

Antonio Alvarez Lleras and his Theatre

LEON F. LYDAY

Although Colombian literature has provided the Hispanic world with numerous novelists, poets and essayists of indisputable quality, few dramatists from that country have achieved any international significance. Of these few, one whose works have received considerable acclaim is Antonio Alvarez Lleras, who began writing in the second decade of the twentieth century. Before the advent of this dramatist, many plays were written and produced in Colombia but there was no author of sufficient merit to acquire lasting fame as a playwright.¹

Born on July 2, 1892,² Alvarez Lleras was the son of Enrique Alvarez Bonilla, a well-known writer and educator, and Helena Lleras Triana, daughter of Lorenzo María Lleras, himself a prominent dramatist. The latter's son, José Manuel Lleras, was also a playwright of some renown. With the interests of his family providing an environment conducive to literature and particularly to the theatre, Alvarez Lleras early began displaying an interest in playwriting. He received his secondary education at the Instituto de La Salle in Bogotá, and while there wrote several plays for the school repertory group, including *Don Luis Vesaques*, *Los de Altamora*, and *Los traidores de Puerto Cabello*.³

After completing his secondary education, Alvarez Lleras entered the Law School of the Universidad Nacional in 1910. His tranquil temperament was apparently not suited to this profession, and after one year he decided to discontinue his law studies and transfer to the field of dentistry. With this in mind, he enrolled in the Colegio Dental in Bogotá, and from there obtained a degree in dental surgery in 1913.

While still a student at the Colegio Dental, Alvarez Lleras had his first play produced—*Viboras sociales*. The work had its premiere performance

in the Teatro Municipal of Bogotá on August 5, 1911, and its immediate success caused Alvarez Lleras to be quickly proclaimed Colombia's most promising new dramatist.

A thesis drama attacking the perpetrators of fraud under the pretense of benevolence and social concern, *Viboras sociales* deals specifically with two men who set up a protective union allegedly to invest wisely the savings of the workers of the city, but actually to swindle money from them. The scheme is ultimately discovered and the men jailed, but the play ends on a pessimistic note as a policeman predicts that the culprits will soon buy their freedom and return to continue their vile acts, for, he says, hypocrisy will always triumph in his country.

Viboras sociales is not one of Alvarez Lleras' best plays, but it does provide a good example of his thesis drama, since the social concern and the pessimism mirrored in this play were to reappear in several of his later works. It is this continued expression of concern which leads some critics to think of him primarily as a social dramatist.

In his next two major plays, *Alma joven* and *El fuego extraño*, Alvarez Lleras moves from the realm of serious drama to that of comedy. *Alma joven* (1912), a play in which a stern, older man finds himself in conflict with the spirit and ebullience of youth, has been aptly described by L. E. Nieto Caballero as "un canto a la vida y una protesta contra la incomprensión de los espíritus cansados respecto a aquellos que, frescos aún, quieren agitarse en un mundo de sonrisas . . ." ⁴ Tinged with a light sentimentality somewhat reminiscent of Isaacs' *María*, and set in the same florid landscape present in this classic novel, *Alma joven* exudes a warmth and grace not found in any of Alvarez Lleras' other plays.

The principal humor in *Alma joven* radiates around a young man who fancies himself a poet and a playwright. With reference to a recently completed play, he comments: "¡Yo soy un relámpago! ¿Le parece poco que en tres días no más haya preparado una obra original, en tres actos, en prosa, de tanto trabajo y tan colosal alcance?" (p. 48) He describes one of the other characters as ". . . el símbolo egipcio de lo incommovible. . . . Es la esfinge de granito, es el loto solitario del Nilo . . ." (p. 7), and his depiction of Bogotá mothers is as follows:

Amigo mío: de diplomacia saben mucho las mamás bogotanas, y tú comprendes que en los veranos tienen que desplegar toda su táctica y estrategia. Por eso son los ojos de Argos y los tentáculos de Medusa. Mamás conozco yo que no se declaran satisfechas después de una gira campestre si no han colocado por lo menos cuatro o cinco de sus hijas. (p. 9)

In *Alma joven*, as in *Viboras sociales*, the dialogue is the outstanding feature—the language used by the various characters being realistic and

convincing. The humor in the play is not exaggerated to the point of becoming farcical, and the sentiment present is not cloying. It is rather the subtlety of the blending of these two elements which makes the play one of the more appealing of Alvarez Lleras' dramatic works.

The second of the comedies, *El fuego extraño*, was premiered in Caracas in 1912 and presented in Bogotá the following year. It was also performed in Spain, which provides some indication of its success.⁵ This play, in which two scheming women (mother and daughter) try to coax don Federico, an honorable older man, into marriage, contains considerably more humor than does *Alma joven* and has proved to be the more popular of the two.

Typical of the humor in *El fuego extraño* is a scene in which don Miguel, a friend of Federico, suggests that an old priest double date with him and entertain his girl's mother. The priest, scandalized, refuses the invitation on the pretext that he has not finished his evening prayers. Miguel then responds: "Bueno, bueno, entonces que reces mucho y que te aproveche. Ya te arrepentirás. No sabes lo que pierdes. También creo que la madre es . . ." ⁶ Later, Miguel provides the following rather malicious description of the young woman chasing don Federico: "Es verdad que está ya algo jamona y que moralmente no vale mucho: hay intereses mezquinos, hipocresías; pero en cambio no me disgustan los pies, ni las caderas, ni . . ." (p. 178)

The plot of *El fuego extraño* is unified and the characters are well drawn. The humor, which occasionally borders on farce, is skillfully distributed among the several characters, and the dialogue is handled quite effectively. As a comedy, *El fuego extraño* is superior to *Alma joven* in most respects, but it lacks the warmth present in the latter play.

In 1916, three years after completing his studies, Alvarez Lleras' fourth major play was presented in Bogotá. The work, *Como los muertos*, is a psychological drama which treats the theme of the eternal love triangle. In it, a young wife finds herself torn between devotion to her husband and love for a young medical student who had diligently attended her during a serious illness. Her dilemma is complicated by her husband's recent indifference toward her and by his skepticism toward life in general, but she then learns that his attitude stems from the fact that he knows he is afflicted with leprosy.

One of Alvarez Lleras' outstanding literary creations, *Como los muertos* is the first of his two psychological dramas. Its plot is well structured and its characters presented with care, but its outstanding feature is, once again, dialogue. *Como los muertos*, which ran for more than a hundred performances in Bogotá and was presented in Spain, was printed in its fifth edition in 1931, fifteen years after it was first published. Five editions in fifteen years, a rarity for a dramatic work in most Latin American countries,

attests to the popularity of the play, as does the fact that a film version of it was done several years after it was first performed.⁷

Of *Como los muertos* and its author, Ortega Ricaurte states:

Desde esa fecha [March 4, 1916, the date of the premiere of *Como los muertos*] conquistó con justicia un elevado puesto en la dramaturgia colombiana, el que conservará por muchos años, dada su técnica maravillosa y su lenguaje bello, natural y castizo. El ha sido uno de los que más se han interesado por el desarrollo y cultura teatral.⁸

In 1924, the fifth major play of Alvarez Lleras was presented. A thesis drama entitled *Los mercenarios*, its central attack is directed at the practice of parentally-arranged marriages, but it also discusses the issues of divorce, of hereditary nobility and privilege, and of the social and moral education of children. In the play a young woman of an "elite," but poverty-stricken family is forced by her family to marry a wealthy but rough-hewn *advenedizo*. The marriage ends in tragedy for both and thus dramatizes the major thesis.

Los mercenarios is the second of the thesis plays written by Alvarez Lleras. Its theme is presented with considerable skill, but there are a number of scenes which would prove too melodramatic for contemporary tastes. The protagonists are described in depth and the minor characters are also well drawn. The dialogue is realistic and is skillfully used in scenes of high emotion. *Los mercenarios* is not one of Alvarez Lleras' best dramatic works, but it is of interest for the thesis it presents.

The next significant work by Alvarez Lleras was *El zarpazo*, a rather sensational psychological drama treating the incest motif. Premiered in 1927, it had a run of more than a hundred performances in Bogotá, and was then taken into the repertory of plays of Camila Quiroga, the noted Argentine actress and producer, and presented in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, New York, Paris and Sevilla.⁹ In the play, a young man returns home after having worked for five years in the jungle. He soon accuses his *novia* of having given her favors to an older, wealthy "friend" in order to obtain the money needed to support herself and the young man's mother, with whom she is living. However, when the young man discovers that it is his mother and not his sweetheart who has been granting these favors, his apparent love for his *novia* is forgotten and the passionate, physical love he feels for his mother is revealed:

José: Perdón, madre . . . No sé . . . Pienso tantos absurdos. Soy estúpido, brutal . . . No la trato como debiera, como a mi madre. Pero es que no puedo tratarla así. . . No tiene usted ni un cabello blanco . . . Está tan joven, tan hermosa todavía! Yo soñaba con usted viejecita, sentada aquí tejiendo, y me veía a sus pies con la cabeza reclinada en su regazo y sentía una emoción, una ternura inexplicables . . . Pero la encuentro tan joven que me da rabia no poder quererla de esa manera. Yo la quiero a usted con locura, con pasión; la quiero para mí solo y por

eso tendré siempre metido aquí el atroz pensamiento y ya no podré nunca olvidar ni perdonar.¹⁰

A second and perhaps even more revealing expression of José's love for his mother is presented in the closing passages of the play, in which José explains why he killed the man who had intruded on his family. He then adds that even if he is jailed, his mother will accompany him and therefore the two will still be together:

Jose: Asaltaba mi casa como un ladrón. ¿Venía por María Elisa? . . . ¿Por usted? . . . Es igual. Lo he matado. ¿Teme usted que no me hagan justicia? . . . ¿Y qué me importa? Ya la tengo a usted, ya es usted solo mía . . . ¿Por qué tiembla? ¿De qué tiene usted miedo? ¿Acaso va a permitir que vaya yo solo a la cárcel? . . . Los dos hemos matado a este hombre, madre . . . Usted ha sido mi cómplice y así habrá de declararlo.

Rosaura: Sí, sí, como quieras . . .

Jose: Ahora sí es usted mi madre de verdad . . . Ahora iremos juntos a la cárcel . . . ¡Juntos, juntos! . . . Es que alguna vez, madre, teníamos que estar juntos! (p. 70)

Reminiscent in many ways of Benavente's *La malquerida*, *El zarpazo* provides an interesting, unusual treatment of the incest motif in that the passionate love expressed by the young man for his mother is not returned as such, but seems to be accepted as a part of the all-encompassing maternal love of the woman for her son. The author's frank expression of the motif in the two quotes given above is unusual for Hispanic drama of the 1920's, and seems more closely akin to the French drama of the period. This frankness is especially surprising when one considers that whereas in Benavente's play the principals are stepfather and stepdaughter, in *El zarpazo* they are actually mother and son. The motif in *La malquerida* is also expressed in a generally much lower key than it is in *El zarpazo*, there being in the former play no passionate outburst until the final scene.¹¹

El zarpazo is clearly the better of the two psychological dramas of Alvarez Lleras and deservedly ranks as one of his best plays. The fact that it was, as Agustín del Saz notes, "una de las primeras obras del teatro realista hispanoamericano,"¹² has also accorded this work a place of some prominence in the development of Spanish American theatre.

Alvarez Lleras left Colombia in 1927, and went to Cádiz, Spain, as a member of the Colombian consulate, a position he held until 1931. During his stay in Cádiz, he wrote a psychological novel entitled *Ayer, nada más*, published in Paris in 1930, and termed by Anderson-Imbert "one of the good novels of the period."¹³ Curcio Altamar goes a step further when he rates it one of the best Colombian novels since *La vorágine*.¹⁴ After returning to Colombia in 1931, Alvarez Lleras resumed his dental practice, and taught in various schools of dentistry. For a time he was also employed as a professor of *retórica y poética* in the Instituto Antonio Ramírez in Bogotá.

Following a rather long period of inactivity in the field of drama, Alvarez Lleras wrote *Almas de ahora*, a thesis play which was premiered in 1944 and had a run of some seventy performances in Bogotá and a successful tour through the country. The work's title and thesis are explained by the author in the following passage:

Empiezo por declarar que el título "Almas de ahora" tiene para mí especial importancia. No es un título cualquiera, sino la esencia misma del propósito que me animó, pues creo firmemente que las almas de ahora son muy distintas de las del pasado puesto que vivimos en una época de transición, época de profundas modificaciones de la inteligencia y del corazón humanos, que se encaminan por extrañas orientaciones hacia un porvenir confuso y contradictorio. . . . Los jóvenes espíritus de hogaño aparentan ser renovadores cuando solamente los mueve un ímpetu revolucionario absolutamente destructor e incapaz de ofrecer la sustitución de lo ya caduco por afirmaciones netas y realizaciones efectivas. Los jóvenes espíritus de esta época conturbada rechazan la autoridad paterna, no aceptan sujeción de ninguna clase, desprecian los consejos de sus mayores, sólo anhelan la satisfacción de todos sus caprichos y, llenos de necia vanidad, pretenden triunfar por encima de las convenciones del pasado, y aún contra las reglas morales que antaño se creían rígidas e invariables.¹⁵

This expression of concern by Alvarez Lleras for the youth of the 1940's has a strikingly familiar ring today.

The thesis of *Almas de ahora* is developed through the delineation of the tragic effects that "modern" ideas and "modern" education (i.e. about 1944) have on the life of a young Colombian woman, and consequently on the lives of her family and friends. Examples of the "modern" ideas are women smoking and participating competitively in sports, and young men and women dating unchaperoned. The young woman in question attempts to live in accordance with these new modes and customs to which she has been exposed while in school in Europe and in the United States, but she finds them incompatible with her own character and personality and with the social and moral environment in which she lives. The internal conflict resulting from her attempt to reconcile the two ways of life leads to personal tragedy.¹⁶

Of the three thesis dramas of Alvarez Lleras, *Almas de ahora* is the one in which thesis is most predominant. Its interest, thus, lies mainly in the fact that it depicts the playwright's pessimism regarding the society of the time, and his ever-increasing concern for social and moral problems. This concern with society is also evidenced by the fact that several of the plays written during the latter part of his life were never published or produced because he felt that the society of the period was too frivolous to understand or appreciate them. These plays are *El marido de Mimi*, *El sí de los cocacolos*, and *Sirena pesca marido*.¹⁷

Alvarez Lleras did have one other play produced, however, a historical

drama entitled *El virrey Solís*. This work had a long, successful run in Bogotá and was subsequently presented throughout Colombia and in various other countries. The play itself treats the lives of José Solís and la Marichuela, his mistress. Solís was an eighteenth-century Spanish nobleman who became an arrogant, rakish, yet progressive viceroy to Nueva Granada and later entered a monastery in Bogotá.¹⁸

El virrey Solís is the best of the dramatic works of Alvarez Lleras. The plot provides an intriguing interpretation of the life of José Solís, one of the most fascinating figures in Colombian history and legend. The level of action within the work is sufficiently high to maintain the audience's interest, and the dialogue, in which the author attempts to emulate the speech of the eighteenth century, flows smoothly and is effective in orienting the audience historically. It is in character presentation, however, that *El virrey Solís* is significantly superior to Alvarez Lleras' other plays. The protagonists in the drama are portrayed skillfully and with a careful blending of history and legend, and the numerous minor characters also receive close attention.¹⁹

El virrey Solís has received acclaim from Willis Knapp Jones, Agustín del Saz, and various other critics, including Nicolás Bayona Posada, who states that it is the best historical drama of Latin America.²⁰ While this final estimate may be somewhat exaggerated, the play is skillfully written and must be considered among the master works of the Colombian theatre, and among the outstanding plays of its type in Latin America.

In the first portion of his prologue to *Almas de ahora*, Alvarez Lleras presents his concept of the theatre in what can be considered a brief *ars poetica*.²¹ He begins this discussion with his interpretation of what a theatrical work should be, and with a statement as to his own special interests as a playwright:

Si la obra de teatro es, por una parte, manifestación artística de particulares características, debe ser, por otra, creación literaria y, por tanto, contener ideas, expresar tendencias, encerrar un objetivo social preciso, ya que su radio de acción no se limita a las salas de espectáculos sino que alcanza al público lector y en veces sobrevive a través del tiempo para enseñar y deleitar a la par. Ha sido este íntimo convencimiento el que ha hecho objeto de mi especial predilección las producciones escénicas de tesis, de análisis psicológico tendiente a una demostración filosófica de propósitos morales concretos." (p. v)

The dramatist then explains that in his works he has always followed the precepts of the universal scenic art, even though in doing so he has been in opposition to some contemporary critics who maintain that the theatrical work should be void of any educational or dogmatic purpose. He also states that he has been a faithful disciple of the classicists who have seen in the theatre a school and have been aware of its elevated social mission.

Next, Alvarez Lleras relates, in a rather general manner, his method of writing a play:

Así, pues, cuando he escrito para la escena he pensado ante todo en un plan definido que gire alrededor de una idea matriz, procurando conciliar su desarrollo escénico con un conjunto homogéneo. A este fin he procurado usar de los medios indispensables en justa medida y en una proporción adecuada, hasta donde alcanzan mis escasos conocimientos. (pp. v-vi)

After stating this procedural method, the author defends it as being a more valid approach than that practiced by the advocates of the "novísimo teatro literario."

While discussing his own theatrical works, the playwright gives his concept of dramatic art:

El arte dramático consiste en demostrar una tesis, en elaborar una exposición ordenada a un fin por medio de la interlocución de personajes distintos del propio autor, con caracteres opuestos y aun firmemente contrastados que den la impresión de la realidad misma; esto es, en crear entidades individuales que vivan su propia vida durante el corto tiempo del espectáculo teatral hablando por sí mismas y no repitiendo lo que piensa quien las ha creado. (p. vi)

From the comments above, it can be seen that Alvarez Lleras held a traditional view of drama, and had a special interest in the theatre of ideas or of social mission. A consideration of the dramatic production of the playwright reveals that these views and interests are manifest in his own plays. The writers who exerted most influence on the theatre of Alvarez Lleras were Echegaray, Benavente, Dicenta, Ibsen, Maeterlink, Bataille, and other dramatists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Europe, and the sensibility of his plays, even the later ones, is clearly that of the turn of the century.

Also present in the above selections from Alvarez Lleras' commentary on his own theatre are several unfavorable remarks about new critics and new theatrical schools of thought. These remarks also are indicative of his traditionalist views on theatre, and reflect his polemics with critics during his later years.

As a playwright, Alvarez Lleras' particular creative ability lay in his skill at characterization and at producing natural and convincing dialogue, and it is with the latter that he is decidedly at his best. In the development of plot and action he is generally less successful, although in several plays, most notably *El virrey Solís*, *Como los muertos*, and *El zarpazo*, there is a rather high level of artistry in these two areas.

Alvarez Lleras then, although by no means a great dramatist, was one of the outstanding Spanish American playwrights of the early part of this century and must be ranked among the highest exponents of the Colombian

theatre. His influence on other dramatists was also significant, and he has come to be recognized as the father of the modern theatre in Colombia, a position accorded him by dramatists and critics alike. Daniel Samper Ortega states:

Con anterioridad a Alvarez Lleras apenas habíamos hecho débiles ensayos de drama histórico o de teatro costumbrista. Alvarez Lleras es el primero que aborda a fondo los problemas sociales de alguna trascendencia y los aborda en forma completamente nueva que, para el año 1911, era desconocida en Colombia, donde las compañías nos tenían acostumbrados al teatro de capa y espada o al que denominan los españoles de astracán.²²

Luis Enrique Osorio speaks of Alvarez Lleras' place in the theatre as follows: "Nuestro teatro eran simples balbuceos familiares, escritos realmente dentro de la moral relativa, hasta que Antonio Alvarez Lleras sorprendió al público bogotano con la rebeldía y la crítica mordaz de su obra *Viboras sociales*."²³ Agustín del Saz refers to Alvarez Lleras as "el iniciador del teatro moderno colombiano,"²⁴ Leguizamón terms him "el verdadero iniciador del teatro colombiano en su etapa moderna" and as the "inspirador de una renovada actividad,"²⁵ and Willis Knapp Jones also points to him as the "fundador del teatro moderno colombiano."²⁶

The stimulus provided by the success of Antonio Alvarez Lleras as a playwright has been important to the life and growth of the Colombian theatre of the twentieth century, and his influence on many of the dramatists of the period from 1911 to the 1930's is evident. Of these dramatists, Luis Enrique Osorio and Daniel Samper Ortega rank among the most outstanding. Osorio, author of some thirty-six dramatic works and a key figure in the twentieth-century Colombian theatre, is generally regarded along with Alvarez Lleras as their country's two foremost playwrights. Alvarez Lleras' influence on him is clearest in his early plays, a number of which are biting satires on social and political conditions of the time.

Since about 1940 the primary influence on the Colombian theatre has been the contemporary theatre of Europe and the United States. However several dramatists have continued to write in a vein similar to that popularized by Alvarez Lleras and then by Luis Enrique Osorio. The most notable among these is Oswaldo Díaz Díaz, the author of some two dozen plays and a figure deserving of further critical study. Playwrights such as Oswaldo Díaz Díaz, and even the members of the newer schools such as Enrique Buenaventura, Juan Bautista Castro, and Gonzalo Arango, continue to benefit from the theatre of Alvarez Lleras, for it was he who instituted Colombia's first significant movement in twentieth-century drama, and who provided the initial stimulus for its growth and development.

Notes

1. Additional information regarding the life and works of Antonio Alvarez Lleras can be found in my unpublished doctoral dissertation, "The Dramatic Art of Antonio Alvarez Lleras," University of North Carolina, 1966.

2. The year 1892 is the date given by most historians, including Antonio Curcio Altamar (*Evolución de la novela en Colombia*, Bogotá, 1957, p. 270); Gustavo Otero Muñoz (*Historia de la literatura colombiana*, Bogotá, 1935, pp. 164-65); and Daniel Samper Ortega (Prologue to Antonio Alvarez Lleras, *Viboras sociales y El juego extraño*, Bogotá, n.d., p. 6 [Selección Samper Ortega de literatura colombiana, XCVIII]), who gives the date as July 2, 1892. Nicolás Bayona Posada (*Panorama de la literatura colombiana*, Bogotá, 1942, p. 97) lists him as having been born in 1895, however, and Alvarez Lleras' son, in a personal letter written January 8, 1965, also gives 1895 as the year of his birth. Since most of the information provided in this letter seems to be extracted directly from another source, and not all of it is accurate, Samper Ortega's date has been provisionally chosen as most likely.

3. None of these plays was published, but they are cited in the letter referred to in note 2.

4. As cited in Antonio Alvarez Lleras, *Alma joven*, 2d. ed. (Bogotá, 1914), p. 70.

5. See Willis Knapp Jones, *Behind Spanish American Footlights* (Austin, Texas, 1966), p. 329.

6. Alvarez Lleras, *El juego extraño*, p. 153, in *Viboras sociales y El juego extraño* (Bogotá, n.d.) [Selección Samper Ortega de literatura colombiana, XCVIII].

7. See preface to Alvarez Lleras, *Como los muertos*, 5th ed. (Bogotá, 1931), p. 1.

8. José Vicente Ortega Ricaurte, *Historia crítica del teatro en Bogotá* (Bogotá, 1927), p. 238.

9. This information relating to the production of *El zarpazo* was included in the letter (see note 2) from the son of Alvarez Lleras.

10. Alvarez Lleras, *El zarpazo* (Bogotá, 1946), p. 65.

11. To my knowledge, the presence of the incest motif in *El zarpazo* has not heretofore been pointed out.

12. Agustín del Saz, *Teatro hispanoamericano* (Barcelona, 1963), II, 355.

13. E. Anderson-Imbert, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana*, 3d. ed. (Mexico, 1961), II, 92-93.

14. Antonio Curcio Altamar, *Evolución de la novela en Colombia* (Bogotá, 1957), p. 230.

15. Prologue to *Almas de ahora* (Bogotá, 1945), p. vii. In this prologue Alvarez Lleras explains the thesis of the play *Almas de ahora* and discusses the social and moral problems of the period in which this work was written. This discussion is interesting in that it provides a rather thorough description of Alvarez Lleras' views on the society of the period. The most valuable portion of the prologue, nonetheless, are the pages in which he gives his concept of the theatre, to be discussed later in the article.

16. For a more detailed appraisal of *Almas de ahora*, see Erminio Neglia's "Almas de ahora, de Alvarez Lleras," *Magazine Dominical of El Espectador* (Bogotá), 9 de enero de 1966, 11-E.

17. These titles were obtained from the previously-mentioned letter from Alvarez Lleras' son. Manuscript copies of the plays are in his possession.

18. José Solís' life as an adventurous Spanish soldier, as an arrogant viceroy whose escapades provoked scandals in Santa Fe de Bogotá, and ultimately as a devout member of a monastic order has made him one of the most popular figures of the colonial period in Nueva Granada. The dramatic contrast between his arrogance and gallantry as a soldier and as viceroy and his contriteness and devotion as a *fraile* has also caused him to become known as something of a don Juan figure—Willis Knapp Jones refers to him as "... a combination of Don Juan in sinning and Oedipus in repenting" (*Behind Spanish American Footlights*, p. 329). This aura of the don Juan has given Solís prominence as a legendary personality as well as a historical one, and three plays, a novel, and numerous poems have treated him, in addition to a large body of biographical studies.

19. For a more thorough consideration of the play *El virrey Solís* see my "History and Legend in *El virrey Solís* of Antonio Alvarez Lleras," *Hispania*, LII, No. 1 (March 1969), 13-20.

20. Nicolás Bayona Posada, *Panorama de la literatura colombiana* (Bogotá, 1959), p. 111.

21. Alvarez Lleras, Prologue to *Almas de ahora*, pp. v-vi.

22. Prologue to Alvarez Lleras, *Viboras sociales y El juego extraño*, p. 9.

23. As cited in Carlos Solórzano, *Teatro latinoamericano del siglo XX* (Buenos Aires, 1961), pp. 42-43.

24. As cited in Willis Knapp Jones, *Behind Spanish American Footlights*, p. 328.

25. Julio A. Leguizamón, *Historia de la literatura hispanoamericana* (Buenos Aires, 1945), II, 542-43.

26. Willis Knapp Jones, *Breve historia del teatro hispanoamericano* (Mexico, 1956), p. 128.