

Book Reviews

Giordano, Enrique. *La teatralización de la obra dramática. De Florencio Sánchez a Roberto Arlt*. México: Premia Editora, 1982. 255 pp.

Este importante estudio de Enrique Giordano nos pone frente a uno de los serios intentos de comenzar a investigar el teatro latinoamericano desde la perspectiva de la crítica moderna y rompiendo el marco tradicional de la crítica impresionista en pro de un enfoque teórico de carácter más científico. El libro se divide en dos partes fundamentales: 1) las consideraciones metodológicas; 2) el examen de dramaturgos representativos o cabeza de generación. En la generación de 1912 está Florencio Sánchez, y en la de 1927, Samuel Eichelbaum, Conrado Nalé Roxlo y Roberto Arlt.

Los planteamientos metodológicos que nos ofrece constituyen la parte más relevante del libro. Ante la falta de estudios orgánicos del teatro latinoamericano, el autor se propone "determinar el proceso de desarrollo de la composición dramática durante las primeras décadas de este siglo en Hispanoamérica" (7). Para lograr esta sistemacidad necesaria, Enrique Giordano, en sus consideraciones metodológicas, toca tres puntos que son para él los más pertinentes en la creación de un marco de trabajo analítico: a) la primacía del texto dramático; b) el enfoque generacional como punto de partida; c) el concepto de teatralización.

Veamos brevemente cada uno de estos puntos que son, a nuestro modo de ver, la articulación básica de la visión de la obra dramática que Giordano propone.

La primacía del texto dramático. Aquí el autor hace una revisión de las relaciones entre obra dramática y obra teatral, o entre texto dramático y espectáculo, pasando revista a la obra de varios importantes teóricos con los que se plantea coincidencias y desacuerdos; estudia entre otros a Wright, Castagnino, Tschudi, Villegas, Martínez Bonati, e Ingarden.

Después de clarificar algunos elementos de análisis, establece una metodología que utilizará a lo largo del libro y que enuncia de la siguiente manera: ". . . mi metodología que no logra escapar todavía del empirismo, se basará en el estudio del sistema de signos a nivel de la escritura del texto, buscando relaciones de diferencias y oposiciones y la frecuencia con que aparecen, atendiendo dentro de lo posible a la yuxtaposición, anteposición, combinación y solidaridad. Tarea ésta mucho más simple que la complejidad del enunciado supone, sobre todo porque no abarcaré las obras en forma exhaustiva" (50).

El enfoque generacional como punto de partida. Utilizando el enfoque generacional, previa discusión de los teóricos que han hecho uso de dicho método—Arrom, Dauster, C. Goić, G. Rojo—el autor extrae de estos dos últimos las herramientas que le permitirán agrupar y contextualizar a los dramaturgos que examinará en la parte práctica del estudio. Dice: “Las premisas de Goić y de Rojo me servirán, en consecuencia, como punto de partida. Los autores han sido escogidos de acuerdo a su distribución generacional para establecer sobre esta base un orden que permita enfocar el lenguaje dramático en una perspectiva de desarrollo acorde al devenir histórico-literario, evitando la monografía aislada de su contexto” (56). La intención expresa de Giordano aquí es poner el acento en la evolución literaria que da continuidad, por encima de las “interrupciones generacionales,” al proceso de una cultura.

El concepto de teatralización. El concepto de teatralización es la tercera instancia teórica en que se apoya el estudio de Giordano. Aquí se dedica a definir “teatralización” y “teatralidad,” nociones tomadas de Gerald Prince y que aluden al proceso de elaboración de los elementos que constituyen la “teatralidad,” es decir, la conciencia que tiene de sí mismo el hecho teatral. La definición de estos conceptos le permite abordar el fenómeno de la evolución del género dramático, en este caso la generación del 27. Dice que “al hablar de la evolución del género dramático en la generación del 27, lo haré definitivamente en términos de *teatralización de la obra dramática*, refiriéndome a los medios de escenificar en forma tangencial para ayudar a explicar los procedimientos del texto en su escritura y composición” (67).

Basado en estos tres puntos teóricos, Giordano pasa al análisis de *Barranca abajo*, *M'hijo el dotor* y *La gringa*, de Florencio Sánchez; *El gato y su selva*, *Dos brasas*, y *Un guapo del 900*, de Samuel Eichelbaum; *La cola de la sirena* de Nalé Roxlo; y *Trescientos millones* y *Saverio el cruel*, de Roberto Arlt.

De todos estos análisis, creemos que los de *Trescientos millones* y *Saverio el cruel* aportan una nueva visión al estudio de la obra de Roberto Arlt. Según Giordano, “Arlt rompe definitivamente con el ilusionismo naturalista, en la forma más radical de su generación, incluso en *Saverio el cruel*. Aunque pareciere que esta obra se acerca en algún grado a cierta forma de ilusión de realidad, lo que a Roberto Arlt interesa como fundamental no es reproducir en forma mimética la realidad empírica, sino significar los contenidos que la trascienden. Nos pone en el terreno de la teatralidad en su plena acción. No hay duda: podemos decir que la composición dramática de Arlt es fundamentalmente paratáctica y teatralista” (225).

Finalmente, no podemos sino elogiar este trabajo de gran capacidad sistemática que nos ofrece Enrique Giordano en un intento de acercarse con precisión científica a algunas de las expresiones más importantes del teatro del Río de la Plata. En este sentido es éste un libro obligatorio para los especialistas en el tema.

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George, David. *Teatro e Antropofagia*. Trans. Eduardo Brandão. São Paulo: Global Editora, 1985. 88 pp.

David George's study of two contemporary Brazilian dramatic performances draws parallels between theatrical innovation and the literary innovation promoted by Oswald de Andrade's 1928 *Manifesto Antropófago*. "Antropofagia" is literary cannibalism, an idea derived from the Indian practice of eating the enemy as a means of empowerment, and it involves absorbing, adapting, and mixing outside influences with native ones in order to create original, exportable art. The performances discussed in the book are Teatro Oficina's 1964 staging of *O Rei da Vela* and Grupo Pau-Brasil's 1978 production of *Macunaíma*. Both are based on cornerstones of Brazilian modernism written by Oswald de Andrade and Mário de Andrade respectively. George justifies his approach by suggesting that these two groups had the same agenda as Andrade for revolutionizing stagnant literary patterns and that they used the same means (antropofagia) to reach the mutual goal of decolonizing Brazilian art. That is, Oficina and Pau-Brasil carried out Andrade's directives on creating new independent Brazilian art and exported it back to the Old World when they performed throughout Europe.

The study is organized into three thematic units: *Antropofagia*, *O Rei da Vela*, and *Macunaíma*. In the introductory study on "antropofagia" George explains the idea and the movement as defined by the modernists and as developed by Oswald de Andrade in his "Manifesto." George elaborates on Andrade's ideas about the need to reverse the economic and artistic colonization of Brazil and then synthesizes the tenets of the "Manifesto" into three characteristic elements: adaptation and/or adoption of any and all foreign aesthetic movements or forms; ideological transformation of those forms to serve the interests of national art; and synthesis of foreign and native modes into a new, exportable product. These three become the analytical guidelines for the study of the performances by Oficina and Pau-Brasil.

The analysis of *O Rei da Vela* and *Macunaíma* are divided into two major sections each, one devoted to the literary text and the other to the performance. This separation helps draw attention to the particular readings given to each work by the director and his group in the process of turning the written word into action. George's field research and his experience as a producer enable him to highlight with insight and precision the aspects of each performance that provide evidence to support his thesis. He is also skillful at enhancing the reader's imagination an appreciation of the original texts and, more importantly, of the subsequent performances.

Through the association of the theatre and "antropofagia" David George not only enlightens the reader about the process of dramatic innovation in Brazil but also renews an appreciation for the varied ways in which Oswald de Andrade fostered the development of Brazilian literature in the 1920s and how he continues to enrich it today. While refraining from making unreasonable claims, George does demonstrate that both theatrical groups did indeed implement Oswald de Andrade's dictates and as a result made valuable contributions to the artistic de-colonization of Brazil. *Teatro e Antropofagia* is a

useful, straightforward study that should be of interest to Latin Americanists who specialize in theatre, the avant-garde, and/or literary history.

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Arrau, Sergio. *Digo que norte sur corre la tierra*. Lima: Lluvia Editores, 1982. 126 pp.

The play *Digo que norte sur corre la tierra*, by the Chilean dramatist Sergio Arrau, is an example of the current interest in historical themes in Latin American theatre. Subtitled "Lautaro y el conquistador," the play presents the conquest of Chile by Spain, dramatizing the struggle of two of the forces that comprise the American reality: ancient tribal ways and modern European ideas. Throughout the play these forces clash and battle, but eventually merge to form the basis of Chilean culture and life.

Arrau's play is divided into two acts. The first act, entitled "La larga agonía de un conquistador," centers upon the Spanish side of the conflict, presenting the behavior and ideas of Pedro de Valdivia and his men on the eve of the battle that pushed the conquistadores out of Arauco, thus beginning the last great offensive by the Araucanos. The Spaniards are depicted, not as the fierce and greedy soldiers of the "Black Legend," but as complex human beings who are in America for a variety of psychological and economic reasons. This act explores the beginnings of the confluence of European and indigenous cultures; the author does not confine himself to the historical setting of the play. To emphasize that his work goes beyond the folkloric anecdote to show the merging of two forces opposite in origin and age, colonial and contemporary actions are staged side by side, with the actors interchanging roles as conquistadores, Indians, and modern-day Chileans. Thus, historical truth is explained by contemporary ideas and further illuminated by the use of literary interpretations, as in the appearances of Alonso de Ercilla reciting parts of *La Araucana*, and related to the present when actors recite segments of Pablo Neruda's *Canto general*.

This dualism of time and identity is continued in the second act, which is entitled "La corta alborada de un libertador." The Araucanos are the center of this act, where they are portrayed as normal beings, not as the superior characters of nationalistic legends. Their "old ways" are as flawed as the ones brought in by the enemy, with the Indians shown to be as susceptible to their own passions as the Spaniards are to theirs. The strength gained by the Araucanos in their victories is short-lived, and the unity and determination brought by success deteriorates under the strain of defeat, incomprehension, and selfishness. Lautaro is as alone as Valdivia in the hour of his greatest battle. The Mapuches lose their war against the Europeans when they step beyond their traditional ways, leaving behind their sustaining relationship with the land.

In this act, the dramatist also uses commentaries by actors in modern-day roles, but goes a step beyond; the confluence of cultures hinted at in the first act is now demonstrated by interpolating songs and commentaries by "criollos" and "huasos," thereby showing the integration of both cultures

that took place with the culmination of the Conquest. The Indians and the Spaniards do not obliterate each other, but merge forces. This integration is exemplified near the end of the play when Valdivia and Lautaro (both now dead and therefore removed from strictures of time), interchange lines in a litany of historical import, chanting about the landmarks of Chilean history. As the play ends, the actors continue the chant with lines like "Val . . . taro" and "Lau . . . divia," singing praise to the making of an American country.

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Schmidhuber de la Mora, Guillermo. *Cuarteto de mi gentedad*. México D.F.: Editorial Oasis, 1985. 105 pp.

Cuarteto de mi gentedad is a carefully orchestrated suite in four movements, each of which stands easily alone, yet is enhanced by the presence of the other three. These four one-act plays are all concerned with the confrontation of progress and tradition, as well as with the existential and moral questions that have come to be Schmidhuber's dramatic hallmark. The four elements—fire, earth, wind and water—serve as unifying motifs. In each work a scheme is proposed to reverse or transform the social fabric, resulting inevitably in tragic consequences.

In *Fuegos truncos*, for example, Teodoro, a fiery ("fogoso"—the adjective is chosen advisedly) young rural schoolmaster, decides to extirpate the idolatrous practices of the inhabitants of San Martín de Abajo, the ramshackle settlement to which he has been assigned, by burning the image of the village's patron saint, so that genuine faith and intellectual growth can develop in place of superstition. The plan fails abysmally, however, when the townspeople substitute one idol for another by worshiping the fire in which their venerated idol has perished. The ultimate irony occurs when Teodoro and the statue (which has not been burned, after all, but rather stashed in the teacher's home for safekeeping), are both destroyed in a retaliatory blaze set by the outraged villagers.

Equally symbolic is *María Terrones*, the second play. In this piece, the sins under discussion are not idolatry, but avarice and lust. The eponymous protagonist, whose name suggests telluric values, lives in apparent harmony with both her dependent husband, Tomás, and Matías, an ardent lover. As in the first play, here again one finds a scheme that goes awry and culminates in death. The play evokes those countless folktales, both within and outside the Mexican tradition, whose theme is *el burlador burlado*. In this instance, Tomás' death results from his insistence on testing Matías' capacity for greed. By lowering some bronze ingots to the bottom of a well, Tomás hopes to lure the avaricious Matías into believing they are gold. It is Tomás, however, who is deceived when his rival, suspecting a trap, delivers a blow that sends Tomás plummeting to the bottom of the shaft, interred by his own foolish curiosity.

A strange morality prevails at the end of *María Terrones*, as the newly-widowed María sends her lover away. Although she had previously allowed herself to be shared by both men, she now refuses to choose one over the other,

or to be seduced by Matías' wealth. Schmidhuber's message is clear: the earth, our communal patrimony, must be shared. It must belong equally to all humankind or to no one at all.

The violation of nature by the encroachment of "civilization" is a theme in the third piece, *La ventana*, which like an earlier Schmidhuber work, *Lacandonia*, examines the exploitation and destruction of indigenous culture by urban society. In *La ventana*, air, the predominant element, symbolizes the ephemeral quality of human life and the impossibility of recapturing the past.

When an anonymous Indian ("el Indígena") is brought to a Mexico City hospital to recover from wounds inflicted by a gang of jungle-plundering gringos, his arrival triggers a variety of reactions in those who are charged with his care. A Nurse, a Journalist, a Policeman, and an Ethnographer all band together, allegedly to preserve the interests of the patient, but upon closer scrutiny, it is apparent that their interest is primarily in their own self-aggrandizement and recognition. While they debate their comparative commitment to the Indian's welfare, even placing bets on his rate of recovery, the Maya slips undetected through the hospital window back to his homeland, which, although fraught with dangers, is less intimidating than this urban environment. Ironically, his body and those of his wife and child are later discovered in the jungle.

Something similar happens in *Perros bravos*, a mytho-allegorical play that corresponds to the fourth element, water. In the godforsaken town of Perros Bravos, running water has finally been introduced. This innovation is presented as a mixed blessing, for while initially the villagers rejoice at this technological wonder, the water pipe, ominously omnipresent, "nos recuerda la boca de una serpiente" (87). Compounding the evil of the physical presence of the serpent in the Garden is the nagging question of who put it there in the first place. A further complication is the fact that the water inexplicably runs red through this town. Is this phenomenon a curse, as the villagers believe? Is it, perhaps, a natural consequence of mineral deposits in the soil? Or could it be part of a misguided experiment on the part of some sociologists to quantify and interpret the reactions of these "primitives?" Ultimately the townspeople, suspicious of the unknown, destroy the new machinery, preferring to allow their young to die of thirst.

Is *Perros bravos* an invective against ignorance? A diatribe against intervention? Or is it simply another existential parable from an increasingly complex playwright who brings his public many questions and ever-fewer answers? *Cuarteto de mi gentedad* is a fine, well-balanced anthology that should appeal to the "peoplehood" in all of us.

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Marras, Sergio. *Macías. Ensayo general sobre el poder y la gloria*. Santiago, Chile: Las Ediciones del Ornitorrinco, 1984. 94 pp.

Macías, del escritor chileno Sergio Marras, es uno de los textos dramáticos que ha causado más polémica en el ambiente teatral chileno después de su representación en el teatro Camilo Henríquez en 1984 en Santiago.

El texto es un largo monólogo que consta de 11 cuadros encabezados por un título que es el nombre de una aldea ecuatoguineana. Su protagonista principal y único (salvo por un ayudante que aparece esporádicamente en el curso de la representación) es Francisco Macías, quien se declaró presidente vitalicio en 1968 cuando su país obtuvo la independencia de España en ese mismo año, siendo ejecutado por sus crímenes el 29 de septiembre de 1979.

El monólogo se centra en la reflexión y defensa de Macías ante sus actos y acusadores, antaño sus aliados. Lo más importante de su mensaje reside en que Sergio Marras problematiza, y de aquí su valor e interés, la figura de este sangriento dictador, no ya en términos de opresor/oprimido, sino que pone en cuestión a los sectores que le otorgaron el poder al dictador, a los que lo apoyaron y que luego pretenden evitar toda responsabilidad, ejecutándolo. Esta es la problemática de Macías, y no como algún sector sugirió en Chile, que se trata de una apología del dictador (Pinochet). Muy lejos de esto, Marras pone al dictador ante sus colaboradores de antaño, los mismos que hoy lo condenan: en realidad esa sociedad juzga y procesa a Macías y éste los juzga a ellos. Creemos que la publicación y representación de *Macías* no pudo ser más oportuna, puesto que en Chile hoy la clase media, quien casi mayoritariamente apoyó al dictador en nombre del orden, es esa misma clase la que hoy también comienza a pedir masivamente que el dictador sea expulsado. Sergio Marras pone en juicio a las clases colaboracionistas del sistema, pero cuya colaboración hoy cesa al verse sus propios intereses de clase amenazados y destruidos. Cuando en el momento de ser ejecutado Macías ruega por su vida y pide que se castigue también a otros que tienen tanta responsabilidad como él, el verdugo responde:

“Son muchos más los culpables. Tienes razón. No han sido ni serán juzgados todos los que deberían. Pero cómo colocar en el banquillo de los acusados a una nación entera . . . a los jueces, a los oficiales, a los notables, a los brujos y a cada uno de los ciudadanos. ¡Todos hemos sido cómplices, Macías!”

Desde un punto de vista formal y técnico, Sergio Marras realiza una tarea de primer orden y presenta un completo control del medio que utiliza: el monólogo. Tanto en la lectura como en la representación, el monólogo fluye y captura de inmediato la atención del lector/espectador. No hay momentos débiles en el texto dramático o espectacular; el monólogo es realizado con maestría, al igual que el tratamiento de la historia y el mensaje presentados. Sergio Marras sitúa su historia en un lugar desconocido para muchos de nosotros, pero los códigos de inscripción y descodificación que emplea, no le escapan al lector/espectador inscrito en la realidad chilena actual. A nuestro ver, se trata de un texto dramático que revela a un joven autor con un excelente manejo del lenguaje teatral.

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Rhoades, Duane. *The Independent Monologue in Latin American Theatre: A Primary Bibliography with Selective Secondary Sources*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985. 242 pp.

What is it about a bibliography that fascinates me? I suppose it may be that it represents both birth and death, the beginning and the end, for so much of what we do. We are all aware that critical writing really cannot begin without a thorough grasp of the bibliographic parameters for the study. In addition, the inclusion of a good bibliography may endow a work with transcendent value when other virtues are absent or disappear with the passage of time. Poor bibliographic preparation, on the other hand, may be such a limiting factor that the validity of the work is compromised by the author's lack of scholarship. A good bibliography may literally live on as a source of inspiration long after the words that preceded it have ceased to be meaningful. Bibliographies also tend to transcend the esoteric limits which their compilers intended to place on them when they began their original research. So it is that a bibliography focusing on a relatively narrow subject of limited interest like, for instance, *The Independent Monologue in Latin American Theatre*, may serve as a primary source bibliography of research in many other analogous areas or related fields (i.e., period theatre research; national theatre issues, including staging, patronage, and important theatrical figures; artistic psychology of different periods and areas; different theatrical methods, styles, and philosophies—religious thought, comic trends, political caprices and national scandal; and human issues, such as minority concerns, the world of children, or human rights). A good bibliography, regardless of its specific subject matter, is replete with source material.

Although mechanical by nature, the compilation of entries for a bibliography becomes a tedious, prickly, and exasperating task which few of us really enjoy or wish to undertake. We must, therefore, commend our colleagues like Duane Rhoades who give yeoman bibliographic service in research which relates to their preferred, if limited, areas of scholarship. His work, *The Independent Monologue in Latin American Theatre*, treats the bibliographic references to the monologue, melologue, monodrama, and mono-theatre from colonial times to the present. It is divided into three sections: Colonial, from 1550 to 1840 (3-14); the one hundred years from 1840 to 1940 (15-153); and the contemporary period from 1940 to the present (154-215). He includes an appendix of sources for unpublished plays and a short secondary source bibliography of supporting references. There is an author index for quick access to particular dramatists.

Despite the seemingly limited scope of a work on the dramatic monologue, it is surprising to note how many important writers have made contributions to this form: Benedetti, Carballido, Dragún, Fernández de Lizardi, Gamboa, Garro, Leñero, Magaña, Sábado, Florencio Sánchez, Luis Rafael Sánchez, Solórzano, Talesnik, Usigli, Vasconcelos, Villaurrutia, and many more. This is a reference work, therefore, that should be acquired by our libraries and made available to students and professionals interested in Latin American theatre, including, of course, the theatre of Brazil.

Rhoades' introductory notes provide some good, general background

orientation and they define the limits of the work. It is unfortunate, therefore, that this section was not edited or proofread more carefully before publication. The misspellings and typographical errors serve as a distraction and the style is wordy at times. The text lacks good transitions and reads unevenly and some of the examples provided by the author seem superfluous, although these are relatively minor concerns. This book is foremost a bibliography, and the value of the work resides in the care of compilation, the extensive list of entries, and its usability. Rhoades has succeeded in creating a fine reference tool for the scholar in the Latin American theatre.

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