection.

Purdue University

Notes

1. Antonio Magaña Esquivel and Ruth S. Lamb, *El teatro en México* (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1958), p. 153, and Angel Flores, *Historia y antología del cuento y la novela en Hispanoamérica* (New York: Las Américas, 1967), p. 650.

2. Gaston Baty and René Chavance, *El arte teatral*, trans. Juan José Arreola (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1951).

3. Emmanuel Carballo, *Diecinueve protagonistas de la literatura mexicana del siglo XX* (México: Empresas Editoriales, 1965), p. 370.

4. In this article I refer to Arreola's stories found in the anthology, *Confabulario*, 4th ed., Colección Popular, No. 80 (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1966). Page numbers from this edition will appear in the text.

5. See "La vida privada," *Confabulario*, which dates from 1947 and shows an early prose attempt at Pirandellian internal duplication. As audience to a play, society condones the fictional counterpart to a real-life situation which scandalizes it.

6. Walter Starkie, *Luigi Pirandello: 1867-1936* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1967).

7. Magaña Esquivel, p. 154.

8. The only possible connection arises from the early use of the fish as a eucharistic symbol, Gilbert Cope, *Symbolism in the Bible and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 38, and the protagonist's name, Harrison Fish. More to the point is J. E. Cirlot's summary that "in

broad terms, the fish is a psychic being, or a 'penetrating motion' endowed with a 'heightening' power concerning base matters—that is, in the unconscious," *A Dictionary of Symbols*, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p. 101. Through the program, Fish must delve into his unconscious as during psychiatric treatment. At the same time, the overt caricature of his animal designation serves to underline the play's preoccupation with dehumanization. Fish represents the prototypical U.S. capitalist who objectifies not only others but himself. He parallels types from *Confabulario*, including the scientist Arpad Niklaus of "En verdad os digo" and the businessman-narrator of "El fraude," who cancel religion in favor of material progress.

9. Demetrio Aguilera-Malta's *Infierno negro* (1967) also contains a final judgment framework. After death, Hórridus Nabus is condemned by the victims of his racism to return as a Black man to life in mechanized Nylónpolis.

10. A complete list of works manipulated in *Confabulario* would be too extensive to cite here. See, for example, "Teoría de Dulcinea," a one-page simplification of the *Quijote*, "*Inferno V*," based on the *Divina Commedia*, and "Los alimentos terrestres," composed of 53 excerpts from Góngora's *Epistolario*.

11. Emmet Simpleton and Bárbara resemble in their pedestrian view characters from *Confabulario*: Mona Lisa's friends in "*Cocktail Party*" and the Muse of "*Parturient montes*."

12. *La hora de todos* in *Obras de Juan José Arreola: Varia invención* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1971), pp. 124-37. All subsequent textual citations will refer to this edition.

13. Francisco de Quevedo, *La hora de todos y la Fortuna con seso* in *Los sueños*, ed. Julio Cejador y Frauca (Madrid: Ediciones de "La Lectura," 1917), XXXIV, 62.

14. Raúl Leiva draws a spatial contrast, "lo más alto aloja a lo más bajo y bestial," "Autores y libros," *México en la cultura*, No. 301 (26 Dec. 1954), p. 2.

15. Frank Adams, "Bomber Hits Empire State Building, Setting It Afire at the 79th Floor; 13 Dead, 26 Hurt; Wide Area Rocked," *New York Times* (29 July 1945), p. 1, col. 8; p. 25, cols. 1-8.

16. H. Kuenzel, *Lucas Cranach the Elder*, trans. Anne Ross (New York: Crown Publishers, n.d.).

17. Samuel S. Trifilo, "Mexican Theater Goes to Paris . . . And . . . A Polemic," *Hispania*, XLVII, ii (May 1964), 337.

18. *Tercera llamada* [Terceral o empezamos sin usted in *Obras de Juan José Arreola: Palindroma* (México: Joaquín Mortiz, 1971), p. 73. All subsequent textual citations will refer to this edition.

19. The following discussion is based on Martin Esslin, *The Theatre of the Absurd* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1964). Esslin mentions both of Arreola's French mentors, Louis Jouvet and Jean-Louis Barrault, for fostering this approach to dramatic art. In 1947 Jouvet directed the first presentation of Jean Genet's *The Maids* (p. 161) and in the same year Barrault produced a version of Kafka's *The Trial* (p. 257).

20. Thomas A. Harris, *I'm OK—You're OK* (New York: Avon Books, 1967), p. 63.

21. Arreola often refers to the Bible in *Confabulario*. "De *L'Osservatore*" distorts the image of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:18-19) and "En verdad os digo" manipulates Christ's parable concerning the rich young man (Matthew 19:16-30).

22. The setting visually underlines the desire to give a modern outlook to the constancy of human nature. It consists of a condominium incongruously decorated with stuffed, extinct animals and a monument to the Mother, a Venus of Willendorf. In this jumbling of time and in the basic clash, *Tercera llamada* resembles Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of our Teeth*.

23. The title, a playful rendition of the last warning, contains an unintentional irony. As Arreola told me, *Tercera llamada* has only been performed by an amateur group in Ciudad Guzmán, Jalisco, the author's birthplace.

24. The relationship of the sexes forms the most recurrent source of satirical material in *Confabulario*: a derisive treatment of masculine superiority ("*La trampa*," "*Insectiada*," and "*Interview*"), blatant misogyny ("*Cocktail Party*," "*Metamorfosis*," and "*Homenaje a Otto Weininger*"), ardent misogamy ("*El soñado*," "*In memoriam*," and "*Una mujer amaestrada*") and comical cuckoldry ("*Pueblerina*," "*El faro*," and "*Caballero desarmado*").

25. Emmanuel Carballo, *El cuento mexicano del siglo XX* (México: Empresas Editoriales, 1964), p. 70.

26. Another epigram stresses a complementary idea: "Cada vez que el hombre y la mujer tratan de reconstruir el Arquetipo, componen un ser monstruoso: la pareja," (*Confabulario*, p. 21).

27. Many parallels exist between the play and "Carmen." They share a prototypical triangle: rival-toreador, seductive female, deceived mate. Bizet's José just misses shooting the new lover; Marido only slightly wounds Angel. The bullfight of *Tercera llamada* ends to the music of Bizet's "La habanera."

28. Arreola conscientiously plays with the oral tradition as far as the central motif is con-

cerned. In the closing moments, a popular song is recited: "No salgas paloma al campo, / mira que soy cazador, / y si te tiro y te mato, / para mí será el dolor, / para mí será el quebranto. . ." (p. 143).

29. Ralph H. Elliott, *The Message of Genesis* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1969), pp. 170-76.

30. Arreola's secularized view of angels begins in *Conjulario* where they are always associated with physical struggle. Man usually loses the battle with a boxer-type: "Boletín de última hora: En la lucha con el ángel, he perdido por indecisión" (p. 21), which Marido recites during the play, and "Una de dos." In "Caballero desarmado" the celestial agent intervenes directly in human affairs. He dehornes the cuckold-narrator by making him do a flip-flop and later returns the horns, mounted on velvet.

31. Lincoln Rothschild, *Sculpture through the Ages* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1942), p. 176.

32. Story Sommerville, *Auguste Rodin and his Works* (London: George Allen & Unwin, n.d.), p. 18.

Presentación de teatro hispanoamericano en Cincinnati

Junto a la celebración del simposio de Teatro Español, organizado por la revista *Estreno* y realizado en la Universidad de Cincinnati, hubo una presentación de tres obras del teatro breve hispanoamericano: *La campana*, de Julio Ortega (peruano), *Estudio en blanco y negro*, de Virgilio Piñera (cubano) e *Historia de un número*, de Josefina Pla (paraguaya). Los estudiantes de la Xavier University, bajo la dirección de Thomas R. Coates, se encargaron de la presentación que se efectuó en marzo de 1975. Mark Finch dio una conferencia, "Algunas observaciones sobre el teatro hispanoamericano."

T.A.P.