
Introduction: In Honor of Sandra Messinger Cypess: Creator of Critical Dialogues

Priscilla Meléndez and Amalia Gladhart

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Machado de Assis, Jorge Luis Borges, Rodolfo Usigli, Javier Villaurrutia, Celestino Gorostiza, Salvador Novo, Octavio Paz, Elena Garro, Rosario Castellanos, Emilio Carballido, Griselda Gambaro, Carlos Fuentes, Myrna Casas, Cristina Pacheco, Sabina Berman, Nora Glickman: These are only some of the names of distinguished Spanish-American writers that surface when we examine the academic trajectory of Sandra Messinger Cypess—Sandy, to her friends and colleagues—professor emerita and former chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Maryland. It is a trajectory that culminates most recently in the publication of *Uncivil Wars: Elena Garro, Octavio Paz, and the Battle for Cultural Memory* (2012), as well as the co-edited (with Valerie Orlando) *Reimagining the Caribbean: Conversations amongst the Creole, English, French, and Spanish Caribbean* (2014), a distinguished record to which Sandy has continued to add since her retirement from the University of Maryland.

Sandy's journey as a critic is broad in scope and in depth. The impressive repertory of writers just mentioned hail from all parts of the continent—Mexico, the Caribbean, and the Southern Cone; from diverse periods—colonial times, the 19th century, the avant-garde, and contemporary writers; and from all genres. Sandy has moved with ease from the study of Spanish-American poetry to theatre and narrative, contributing as well to Sephardic and Jewish studies and, in particular, producing a body of influential work on feminist and female writers.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Brooklyn College and Master of Arts from Cornell University, Sandy earned her Doctor of Philosophy from the University of Illinois, writing her dissertation, "The Dead Narrator in Modern Latin American Prose Fiction: A Study in Point of View," under the direction of Don Luis Leal. During her distinguished teaching career, first at SUNY Binghamton and then at the University of Maryland (with visiting

and invited appointments along the way), she mentored hundreds of students, both graduate and undergraduate. As a scholar, she has mentored hundreds more through her many publications and through her generosity as reader, reviewer, editor, panel participant, and moderator.

Sandy's pioneering role in the study of women writers and feminism—an area of study that touches on the personal and the political—opened the way for many of us as we have traveled in her footsteps. Inspired by her work, we have felt, in our own research and writing, that we were conversing with Sandy, learning from her, even arguing with her about some aspects of the texts. She has the admirable gift of writing scholarly prose that is at once rigorous and accessible, welcoming and at the same time challenging the reader so as to develop that ongoing conversation that is the essence of scholarship.

Sandy has played a leading role in the development of Latin American theatre studies in the US, expanding the canon even as it was established. A member of the editorial board of *LATR* since 1978, she produced some of the earliest studies of Griselda Gambaro, among many other playwrights. Her book *La Malinche in Mexican Literature* (1991) is indispensable for scholars as well as students. A clear example of the depth and breadth of her work, this landmark book traces the historical and mythical figure of La Malinche throughout Mexican literature, from Bernal Díaz's account of Malintzin's role in the conquest of the Aztec empire to Chicana writers' reformulation of the Malinche myth. Reflecting the central place that theatre occupies in Sandy's body of work, two of the book's nine chapters focus on dramatic representations of La Malinche. The first, "La Malinche on Stage," treats selected plays that deal with the Malinche figure, focusing on Rodolfo Usigli's *Corona de fuego* (1960), Salvador Novo's *Cuauhtémoc* (1962), Celestino Gorostiza's *La Malinche o La leña está verde* (1958), and Carlos Fuentes' *Todos los gatos son pardos* (1970). Reinterpretations of the figure are addressed in the next chapter, "Re/visions of the Cultural Metaphor," through the analysis of *El eterno femenino* by Rosario Castellanos (1975), *Malinche Show* by Willebaldo López (1977), and *Águila o sol* by Sabina Berman (1984).

Uncivil Wars: Elena Garro, Octavio Paz, and The Battle for Cultural Memory interweaves the personal, cultural, and political influences of two Mexican literary icons, Elena Garro (1916-1998) and Octavio Paz (1914-1998), with the goal of introducing the work of Garro to a greater audience and underscoring her role as an intellectual and as a creative influence on Mexican culture. Building on her earlier work, in *Uncivil Wars* Sandy carefully examines Garro's and Paz's understandings of the figure of La Malinche.

The fact that Paz is inevitably quoted whenever Malintzin is discussed as a historical figure—as woman, traitor, translator, lover, and mother—invites Sandy to explore why Paz’s sometimes inaccurate and prejudiced views of this character have been so easily disseminated, but not those of Garro, who, in her 1963 novel, *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, examines the complex concept of *malinchismo*. Through the study of novels, plays, and memoirs in the case of Garro, and through essays and poems in the case of Paz, Sandy sagaciously explores Mexican literature, history, and culture in the context of the tumultuous relationship between a woman and a man who were each controversial in their own way, and whose social, literary, and political stands placed them in very different ideological and personal positions.

Sandy’s key role within Latin American women’s studies as well as her generosity have been widely recognized. She was selected by the University of Maryland Women’s Studies Honor Society (Triota) as the recipient of the 2012-2013 Award for Feminist Excellence, based on “your pioneering work in the study of women writers of Latin America; your commitment to teaching and mentoring women students and colleagues; and your overall embodiment of feminist values and ideals.” These statements perfectly summarize Sandy’s qualities as a scholar, teacher, mentor, and human being.

As we celebrate in this special issue Sandy’s scholarly contributions to our field, we also celebrate her personal attributes: her characteristic smile, undiminished enthusiasm, inexhaustible curiosity, empathy, kindness, solidarity, and continual support—formal and informal—to colleagues at all stages of their careers, not to mention a ready laugh and warm sense of humor.

Many of the essays included in this special issue originated in papers delivered at the 2015 Kentucky Foreign Language Conference as part of a series of six panels organized in Sandy’s honor. Colleagues and former students converged from far and wide to celebrate the occasion. As always when Sandy is present, it was a lively gathering, full of warmth, intellectual exchange, and admiration. These essays continue the celebration, honoring Sandy’s contributions to the study of Latin American theatre in their attention to questions of gender, justice, marginality, and change, and in the inclusion of diverging voices and theatre artists both well-known and still emerging. They are contributions to the conversation that professor and friend Sandra Messinger Cypess has done so much to forward and to sustain.

Trinity College and the University of Oregon

Chile: Alejandro Sieveking, Premio Nacional de Teatro 2017

Pedro Bravo Elizondo

El 27 de agosto de 2017, Alejandro Sieveking recibió una llamada telefónica: “Casi me fui de espaldas cuando me dijeron ‘le van a hablar, no cuelgue’, y era la ministra de Educación: ‘Lo llamo para contarle que acaba de ganar el Premio Nacional’”, relató al periodista de *La Tercera* de Santiago de Chile. Desde 1955, cuando subió por primera vez al escenario, llegó a ser una de las figuras fundamentales del teatro chileno.

Nació en Rengo, un pueblo cercano a Santiago, en 1934. Egresó de la Escuela de Teatro de la Universidad de Chile en 1959. Su intensa labor teatral como actor, autor y director comenzó con *Encuentro en las sombras* (1955). Algunas otras son *Mi hermano Cristián*, *El paraíso semiperdido*, *Parecido a la felicidad* (Premio Municipal de Teatro 1959), *La remolienda*, *Tres tristes tigres*, *La virgen del puño cerrado* y *Cama de batalla*. Obtuvo el Premio Casa de las Américas en teatro con *Pequeños animales abatidos* (1975).

Lo entrevisté en septiembre 1978 durante las Jornadas Culturales Salvador Allende, celebradas en Ciudad de México. Alejandro ya vivía en San José, Costa Rica, donde había establecido su compañía Teatro del Ángel (“Entrevista con Alejandro Sieveking”, *LATR*, vol. 12, no. 2, 1979, pp. 55-59). El golpe militar había impulsado a cuatro de los integrantes —Sieveking, Bélgica Castro, Luis Barahona y Dionisio Echeverría— a emigrar de Chile en abril de 1974. En Costa Rica contaron con sala propia, donde estrenaron más de veinte obras teatrales de diferentes autores y obtuvieron el Premio Municipal de Teatro.

Su escritura dramática no buscó representar la realidad ni ser panfletaria, como lo demostró con su legendaria *La remolienda*, dirigida por el director y canta-autor Víctor Jara, en la que inventó un folclore. “La gente estaba convencida que era una copia fiel del lenguaje chileno, y no es verdad. Creen que es una tradición popular antiquísima y no es cierto. Inventé todo [. . .]. Porque eso de estar copiando la realidad, ¿en qué consiste entonces el trabajo del dramaturgo?” (57).

Se impuso unánimemente en la selección final por el galardón que otorga el Estado a las artes escénicas. “En mérito de su prolífica producción dramática, reconocida nacional e internacionalmente, la que prevalece en el tiempo. También por su destacada trayectoria como actor, director, diseñador y fundador de importantes compañías, a lo que se agrega su labor como formador de artistas”, declara el acta oficial.