

## Recollections of Plays to Come: Time in the Theatre of Elena Garro

Catherine Larson

Elena Garro's dramatic works frequently test the limits of theatrical representation by detailing a clash between illusion and reality. Indeed, Frank Dauster observed this aspect of Garro's theatre, noting, "el teatro de Elena Garro demuestra una marcada preferencia por el tema de las relaciones entre diversas realidades. Sus personajes oscilan entre realidad e ilusión" (66). One way in which Garro calls attention to the line dividing appearance from reality is her interest in time. Temporal reality has been explored with regard to Garro's novels and short stories, but little critical attention has been paid to the ways that past, present, and future coalesce in her theatre.

Robert K. Anderson, who has studied the notion of temporal reality in Garro's *Los recuerdos del porvenir*, analyzes the author's interest in time as follows:

Elena Garro manifiesta en la novela una preocupación profundísima por la realidad temporal, expresando ésta con unas técnicas poco convencionales que tienden a minar la confianza del lector en las realidades y hechos que éste toma por ciertos. (25)

Anderson focuses upon two motifs that deal with Garro's treatment of time: "1) la narración orientada por la memoria, y 2) la trayectoria circular repetitiva de la historia" (25). I would maintain that Garro echoes these motifs in her dramatic texts, as well; time is presented in analeptic recollections and proleptic projections along a diachronic trajectory and in evocations of endlessly repeating cycles that stress synchronicity and simultaneity. Yet, I would add that Garro also presents the conflation of diachronic and synchronic elements, creating a new temporal reality in the process, one that resurfaces as a kind of spiral that evokes both historical movement and cyclical repetition. Patricia D. Tobin's description of the spiral aptly reflects this use of time:

Less rigid and less exacting than either the line or the circle, the spiral allows for a certain slippage within its formal unity. Its sideways twist makes for spacing and delay, so that what is given up in space is given back in time. It records, among diverse moments in time, relative reversals and likenesses, so that both recurrence and variation contribute an enhancement of the richly multiple. Because it is asymmetrical, the spiral does not produce mirror images, but rather imperfect reflections and refractions, catching within its coils the effect of abundant layerings, of wayward surprises. Since time may be spun off at any point along its coils, since its open end refutes any circular enslavement by time, the spiral symbolizes whatever liberation is possible to the human spirit . . . (153)

Although she might disagree with Tobin's description of the spiral's distorted mirror image, Garro's own assessment of the function of time in her writing underscores a similar preoccupation with transformed realities, repetition, and doubling: "La unidad del tiempo, pasado-presente-porvenir, todo es un espejo que se repite a sí mismo" (Anderson 2). We will see the expression of this interest in temporality and alternative realities in a survey of eight of Garro's plays--seven of which are found in the anthology, *Un hogar sólido* (*Un hogar sólido*, *El Encanto*, *Tendajón Mixto*, *Andarse por las ramas*, *El árbol*, *Los perros*, *La mudanza*, and *La dama boba*), and one, *La señora en su balcón*, which was published separately.<sup>1</sup> In these dramas, most of which premiered or were first published from the late 1950's to the mid-1960's, temporal imagery is repeatedly related to an altered view of reality. Past events often resurface in the present in a distorted mirror reflection that fuses history into the reality of the dramatic present. Past experiences are replayed in an endless repetition of history; early texts reappear in modern guises. But like any mirror image, these later incarnations of previous experiences and pretexts come close, but cannot completely recreate a preexisting reality. Mirror images may attempt to reproduce reality, but they also always, and necessarily, distort that reality, offering in its place an illusion. When Garro sees the union of past, present, and future reflected in an endlessly repeating mirror, she therefore fixes upon a temporal expression of the contrast between appearance and reality.

The first play to be discussed is the title piece to Garro's anthology: *Un hogar sólido*. The setting is a family tomb, and the characters are all deceased members of the same family. Time is underscored in a highly self-conscious manner for these characters, precisely because "normal time" has stopped at the moment of each character's death. The costumes reflect the different styles in fashion at the time in which each one died, which accentuates the passing of the years, a diachronic image. Furthermore, curiously anachronistic situations result: when the thirty-two year old Lidia dies, she meets for the

first time her long-departed great aunt, Catita, whom she can identify from the family photos that sat on the piano in her home. What is ironic, however, is that this great aunt is only a five-year-old girl in the play, because she died of diphtheria at that age. Other such temporal dislocations include a bizarre flirtation, continued in the grave after a great lapse of time, since the participants are now twenty-three and eighty years old, respectively. On a logical level, we can explain these temporal inversions; yet, we are struck by the uncanny quality of such unusual relationships, especially when they are performed onstage, where we can see the disparities indicated by the ages of the actors and the costumes that they wear.

*Un hogar sólido* illustrates numerous other examples of Garro's preoccupation with time. Predicting or anticipating what will happen in the future is seen to be a gift of several of the women in the play. The role of memory is also central, as many of the characters reflect back upon their past lives, discussing their hopes and dreams, as well as such every-day occurrences as house cleaning. These recollections of past experiences offer a contrast to the eternal quality of life-after-death in the grave, a timeless present that is only altered by the arrival of new family members, while the inhabitants of the tomb await judgment day. Garro, however, stresses yet another type of reality in *Un hogar sólido*, one that may be linked to her treatment of temporal frames of reference. In the last part of this one-act play, the other characters share with Lidia the truths of life after death, telling her that she will become one with all matter, that she will mix with the wind, the snow, the worms that help her body decompose, the rivers: "Lilí, todavía no lo sabes, pero de pronto no necesitas casa, ni necesitas río. No nadaremos en el Mezcala, seremos el Mezcala" (25). Lidia, like all of the other dead members of her family, will participate in a constantly shifting and repeating cycle that unites her with the universe.<sup>2</sup> In that sense, she will become part of all time, her new existence demonstrating not merely a spatial, but also a temporal union stretching into eternity.

*El Encanto, Tendajón Mixto* is also a play that presents new and alternative realities. In this one-act drama, three solitary muleteers are greeted by a beautiful and mysterious woman, who invites them to join her for a drink in a little store named El Encanto Tendajón Mixto. "Encanto" is the operative word here, because when one of the men disregards his friends' warnings, enters, and begins to drink, he and the woman--as well as the entire store--magically disappear. His two remaining friends return to the same spot exactly a year later, and the scene reappears as if no time had elapsed, since they witness their friend setting his glass down on the bar. The mysterious woman explains that in this new reality, traditional views of time have no meaning: "¡Una copa y un día son lo mismo! Aquí medimos con medidas que ustedes desconocen. No contamos los días porque esa copa los contiene a todos. . . . El vive en otro tiempo . . . El tiempo de los pájaros, las frutas y la luz" (117). Their friend is, however, unable to find the right words to describe

the wonders of this new reality, and the two muleteers refuse to listen or to open their eyes to different possibilities. The play ends with the second sudden disappearance of El Encanto and with the muleteers' resolution to return exactly a year later to bring their friend back home and to put an end to El Encanto once and for always.

Garro has tied the creation of alternative realities to alternative views of time in this play. A synchronic perspective is stressed in the unreal world controlled by the mysterious woman: a year is covered in an instant in this magical place where conventional measurements do not apply and where time can stand still. Yet, time is also presented as a repeating cycle: the play takes place on two days, the third of May a year apart, and it concludes with the promise of further repetitions on succeeding thirds of May. The focus on this specific date and on the passage of time helps to underline the contrast between conventional time and the time of El Encanto.

A final temporal element relates to Garro's use of an unnamed narrator to introduce the play. The narrator sets the stage in a style reminiscent of the beginning of a fairy tale: "Hubo un tiempo, hace años, en que el hombre buscaba el sustento, penando en despoblado" (105). This type of introduction, with its connotative echoes of legends and fairy tales, gives the reader/spectator an early indication of the theme of appearance vs. reality that this play incarnates. Yet, it also establishes a temporal framework for the action of the play, situated far from the time of the narrative present and fixed in a specific, if unnamed, moment in the past. The rest of the play moves forward from that temporal strategy toward the present, offering endless repetitions occurring precisely one year apart on the third of May. Garro has presented a multiplicity of temporal perspectives, but she has linked each of them to the creation of new and alternative ways of seeing the world.

In *Andarse por las ramas*, Garro deals with time in its relationship to language and to reality. Titina, a dreamer who is able to escape the confines of her mundane world by climbing into a house and onto the branches of a tree that she draws in chalk on the wall, is contrasted to her husband, Don Fernando de las Siete y Cinco. Don Fernando measures his life in fragments of time: "Las siete y siete y apenas han servido la sopa de poros: lunes" (69); "(*Mira su reloj.*) Las siete y cincuenta y nueve y Polito no come su sopa de poros" (73). Titina ponders the links between these temporal frames of reference and reality:

**Titina:** ¿Ha pensado usted don Fernando de las Siete y Cinco, en dónde se meten los lunes? En siete días no sabemos nada de ellos.

**Don Fernando:** Los lunes son una medida cualquiera de tiempo . . . una convención. Se les llama lunes como se les podría llamar . . . pompónico(69).

Unable to get her husband to understand her search for alternative frames of reference, Titina leaves her home and meets Lagartito, who turns out to be as disappointingly prosaic as her husband. The two engage in a surrealistic attempt<sup>3</sup> to sort out the roles of language and time in the creation of reality:

**Titina:** Entonces, los lunes son pompónicos.

**Lagartito:** ¿Qué dices? Un lunes es un lunes.

**Titina:** ¿Nunca te has asomado a ver lo que es un lunes?

**Lagartito:** Nadie puede asomarse a un lunes.

**Titina:** Entonces nadie puede asomarse a ti.

**Lagartito:** (*Angustiado*) ¿Y por qué no?

**Titina:** Porque no quieres ser lunes.

**Lagartito:** Y si yo fuera lunes, ¿qué sería?

**Titina:** Serías después de la fiesta.

**Lagartito:** Y antes de la fiesta.

**Titina:** Si eres lunes, eres toda la fiesta, porque estás entre la de ayer y la de mañana.

**Lagartito:** ¡Titina, yo quiero ser lunes! (75-6)

The passage above is highly self-conscious in its use of the concept of time (in the day of the week) as a structural device. Time is as arbitrary as language itself, and it functions here to point out the ways that alternative realities mandate alternative ways of existing in time. Titina seems to be convincing Lagartito: he finally, triumphantly exclaims, "El lunes somos nosotros, estrellas caídas en la noche del domingo" (77). Titina has tried to get Lagartito to see their oneness with time and space; "El lunes somos nosotros" epitomizes a search for the unity of essence that contradicts her husband's view that Monday is merely a linguistic convention. Lagartito grasps Titina's hand and climbs into the branches of her chalk tree, echoing her promise to stay there "por los siglos de los siglos" (78). Their escape into the infinite "por los siglos de los siglos," however, does not last long. Lagartito, drawn to the material world, leaves Titina sitting in her tree and returns to more mundane relationships with people, time, and space. The play ends with both of the men in Titina's life passing by her tree, while she sits alone in her own timeless reality.

Garro has contrasted Titina's rejection of the limits of temporal and spatial reality with the unimaginative perspectives of Don Fernando de las Siete y Cinco and Lagartito. Titina's imaginary world is made even more illusory when it is compared, for example, with that of her husband, whose very name--as well as his repetitive glances at his watch--signals a firm grounding in traditional ways of perceiving time. In this play, time is the element that lays bare this contrast, and it is the means by which a truly imaginative and dynamic character expresses transcendence vis-à-vis the limits of conventional reality.

Four of Garro's plays treat the notion of time on a thematic level (and often on a structural level, as well) by stressing the importance of memory. In *El árbol*, *Los perros*, *La señora en su balcón*, and *La mudanza*, past events make a profound impact on present realities. *El árbol* presents the story of two women alone in a house in Mexico City. Luisa, the guest, tells her old acquaintance from the past what has happened in her life since they were children together in a small village. As Luisa's sordid story progresses, Marta, the hostess, becomes alarmed, because she begins to realize that Luisa is crazy. The culmination of Luisa's flashback is her confession that when she finally broke down and confided the details of her past out loud, she confessed her sins and crimes to a tree; when she returned later, she found that the tree had shriveled and died. The implications of the flashback become clear to Marta: since Luisa has never confided her past to any other living thing or person, she will now recreate the "murder" of the tree in the murder of her hostess. Marta tries unsuccessfully to stop the act that has been set in motion with Luisa's confession: "Olvide todo, Luisa. Fue una broma cuando le dije que estaba endemoniada. Todos hemos hecho cosas malas . . . el pasado no existe, nunca más volvemos a ser lo que fuimos" (167). Luisa, however, seems resolved to make the past live again in the present, and the play ends with the implication that the murder will take place in a matter of seconds. In this play, confession, seen in the recollection of the past, does not lead to expiation and forgiveness, but leads, instead, to a continuation of the cycle of destruction. Luisa relives her past orally and then actively, illustrating the union of memory and prophecy.

*Los perros* describes the abduction and rape of an innocent twelve-year old girl in rural Mexico in an exact repetition and recreation of the abduction and rape of her mother years before. We are presented first with the young girl's preparations for a village feast day and with her cousin's warnings of the planned abduction. When the mother returns home and hears the news, she relates her own tragic story. History is then repeated when two men sneak into the room and make off with the daughter while the mother, seemingly unaware, concludes her narration.

The recreation of the mother's past experiences in the present reality of her daughter deals directly with the notion of cyclical time. The recollection of the past, the narration of personal history, is actualized onstage in an exact duplication of the events that took place years before. Garro emphasizes the parallels between past and present with two key images that are repeated in both the narrated (past) and actualized (present) versions: the dogs do not bark, because they have been silenced by the abductors; and a male cousin who warns the young girl about the planned attack betrays the family by joining the kidnappers. The play ends with the daughter's abduction, but the clues given in the embedded flashback predict her future tragic fate. Ironically, the mother disregards every indication that history is going to repeat itself. She refuses to see that time has changed her daughter into a desirable

object for her abductor: "No es a ti a quien mira. No estás en edad de merecer. ¿Quién ha de fijarse en ti si todavía no has crecido?" (128). The dramatist uses numerous direct references to time--the example above, references to days, years, the feast day--to point toward the importance of this theme in her play. She further emphasizes temporal repetition through the use of mechanical, repetitive action onstage in, for example, the daughter endlessly ironing her dress or the mother making tortillas by hand. Finally, as Richard Callan has observed, the mother and daughter further underscore the notion of cyclical repetition through their identification with the classical myth of Demeter and Persephone and with Aztec myths of fertility, each of which deals with repetition in the cycles of nature (231). In *Los perros*, Garro has shown that history can repeat itself, that memory can be actualized in new forms, and that the past can live again in the present and future.

In *La señora en su balcón* and in *La mudanza*, the protagonists are older women who, unable to face the present, choose suicide as the only alternative to their empty lives and uncertain futures. Clara, the protagonist of *La señora en su balcón*, sits on her balcony reliving key moments of her past. The protagonist appears onstage in her present-time age of fifty and in her flashbacks as eight, twenty, and forty years old. The fifty-year old Clara is an observer of the scenes that she recalls, but she nevertheless attempts unsuccessfully to enter into those scenes and to influence them from her perspective as a mature adult. In one example, the eight-year old Clara is scolded by her teacher, who warns her that she must stop dreaming of a utopian Níveve and recognize that the world is round; the mature Clara tries to tell her younger self to disregard his advice and to keep her dreams. This technique emphasizes the role of time in the play; the multiple images of the same woman in different times cause the reader/spectator to reflect on the role of memory in the creation and development of the self, as well as on the impact that decisions made early in life will have on our futures.

Gloria Orenstein explores the union of surrealism and time in *La señora en su balcón* in *The Theater of the Marvelous*:

Clara has ceased to perceive reality chronologically, and, as Níveve becomes reality for her, she begins to live in a time continuum in which all is timeless; she cohabits with Julio as a young man as well as with him as an aging man. "CLARA. For me you have no age. What are a few years compared with the infinite centuries that await us and that precede us?" Affirming her belief in the reality of Níveve, she leaps to her death, which, in a surrealist play, does not necessarily signify a tragic ending. Clara has chosen to merge with the ultimate point at which life and death meet--*le point suprême* in the vast expanse of infinite time in which Níveve is reality. (117)

As Orenstein notes, time in *La señora en su balcón* functions on a variety of levels. Clara represents a mediating force between two contrasting views of time: the infinite and the mathematically precise. Through her linking of time and language, her nostalgic desire for the absolute in time and space, and her surrealistic search for a transcendent reality, Clara incarnates the best of Garro's experiments with time and reality.

In *La mudanza*, Garro uses less experimental techniques to illustrate the links between the present and the past. In this play, the elderly protagonist, Lola, has been cheated out of her family home by a nasty sister-in-law. Movers empty the house of all its possessions, while Lola sits in the middle of an empty room, immersed in memories of her past. The scene later erupts in verbal abuse, when Lola's sister-in-law explodes in anger, revealing her hatred for her late husband's family. Lola is humiliated by her sister-in-law, who leaves her with nothing, having robbed her of her home, sold her father's library, and thrown her family pictures in the garbage. With every vestige of her happy past destroyed and with the promise of an extremely unhappy and degrading future awaiting her, Lola kills herself. Suicide appears again as the only viable alternative to an existence that has been changed so dramatically by the passage of time.

Much of this paper has been devoted to Garro's use of the theme of time, of her characters' attempts to recuperate the past through memory, and of the clash between diachronic measurements of time and cyclical repetitions. The final play to be examined presents Garro's use of temporality in a context that both echoes and alters her perspective on the topic. *La dama boba* is about the transformation of the past--here, the literary past--into a contemporary context.

The importance of the literary past in Garro's development as a dramatist was explored in detail by the writer in her prefatory note to the 1967 edition of *El árbol*:

Mi primer contacto con el teatro fué en la infancia y a través de los clásicos españoles. *La dama boba*, *La Estrella de Sevilla*, *Las paredes oyen*, *El perro del hortelano*, *El condenado por desconfiado*, etc. me iniciaron en el deslumbrante mundo de la fantasía española del cual todavía no acabo de salir. El descubrimiento de un mundo que existe encerrado en los libros y que puede recrearse a voluntad me reveló la posibilidad de vivir dentro de una realidad infinitamente más rica que la realidad cotidiana . . . La convicción de que el teatro que escribo no sólo palidece sino que desaparece junto al teatro que admiro, me ha hecho perder el entusiasmo para continuar escribiendo. . . . Me proclamo discípula, mala, pero discípula, de los escritores españoles. (9-10)



In this note, Garro illuminates the strength of her debt to the literary past, as well as her rather negative self-judgment of her own abilities as a dramatist. She describes herself as drawn to the theatre from her earliest days, studying and participating as a choreographer just so that she could be a part of the world of the stage. Garro further emphasizes her recent role as a reader, rather than as a writer (or actress or choreographer) of drama. She returns to the idea that the classics of Spanish literature have provided her with inspiration, recommending "un baño diario en su inagotable fantasía . . . a todos aquellos que quieran permanecer siempre jóvenes" (11).

This confession does much more than illustrate the sources of Garro's works. The dramatist describes the relationship between the classics and her interest in such eternal themes as the conflict between appearance and reality, and she emphasizes the respective roles of readers and writers of dramatic texts. This notion will surface again in her own version of a Golden Age classic, *La dama boba*, in which contemporary readers (here, members of the audience inside the text) find themselves unable to separate theatrical illusion from reality. These naive readers will then attempt to rewrite a pre-existing text by (re)living it, in a parallel to Garro's rewriting of Lope's text in the title, theme, and plot of her own version of *La dama boba*.

In Garro's version, a troupe of actors from the capital is shown presenting Lope's *La dama boba* to a rural Mexican village. The play opens in a parodic manner, with two scenes from Lope's text comprising the first scenes of Garro's drama, a highly self-conscious strategy, since two audiences and two texts, Lope's and Garro's, are immediately placed on display. Theatrical illusion is seen as reality for one of the members of the audience: Avelino Juárez, the mayor of a neighboring town, believes that Finea's school lesson from Lope's play is a real-life lesson, and he kidnaps the actor who plays the teacher for his community of Indians, none of whom knows how to read.

In the months that the actor/teacher, Francisco Aguilar, spends in the village, he does teach the people how to spell, and he receives something in return: Francisco is bewitched by Lupe, the mayor's mysterious daughter, and he discovers that she can help him see the world in a new and exciting way. One of the lessons that Lupe teaches Francisco is that traditional notions of time are constantly revised in this village: "el tiempo dura y no dura. A veces es largo como la enfermedad de un día, y a veces corto, tan corto como los noventa años de mi abuelita, que se fueron retratados en un abrir y cerrar de ojos de mi abuelito" (221). Just like Finea in Lope's play, Lupe proves to be much less *boba* than she appeared to be at first, becoming Francisco's teacher by offering him enlightenment and an introduction to new realities. Although he is beginning to fall in love with Lupe, Francisco still hopes to escape, even when the town honors him by turning out en masse dressed in the seventeenth-century costumes appropriate for the original staging of Lope's *La dama boba*.

At that point, the other members of Francisco's acting company arrive on the scene and offer to put on the play for the town. The scene is central,

because it stresses again the strong links between time and the nature of theatrical illusion. Francisco explains:

Don Avelino, se me ocurre que debemos darles "La dama boba" para que sepan lo que es el teatro. Verá usted que "La dama boba" es una lección, pero que no es una lección. Sólo existe unos minutos, y no pasa en este tiempo, ni en ningún tiempo. Y los actores vivimos siendo lo que no somos en un tiempo imaginario y somos tantos y tan variados, y vivimos en tantos tiempos diferentes, que al final ya no sabemos ni quiénes somos ni lo que fuimos. (241)

Garro has written a play in which characters seeing a play try to live it in order to make real the illusion of the dramatic text. They live literature--here, a Golden Age play--in a manner reminiscent of Don Quixote's attempts to live the fiction of the novels of chivalry. Yet, Garro builds layer upon layer of her metaplay, since these audience members-cum-characters now become audience members again for a third staging of *La dama boba*. Garro has fused the seventeenth-century text into a twentieth-century experience in order to foreground the tenuous line separating illusion--particularly theatrical illusion--from reality. The theme of *theatrum mundi* is illustrated in these three "performances" of *La dama boba*, in which echoes of the past resurface and form the fabric of present experience.

Temporality in Garro's theatre performs a multitude of functions: existence in time operates on both thematic and structural levels in her plays. Garro's emphasis on alternative modes of existing in time points to her thematic explorations of the nature of appearance and reality, and her use of flashbacks and other temporal frames of reference helps to structure many of her works. Her interest in temporality posits the creation of dramatic worlds in which diachronic or historical measurements, cyclical measurements and repetitions, and timelessness all merge. She underscores these divergent, yet curiously unified concepts of temporal reference via her own stylistic repetitions: repeated motifs (for example, the use of "por los siglos de los siglos," often in reference to the search for a temporal utopia), frequent flashbacks or time shifts, her stress on both memory and prophecy, and the use of intertextual echoes (reminders of her debts to past texts and past myths). These elements surface so often in her works that they indicate thematic and structural patterns clearly linked to a pervasive interest in time and to its relationship with reality.

The cumulative effect of these temporal elements experienced in Garro's plays relates directly to A. A. Mendilow's exploration of temporality in narrative, *Time and the Novel*. Mendilow's discussion of the Bergsonian notion of *durée*, expressed in modern writing in terms of psychological time, is particularly relevant to the study of Garro's theatre: "the Bergsonian view is that time is another term for the impulse behind all things, that it is not a form

or aspect or attribute of reality but reality itself" (155). Mendilow describes modern transformations of Bergson's ideas for the writers of today: "They aim at conveying the effect of an all-pervading present in which past and future are part, in preference to an orderly progression in time of separated discontinuous events" (169). The time-shift technique that Garro uses so frequently in her theatre illustrates Mendilow's point; I would maintain that his discussion of temporality with regard to narrative is directly applicable to Garro's theatre, in which, like with narrative, "prior and tacit acceptance of conventions based on temporal values" is also turned upside down with the use of key temporal devices that can "overcome the denotatory and connotatory limitations of a symbolic representational medium, that is, of language" (237). Indeed, many of the essential elements of Mendilow's theories of time and the novel have been suggested in a number of important studies of Garro's theatre, specifically those treating her interest in language, myth, and intertextuality.<sup>4</sup>

This brief overview of time as theme and structure in the theatre of Elena Garro gives an indication of her overwhelming interest in the relationship between the past and the present, and appearance and reality. Garro's plays present us with the harsh, cold realities of modern relationships, with magical worlds beyond the scope of human comprehension, and with the reincarnation of past texts and past actions in present-day experiences. The dramatist pursues the roles of memory and prophecy in creating these experiences, and she conflates diachronic notions of time with cyclical repetitions. In that sense, Garro's plays do, indeed, present time as a type of a repeating spiral, an image that focuses on the past but also points toward the future.<sup>5</sup> Garro's theatre, like her prose fiction, gives us many recollections of things to come; this union of memory and foreshadowing helps to create an often magical present in which, as Francisco of *La dama boba* noted, we live in so many different times that at the end, we don't even know who we are or what we were.

*Indiana University*

## Notes

1. *Un hogar sólido* contains eleven one-act plays and one three-act drama, *La dama boba*. *El árbol*, one of the plays in *Un hogar sólido*, was also published in an earlier edition; Garro's comments in the preface of that 1967 edition offer a particularly insightful analysis of her own motivations for writing and of the influence of the classics on her dramaturgy. The seven plays from *Un hogar sólido* (as well as the separately-published *La señora en su balcón*) that are discussed in this paper illustrate the variety of ways that Garro uses time—both as a thematic element and on a structural level—in her dramatic opus. These eight plays display the same basic motifs that Anderson noted with regard to Garro's prose fiction: the importance of memory and the use of cyclical, repetitive time. Garro's interest in temporality is not limited

to these eight works; however, time functions as a major thematic or structural element in them, and her use of temporality in these plays is paralleled in a number of her other dramatic texts.

2. The idea of cyclical time may be traced back to the Mayas and Aztecs; Frank Waters focuses on the Mayas when he notes, "No other people on earth have been so obsessed with time. . . . The Mayan concept of limitless time is still a distinguishing feature of Indian mentality throughout America" (252). Cecelia F. Klein notes that Post-Classic Mexican culture "conceived of space and time in terms of ever-recurring cycles" (80). Klein's observations of the links between Post-Classic Mexican death imagery and the completion of certain key temporal cycles helps to explain the union of death images and temporality (and, particularly, cyclical completion) seen in numerous examples of Mexican literature, including many of the plays of Elena Garro.

3. See Gloria Orenstein's *The Theater of the Marvelous* for an explanation of surrealism in three of Garro's dramas; Orenstein observes that "The female protagonist of most of Garro's plays is in search of the marvelous. Her quest is often thwarted by the male protagonist, who exerts a tyrannical control over her desires, and against whom she must rebel in order to express her inherent nature as a guide to the sources of the surreal" (111).

4. See studies by Vicky Unruh, Richard Callan, Sandra Cypess, and Gabriela Mora on Garro's theatre, in addition to Robert K. Anderson's article on *Los recuerdos del porvenir*.

5. A complementary discussion of the use of time in a classical Spanish text may be found in my study of Calderón's *Eco y Narciso*.

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