

Book Reviews

Guimarães, Carmelinda. *Um Ato de Resistência: O Teatro de Oduvaldo Vianna Filho*. São Paulo: MG Editores Associados, 1984. 162 pp.

Doze anos após sua morte, Oduvaldo Vianna Filho parece estar consagrado como o mais importante dramaturgo brasileiro dos últimos vinte e cinco anos. A uma lista sempre crescente de ensaios sobre a obra de Vianinha vem agora somar-se, graças à dedicação e ao afincado de Carmelinda Guimarães, este primeiro estudo crítico em forma de livro. A comemoração, neste ano de 1986, do cinquentenário do nascimento de Oduvaldo Vianna Filho tem dado ocasião, no Brasil, a uma série de eventos culturais assim como a um bom número de artigos e reportagens sobre a personalidade e a obra do vibrante e muito querido ator, teatrólogo e ser humano prematuramente desaparecido, aos 38 anos, em 1974.

O surgimento do livro de Carmelinda Guimarães foi precedido, por pouco tempo, pela publicação póstuma de uma coleção de textos de Vianinha, muitos deles inéditos até então. Esta coleção, *Vianinha: Teatro, Televisão, Política* (São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983), impecavelmente organizada e anotada por um amigo de Oduvaldo, o ator e crítico teatral Fernando Peixoto, deverá tornar-se consulta obrigatória para qualquer estudioso do teatro brasileiro contemporâneo. Na verdade, a antologia organizada por Peixoto constitui uma imprescindível leitura complementar ao livro de Carmelinda, tantas são as referências por ela feitas a materiais incluídos em *Vianinha: Teatro, Televisão, Política*.

É justamente a parte de documentação que se sobressai em *Um Ato de Resistência*: basta notar que das cento e sessenta e duas páginas do livro, as quarenta últimas nos proporcionam uma riqueza de informações quanto à cronologia, dramaturgia, e bibliografia de, e sobre, Vianna Filho. Nesse respeito, é possível afirmar que as obras de Guimarães e Peixoto se alinham com a profusamente detalhada edição de *Rasga Coração* pelo Serviço Nacional de Teatro em 1980, na qual o texto da peça toma apenas sessenta e seis das trezentas e vinte e duas páginas do volume, o restante sendo ocupado por anotações, pesquisas, e informações de cunho histórico sobre o período coberto pela peça.

A organização estrutural de *Um Ato de Resistência* obedece a um esquema surpreendentemente tradicional, acompanhando a obra de Vianinha em uma seqüência estritamente cronológica, relegando o estudo temático ou cênico a uma posição secundária. Assim é que o primeiro capítulo do livro se inicia

com o já muito gasto “Nascido em . . . , filho de . . . ” (15), e o último capítulo se encerra com a transcrição da derradeira carta escrita por Vianinha antes de morrer e a reação do destinatário da referida carta, seu amigo Ferreira Gullar (115-116). A abordagem biográfica, que felizmente não deixa de incluir os pontos marcantes da carreira de Vianinha—a aproximação com o Teatro de Arena de São Paulo, o surgimento do Centro Popular de Cultura, a fundação do Grupo Opinião no Rio de Janeiro—é então intercalada por análises das peças mais importantes do dramaturgo. Além disso, a narrativa é complementada por relatos das freqüentes e lamentáveis limitações impostas à vida e à carreira de Vianna Filho pelo regime militar instaurado em 1964. Vianinha estava destinado a morrer sem ver a suspensão daquela instituição, a censura federal, que tão sistematicamente prejudicou a sua obra teatral.

Antes de passar à análise das peças, é necessário apontar alguns erros e imprecisões do texto. Estão incorretas as datas da presidência de Cacá Diégues no Centro Popular de Cultura (32), e do prêmio “Casa de las Américas” concedido a *Quatro Quadras de Terra* em 1964 (52). Ainda quanto a datas, é difícil aceitar a inclusão de Hegel (1770-1831) em uma lista de “filósofos contemporâneos” (117). No resumo do enredo de *Papa Highirte*, o nome do personagem Mariz é duas vezes confundido com o de Manito (156); do mesmo modo, o resumo de *Rasga Coração* erroneamente sugere que o vestibulando Luca está cursando medicina (105). Finalmente, apesar de pouco numerosos, há alguns erros de imprensa que não deixam de incomodar: para citar apenas os que envolvem nomes próprios, aparecem incorretamente escritos os nomes de Nietzsche (117), Tennessee Williams (118), Otto Maria Carpeaux (132), e do personagem de *Papa Highirte*, General Menandro (156).

As análises das peças se caracterizam por um evidente desnível, indo desde os excelentes estudos dedicados a *Moço em Estado de Sítio*, *A Longa Noite de Cristal*, e *Rasga Coração*, até os apressados tratamentos dados a duas das mais importantes peças de Vianinha, *Se Correr o Bicho Pega, se Ficar o Bicho Come* e *Papa Highirte*. Nos casos mais graves, como na secção dedicada a *A Mais-valia Vai Acabar, seu Edgar*, a autora parece ter simplesmente juntado depoimentos de críticos teatrais, de companheiros de trabalho do teatrólogo, ou do próprio Vianinha, e os alinhavado frouxamente um após outro, usando, para tal fim, observações suas, na maior parte inexpressivas ou curtas demais. Este, e outros pontos fracos do livro, são, porém, facilmente compensados pela boa qualidade que caracteriza o resto deste estudo crítico. De qualidade certamente superior é a análise do envolvimento de Vianinha com a televisão, tanto na criação de textos de novelas como nas produções, com Paulo Pontes, para a série “Caso Especial” da Rede Globo. O mérito desta secção de *Um Ato de Resistência* é demonstrar que, apesar de não nutrir grandes ilusões quanto à qualidade artística das suas colaborações para a televisão, Vianinha pôde detectar a imensa importância desse meio de comunicação dentro do contexto da realidade social brasileira. Aquele que vem a ser o último e mais sólido dos cinco capítulos deste livro abre com esta secção sobre televisão e culmina com o excelente estudo sobre *Rasga Coração*. Com muito acerto, a autora concentra sua análise da obra-prima de Vianinha na relação entre o panorama histórico de quarenta anos de vida coletiva brasileira e os proble-

mas que dominam a vida individual de membros de três gerações de uma família carioca. Contudo, o reconhecimento da magnífica exploração teatral dos conflitos sociais e individuais em *Rasga Coração* e nas outras peças de Vianna Filho é apenas um primeiro passo em direção ao estudo aprofundado que sua obra exige.

Este panorama do teatro de Oduvaldo Vianna Filho deverá servir como uma competente, se bem que breve, introdução à carreira e à vida do mais destacado dramaturgo brasileiro do último quarto de século. Porém, à luz dos escritos reunidos em *Vianinha: Teatro, Televisão, Política*, muito resta por fazer antes que possamos compreender a riqueza e a complexidade do *corpus* teatral que ele nos legou.

Severino João Albuquerque
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Puig, Manuel. *Under a Mantle of Stars*. Trans. Ronald Christ. New York: Lumen Books, 1985. 64 pp.

On the back cover of the English version of Manuel Puig's two act, five character play, *Bajo un manto de estrellas*, it states: "Readers accustomed to Puig's dramatic novels will find here a play that reads like a novel." Ronald Christ's translation is an authentic and careful rendering of this original work. The English version clearly replicates Puig's idiosyncratic forms of speech, characterization, and stage direction. Christ has created a script that is highly theatrical, interesting, and playable in English.

A discussion of the translation is less an examination of the translator's work, in this case, than it is an exploration of Manuel Puig as playwright. In reading the text what might seem to be lapses or strange choices in translations are actually indications and intentions from the original Spanish. This work was first published by Seix Barral in 1983 along with the theatrical text of *El beso de la mujer araña*. Christ originally provided an English version of *Bajo un manto de estrellas* independently of Puig. Then, both translator and playwright reworked the English script, making minor changes they felt necessary in conjunction with the demands of the American stage.

A line by line comparison of the English with the Spanish reveals only eight or so insignificant line cuts, adaptations, or intended word changes. The original was not altered in language or argument in the translation.

Where Christ most succeeds as a translator is in his ability to find proper and theatrically interesting word choices for Puig's original metaphor-laden language. According to the introduction to Act One: "Nothing is realistic, everything stylized, including the characters' speech." The latter clarification about speech was added by the translator.

The plot is straightforward yet illusive in its changes of characters and unrealistic setting of a late 1940s upper-class Argentine family. The Master and Mistress of the country house engage in an indirect conversation, not looking at each other, but saying more about what is on their minds than what is socially acceptable to say. They long for their adoptive daughter, "who seems to be lost." The daughter returns distraught; her supposed fiancé,

Antonio, has jilted her that very day, or so she explains. A pair of visitors, Lady Visitor and Visitor, arrive at the secluded country home, dressed for a costume ball with a 1920s theme. They pose as jewel thieves.

The play reveals that the real parents of the daughter “were supposed to have died” in a car accident and the visitors pretend to be the parents. The daughter then mistakes the Visitor for her fiancé and the Mistress of the house is sure he is the real father, with whom she had an adulterous affair. Act One ends with the best scene of the play. The daughter has seduced the Visitor; they are making love on the living-room couch. The Lady Visitor, Master, and Mistress witness the scene, trying to convince the daughter that they are not actually there, just present in her mind, in the way most parents are present mentally at the deflowering of a virgin daughter.

This final scene of Act One is most reminiscent of the early works of Christopher Durang, *Identity Crisis* and *The Nature and Purpose of the Universe*. However, Puig does not rely on the frenzy of constant, breakneck hysteria and the self-effacing humor that characterizes Durang’s work. Puig has written a play of supposed identities, mistaken identities, and assumed identities, less self-proclaimingly psychological and more lyrical in the language and absurdity of the situation.

Act Two reveals the Mistress as murderess, who eliminates the pair of visitors. In agony, the daughter leaves the house only to return seconds later as the long-awaited housemaid. The pair of visitors returns as nurse and doctor from a psychiatric clinic, and lead the daughter/housemaid away, quite willingly, in a straight jacket. The Mistress and Master remain, refusing to open the door again to the strangers who knock, accompanied by a police siren.

As playwright, Puig allows the audience to be voyeuristic and witness Oedipal sex, domestic farce, nostalgic absurdities, and a pathetic society. What he is not is insightful and penetrating—a deliberate choice in exploiting the soap opera fashion of stock characters, impossible situations, and ludicrous events. Perhaps the overriding Freudian determinism gets in the way of alternatives for the characters and leaves them a bit too analytical and not humorous enough. This play is more evocative of the theatrical and cinematic possibilities of *Boquitas pintadas* or *Traición de Rita Hayworth*, both Puig novels, than a script demanding production.

The linguistic value of the play has been clearly conveyed by Christ’s translation. The soap opera elements, including a “cheap” murder mystery, were intended by the playwright and not modified with the translation. The English version makes one ask for a play styled more openly on the antics of a Charles Ludlam or John Viccaro, pushing beyond the limits of reality and believability, only to have them return as camp, although Puig does still demand a grain of psychological truth and possibility from the characters and situations.

With hindsight it is always easy to ask for more. What is an excellent translation of a good and interesting play could only have been enhanced with a joint publication of the English version of the play *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. In addition, Puig’s close collaboration with Christ in the translation process would provide an ideal topic for an introductory note to the text. All this,

however, is secondary to an English version that stands on its own merits and leaves us asking for more Manuel Puig as playwright and more Ronald Christ as translator.

Rodney Karl Reading
New York City

Malaj, Leib. *Regeneración (Ibergus)*. Trans. Nora Glickman and Rosalia Rosembuj, with a critical study, "La trata de blancas," by Nora Glickman. Buenos Aires: Editorial Pardes, 1984. 135 pp.

From the first to the last page of this volume, I was both fascinated and horrified to learn about the white slavery and prostitution of Jewish women from Poland in Argentina and Brazil from 1890-1930, indeed a shameful chapter of sexual exploitation in both Argentine and Jewish history.

In his highly successful Yiddish play *Regeneración* (1926), Leib Malaj (pseudonym for Leibl Slatzman) reveals the complicated nature of the conflictive relations between the "Vítishe," the respectable although often over-zealous/Jewish Argentine community, and the "Blate," the "tainted ones," both the female victims and the cynical exploiters (called "rufianes" and "caftanes") who created their own theatres, synagogues and cemeteries as a response to their forced exclusion from those communal centers by their brethren.

Malaj depicts the human toll that the tragedy of prostitution and the thwarted attempts at transformation, or "regeneración," take on the lives of Reizl, a young Jewish prostitute; Silva, the older Brazilian doctor who offers to marry Reizl to save her from the life she leads; Kvoke, the self-serving Madam who paradoxically also adheres to the rituals of the Jewish religion; and El Rubio, the compassionate Jewish *criollo* who also loves Reizl and who desperately tries to convince her to emigrate to the more egalitarian "America" (i.e., North America) where she could be one more among many and not the center of scandal and jealousy that she is in Argentina.

Nora Glickman and Rosalía Rosembuj's translation from the Yiddish to the Spanish is smooth and reads well. Their inclusion of various words in Yiddish, such as "goi," a non-Jewish person; "najes," pleasure; "Kain ein hore," an expression to protect against the "evil eye"; and "mitzve," a good deed, creates an authentic Yiddish flavor. Glickman provides a helpful study of the work itself, its idiomatic language, structure, characters and its proselytizing young author (born in Poland and emigrated to Argentina in 1922), who followed his play to New York, Canada and Brazil, speaking against prostitution.

As students and scholars of theatre what is worthy of note is the pivotal role the theatre first played in perpetuating this prostitution and later, through Malaj's play, in exposing this social evil. Originally the Yiddish theatre was financially supported by the "Blate" and consequently, it was the only place where the prostitutes could freely mingle with the "good citizens." However, the conflicts and fighting finally reached the point where a representative from the League of Nations was sent to Buenos Aires to investigate the activities of the Yiddish theatre!

Glickman presents a wealth of information in her critical study. She

describes and cites numerous newspaper and police investigations carried out at that time. She captures the various points of view of the reporters toward the Jews they were writing about—even Roberto Arlt covered the Jewish “mafia” in *El Mundo*—and she observes that some were blatantly anti-Semitic to begin with. Here Glickman notes those Argentine *criollo* authors who wrote against immigration, such as Miguel Cané, Eugenio Cambaceres, Julián Martel and Manuel Gálvez.

Glickman also traces the image of *las polacas* in Yiddish literature, examining works by literary giants such as Nobel prize winner I. B. Singer, and Solomon Asch and Sholem Aleichem, all of whom tended to create an exotic and sinister aura around those involved in white slavery. Glickman examines this theme in two Argentine dramas, *El cambalache de Petroff* (1920) by Alberto Novión and *Nadie la conoció nunca* (1926) by the well-known Samuel Eichelbaum. She also includes an analysis of the present-day treatment of the Jewish prostitute in Mario Szychman’s *Los judíos del Mar Dulce* (1972), *La verdadera crónica falsa* (1972), *A las 20:25 nuestra señora entró en la inmortalidad* (1981) and the Brazilian Moacyr Scliar’s *O Ciclo das Águas* (1978).

Glickman’s research never gets in the way of the compelling story she is telling, replete though it is with extensive documentation and notes. Her well-documented study might, however, have been of even greater interest had it included a feminist perspective on the situation of forced prostitution (perhaps using recent essays of Kate Millet on the subject), or a more in-depth examination of the socio-economic exigencies behind the organized selling of Polish daughters into prostitution by their fellow Jews. What I particularly missed was a consideration of questions such as who were the traffickers, the “caftanes”? Are there diaries or letters left by the women, as in the case of *The Maimie Papers*, the letters of a Jewish prostitute in the late 1800’s to her Gentile benefactress (published by the Feminist Press)? What happened to the women after 1930 when over 400 “rufianes” and prostitutes were arrested or deported?

It is an acknowledgment of Glickman’s work that I/we are plagued by these questions well after we close the book. This is a perfect example of the sociology of literature, demanding not only an analysis of the literary design of the play but also commentary about the origin of this phenomenon of white slavery, the reasons for its longevity (over 40 years), and its effect on the Jewish community as well as the larger Argentine community.

What Glickman has done, in a highly readable and amenable style, is to introduce a controversial theme to a wider public, as well as allowing us, through her translation, to be privy to a play intended for the Jewish community alone and not for Spanish-speaking “outsiders.” She has piqued her audience’s interest, an audience of scholars, teachers and lay readers who will certainly think further about this painful episode in Argentine Jewish life.

Gloria Feiman Waldman
York College, CUNY

Luzuriaga, Gerardo. *Bibliografía del teatro ecuatoriano 1900-1980*. Quito: Editorial Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana, 1984. 131 pp.

All bibliographic work represents a tedious and often thankless service to

further the profession, particularly when the bibliography concerns little-known or seldom studied areas of production and criticism. Such is the case with a bibliographic study as esoteric (in the opinion of some of our fellow Hispanists) as Ecuadorian theatre. We are indebted to Gerardo Luzuriaga for his work. Colleagues who contribute to the availability of primary and secondary source bibliographic material receive little recognition for the countless hours they spend researching the material, although our use of their findings undoubtedly will save us a commensurate number of hours of research time on our own projects. The value to a scholar of a good bibliography is inestimable.

Luzuriaga has listed the primary source, creative production of Ecuadorian dramatists we have heard of or worked on, like Adoum, Aguilera Malta, Descalzi, Icaza, Martínez Queirolo, and Tobar García. Perhaps we have even read a play by Víctor Rendón, but what do we know of local favorites, like Rodrigo Chávez, Alvaro San Félix, Hernán Rodríguez Castelo, Pedro Vera, Carlos Villasis Endara, or Agustín Vulgarín? The works of these and more than 150 others occupy the pages of this bibliography.

The publication information on plays by recognized, as well as obscure playwrights is reproduced in some detail in the work. Reprints, adaptations, new editions, and translations of the plays receive careful documentation. Where possible, the dates, places, and theatre companies of the play's première are included, along with concise annotations on the quality and length of the work, and the preliminary studies and reviews which appear with the printed text of the play. There is also a short section on general reference works at the beginning of the bibliography and a section on secondary sources of a critical nature at the end of the book. The entries are virtually free of errors and are reproduced in a universal bibliographic form which is neither so cryptic as to be indecipherable, nor too wordy in its explanation of annotations, references, or publication information.

Luzuriaga has not neglected to include several general categories within the alphabetical listing of the authors, and these citations also give exposure to Ecuadorian theatre troupes when it is appropriate. University, private, or culturally-oriented theatre groups (i.e., Grupo Ollantay, Iván Eguez y el Teatro de la Universidad Central) are included along with a description of the contents of important anthologies of Ecuadorian theatre, for example, the three-volume *Teatro ecuatoriano contemporáneo* and the *Teatro social ecuatoriano*.

Although some may say that this bibliography is so limited by national boundaries and scope and represents such a small segment of the total production of Latin American theatre that its importance can only be seen as minor, I was impressed with the listings Luzuriaga has accumulated. I believe the work is a fine contribution to an area of scholarship that could use many more studies of a similar regional nature. From a strictly personal perspective, I found myself saying, "I'll have to get a hold of that work . . . and that one . . . and that one too." Perhaps, in the last analysis, these are the comments which determine the true value of a bibliography as a useful research tool.

L. Howard Quackenbush
Brigham Young University

O Berço do Héroi

A adaptação para a televisão da peça *O Berço do Herói* (1965) de Dias Gomes, atualmente em exibição pela Rede Globo tornou-se o maior sucesso de toda a história da televisão brasileira, atingindo cada noite a um público de mais de 60 milhões de pessoas, constituindo um índice de audiência às vezes superior a 90 por cento. Intitulada *Roque Santeiro*, a telenovela é na verdade uma versão muito livre de obra teatral, cujos 2 atos em 13 quadros foram expandidos em mais de 200 capítulos de 40 minutos de duração cada um. A telenovela vem sendo levada ao ar desde julho de 1985 e deverá continuar até março de 1986. É interessante notar que somente cerca da metade dos episódios terão sido escritos por Dias Gomes. O consagrado dramaturgo é responsável pelos primeiros 51 capítulos (essencialmente prontos desde 1975) assim como pelos quarenta últimos. Todos os demais episódios foram escritos pelo experiente roteirista Aguinaldo Silva. Os papéis principais são desempenhados por José Wilker (Roque) e Regina Duarte (a viúva).

A peça de Dias Gomes foi alvo da censura da ditadura em várias ocasiões. Em julho de 1965 a montagem de *O Berço do Herói* foi proibida poucas horas antes da sua estréia nos palcos cariocas, e em 1975 o Ministro da Justiça impediu que a versão para a televisão, *Roque Santeiro*, fosse levada ao ar. Somente com o advento da Nova República é que a Rede Globo pôde afinal começar a transmitir esta visão satírica das relações entre o misticismo e a política em uma cidadezinha do interior brasileiro.

Severino João Albuquerque
University of Wisconsin-Madison