VIEWS OF THE CONTEMPORARY THEATER IN MEXICO

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PREFACE

In order to give the effect of the surge of dramatic production in Mexico today, the plays herein treated are given not in perfect chronological order, although approximately so, but in the order of their development from the social to the revolutionary drama. The first dramatist whose works are to be treated is José Gamboa, whose theater is entirely socialistic. María Luisa Ocampo's works at first were purely of a social nature, but her later plays smack of revolution. Francisco Monterde and Mauricio Magdaleno tend decidedly toward the revolutionary drama, while Juan Bustillo Oro's theater is plainly revolutionary propaganda.

L. M. B.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The theater has had a spectacular beginning in Mexico. Among the ancients it was a form of the dance that gradually grew from a simple yet free expression of the emotions to an aesthetic interpretation of the life of man under the influence of the sun and the elements, the dawn of the new seasons, the joy of birth and the mystery of death. From this highly animated state the dance passed to a more determined state, expressing daily occurrences, history and periodical celebrations and spectacular events. The dances of the sowings, harvests, hunts, birth, and death became as frequent and significant as traditional tribal ceremonies, and pilgrimages, wars and worships of the gods. Gradually the dance advanced from this exalted state of ecstasy to a representation of the internal conflicts of humanity, of love, duty, suffering and faith. Thus it was that a verbal expression became a part of the dance to give greater meaning to the movement and idea.[1]

Accompanying dances for the gods, were chants, at first sung in unison, then in conversation. In this manner were presented several existing theaters, the religious and symbolic theater and the caricatural theater in which farce and satire were employed with a certain artifice. Undoubtedly

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[1] Monterde, Francisco, Bibliografía del teatro en México.

the religious theater was the only one prepared and conserved, while the others were improvisions of the actors upon occurrence.[2] In caricatures the dance was not the main issue, but grew to be a preliminary part. In time the dance came to be a musical interpretation, a distinct and separate ceremony. In the spoken theater lines given in verse were substituted for lines in prose. There were certain schools of the dance. Men dressed as women figured in farce dances, as the dance of old age, in which some impromptu actor was the fool.

In all its various forms the theater and the dance were aesthetic and artistic offerings to the gods: from the religious and symbolic to the ridiculous and caricatural, in the solemnities celebrated in tribute to Huitzilopoxtli, Quetzalcoatl and other divinities.[3] Probably no other phase of their life so aptly represented the native spirit and temperament as did these traditional theaters.

The conquest of Mexico in the sixteenth century, brought about the second act of the Mexican drama. The stage could not have been better set and prepared for the padres of the Catholic Church of Spain. They were almost immediately aware of the existing primitive theater, and through no more effective means could they present their religion. As soon as the dialects of the Aztecs were

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[2] Monterde, Francisco, Bibliografía del teatro en México.

[3] Ibid.

learned the friars substituted for the feasts and ceremonies in honor of pagan gods, dramatized stories of religious subjects and ceremonies, and presented these pictures of morality and Christian dogma to the multitudes to convert them and to organize and establish sacred representations.[4]

These representations were something on the order of the Spanish sacramental autos. They were composed and adapted by the missionary monks. Sometimes translations from written Spanish autos were made in the Aztec dialects, or specific verses of the scripture translated and presented. Through these means the Christian religion was substituted for the pagan with no drastic perceptible change. There is no more significant coincidence in the history of the world than this pagan theater of advanced art.

Oftentimes religious presentations given in the temples were inadequate. Altars erected on low hills offered a convenient stage setting and appropriate religious atmosphere for these autos, and permitted great numbers of Indians to mass about and view the performance. True, the Aztecs had huge outdoor theaters long before the time of the conquest, but the faithful padres chose not to use them unless the pagan altars were destroyed and Christian ones erected in their place. Since autos acted in these settings were not enough, great processions followed the program.

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[4] Peña, Carlos G. Historia de la literatura mexicana.

It is thus that the actual theatrical performance became only a part of the religious festivity. A huge procession was set in march under the all-powerful sun that shone from a clear sky.[5] The padres led, elegantly dressed, carrying small images. The faithful followed, carrying crosses and banners. Everywhere were tokens of the occasion. Candles were burned and flowers fell everywhere, their delicate petals carpeting the paths. Many small altars were erected and chapels kept aglow where the Holy Jesus might stop to rest. The masses sang and danced in his honor. In due time some biblical episode was pantomimed or reproduced on an elevated platform.

The first brilliant festival of this manner was celebrated in New Spain by the Tlaxcaltecas in 1538. The procession marched to the scene of the platform, adorned with plumes and gold, flowers and trees, and even small birds. Amidst this bit of created paradise on the stage four significant autos were given, namely El nacimiento de San Juan el Bautista, by Zacarías, followed by La Anunciación de María, then La visitación de Santa Isabel and lastly El nacimiento de San Juan.[6]

The early outdoor theaters with their large stages provided ample room for elaborate presentations. Since these productions were always given in the Mexican

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[5] Monterde, Op. Cit.

[6] Ibid.

language they attracted ever-increasing numbers. The missionaries knew that only through their own language could the Indians be converted. They took advantage of the growing success of this method of conversion and all the miracles of Catholic history of the Virgin Mary and baptism were presented. The intention was to build up a strong Christian people. However, some of the instruments employed had a counter result. But the selection of themes and their writing by the able missionaries, the adaptation to the audience and the scenic realization of the autos by the Indians were the most admirable qualities of this theater.[7] Thus the paradise of Adam and Eve, the hell of Las predicaciones de San Francisco de las Aves, the boldness and piety in La conquista de Jerusalén, were masterpieces of content and scene, where the virtues of the theater were performed with free vigor.[8]

With the presentation of La conquista de Jerusalén, in Tlaxcala, first example of the theater of the masses, in the Russian manner of our age, the Mexican theater suffered a turn toward the more basely historic. The first Conquista, as so shall here be called the dramatic representations of the friars to convert the Indians, gave beautiful descriptions, portrayed marvelous acts of valor and power, of fatality and victory when God was fought against. The

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7 Monterde, op. cit.

8 Ibid.

second Conquista was the interpretation of the miracles, instilling in the Mexican love, through piety, fear, by the show of force, humility and suffering, by the struggle of Christ under the cross, from which the spectators learned the meaning of death. In the third Conquista, 1595, certain historical autos were chosen to be given traditionally on August 13.

But the Mexican temperament could not entirely subject itself to laws and norms, and joy and merriment found the strict religious processions an inadequate means for expression.[9] Animal masks and dances burlesquing love constituted the first rebellion against the purely religious theater.

In spite of the fact that religious autos were given constantly all over New Spain to convert the Indians, as early as 1539, there were non-religious works attempted in Castillian, namely a farce entitled El juicio final, attributed to a person whose surname was Las Casas.[10] But so strict were the Colonial Government and the Catholic Church that scarcely anything but religious works were written. Writings of a religious nature, written in Castillian, alone were encouraged. Near the close of the sixteenth century, however, Spaniards, attracted by New Spain, came and formed companies of actors, whose skits

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9 Usigli, Rodolfo, México en el teatro.

10 Peña, op. cit.

were open defiance of the existing religious theater. These companies, not without scandal, employed women to act the feminine roles. The representations given were written by one of the actors in his turn. Some of the farces, however, were not without some merit: those of Alfonso de Buenrostro (1586), Bachiller Arias de Villalobos, the comedian Navijo, who presented the first Conquista de México, (1595), Gonzalo de Riancho, and he who presented Casa de comedia. While the church still sponsored many dramatic presentations, it was nevertheless losing perceptibly to the secular theater. Many productions were a fusion of the two, principally the historical with the religious. Another type was religious farces, effective, but comprising a very minor part of the Mexican theater. It must not be assumed that the Mexican theater, although spectacular and advanced, was finely cultivated at the close of the sixteenth century. There is very little literary value in all these early productions. They were incongruent in action and incorrect in historical and geographical background.[11] Nevertheless they comprise priceless documents for judging the primitive theater.

In 1610, Friar Fernando Vello de Bustamente brought to light the coloquios, sixteen skits of conversation, written during the latter part of the sixteenth century. Little is known of what gave rise to them. They are

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[11] Peña, op. cit.

short one-act skits, similar to the sacramental autos, made up of five-verse stanzas, with a very few characters representing some non-religious episode through conversation. They were many times comic and reaching at times to the grotesque. The dramatist had a certain knack of fitting the coloquio to the audience, which was both Spanish and Mexican. Esclava, another writer of the coloquio, wrote in verse form the stories of the Bible. Many of his stanzas were sung as carols by the faithful.

No survey, regardless of brevity, of the Mexican theater can be complete without mention of Alarcón. D. Juan Ruíz de Alarcón, born and partly educated in Mexico, is claimed by Spain, but is always Alarcón of Mexico. He humanized the drama in his native land. He presented to the world a new moral on the stage, that he discovered in his isolation in native Mexico: charity, pardon of injuries, goodness with imperfections, vanity of birth before the virtues, the heroism of spiritual action over physical heroism, punishment of deceit and disloyalty, and the final reward.[12] The age of Alarcón was not purely Christian. Nor was Alarcón purely Mexican in his sadness and thought, or Spanish. It is possible that his sensibility had a closer relationship with the pessimism of Mexico.[13] Although his works were written

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12 Monterde, op. cit.

13 Peña, op. cit.

in Castilian, and attributed to Spain, they extended Mexican popularity and theatrical art. The influence of his native land is ever evident in his work.

Alarcón cannot accurately be classified. He does not belong to the usual seventeenth century dramatist. The Colonial Government of Mexico was ever severe. Various companies struggled to keep the fires of the secular theaters aglow, and the church continued its presentations under the imposed restrictions of faith and royal discretion. Certain of the companies presented foreign works, and original fables, triumphal arcs, and fantastic religious skits, and recited professional farces exclusively for the viceroys.[14] The fable comprised the themes of the more successful short dramatic skits of this age, but the latter half of the century gave rise to a more significant type of drama.

Augustín Salazar y Torres (1642-1675) and Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) were two most notable figures in the Mexican theater of their time. The former was a Spaniard, but his works on Mexican subjects did a great deal to further the success of the Mexican theater. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, a Mexican, is the only lyric writer who shines forth in this epoch. The theater is no more than an ornament in her poetic works. Her Loa a la concepción, El martir del Sacramento San Hermenegildo,

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[14] Monterde, op. cit.

El cetro de José, and El Divino Narciso, and the comedies Los empeños de la casa, and Amor es un laberinto, were all applauded by the hands of the viceroys of her time.

During this time the popular comic skits continued. The war farces, called Conquistas, alternated with dances, so frequent then. They are still given today in certain regions of Mexico. The religious autos ever grew more infrequent, and the professional theater at the end of the century was firmly established. There were only two works, written in the Mexican of this time, conserved: Sacrificio de Isaác (1678) and Destrucción de Jerusalén. Little remains of the theater that illuminated the seventeenth century.

The tyranical Colonial Government, with its many absurd restrictions, hindered biologic processes of development of the Indian and the Mestizo and caused a retardation of the march of life and thought.[15] The elaboration of modern life of the country among the Spaniards, creoles and educated mestizos caused a wider gap between them and the native Indians. Necessity for expression of thought struggled under the censure.[16] Thus it is that the theater of this century, in comparison to the preceding ones, is much poorer, and shows no development.

Except for the Mexican author Eusebio Vela, no one

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15 Ugsili, op. cit.

16 Ibid.

is distinguished in the dramatic theaters. His works relate to the first part of the century, and are valuable chiefly for rarity. Although some of his works were popular at the time, there were as many imported works read and presented as native works. As a matter of fact, it was no easy task to define the nationality of a work.

Some of the importations were operas, prepared and presented in the Palace. Some operas were written by Mexican authors, a new form for the theater of New Spain. Although the theater of the seventeenth century gained little of dramatic literature, it nevertheless gained in a material sense.[17] Many dramas were presented and facilities for producing them increased. The most notable improvement was the opening of the theater of the Royal Hospital, January 19, 1722, where the comedy Ruina e incendio de Jerusalén o desagravio de Cristo was given. A second theater was erected in 1725. Here acted the notables of the theater of the day, and dramas, foreign song and dance programs and operas were presented. In 1749, this theater suffered from existing conditions that caused it to grow unpopular, and eventually to be closed. A new theater soon took its place, called Teatro Principal, in 1753, and lasted until March 1, 1931, when it was destroyed by fire. Short dramatic skits, autos and fables comprised

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17 Monterde, op. cit.

its chief successes for the first twenty-five years. Toward the end of the century Spanish works as *La vida es sueño*, by Calderón, one act plays, dramatic sketches, comedies and operas were produced. But always the productions were under the heavy censure of the Colonial Government.

Nothing in the production of theatrical manuscript leaves clear the way for the study of the decay of *culteranismo* or the introduction of the neoclassic school. Decay and renovation were evident in other forms of literature. But the theater revived toward the end of the century.

So turbulent were the years following the close of the eighteenth century, that the theater suffered greatly. The struggle against the despotic regime was heated, especially with the expulsion of the Jesuits, action of the monarchy by divine right. There was rebellion against vassalage and servitude of the lower classes, armed protests against existant ignorance of the masses, the growing neglect of the Indian, the delay of life in the Colony.[18] How could the theater thrive under such chaotic conditions? Another factor from outside Mexico further hindered its progress. Foreign actors, having failed in their native land, preyed upon the theatrical hospitality of Mexico, parasites that dumped a mass of foreign material on the colonial stage. But free from this outside hindrance

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[18] Monterde, *op. cit.*

and interior censure, was a type of short lyric dramatic sketch whose popularity lasted throughout the century. In 1809, an Italian opera was given notable performance, El barbero de Sevilla, by Paisiello. But the ecclesiastic censure in protest to subsequent presentations, condemned every work of valor, regardless of nationality.

Notwithstanding the despotic rule of the church, the theater brought forth several notable works of various types. There were two-act farces, full length comedies and tragedies, historic dramas, and lyric interludes, written between 1800 and 1810. However, none were of outstanding merit. All these appeared in the capital city. In the provinces the theater, although supported by the faithful few, suffered even worse.

From 1810 to 1821, during the fight between the viceroy and the insurgents for independence, the theater suffered even a worse fate than in the ten year period preceding.[19] The rebels did not see fit to use the theater as a medium through which to promote their cause. Was it because they lacked great actors and authors that lacked the secret of the theater? It happened, however, that in 1813, a certain viceroy became interested in the theater and extended it some protection. Perhaps he sensed a possible turn of the rebels toward the theater. At this time several operas, or better termed zarzuelas,

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[19] Monterde, op. cit.

as Clara y Adolfo, Reloj de madera, and Una travesura, all anonymous, were written and presented. In 1814, El pintor fingido, and the first sainete, Cafés y condes, were presented, the first productions of this type in the nineteenth century. The coloquios, that since 1808, had been prohibited, were given in homes and open squares, and termed pastorales.

After the war for independence, the theater took on a new aspect, that of nationalism; romanticism already had begun in Europe, but not in Mexico. José Agustín de Castro, author of "loas" and sacred poetry, introduces in the theater the employment of types, customs and popular language, although he wrote only two sainetes in this form, Los remendones, and El charro.[20] Francisco Ortega, author of México libre, was a follower who reached some eminence as a dramatist, especially furthering nationalism in the theater.

Don José Joaquín Fernández de Lizarde (1776-1827) was one of the best versed men of his time. He was a good dialoguer. He knew his native people and country, and best of all he knew his country and his time. His influence over the theater and its development was more important than the things he wrote. His nationalism is a historical document.[21] The most notable of his dramatic works is El negro sensible (1825), a play

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[20] Monterde, op. cit.

[21] Pena, op. cit.

against slavery.

The theater finally shows itself in the revival of the classic school, through the works of Eduardo de Gorostiza, (1789-1851), a Spaniard by birth, but a Mexican at heart. He put forth all his skill in service of Mexican politics and policies, and gave to Spain as well as to Mexico his influence. The theater and foreign actors governed. National productions increased, and harmony grew out of caos. Romanticism, already in all of Europe, marched slowly to Mexico, reaching there about the time the European countries began to abandon it for realism.

For a country whose neo-classicism was little more than a belated transplantation, the adoption of foreign romanticism was mainly interpretation of nationalism and the expression of the exotic. But the movement was feeble. Ignacio Rodríguez Galván (1816-1842) had the honor of being the first Mexican to attempt romanticism, in his dramas Muñoz, visitador de México (1838) and El privado del virrey (1842). There were others who followed, among them Fernando Calderón, whose works in contrast to Galván's were exotic romantic comedies, Juan Valle, and the first woman after Juana de Asbaje to write for the theater, Isabel Prieto de Landazuri (1833-1876). During this time the critical theater, unknown art, awaits in the shadow.[22]

There was no more fertile period in the 19th century

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[22] Monterde, op. cit.

than the period from 1867 to 1900. Nor was the theater ever more diversified. Romanticism, for a time on the wane, found adherents. Several classic writers contributed worthwhile dramas, four classes of lyric poetry, and even the género, the sainete and various types of comedy had followings, while in Europe the theater was being molded anew by the powerful hands of Henrik Ibsen. José Rosas Moreno represented the romantic theater of this period, and José Peón y Contreros, the greatest romanticist of the Mexican theater. Manuel José Othón (1858-1906) was of the new classic school, while Roberto Esteva and Enrique de Olavarria Ferrari manifested their art in the género chico, short dramatic play.[23]

In the last two decades of the century, appeared "the critic," in the persons of Gutierrez Najera Urbina, and Federico Gamboa (B. 1864) who with his work La última campana, (1894), introduced a model of nationalism. José Joaquín Gamboa (1878-1931), of greater and more modern literary refinement than his predecessors, was a good critic and author of a number of good works, his best being El caballero, and La muerte y el diablo. He dealt with social problems of the day.

A number of operas were written during this last lap of the century, among which are some of the finest compositions of Mexico. Even greater was the number of

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[23] Monterde, op. cit.

género chico, both of tragedy and comedy, in which also are found wonderful compositions.

The twentieth century awoke to a peaceful Mexico, to a flourishing sweep of modernism, where noble critics were bringing about a purifying of forms.[24] The liberty of the theater gave rein to every type of dramatic production, practically free from censure. The theater was cultivated for the sake of art, and art alone. Nevertheless, the social drama was fast gaining a following, and the political life, so full of conflicts, had its influence. Nervous liberty became a slave to the sudden and uncertain change. The insecurity of life told on the theatrical interpretations, for the public is after all the examiner. In the face of even this humiliation the theater has the right to interpret that which may modernize and transform it to place it at the height of the age. The person that brought about this very thing in Mexico was Virginia Fábregas, an actress who though exalting Mexican works, leaned on the foreign theater for competence. One of the greatest of difficulties with the Mexican theater has been the lack of constructive criticism. There are individuals but there is no theatrical society.[25]

During the first ten years of the new century the works of Federico Gamboa, Manuel José Othón, Marcelino

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[24] Monterde, *op. cit.*

[25] Usigli, *op. cit.*

Dávalos, José Gamboa, etc., were given successful performance. These authors paved the way for Antonio Medez Bolio, whose zarzuelas and operas, although not determinate, at least explain the tempest of 1910, the same thing that Dávalos describes in 1911. In Esclavos, by Carlos Barrera, the drama of the drama expresses existing conflicts of the day. Other dramas as, El Tenorio moderista, El succo of José Elizondo and J. Rafael Rubio, are identified with the life of the country and politics, if not for the sake of art, for the sake of public sentiment. Talent, the characteristic of this theater, exerted itself in the picturesque and the national situation of the country. "In hands more pure and deft, there would have been a national theater established. It is not a written theater, but a sung and danced theater without being an institution."[26]

During the turbulent years of intense political agitation and revolution, the theater appeared only in foreign productions, so much so that the actors and actresses became engrossed in them and formed foreign dramatic schools, and nurtured an almost hostile attitude to the spasmodic surge of revolutionary drama that broke forth.[27] The productions of contemporary Mexican dramas were given, perhaps one occasionally, for curiosity. But some continued to write such works, whose labor succeeded

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[26] Monterde, op. cit.

[27] Ibid.

at length in being the first organized movements.

In 1921 the regional theater was initiated in San Juan Teotihuacán by Rafael M. Saavedra, the first attempt of the century to bind the theater to the state. Later the "Secretaría de Educación Pública," took up the cause. Noble, if slow work. Its work consisted of showing to the Indian his own conflicts, through mediums of his own level, and not superior. This organization with the aid of the comedy-dramatist, Saavedra, has done much to better the education of the masses, through a sympathetic understanding of the Indian.

1923 marks the beginning of presentations of true Mexican works, through the collaborated works of several dramatists. María Teresa Montaza, with her company, produced works of Jiménez Rueda, Alberto Michel and Federico Sodi, in a Municipal theater season. About the same time other Mexican works were presented in other places, as La que volvió a la vida, of Francisco Monterde. As a result of these efforts, in the same year was founded the Unión de Autores Dramáticas, by Rueda, Monterde, Montés, León, Saavedra, and Torres. Others followed: Barrera, Barrosa, and María Luisa Ocampo, who helped maintain Mexican productions in the theaters, in which Virginia Fábregas acted. During the next few years, various organizations were formed for the purpose of furthering the theater in Mexico, organizations to bring forth Mexican comedy, as well as tragedy, and other farces of the theater, in which

such personages as Barrera, Ocampo, Monterde, León, Hope, and Barrosa figure.

The Señora Castillo Ledón, in 1929, started a theatrical cycle that was seen in two forms: representations against punishing works and establishments, and functions for children in schools and public gardens.[28] Dramatists of the day, like Monterde, wrote for this theater, and, besides several other works by native authors, some foreign productions were given. The theater thus formed was called Teatro de Periguillo.

In 1930 and 1931, several theatrical societies were formed, notably "Amigos del Teatro Mexicano," and "Teatro de Orientación de la Secretaría de Educación Pública."

The year 1932 was very fertile. First appeared the "Teatro de Ahora," tending toward the political, which found inspiration in the works of Juan Bustillo Oro, and Mauricio Magdelano. It was here that Los que vuelven, by Oro, and Emiliano Zapata and Pánuco 137, by Magdelano, were first presented. They also wrote revistas that were given performance in the Teatro Iris.

The "Teatro de Orientación" was reorganized and placed under the direction of Celestino Gorostiza. His first productions were Mexican works, but he soon turned to foreign plays. There have been presented here works of Jean Cocteau, Eugene O'Neil, Shakespeare, Pellerin, Chekcov,

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[28] Monterde, op. cit.

and Moliere, of Cervantes and Synge, and of Jules Romains.

The "Departmento de Bellas Artes de la Secretaría de Educación Pública," together with the comedy company of Gloria Iturbe, initiated in the classic Teatro Hidalgo, a season of modern and post-romantic presentations. In 1932 several works of Ibsen, Strindberg, Kaiser and Bernard Shaw, Barrie, and Galsworthy, were given.

Among the representations were several Mexican works presented of which Estampas, by Barroso, with musical commentaries, in the Teatro Arbeu, and Monterde's La coreta de cristal, with Virginia Fábregas, in her theater, were the most notable. Besides the drama, the opera and ballet appeared. For the latter, such authors as Monterde wrote, and among scene decorators was Diego Rivera.

It is interesting to note that the regional theater, expressed in native Indian and Spanish languages, still flourished. The authors of theatrical presentations were writers of scenery and plot based on legend and tradition rather than lines, for the actors improvised as the scene progressed.

Among the periodicals dedicated to the theater, mention may be made of the principal ones, namely El apuntador (1841), El entreacto, (1895-1926) of Manuel Caballero, and El espectador, (1930), by Humberto Rivas.

Chapter II

JOSÉ JOAQUÍN GAMBOA

The Mexican theater has been notably enriched by the dramatic works of José Joaquín Gamboa. Through his intimate acquaintance with human nature and the social and economic conditions of Mexico of his time, he is able to lay before the public such realistic dramas as *Vía crucis* and *Los Revillagigedos*. His interpretation of life, while accurately drawn from his native land, is applicable to life in any country which suffers from similar social conditions. The inspiration of the author is everywhere present in his work. Vitality and ever-increasing interest of characters, sincerity and serious reality mingled with bits of slightly satirical humor, and with all a clear, expressive language and phraseology mark the author as outstanding.

Among the dramatic works of Gamboa are *La carne*, a drama in three acts, produced for the first time in the Teatro Hidalgo, June 28, 1903; *La muerte*, a four-act drama, and *El hogar*, a three-act drama, first presented March 12, 1904 and August 18, 1905, respectively, in the Teatro Renacimiento; and *El día del juicio*, comedy in three acts, enacted in the Teatro Virginia Fábregas, November 8, 1908. Within the last decade of his life, Gamboa wrote a number of plays that were given successful performance. On April 27, 1923, in the Teatro Colón, *Vía crucis*, probably his best drama, was given successful presentation. Following

this came Los Revillagigedos, social drama in three acts, produced in the Teatro Regis, July 3, 1925; Vía crucis, three-act comedy-drama, and Cuento viejo, a one-act sketch in the Teatro Virginia Fábregas, November 7, 1925; and in the same theater, on October 3, two years later, Si la juventud supiera, a three-act comedy. Two of his best known later dramas are Espíritus, comedy in one-act and Ella, a three-act comedy.

In his early works, José J. Gamboa reveals himself in drama of well-balanced plot and character in which he expresses his beliefs and philosophy, but avoids being didactic. However, his later dramas show a decided awareness of the ills of social Mexico. Vía crucis is essentially a social thesis drama. In it he treats tactfully a subject that one less skilled might have made extremely distasteful even to the point of the grotesque. The play does not lack much of touching upon melodrama. Only the author's careful preparation of plot and scene prevents its degeneration into melodrama.

The play opens in a delightful manner. A few friends and relatives are gathered together enjoying a farewell party for Clara, a beautiful girl who is to leave to enter the convent. The conversation is on the surface light and gay, yet underneath runs a serious note of conflicting emotions: in some of craft, of shyness in others, of strain and worry in still others. It is here, in the first act, that the reader is thoroughly familiarized with the lovable, indulgent, worldly father; the modern sister who over-enthusiastically plans alternately a career and marriage with her

ambitious young lover; the cynical, grasping jealous aunt; and the faithful old friend of the family. A genuine human personality is created for each character. And the undermining craft and perversity of the old aunt, plus existing social conditions create adequate motive for what is to occur, saving the play from being untrue to life or melodramatic.

The second act opens on quite a different scene. The father has died, leaving little wealth. Most of what property he left has been sold in order that the old aunt, a distant uncle who has lost his position because of the changed politics, and the sister, Magdalena, might live. It is now that the old aunt, Doña Rita, lays the stage for the final tragedy that is to come. She succeeds in breaking all relations between Magdalena and her betrothed, and sells her to the professional stage. With a few deft strokes, Gamboa here paints a vivid portrait of a most despisable old fiend whose jealousy, love of leisure and utter selfishness cause her to bring about the downfall of her charming niece.

Twelve years elapse between act II and act III. Magdalena is no longer an innocent girl in the bloom of youth. Her life has been ruined, her spirit broken, her self-respect gone, her body sold. Poverty presses a cold, ruthless hand, and a critical social world turns an equally cold shoulder and stamps her deep into the mire of friendless despair. She has no alternative but to pursue the way to which she has gradually been pressed. In the blackness of her sorrow,

Clara, the sister, comes. Having been attacked by a lustful soldier, she has left the convent. Once a spirited girl who refused to enter into sisterly companionship with Magdalena, she comes now, broken, disgraced, and repentant. The scene of their meeting is intensely real, dramatic, emotional, yet not over-done. The pathetic position of the old man, the distant relative of the family who has remained true and has suffered like poverty, as he tries to grasp the full meaning of the coming of Clara in such distress, is touching. The girls, now haggard and careworn, face the truth. They need money for food, for Clara's child must be born. Magdalena promises food and goes to sell her body another time for a few paltry coins.

The tragedy of the final situation is complete; Clara and Magdalena have nothing to look forward to, yet the child must be born. Gamboa's tragedy is a living tragedy. He does not ruin the high dramatic moment by too much treatment, nor weaken or lessen its effect by prolonging the scene. He knows when to stop, a characteristic of the truly great dramatist.

As to characterization, Gamboa is decidedly competent. The people of his play progress as the plot progresses. They act in accordance with their personality which he is careful to bring out before they act. They are not types, but are so truly drawn that they seem like acquaintances one may have had. The types he places in Vía crucis are varied, each an individual, fitting perfectly into the

story. Yet in a plot as simple as he uses, Gamboa might have left out two of his characters, Almendarez and El Cobrador. They do not detract from the play, neither do they add anything. Perhaps he wished to add more types for the purpose of extending his social picture.

There is a marked difference between the social drama Vía crucis and that of Los Revillagigedos. In the former the characters are more or less resigned to their lot in life and the fate it holds for them. In the latter there is a revolt expressed by the characters. There is a faint sting of irony, a tinge of sarcasm for the customs of the socially elite of Mexico. Gamboa gives a different angle of the social situation in Los Revillagigedos than he does in Vía crucis. He revolts against the strict, absurd bonds of the old customs, yet he does not contrast them with a more desirable modern order. The tragedy is not the death of Eugenia, the brilliant young heroine; it is the pitiful situation that exists between a dying generation and an ultra-modern one that may offer little or nothing for improvement.

In the house of the titled Revillagigedos, live the grandparents, the parents, and the daughter, Eugenia. The old couple live in their own tiny, out-of-date realm, misunderstood and misunderstanding. However, they are wiser than they are accredited with being. The younger couple, too busy in the swing of a society gone mad in sudden freedom, fail utterly in their duty to rear and understand

their daughter. She has been given everything she has wanted except love, attention and consideration. Even her lifetime sweetheart saw her only as a beautiful creature who lacked for nothing. In truth, she had everything except love and happiness. Yet only after it was too late, did he find that he loved her and always had. Eugenia's grandparents were scandalized that she should declare her love for this man, who married her only real girl friend. They feared for the reputation of the family, while the parents were mainly annoyed because their domestic troubles interfered with their life. To save the family name, she married a young lawyer-politician, who wanted her for youth and beauty, and because she would be an asset to him professionally.

Eugenia's only happiness in life was with her lifetime playmate and sweetheart. When their illicit love was discovered, the name of Revillagigedos was at stake. The grandparents were concerned, not about the actual situation of their granddaughter, but about the scandal it would cause. Eugenia's separation from her husband and her immoral relations were not sins, but the scandal they would cause would be an unpardonable sin against the family name. The parents were concerned mainly with the wealth of the family. Their son-in-law, newly made secretary of agriculture, could easily deprive them of their haciendas and leave them penniless. But to save the family name and fortune, Eugenia agreed to return to her husband and sacrifice the only real joy she had ever wrung from life. It was then that she

caused her own death by means of the thing that gave her momentary pleasure, racing in an automobile.

Gamboa is a writer of undertone. Throughout the drama Los Revillagigedos there are intervals that are gay on the surface, yet the undertone ever remains the same. There is something of hopelessness, something that is deadening to the spirit. The author portrays his characters accurately, they are human with human weaknesses and desires. At the first the outcome of the play is evident. But Gamboa is not interested in plot. While it is not the main issue, it is a carefully constructed, simple network that makes a firm foundation for the construction of situation, character and atmosphere. He employs the device of a lapse of time between two acts, thus relieving plot strain, yet adding more to the background and purpose of the drama.

As Gamboa himself has said, Los Revillagigedos is a contemporary social study. It is a thesis drama, reminiscent of Benavente's De muy buena familia. Like the true artist that he is, he skillfully manipulates plot and character, scene and construction so that art is not sacrificed for the sake of an issue. The ills of society of the past generation are great, and the changes the new one offers are of questionable consequence.

From beginning to end Los Revillagigedos is interesting. It is attractive, although not of an extremely pleasing character. There is a marked dash, a nonchalant swagger, a rhythmic swing of events. And the steadying hand of the

old couple, the sullen undertone and softened irony make an unusual drama. In no place does the play lag in interest, or lose vitality. The steadily growing thread of plot leaves no gaps. Eugenia, ever the center of interest, proceeds logically to her inevitable end.

As in Vía crucis, Gamboa shows himself in Los Revillagigedos a competent student of human nature. His characters as individuals are not outstanding, yet they are well drawn. The Marqués and Marquesa, typical of the old aristocracy, bound in social convention, sacrifice everything for the name and reputation of the family. The name Revillagigedos must ever be kept a name of distinction and honor. They do not approve of the new, extravagant, careless modern life. They are resentful when their daughter pities their loneliness on finding the old pair at home alone. Their daughter, who must have people around her constantly, lest she be "bored," harbors an indifferent love for her parents, her husband and her daughter, Eugenia. She is so occupied with her various engagements, social functions and charity committee meetings, that she has no time for her home. Even Eugenia's welfare is of so little concern to her, that she is astonished, when she finds her daughter has not had everything she ever wanted. But being a shallow woman incapable of deep love and emotions, she utterly fails in understanding Eugenia. On the other hand, the girl cannot understand her mother. Eugenia loves, hungers after true companionship, sympathy and understanding. To fill a

great vacancy in her life she indulges crazily in a most dangerous, unprofitable hobby, driving an automobile at break-neck speed. She is extremely human, subject to human desires and human passions. Gamboa portrays her carefully, giving sufficient motive for her actions.

He also treats the men characters equally as well. The father, like the mother, is too occupied to be greatly concerned about his daughter. It is the Marqués that pays most attention to Eugenia, and urges action toward marrying her off. The man she marries is typical of a modern man of position who is interested only in personal gain. He wanted Eugenia because she represented youth and beauty and would add to his success professionally. He was cold, clever and impersonally affable.

The theme of the drama centers around the domestic situation. Herein lies the tragedy. There are three matrimonial misfits, all brought about by the rigid social customs and obligations. Eugenia's parents held no true love for each other. Their marriage was arranged between two "proper" families of wealth and distinction. Eugenia's life-time playmate and sweetheart married to fulfill a social obligation. And Eugenia's marriage was to save family name and fortune and satisfy a young politician's ambition.

Gamboa does not protest bitterly against existing ills. He makes it his main purpose, but not too noticeably so. The situation is laid bare for the reader to judge for himself, to draw his own conclusions, for the author offers

no solution to the problem. A less skilled playwright might have attempted to do so. The drama is not overdone. It is a well-rounded study of the people and the social situation of modern Mexico.

Chapter III

REPRESENTATIVE WORKS OF MARÍA LUISA OCAMPO

Among the leading dramatists of Mexico today is María Luisa Ocampo, whose Cosas de la vida has received national popularity and recognition. Not only is she known for her writings, but for her valuable and tireless labor for the development of the modern theater in Mexico. Her first works to receive recognition were social dramas, but those that have appeared within the last few years have been somewhat revolutionary.

Among the dramas to receive immediate recognition are Cosas de la vida, one of the first and undoubtedly the most noted, presented for the first time July 14, 1923, in the Teatro Fábregas. In the same theater were given La hoguera, a three-act drama, enacted October 23, 1924, and nearly a year later La jauria, a comedy in three acts. Also in 1925, Sin Alas, a three-act comedy written in collaboration, was given a successful first performance. Since this last there have appeared Los que han hambre y sed, Por una mujer, Castillos en el aire, Las máscaras, and last, El corrido de Juan Saavedra.

The most noted drama of María Luisa Ocampo is Cosas de la vida, a play so full of pathos and the pulse of human life that it has universal appeal. The dramatic element is carefully sustained from the first to the last, never weakening, yet never growing too intense or touching on

melodrama. The plot is simple and well-woven, relieved with only enough sub-plots to strengthen it. And the characters are so well drawn that they leave a lasting impression.

The story of the drama Cosas de la vida, centers around two young people whose lives are ruined by the selfishness of the domineering mother. Rafael, the son, is so jealously guarded, that his life is empty, meaningless, and in a moment of ecstasy his passion leads him to regrettable lengths. He is drawn between personal love and a selfish mother, and having been too long suppressed is not strong enough to make a definite stand for himself. For five years he lets his mother rule his life, while the mother of his unclaimed child struggles against social criticism, poverty and shame to rear her son. Is it any wonder that Luisa, the wronged woman, will not marry him when he returns at the end of the five years, and begs to be allowed to assume the rôle of father to his child? Luisa could not possibly take him back after the years of heartbreak, disgrace and struggle he has caused her. The reader is thoroughly convinced that Luisa is justified in her feelings, her attitude, her decision. Yet Rafael is not all to blame. He has been completely under the tyrannical love of his mother. She is dead, now, and he has hopes of righting a terrible wrong, and at last, of happiness. His anxiety is keenly felt. The situation is gripping, dramatic, tragic. His child does not know him, and he is turned away to live his ruined life in despair. Luisa faces a new world with a soul washed

clean by countless tears of regret. Yet she faces the greatest tragedy, life without hope for herself, for the greatest tragedies are living tragedies.

The dramatic appeal in the closing act is most keenly felt. The principal characters are well drawn. Their progress is in perfect harmony with the action of the play. There are no artificial stage devices to create atmosphere and no spectacular scenes employed. The settings for the entire drama are in keeping with the characters and actions of the play, being more or less obscure, simple and unpretentious. At times in the first two acts of the drama one may not be thoroughly convinced that the author has given Rafael enough motive for his weakness and vacilation; his passive submission lacks plausibility. But the strain is relieved at this point by the incident of the minor characters, who are skillfully employed in smoothly carrying on the plot and the progression of the main characters.

Cosas de la vida is a social play not without certain characteristics closely akin to the social thesis dramas of Ibsen. It is a problem drama, realistic, and vivid. It is an excellent picture of a typical real-life story of social conditions in Mexico today, clearly and simply disclosed. The protest against the existing social regime may seem mild; but it lurks in the background; it is the undertone of the drama. María Ocampo displays her artistic ability in bringing to light the existing conditions of society, weaving them into her plot to make a drama worthy

of all the fame and recognition it has received.

It could hardly be said of María Luisa Ocampo that she employs the "slice of life" type of plots for her plays. Yet in El corrido de Juan Saavedra, she gives brief, sketchy glimpses of truly Mexican scenes. She does not term the various parts, or progressions of the drama acts, but calls each one a "picture," and such it surely is. There is practically no plot, for each cuadro is separate and distinct from the others. Only a fine thread of plot runs through the entire play--the career and love of Juan Saavedra.

In the first cuadro, various characters are introduced on the scene, only to enact a simple, significant scene that creates the atmosphere for what is to come. Juan Saavedra, the protagonist, is not even introduced. With the next cuadro, however, Juan is presented with Chole, his sweetheart, whom he asks to marry him. Before the curtain falls, Juan is arrested for knocking down a scoundrel who attempted to attack a blind girl. Mainly from the stand he takes in these situations is his character portrayed. In the same manner the succeeding four cuadros are created and thoroughly prepared for Juan's entrance, where he takes a certain stand typical of the sincere, benevolent hero that he is. Instead of the protagonist helping to create the scenes, the scene and even the action are deftly created for him. A clever device. María Luisa Ocampo succeeds, through convincing sincerity, subtle vitality and smooth progression

in character delineation and idea, in making a convincing drama of modern Revolutionary Mexico.

The dramatist does not make as her aim character delineation, but rather chooses to give a panoramic view of the social conditions of Mexico. The element of tragedy is not an issue but it is the undertone of the entire drama. With subtle art the author depicts clearly the conditions of the poor and brings into the picture various general types of Mexican middle and lower class citizens. Sometimes there are slight touches of gaiety, a bit of romance, some roguish buoyancy and even cruel brutality, interwoven with pathos, futility and hope.

Despite the fact that Miss Ocampo did not have as her aim characterization, Juan Saaverdra stands out quite clearly. She gives the reader a well drawn portrait of the protagonist. Perhaps it is his regard for his fellow-man, his kindly treatment of the unfortunate, his firm convictions, or his loyalty and ambition that make him stand out. The career of Juan has been skillfully traced, without placing him too much on the scene. One is only subconsciously aware that he is the hero until near the last of the drama, when his personality has gradually grown to become one of the major elements of the play.

The prologue and epilogue have a singular significance. The characters of each express the mood of the entire drama. These three, an old man, a half-wit boy, and a blind poverty-stricken girl, singing in an impersonal attitude the career

of Juan Saavedra, seem to represent the basic elements of the drama: suffering, futility and poverty.

The drama is simply written in the true dialect of the Mexican peasantry. In this way a more exact picture of the scenes painted could be given. A writer less versed in the language, customs and conditions of her people could not so accurately have presented what María Ocampo does here. She has a poetic style all her own, a sparkle of originality that marks the work as outstanding among contemporary Mexican dramas.

In El corrido de Juan Saavedra, the influence of revolutionary reform is unmistakably shown. After 1910, when Porfirio Díaz was defeated, Mexico awoke to the fact that existing social conditions were extremely undesirable. As Miss Ocampo expresses this condition in Cosas de la vida, so does José J. Gamboa, and other emminent dramatists express it. But as conditions grew more tense and the plea for revolution and reform spread, authors, swept in the tide, used and continue to use the theater more and more as a mouthpiece for the cry of the masses--recognition, emancipation, improvement. However, María Ocampo never sacrifices art for the sake of propaganda. Her El corrido de Juan Saavedra may be rightly classified as a revolutionary drama, yet artistic elements that make good drama are not lacking.

Miss Ocampo gives an artistic interpretation of life that is neither idealistic nor melodramatic. Throughout

her works, simplicity of plot and structure reign. Therein lies her charm. As light as the touch of a fairy wand is her touch of the realistic. Even so, it is more impressive. Her sympathy is entirely with the plain people she portrays, yet she never becomes bitter, or sarcastic in her protests. The delicacy of treatment, the artistic charm and withal, the wholesomeness of her dramas distinguish María Luisa Ocampo as an unusual writer.

Chapter IV

THE THEATER OF FRANCISCO MONTERDE

Among the names of eminent modern Mexican authors, that of Francisco Monterde ranks high. His works are so full of the pulse of human life that they have a universal appeal. The subjects he chooses are social, psychological, and revolutionary but they are so delicately handled that one is primarily conscious of the artistic and poetic qualities of his work. Monterde is not so blinded by theme as to sacrifice literary taste. Nor does the issue become the less poignant. It is the steady, strong undercurrent of the story. The author's knowledge of his countrymen, his versatility, his manner of expression, his sincerity, and vitality all combine to form an intense drama abounding in interest and inspiration.

Francisco Monterde has contributed a notable number of dramas to the modern Mexican theater. The first, En el remolino, a one-act drama, received immediate recognition with an opening successful performance in the Teatro Colón, July 17, 1923. On the twenty-second of the same month La que volvió a la vida, a three-act comedy, was presented in the Teatro Ideal. In August of the same year a two-act comedy was produced, Fuera de concurso, in the Teatro Arbeu. Two years later Viviré para tí, a comedy-drama in three acts, and En la esquina, in one-act, were given in the Teatro Fábregas. Other dramas receiving recognition are Tïegua,

and Intriga, Despertar, and La Herradura, each a comedy in one act, and Golondrina de Francia, Oro negro and La careta de cristal, three-act comedies. Following these came Hada Madrina and El primogénito.

The first work to bring the name of Francisco Monterde to light was En el remolino, a single-act drama of Mexican peasant life. The author could not have chosen a more appropriate title: In the Whirlwind. Indians are the protagonists, and the scenario has as its background the revolution. In Mexico, the superstitious fear of the indigene induced by a whirlwind is generally known. Its direct contact must be avoided at all cost. "Cursed is the whirlwind, and cursed are these shots of the revolution," says Mariquita, the herb woman, in that Spanish changed to fit the soft voice of the Indian.

The revolution waits for no one. It contorts the social life of the Indian into grotesque shapes. Petra no longer lives in her own little home with her husband and her boy. She and Guadalupe, mother of her son's child, live in a poverty-stricken hovel near the soldiers' camp. Life is hard. Food is scarce. Petra's grandchild is sickly and does not grow. The plains surrounding the hut are oftentimes scenes of whirlwinds; Mariquita, the neighbor woman, warns them of their disastrous effects. Petra frets for her son, and accuses Guadalupe of being the cause of her unhappiness in the birth of the sickly child. She nags at the girl to face untold dangers, to find her soldier son,

and reproaches Guadalupe for not seeking him. In a rage the unjustly blamed girl runs for the camp. Petra tries to call her back, but she does not hear. A soldier comes to take the mules. Petra curses him for his bold theft. He cuffs her, takes out his knife and is at the point of striking, when Lencho, the child, cries out. The soldier at once recognizes his son, then his own mother. On inquiring for the whereabouts of his father, he learns that he is dead. Then he recognizes the mules. One night a soldier came to take them. An old man tried to prevent him, and in so doing was killed--It was the soldier's father.

It is not the ability and justice with which Monterde relates this tale of rural Mexico with its broken and corrupted language that astounds us. Neither is it the true psychology of the characters, nor the enriching of the children of the land with his own mentality and passions, nor the unexpected disclosure at the end. It is the tireless activity of this poet that we so much admire, his constant search for the beautiful and the noble. No one else has brought the true Indian to the general public. Authors have revealed him under a strange light that made him a hero, a beast of burden, or a spectacular martyr, like Cuauhtemoc. As just a man, he is little known. But Monterde has been just, and treats with a master hand a subject fertile with curious teachings and unsuspected beauty. He has discovered a world agitated by other passions, but fatally combated by the contamination of

invaders. Even more. He knew how to listen, with the sensibility of a poet and a noble soul, to the silent falling of tears of the humble, of the ignored--tears that the poet wished to dissolve in the false egotist's heart of stone, in order to return them to the eyes of those who weep.[1]

In striking contrast to the drama En el remolino, La que volvió a la vida is a social drama dealing with Mexican citizens of the upper class. The characters of the play are individuals that may be found in any modern Mexican city. The home of the protagonists is a decently furnished house of a family of means, whose members weave in and out throughout the plot to make a poetic creation full of genuine human interest.

The life of Angela is lived for her. With the death of her husband, at the outset, she has no private life, no freedom. Gradually the talk of neighbors seeps into the imagination of the mother-in-law, causing restraint to grow between them. Angela, being a true and sincere girl, does nothing to cause even a hint of scandal. But gossipers must talk. She dare not disclose her love for Jorge, the brother of her husband, for while the two, "brother and sister," waited for the young husband to complete his laboratory experiment, he was accidentally wounded by the poisoned lancet that caused his death. Or was it accidental?

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[1] Casanova, Pablo González, Appendix, En el remolino, Monterde.

Did he read the thoughts of Angela and Jorge as they waited for him? Angela would never know. Jorge, of course, leaves. Only Lupe, Jorge's sister, and Tío Tomás remain the same toward Angela. They understand the situation. Angela's position gradually becomes more hopeless. The finances of the family are practically exhausted, and with Jorge gone, Tío Tomás out of work, Doña Trini, the mother, failing in health, and much of the furniture sold, there is little for which to look forward. When the author builds the course of events to this height, the reader is unprepared for the turn of events that occurs. A young doctor, Meléndez, the owner of the sanitarium and experimental laboratory where Angela's husband worked, offers Angela escape. He has tried many times in some way to help the young widow of his friend. But the piercing eyes and sharp tongues of the neighbors ever prevented him. After bringing about Jorge's return to his home, the doctor learns that Angela does not love this brother of her husband. It is then that Meléndez proposes that Angela oversee his sanitarium while he makes a business trip to Europe. She at once accepts. Only Lupe and Tío Tomás are glad, and approve of her decision to go. They rejoice to see her released from the "tomb" to a new life. Monterde chose a fitting title: <u>She Who Returned to Life</u>.

The protagonist is a victim of ruthless gossips. The drama is a carefully written protest against people who cannot let alone matters that do not concern them. Nowhere does the work become ugly, or unpleasant, or biting. But

the interpretation of life is so accurate that the poet at once gains for himself recognition as a psychologist. Due to social customs of the time, Angela cannot, of her own free will, alter her position. The reader is thoroughly convinced. Although the sudden turn at the end is entirely unexpected, it is in perfect keeping with the drama as a whole, and in all, logical. The characters each progress as the plot progresses, smoothly, and without abrupt, or unnecessary changes.

The issue of the play is only the undercurrent; nevertheless the author so carefully handles it that the purpose is fulfilled. The vitality and sincerity of the drama are its essence. The structure is exceptionally good, and the mode of expression remarkable. La que volvió a la vida is a wholesome psychological study of Monterde's fellow-countrymen, simply presented in the truest light of delicate clarity, but in it inspiration and recreation are imperceptibly blended. Monterde is an author of surprizing originality and versatility, possessing great creative power. His plays leave a wholesome effect and a lasting impression.

It could hardly be said that Monterde is a writer of revolutionary drama, in the truest sense of the word. However, in Oro negro, he uses as the background a subject that has given much cause for revolution and revolutionary propaganda in Mexico.

Many modern authors are concerned with only one subject, and devote their works almost entirely to treating it. Not

so with Monterde. He chooses a dramatic tragedy for one play, with the Indians as his protagonists, a comedy of modern upperclass urbanites as another, and a drama of the mestizo as still another. Oro negro is a comedy-drama whose cast is made up of upper-class farmers. The protagonist is the native soil that ceases to support those it has nurtured, when white invaders are allowed to contaminate it with their greed.

Oro negro is a protest against American capitalists entering Mexican territory, ruining the fertile lands and causing general disasters among the quiet homes. Don Pedro, the owner of a modest hacienda, manages his farm, oversees his obreros, and provides for his family a comfortable home. He is kindly, generous and gentle, yet in all firm. The family is happy and content until Carlos, the brother, who has been attending school at the university, brings home an American geologist. The author paints the scene in such harmonious colors that we loathe the fate that changed them to discordant hues. Nor is the introductory picture overdone. The background is a scene of perfect content, with individual riffles only on the surface. Thus is it extremely human. When Carlos and Taylor, the geologist, come to stir the family from their peace and content, one wishes to throw them out as soon as an oil well is mentioned. Then ruthless fate takes a hand. Taylor is sure, judging from favorable formations, that there is oil on Don Pedro's farm. Alberto, true son of the soil, protests against the

disturbance his brother and Taylor cause. But Don Pedro is convinced that a fifty-fifty proposition of sharing expenses and profits of the petroleum industry will be much to his advantage. Alberto sees no good of it all. Work is delayed. The white engineer and his accomplice's demands for expense money far exceed their original calculations. Don Pedro, at the point of bankruptcy, refuses more, and is kidnapped. It is Alberto who pays the ransom for his freedom. But Don Pedro's wife loses hope and dies before his return. In the face of this, the first oil well, after pumping a short while, brings up salt water instead of petroleum. The family rejoices and Alberto plans to stay, for they think the whites will leave, Carlos will return to school, and Alberto turn to the beloved soil which may again bring forth its harvests. Not so. Another well is drilled and oil flows as from an artesian well. Alberto takes leave of the family immediately on learning of the new well. In the excitement Isabel, the sister, runs out in the dark night to see the burning gusher. She faints and falls in the black oil that is covering her beloved homeland. She is brought back home to the house of sorrow. But Alberto will now stay; Joaquín, her betrothed, will stay. Her father will be doubly blessed. All will pass and the lands will again bring forth harvests.

Oro negro is a very convincing drama. There is a depth of emotion in it which is intensely touching. The picture of this rural family, with their servants and

contented laborers, is a true and accurate photograph singularly beautiful, but showing also minor imperfections. Monterde is not idealistic. Neither is he too realistic. There is so much beauty, so much poetic charm in the drama, that in contrast the tragedy coming later seems the more intense. In the midst of disaster and heartbreak, there is a ray of happiness..Joaquín, when he thought Don Pedro's family would soon be rich, dropped out of the picture, for he would not then be a suitable husband for Isabel. But when he knew the family would not gain wealth, he returned to ask for the hand of his beloved.

Francisco Monterde never resorts to irony or satire. He achieves his purpose far more effectively by more delicate means. The protest against the American capitalists is bitter, but never ugly or bold. Therein lies the power of the drama. Its appeal is great and wide. A writer of finer sensibilities, Monterde creates a world full of human sympathy and kindness, sufferings and joys. He proves the versatility attributed him by the skillful manner with which he treats each work. The drama has literary quality. The author is a good story teller, an able psychologist, an apt student of human nature, and a well-versed writer. In Oro negro he carefully blends information with recreation and inspiration. With this social drama, Monterde's name deserves to rank alongside those of other leading Mexican dramatists.

Chapter V

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DRAMAS OF MAURICIO MAGDALENO

Mauricio Magdaleno, a young contemporary Mexican dramatist, classes Pánuco with his "dramas revolucionarios," for in it he deals with one of the most profound and tragic themes--possession of the land, nucleus of Mexican life. This work was represented in the happy intent of reform and renovation and is recognized in Mexico under the name "Teatro de Hoy."[1] In Pánuco the protagonist is the land that grimaces and protests against the boots of the white invaders. The beloved land is being forced out of the hands of the indigenes to produce the filthy "black flower" of petroleum, under the implacable will of the imperial dollar. But the land takes the part of the Mexican peasants, while the capitalists impose their circumstantial evidence, twisting and contorting it to work against the natives. Magdaleno has written an anti-imperialistic work in a dramatically scenic and poetic method.

Although the author has given more attention to plot and situation than to character portrayal, the latter is by no means neglected. Rómulo Galván, an old man who has lived on the land, nurtured and cared for it, is perhaps the most vividly drawn. His wise prophecies of the result of the

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[1] Magdaleno, Mauricio, "Tres dramas revolucionarios."

North Americans' invasion, his steadiness and firmness, his strong convictions and his kindness are genuinely felt. When he refuses to sell the land he is driven off. His wound is mortal and his suffering deep. So much a part of him is the land that when it is taken, life has no meaning. The other characters are equally well-drawn for the rôle they take. Cande, the heartbroken, faithful mother, and Raquel, a sweet, plain girl of the Mexican peasant class, ask only to be happy with their husbands in the home. Magdaleno cleverly brings in the sly cunning of Allen and White without seemingly making a special effort to do so. Dislike for them at first gradually grows to disgust and hatred. The reader feels the cutting tragedy of the ruthless havoc they inflict, and the heartbreak they cause.

Throughout the play the struggle between the actionist, the Standard Oil Company, and the protagonist, the land, is quite obvious, yet dexteriously kept from being too conspicuous. The characters live. The reader's sympathy is entirely with the Indian peasants uprooted from the land of their forefathers by the cruel, grasping North Americans. Magdaleno's bitter irony in his treatment of the pretended "good men" from the States shows him at his best. The poetic quality of the play is unmistakably evident and the story itself has a dramatic appeal. So pathetic are the peasants as they are beaten out of their birthrights, and so heartlessly cruel are the capitalists that one is gripped in this vital problem of Mexico today--the reclamation of

the land.

The vitality and sincerity of the author makes the Mexican question involved seem much more momentous. The author's structure is clear, straightforward and he attains a certain degree of excellence by the simplicity of his language and style. The problem with which he deals becomes more important, the situation more pressing in its need for betterment. It is realistic and depressing, somewhat informational yet interesting, and the atmosphere created is one of hopelessness and despair. Thus it is that Magdaleno achieves his purpose to give a vivid picture of a typical wrong done to the Mexican peasantry by foreign invaders.

Magdaleno does not depend upon settings for any vital part in his drama, although he uses them skillfully to help to create the desired mood and give proper background to all the action. Neither does he depend entirely upon character delineation. His main pillar for this revolutionary work is the situation, or the problem confronting the personages. One hesitates to say that Pánuco is propaganda, although it obviously has some of the earmarks. Though it does not lack certain characteristics of a work of art, it is, however, evident that the author wrote it for the sake of theme rather than art.

In Emiliano Zapato, Mauricio Magdaleno uses as his theme a problem that concerns only the Mexican people--the struggle of Mexican peasantry to gain its birthright,

the land, that is possessed by the wealthy few. The protagonist, Emiliano Zapato, is the famous revolutionary leader, who was finally killed, and whose army was broken up. The question treated here is one of the leading problems of controversy of Mexico today. But Magdaleno gives the human side of it, and probably achieves much more toward strengthening the issue of redistribution of the land through the human appeal of the drama than he could by any other means.

The plot of Emiliano Zapato is of more importance than that of Pánuco but it is not overdone. The characters stand out less vividly. They are not individually drawn, but are massed to give a totality of effect to classes and types. Emiliano Zapato, however, stands out as an individual, one who loves and hates with equal intensity, an ardent believer of equality, and an unwavering, courageous fighter for the cause of emancipation and uplift of the Indian. Of course the situation, like that in Pánuco, is the main issue of the drama; but the personality of Zapato is sufficiently portrayed to support the action. The author has a marked knack for conveying certain bits of information through implication. More is felt in the drama than appears on the surface. The followers of this young revolutionary leader are trusting and confident. He has succeeded in enlarging his army and extending his forces to such an extent that the national government stands in alarmed awe of his menace. Government representatives have even been dispatched to consider

demands of Zapato for the redivision of the land. Having gained this much success, and with the assurance of their leader that their purpose is about to be fulfilled, the Indian peasants prepare a feast. But during their merry-making Zapato receives word of bandit opposition, and traitorous threats from some of his officers. Then in the shadow of his success he is defeated, killed, and his purpose lost.

There is scarcely anything throughout the drama to relieve the tension of the plot. Even the tiny thread of the love affair between Emiliano and Remedios is strained, hampered and altered by pressing events. The position of Remedios is pathetic. It is through her premonition and the foreboding gloom that enshrouds her soul, that the reader becomes acquainted with the element of tragedy in the drama. Emiliano never lays aside the pressing burden of his cause, not even at the feast, or with his sweetheart. When his success seems so near and sure, he feels restless and strange, and while his countrymen make merry for his sake, he lies dying at the door of his traitorous officers.

The scenes of the drama are laid in significant places, all in perfect harmony with the action and atmosphere. In each there is something, some touch or object that conveys the mood. In the first act it is the drab farm hut, and the small door, through which little light is admitted. In the second it is the cold stone wall that forms the background of the scene. And in the third it is the dull old

dress that Remedios wears. She is too engrossed in the precarious position of Emiliano even to dress for the feast. Her fear for his life is symbolic of the overshadowing disaster of the drama. To give a totality of effect, the author chose to shift scenes suddenly from the feast to the door of the cold, pretentious structure at Chinemeca, where Emiliano Zapato lay shot by one of his own men. The tragedy of the play is not the death of the leader, but the failure of the purpose for which he gave his life. The most profound is the living tragedy. Emiliano Zapato is a living tragedy. Herein Magdaleno shows his skill as an artist. He is at his best in creating a single, significant effect, or mood.

Like Pánuco, Emiliano Zapato is a revolutionary drama. Magdaleno has treated his subject well. But the problem is laid a little too barely before the reader. There is no diversion, no minor plots to strengthen or relieve the main plot. The author, in his sincerity and vigor, has treated his subject too severely, stripping it to a strong harsh thread that twists its knotted way to its abrupt severance. One grows weary of the constant strife and hopelessness, unknown to the characters, but apparent to the reader. Perhaps Magdaleno was a little too intent on his theme, and so drew this drama a little nearer to propaganda than Pánuco.

Magdaleno, poet of the virgin land, fights gallantly for the rights of his people. In Trópico, the actionist

is the United Fruit Company. Again the land is the protagonist, the same as in Pánuco, but another part of it, the warm tropics. This arm of the land rebels against the invader and destroys him. In Pánuco the inert land yields. In Trópico it conquers. The two together give a profound, dramatic vision of the struggle by the land.

In contrast to Emiliano Zapato, and Pánuco, Trópico does not give quite the sensation of a revolutionary drama. The attention is partially drawn from the problem of the white invaders, to the fate of the characters. There is less action but more characterization. There is more of the "bitter cup of life." The author creates a situation that through his poetic skill he brings to an end, tragic for the characters, yet triumphant for the land. Vividly felt is the despair of Marcelino when he learns of his betrothed's coming motherhood, when she is to bear the child of his mortal enemy, the drunkard Bond, and the desperation of this sick American as he gropes blindly for the mother of his child in the forest of the land that dooms him to destruction.

The story of the drama Trópico holds the interest. The plot is involved. Chester Bond, president of "The American Tropical Gum Company," with his doctor, Ben Sunter, come to southern Mexico to develop the native forests of gum trees. They build a factory and living quarters. Bond, a heavy drinker, becomes infatuated with a native girl, and weakened by drink and lack of proper discipline, he ruins

the girl's life, his own life, and the American Tropical Gum Company's interests in Mexico. The tragedy is not with the failure of the issue of the play but with the ruined lives of the victims in the fight for success of their cause. Again the tragedy is with the living.

The character of Bond is well painted. He is a loathsome person, mentally ambitious when not under the influence of intoxicating drink, but physically lazy. His worldliness, extravagance and passion cause his ultimate downfall. In him Magdaleno has succeeded in portraying the disgusting American capitalist who so ruthlessly abuses his countrymen.

When Marcelino, the sweetheart of Rosarito, openly organizes opposition to Bond, he is caught. Since Bond wants the girl for himself, he determines to do away with the young native. But Rosarito begs for his life. So great is her love that she sacrifices her body, name and reputation to save him. The horrible truth is realized only when Marcelino, released, has succeeded in ruining the American's negotiations in Mexico. Rosarito is to give birth to Bond's child. Now, she begs of Marcelino the life of Bond.

The dramatic action is intense. In all of Magdaleno's works, he has no more tragic situation. The hopelessness, the unfulfilled love, the sacrifice, the ruined lives--all are interwoven in this final, realistic scene. The author treats his theme more delicately than he does in either Pánuco or Emiliano Zapato, and gives it more human appeal. Through his characterizations the people of the play are

more vital, and thus their emotions are more keenly felt than in the other plays. Yet his theme, which is ever the nucleus of his dramas, does not grow dimmer in the intent concentration on artistic treatment of characters, scene and situation. The final scene leaves the partially solved problem facing the reader or audience with a depressing effect. Magdaleno displays here his power to sway. He presents his subject simply, in a clear, uninvolved plot, with realistic characters, set in a plain but fitting scene that accentuates his purpose.

Chapter VI

JUAN BUSTILLO ORO AND THE REVOLUTIONARY DRAMA

Juan Bustillo Oro has created a sensation in Mexico with his three Mexican dramas, *Los que vuelven*, *Masas*, and *Justicia, S. A.* They are purely revolutionary dramas, and as such must be read. Oro is neither an artist nor a poet. He is an impressive writer of political and revolutionary horror. His dramas are cruel, cold, and ugly. But he achieves his purpose through the blunt, ruthless method of laying bare the most gruesome happenings and daring to paint them in their most hideous colors.

It is true that Juan Bustillo Oro has received immediate popularity in Mexico; but it is safe to say if the conditions of the country were not as they are, that is, favoring revolutionary propaganda, his works would be without recognition. They contain much the same cutting cruelty and cold heartlessness of Tolstoi's *The Power of Darkness*, but lack the art and literary quality of the latter. There is not enough in the dramas of Oro to endure any great length of time. They create a marked sensation in Mexico today, and receive ardent applause. But they are revolutionary propaganda, the major interest of the masses.

Together Oro and Mauricio Magdaleno initiated in Mexico what they termed the *Theater of Today*, a new theater concerned with revolutionary dramas. Their works are

similar, but Magdaleno is the more deft; he treats in Emiliano Zapato the same subject which Oro treats, but with more delicacy and taste. Oro is a propagandist who has employed artists' tools to achieve his purpose, while Magdaleno is an artist who employs his art for the sake of propaganda.

The drama Los que vuelven deals with a subject that concerns the United States. A group of Mexican peasant laborers are working in southwest United States when the depression reaches its lowest depths. The government orders all citizens of Mexico off its soil, in order that the American laborers may have employment. Chema and Remedios, an elderly couple whose daughter has married a white man and whose son is away, beg to be allowed to visit their children before returning to their fatherland. They have nothing to live for when they leave their son and daughter, never to see them again. At the daughter's home they are unwelcome; there is not enough food for even the young couple, for the son-in-law's wages have been drastically cut. The reader is in sympathy with both the old couple and the young one. Without finding any trace of their son, who has lost an arm recently in the factory where he worked, the parents turn with despair to the way leading home--to starvation and cold.

The horrors of the painful journey of the starved group is spared the reader. But many succumb to the hardships, among them Remedios. Once more on Mexican soil,

the outcasts for a moment feel a sensation of joy and rest, as one long gone from his beloved home feels when he returns to its peace and quiet. But it soon passes, for night with its cutting desert air chills the famished ones. As the dark hours pass, they take their toll in death, and morning finds a few half-crazed survivors awaiting their destiny. Officers in charge come to dispose of the dead as those in the United States destroyed surplus wheat by piling, saturating with oil and burning it. Chema learns that the man who threw himself in front of a locomotive had only one arm. Knowing it was his son, he begs for his body, but is refused. In his hysteria he fights with an officer who mortally wounds him. Chema wants to die, but has a horror of his body being burned, instead of buried. The official, however, promises to bury him deep in the ground. He dies. The official orders the body to be piled for burning.

There is very little characterization in the drama, and practically no plot. The play is almost entirely devoted to situation. The characters are numerous, appearing on the scene at the will of the author mainly to help create the atmosphere. Each act has an almost entirely new group of characters, but the author capably carries two, Chema and Remedios, through the entire drama, thus making the thread of plot that links the acts. Although the drama lacks artistic qualities, its simple plot is strong and well-balanced. The structure is good. But the author's style is extremely distasteful. The atmosphere of utter despair is never in any way lessened, and at the end there is an

even more intense feeling of bitter, heartless cruelty.

An analysis of the structure of Los que vuelven shows it is sound. The characters are depicted well enough for the author's purpose; he only uses them in the scenario to produce the effects he desires. Oro's creation is a problem drama of pure tragedy in its barest and ugliest form.

The play is propaganda, protesting against the inhospitable United States and the inefficient Mexican government. Oro's bitter irony is expressed in a few subtle remarks made by Chema about the burning of "surplus" wheat by the United States Government, in the face of starving humanity. The author is more than just a protester, or a didactic writer: he is a communist.

Masas is a protest against the capitalist. The setting is in an imaginary country called Patria, where the social conditions are the same as in Mexico. The scene opens on a darkened office. A voice on the radio is giving the news, most of which concerns the industrial situation, the strikers, and street riots. As the voice dies away, the lights gradually brighten to reveal the leader of the socialist party, his wife, and his co-worker. The three are working fervently on plans for labor reforms. In the background can be heard the clamor of impatient industrial strikers in the street below. The scene is often broken by Forcada, the labor leader, going to the window and speaking to them. He works for one thing: the rights of the laboring class and freedom from a government which favors capitalism. Forcada is meeting

with notable success, until Neri, his friend and accomplice and author of the plan for social reform, becomes a lukewarm follower who is ready to compromise. Forcada, however, is relentless. Street riots become worse and strikers more ardent in their demands. A powerful general of the government's army, being half socialistic in politics, offers compromise and even threatens to force Forcada to come to terms. Since Forcada's followers are too strong, General Almonte has him tricked and killed. Only his devoted wife, Luisa, stays true to him to his death. She now carries on, but Neri still wants to compromise instead of fight for the reforms as originally planned. When she refuses his terms and chooses to die with those who fight for the cause, Neri begins to realize his great mistake. In the end, as the masses clamor in confusion below, he quiets them with talk of the reforms for which Forcada died. It is now that he is completely convinced that this leader was right, and as he talks, the figure of Forcada appears in the background as his aid and inspiration.

Again Juan Bustillo Oro uses a simply constructed plot on which to build his panoramic scene. The thread of story is fine, yet strong. There is a steady growth of interest to the climax of the play, where Forcada absolutely refuses to compromise, thus breaking relationship with Neri. In this scene he becomes a victim of treachery and is killed. After this there is rapid falling action, but at the end, there is an unexpected upward turn. Neri recognizes his

mistake too late, it seems at first. But at the very close, one is not sure. The question left is, "Is there still hope?" Oro does not try in any way to solve the problem of social and industrial reform. He leaves a dangling conclusion. He creates a vivid situation, lays it with all the cold facts before his audience, then abruptly closes the scene without a hint of warning.

In Masas Oro gives more characterization than in Los que vuelven. Forcada stands out clearly as a forceful leader, a plain, straightforward man, an indomitable advocate, a shrewd, hard-working laborer, and a firm and faithful friend of the masses. Forcada has the same persevering qualities as Dr. Stockmann, the protagonist of An Enemy of the People, by Ibsen. Each fights staunchly for what he believes to be right and suffers severe persecution for upholding his beliefs. Ibsen draws the character of Dr. Stockmann far more carefully than does Oro that of Forcada.

To make the situation more vivid, Oro employs the use of a voice on the radio at the first of each act to tell what is taking place--an unnecessary device, since the entire drama is devoted to that very thing. The appearance of Forcada at the end gives a ray of hope. It contributes some alleviation of the black despair found nowhere else in the drama. Like Los que vuelven, Masas is purely a revolutionary drama, written as propaganda against an incompetent government.

Of the three dramas by Oro, Justicia, S. A. is the ugliest. The plot is more involved than in either Los que vuelven or Masas. The author is ruthless, almost to the point of bloodthirstiness. Delicacy, poetic charm, and inspiration are entirely foreign to the drama. Oro is so intent on his purpose that he spares nothing.

Santos Galvez is not acquainted with the situation in the town where he has been appointed judge. But he soon learns that Don Hilario, who at first is apparently such an admirable man, is a ruthless and tyrannical capitalist who practically controls the industrial town. The former judge was dismissed from office because he would not condemn to death a guiltless man, labor leader and enemy of Don Hilario. Now, Santos has to face the case. He has a conscience and a sense of justice that rebels; but he is so pressed by Luz, his nagging wife, and Don Hilario, that he finally signs the death warrant. The ghost of the first men whom he has condemned urges him to add more to his list of slaughters; Luz begs and coaxes, reminding him constantly of her child to be born, and that they have to live. Don Hilario gives him just so much time to sign. If he does not, he loses his position. In the face of all this, Santos still refuses. However, in the midst of his struggle he has a horrible dream. A machine is making money out of human blood and fat. Don Hilario is the owner. He, Santos, is the foreman whose job it is to behead the victims and extract the blood and oil. Only with the urging of his wife,

the aid of a workman, and the assurance of Don Hilario, can he muster nerve enough to behead the first. But the second and third become easier. Santos awakes and signs the death sentence of the two innocent men. He dreams again. The machine works excellently. The money goes to Hilario. Santos no longer finds it hard to kill the victims. His wife awakens him from his dream, and is happy to see that he has signed the sentences.

The play is overdone. Oro could have achieved as effective results without the drastic methods he used. The device of interpreting a character's dream is not uncommon, but here it is unnecessary. The torment of Santos' conscience is vividly revealed before the author underscores it in the dream. The character of Santos is fairly well drawn. He stands out in the play as a man sensitive to justice, but his weakness causes him to succumb to the stronger personalities that influence him even though he knows he is in the right. The author is careful to create sufficient motive for the actions of Santos. The characters of Hilario and Luz, are sufficiently well portrayed, and the scenes of the greatest interest are intense and keenly felt.

The drama is not without merit: the plot is well constructed; the cast is balanced; the style of writing is simple, straightforward and clear; the setting and scenes are appropriate; there is a single effect. But the piece has not those qualities that make a drama live. From the drama alone one might judge harshly their author. There is no

inspiration and no recreation, neither is there originality. It is realistic and depressing and narrow in scope. The author is a propagandist and not a true dramatist. His works are not without certain characteristics similar to Galsworthy's works which protest against industrial conditions of England, as for example, Justice, Strife, and The Mob. True, there is something of a universal appeal in them, for each country has like or similar industrial and social problems with which it has to cope. But Oro's works are lacking in any sort of finer dramatic qualities. Nevertheless, there is a certain artistry in the ability to revolt an audience as he does. He is a propagandist, but there is some merit in arousing public consciousness of the plight of the "submerged tenth," as in Los que vuelven. However, since Oro's plays are lacking in literary quality, they will probably live only so long as revolutionary propaganda finds a following in Mexico.

Chapter VII

Conclusion

GENERAL TENDENCIES OF THE MEXICAN THEATER

Although the theater in Mexico is still suffering growing pains, it has shown some signs of maturity. Abandoning things foreign, it now turns to the homeland for themes. Not until the turn of the century did it cease groping blindly in a sea of borrowed subjects, and choose instead those near and dear. Since this awakening to the wealth of its birthright, the theater has begun to expand. With the bars of imprisonment let down, a surge of dramas swept the country. The sudden realization that the Indian offered a vast, fertile, and unexplored field, caused a sensational wave of dramatic attempts. Although few are noteworthy and still fewer of actual literary merit, they all have added to the growth and development of this new Mexican theater.

The movement of social drama, started in Europe by Ibsen, gradually spread to Mexico, reaching it possibly a little later than in most other countries. But it soon found a following, if, at first, feeble. With the fall of Porfirio Díaz, Mexico became revolutionary. However, the socialistic drama did not reach any notable heights until well after the political upheaval. Rapidly the revolution began to creep into the theater. Where before it was exotic and poetic, it is now social and revolutionary.

But the pendulum swings too far in the opposite direction. The revolution has at times seemed to have possessed the field. So pressing is the issue that the theater has suffered sacrifice for the sake of propaganda.

It is interesting to note the suddenness with which dramatists turned to scenes and people about them. There is an ever-growing passion for things at home. Mexican people have hitherto been left out of Mexican dramas. Within the last two decades, however, the aspect of the theater has almost completely changed. Enterprising playwrights have delved deeply into social conditions, and brought to light untold ills that heretofore have been ignored. Gamboa takes pithy examples from contemporary scenes and interprets them in their true character to a negligent public. With equal skill, María Luisa Ocampo, Francisco Monterde, and Julio Jiménez Rueda treat similiar subjects. Not only the cause of the upper and middle class Mexican is taken up in these studies of social conditions, but that of the Indian as well.

With the development of revolution and communism, the Mexican theater, as a center of literary art, has suffered greatly. While some dramas, as El corrido de Juan Saavedra and En el remolino, both smacking of revolution, rank high in literary quality, many works submitted to the theater have come under the head of drama but are really propaganda. Even in its persecution the theater is constantly being enriched. There is one great thing the revolutionary drama is doing: it is bringing the Indian to the foreground.

Although the drama of this type is usually grotesque and brutal, the Indian's cause receives interested and sympathetic attention. Perhaps the picture is not adequate, but it is accurate. If the revolutionary drama accomplishes nothing more, it has proved a valuable experiment in the life of the Mexican theater. By means of it the Indian received recognition and the beginning of universal understanding. In previous times the Peon was treated as an unfeeling creature, or as in colonial times, a martyred hero. But with the dawn of a new era in the history of Mexico, he is seen in his true colors. In time, the Indian will be more frequently portrayed as an individual, subject to all the emotions of any other race, and not treated in mass as a mere type.

It is hard to predict what the outcome of this new surge of theatrical experimentation will be. The life of the revolutionary drama will be only as long as that of the revolution. Most of these plays are sensational, crude and depressing, and contain little or no literary quality. The question of the social and psychological drama, however, is different. Many are profound, subtle studies of existing conditions, that have a universal appeal because of their humanness, and their similarity to conditions in other countries. Some that deal sympathetically with the indigenes are unique pieces of art so abounding in excellence, truth and poetic charm that they will endure the test of time.

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