Time and Responsibility in Dragún's *Tupac Amaru*

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Osvaldo Dragún's *Tupac Amaru* establishes a relationship between the protagonist Areche's tragic experience and the tension that exists between specific time and cosmic timelessness, making it possible for the spectator to recognize a correlation between himself and his own era and the historical events taking place on the stage. Despite the protagonist's negative image in history, emphasis on his personal suffering enhances the spectator's identification with this central character. The focus on the temporal-atemporal nature of that suffering influences the spectator to pity Areche as well as to recognize a universal pattern of effort-defeat-responsibility within the protagonist's dramatized experience.

Although the play's title would seem to indicate that Tupac Amaru is the central character, Areche fulfills the role of protagonist both structurally and thematically. Sam Smiley defines the concept of protagonist as "the character receiving the most attention from the playwright, the other characters, and eventually the audience."[1] In Dragún's play, the *Visitador* is the center of attention for author, characters and audience. Both scene and action consistently focus on Areche: all acts take place in his study, except for a few scenes of the last act in which Tupac Amaru's cell is adjacent. Even in those scenes taking place in the cell, Areche is constantly present in his study, and he appears in all other scenes of the play. In addition, because of his role as representative of the king, he initiates all the major events, and is thus central to the spectator's formulation of the central question.

Bernard Grebanier has developed an analytical procedure or "proposition" for distinguishing the protagonist from other characters whose roles also fulfill important functions in a play.[2] Application of this method of analysis to Dragún's play supports the *Visitador* Areche in the role of protagonist. Three stages of development form Grebanier's proposition: one is the first significant event of the play creating the condition under which the action develops. Stage two, the event which logically follows the condition of action, raises a question which *must* be answered. These first two events require some element in common so

that the resulting action becomes a question that *needs* to be resolved. The third and final step, then, is the central question itself, and the rest of the play should develop so as to answer that question. In *Tupac Amaru* the steps taken in forming the central question are:

1. Areche, the Spanish *Visitador* to Cuzco, who feels himself superior to and distrusts both *criollos* and Indians, learns of Tupac Amaru's rebellion.
2. In spite of his distrust of the *criollos* and of the Indians, Areche includes both groups in a plan to conquer Tupac Amaru and his forces.
3. Will Areche conquer Tupac Amaru?

The rest of the play focuses on Areche's motivations, conflicts and reactions as he deals with the rebellion, with the answer to the central question becoming apparent to the protagonist only in the final moments of the play.

The ultimate focus on the individual's role in history becomes evident through Areche's *anagnorisis*. Tension between specific day-to-day time and time in a more cosmic sense creates Areche's suffering and is responsible for his coming to awareness. Two incompatible imperatives[3] form the basis of the protagonist's inner tension. The first imperative is both a legal and a personal one. As *Visitador General,* Areche is required to uphold the traditional power structure between Spain and her colonies. Furthermore, as a Spanish citizen living in a foreign culture, he feels a patriotic obligation to maintain that structure. The conflictive imperative is a moral one. As a human being, Areche is morally bound to treat his fellow humans—in this case the Indians—with kindness and understanding. These two imperatives are unresolvable as the play presents them. Actions belonging to a specific point in time are in conflict with a moral law that knows no time boundaries. The spectator, by identifying with the protagonist, arrives at his own discovery in which he recognizes a relationship between Areche's experience and his own.

Areche, who personifies the timelessness of man's physical and mental suffering, provides the spectator with an identifiable link to the play's particular situation set in an earlier time. Although the Spanish *visitador* is normally a negative figure in history and literature,[4] Areche's specific characterization is not that of an inherently evil man, but rather that of a loyal Spanish subject who believes in the traditional relationship between conqueror and conquered. His internal conflict is rooted in his loyalty to the traditional, historical social structure between the Spaniards and the Indians which the Conquest established, and in the break with that tradition which an acknowledgment of the rights of the Indians as human beings would require.

The first clear indication of Areche's loyalty to the traditional structure comes in Act I in his reaction to the *criollo* Flores' protest of the use of force against the Indians: "El señor Comandante y su Ilustrísima han nacido en este maldito país. Eso los inclina a la benevolencia. Pero yo soy aquí el representante de su Majestad el Rey de España."[5] At times, his political loyalty becomes a blind faith in Spain herself: "No es su fidelidad lo que me importa, sino España. Nosotros somos hombres, pequeñas partículas de tierra . . . y tarde o temprano desapareceremos, convertidos en polvo. Pero España . . . España es Dios para mí" (p.

29). Placing Spain on the level of God gives the spectator a point of reference which enhances his perception of Areche's intense dedication to the social stratification which places Spaniards at the top and *criollos* and Indians in a subservient position. Areche's stubborn loyalty to the traditional social structure points to his own fear of losing his place in that stratification.

Arthur Miller has commented on the tragic hero's fear of losing his position: "The quality [in tragedies] that does shake us . . . derives from the underlying fear of being displaced, the disaster inherent in being torn away from our chosen image of what and who we are in this world."[6] The protagonist demonstrates this fear of displacement in questioning not the Indians' rebellion itself, but rather their boldness in thinking and in decision-making—both actions which their subservient position does not permit. In the judgment scene in Act II, he says to Micaela: "¡Eres esclava! ¿Entiendes? Tu cuello y tus manos llevan todavía la marca de las cadenas que España puso a los incas! ¡Eres esclava y no hay nada que tú puedes decidir! Todas tus decisiones fueron mentiras. Mentiste a los demás y te mentiste a ti misma" (p. 49). Although Areche perceives the battle as a psychological one, he mistakenly chooses to fight it on the physical level. His suffering emerges from his realization that his own power is being eroded, not strengthened, by his insistence on prolonging the Conquest's ethos of force.

In the first act, the suggestion of a correspondence between Areche and the old Inca Tambohuacso associates the *Visitador*'s suffering with the Indians' rebellion. Areche's convulsive seizure prior to his interview with Tambohuacso, in addition to his comments on the old Inca chief's good health comparing Tambohuacso's eighty years with his own sixty, establish the logical comparison between the two men. When the elderly Inca says "Mi alma, vieja y cansada, sólo se dirige hacia la paz" (p. 12), the spectator transfers the physical comparison between the two men which Areche himself made to a comparison of their spiritual tranquility. The protagonist's yearning for the unreachable, beautiful things of Spain signals a more personal aspect of his suffering. In the first scene of the play Areche makes a comparison between Spain and Peru similar to the one between himself and Tambohuacso: "Me gusta el chocolate. Tiene el sabor dulce y agradable de las cosas bellas. En Madrid existen aún cosas bellas. ¡Pero en este maldito país! . ." (p. 10). In Act III, Areche again makes the comparison as he says to Cabrera: "¿Sabes que en España es primavera y los árboles florecen? *(Ríe.)* Pero aquí el frío ha podrido mis huesos. . ." (p. 64). Areche's longing for Spain—more human than political—softens his negative historical image and at the same time places his suffering on a level accessible to the spectator.

Auditory signs making the same sensorial experience available to both character and spectator create a further point of contact. The ringing of the bells in the first act indicates both death and the relationship of the Indians' unrest to Areche's deteriorating physical and mental condition. As the first scene of the play opens, Areche's reaction to the bells is to ask if some important person has died. Bishop Moscoso provides the explanation that they ring because of the unrest among the people. The ringing continues throughout the first scene, changing tempo or force to parallel the changes in tension, finally sounding the loudest at Tambohuacso's execution.

The spectator hears the first drum rolls during the execution, thereafter associating that sound with the physical power which the Spaniard exerts over his subjects. In the second act, the drum sounds in conjunction with the Town Crier's announcement of the trial of Tupac Amaru and his wife. As the tension builds throughout Act III, the Town Crier, accompanied by the drum, repeatedly advises the characters and the audience of the exact date and of the impending execution of the Inca leader. Finally, the association of the sound of the drum and the voice of the Town Crier with the physical force Areche uses against the Indians facilitates the audience's perception of the irony in Areche's empty victory. At the very moment of Areche's realization that he should have befriended the Inca instead of executing him, the Town Crier passes by, announcing the execution and shouting "¡Oh, día de gloria!" (p. 78). The fact that Areche is completely alone at this moment and does not react to the announcement indicates that this particular speech is solely for the benefit of the spectator, who recognizes that the Spaniard has only succeeded in defeating himself.

The third auditory sign is the storm of the last act. The storm is a mysterious and ominous force which Cabrera refers to as a "maleficio" and as a "fantasma." At one point the windows are blown open just as there is a terrific lightning bolt. These simultaneous occurrences seemingly verify the mysterious power which Cabrera suggests. The alternation between the sounds of the storm and those of the drum and Town Crier symbolizes the interior suffering of the Visitador. This alternation, prevalent throughout the third act, exists on a smaller scale in the scene where Areche has been left completely alone for the first time in the play. The deafening sound of the thunder immediately follows the Town Crier's "¡Oh, día de gloria para el Cuzco!" (p. 74). Areche's reaction is one of fright and he shouts for his aide. At this point the Town Crier passes by the window again and the drums begin to sound with more force, giving the appearance that there is a battle going on between the storm and the Crier and drum, with Areche in the middle of the two sides. The spectator who recognizes the figurative use of the storm perceives this as a battle representing Areche's inner experience. Furthermore, the spectator shares a part of that experience as he reacts to the same deafening noises as does Areche.

The concept of self-victimization as a universal human shortcoming provides yet another point of contact between the spectator and the protagonist. Although Areche himself remains basically unaware of his own complicity in his downfall until nearly the end of the play, the spectator recognizes the aspect of self-victimization earlier, through the *Visitador*'s own observations. Grebanier discusses the importance of the self-victimization of the tragic hero: ". . . since we are members of the human race, we can identify with a deed which is the product of human failings. . . . For there is dignity in the catastrophe of which a man is himself somewhat the author."[7] Several times during the play Areche comes very close, but not to the point of recognizing his part in bringing about his suffering. At one point he says: "Una vez en Madrid, vi a un actor gordo que decía en un final de acto: '¡Me siento tan feliz!' Y en ese preciso momento se le cayó la peluca. . . . ¡Me siento tan feliz, señor Medina, tan feliz!" (p. 43). In the indirect comparison of himself to the actor who lost his wig at the high point of his evening, Areche foreshadows his own end in the play. The fore-

shadowing is lost on everyone except the audience, since the other characters are incapable of understanding on that level, and Areche shows no further awareness of his error until the end of the play. The spectator, however, if he recognizes the protagonist's self-victimization, can identify with the aspect of human failing even before Areche experiences his *anagnorisis*.

The protagonist's discovery of his error establishes an atemporal side to his conflict in which the spectator can see himself. Areche's *anagnorisis* moves him from an awareness of his temporal condition to comprehension of his role in the concept of human brotherhood on an atemporal plane. He is completely alone in the room as he makes his discovery: "Estoy solo. . . . Estuve solo desde que llegué a esta maldita tierra. . . . No debí hacerte matar, indio! Solo tú me hiciste siempre compañía. . . . No debí hacerte matar! Debí tomarte por la mano y pasear contigo por el mundo. . ." (pp. 77-78). In his realization, he progresses from his present situation ("Estoy solo") through a political, then personal, and finally, moral discovery. The reference to "esta maldita tierra" brings to mind his political affiliation to Spain in which he has been alone since the beginning. Of the other two Spaniards in the play, one dies in the first act and the other is a youth who lacks Areche's courage and dedication. Personally, the protagonist recognizes that only Tupac Amaru has accepted him as an individual. The Inca had once prayed for peace for the *Visitador*'s soul, acknowledging Areche as a person without regard to his political position or racial background. On a moral plane, the idea of walking hand in hand through the world indicates Areche's discovery of the human bonds that exist between the two men aside from their racial and political differences. This progression from the on-stage, present condition of the protagonist toward the concept of human brotherhood establishes an atemporality in Areche's conflict in which the spectator can participate.

Emphasis on the specific dates and duration of the past historical event creates a contrast between the durative and nondurative aspects of existence which form the basis of Areche's inner torment. The temporal-atemporal tension that develops directs the play's focus to the role the individual plays in history. In each act, references to the specific date and changes in scenification work to establish the temporal aspect. When the spectator, in Act I, learns from the scenic directions that it is November 17, 1780, he focuses both on time in general and on time as history, since Tupac Amaru's rebellion on that date is a fact of history. In the second scene of the first act, the changed appearance of the room and the later time of day indicate that some hours have passed. The room has taken on the appearance of war reconnaissance headquarters with a large map of Peru stretched across Areche's desk. The darkness outside the window contrasts with the afternoon light of the previous scene. The opening scene of Act II again signals that time has passed as the office has become a courtroom ready for the trial of Tupac and Micaela. The ensuing dialogue reveals that the rebellion has ended and that the trial is already in its last day. Act III focuses on the specific date, May 17, 1781, which the Town Crier repeats several times, emphasizing for the spectator the passage of six months since the opening lines of the first act.

Areche's doubts about his place in time invoke the spectator's feeling of awe as the latter realizes, through his identification with the protagonist, that he too is a participant in a temporal-atemporal conflict.[8] Areche demonstrates the dur-

ative nature of the conflict through his awareness that God (or destiny) has assigned to him the role which he plays in life. The first reference to time which the *Visitador* makes introduces his inner conflict. Commenting to the Bishop on his illness, he says: "¡Ay, Ilustrísima . . . este cuerpo mío, actual, se niega a soportar un alma que pertenece al año mil quinientos! ¡Una gran injusticia ha cometido conmigo el Altísimo! . . ." (p. 24). By juxtaposing "cuerpo mío, actual" and "un alma que pertenece al año mil quinientos" he suggests the universal human conflict between body and soul. He expands this division to include the idea of destiny, commenting to the Bishop: "Siento como si mi vida hubiese sido arrojada por una catapulta para ser puesta en este momento frente a Tupac Amaru" (p. 32). By suggesting that because of destiny he is in the position in which he finds himself, Areche avoids taking responsibility for his actions at this time.

Areche's perception of timelessness further augments the atemporal aspect of the conflict. In Act III he insistently asks Cabrera for reassurance of the exact date:

> ARECHE.—¿Estás seguro que hoy es diez y ocho de mayo de mil setecientos ochenta y uno?
>
> CABRERA.—El pregonero lo ha repetido desde la mañana, excelencia. ¿Se siente usted mal?
>
> ARECHE.—No . . . no. De pronto creí que flotaba en el tiempo, en un día cualquiera sin fecha y sin hora. ¡Oh, como les temo a esos días, Cabrera! (p. 65)

Despite Cabrera's reassurance and the fact that the Town Crier has repeated the date several times, Areche cannot comprehend his own relationship to the present time. The idea that what is happening could be taking place in any time opens the possibility that it could be occurring in the present, as the spectator, who integrates the material the play presents to him, sees more than the relationship between the specific actions which the characters portray on stage. He sees in that relationship the self-victimization of the tragic pattern and recognizes its universal applicability outside the play itself.

The play ends on an ironic note that serves to underscore the role of the individual in determining the direction of his own life through his actions. Areche's final order in Tupac Amaru's execution is to throw the Inca's ashes into the river. However, the storm disperses them over the land before the order is fulfilled, symbolizing the distribution of Tupac Amaru's ideals to the people. But this revelation comes after Areche's death, thus having meaning only for the spectator. Because of Areche's earlier suggestion that he was destined to end his life in this particular confrontation with Tupac Amaru, the dispersal of the ashes would appear to result from the workings of destiny. Nevertheless, throughout the third act, the storm has become an outward manifestation of Areche's inner conflict. Symbolically, then, the storm that picks up the ashes and blows them over the land indicates that the protagonist's inner battle is responsible for his own defeat and for his enemy's victory.

In *Tupac Amaru,* the protagonist's inner tension emphasizes the individual's responsibility for the consequences of his own decisions. Areche's obligations

within the specific time during which his actions occur and his perception of a timeless and inherent moral requirement create his dividedness. Areche's physical and mental suffering, which develop out of his inner turmoil, provide a basis for the spectator's personal identification with the protagonist. The observer's pity for the protagonist develops out of this suffering while the awe associated with the experience of tragedy comes from the spectator's own recognition of a pattern of effort-defeat-responsibility that is applicable to a broader time and space than those present in the play.

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Notes

1. Sam Smiley, *Playwriting: The Structure of Action* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1971), p. 96.

2. Bernard Grebanier, *Playwriting: How to Write for the Theater,* Apollo ed. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1965). Grebanier is indebted to the New York theatre critic William T. Price (1842-1920) who laid much of the groundwork from which the proposition concept was developed. Discussion of the procedure can be found in chapter four of *Playwriting: How to Write for the Theater.*

3. The term "imperative" comes from Robert Heilman's *Tragedy and Melodrama: Versions of Experience* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968) in which he defines the term as "the overriding obligation, the discipline of self that cannot be rejected without penalty, whether it is felt as divine law, moral law, civil law, or in a less codified but no less powerful way as tradition, duty, honor, 'principle', or 'voice of conscience'," p. 13.

4. The Mexican playwright and poet of the nineteenth century, Ignacio Rodríguez Galván, creates an extremely negative image of the Spanish *visitador* in his play *Muñoz, visitador de México.*

5. Osvaldo Dragún, *Tupac Amaru* (Buenos Aires: Ediciones Losange, 1957), p. 11. All subsequent references to the play are from this edition and will be cited in parentheses in the text.

6. Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man," in *Aspects of the Drama: A Handbook,* Sylvan Barnet, Morton Berman and William Burto, eds. (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1962), p. 65.

7. Grebanier, p. 273.

8. George Woodyard mentions Areche's displacement in time, saying: "Areche confiesa su fracaso como un hombre que ha sobrevivido a su tiempo." "Imágenes teatrales de Tupac Amaru: Génesis de un mito," *Conjunto,* No. 37 (julio-sept 1978), 64.