

CINEMA IN CONTEMPORARY SPANISH THEATRE:
A MULTIFACETED INTERTEXTUALITY

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In his groundbreaking study, *This Loving Darkness. The Cinema and Spanish Writers 1920-1936*, C. B. Morris affirms that in Spain the genre that proved «most resistant to the influence» of the seventh art was theatre; he identifies the works of Ramón del Valle-Inclán as the notable exception (4). On the other hand, the Spanish film industry owed an early debt to the stage as a source of scripts, a practice that, in the view of many proponents of cinema, was more pernicious than beneficial (32-33).

There is little doubt that the Spanish stage over the years has nevertheless continued to provide the movie industry with film practitioners, as well as subjects. Tracing that involvement from silent films to the advent of the talkies, Rafael Utrera provides extensive lists of movies made from plays by such authors as the Alvarez Quintero brothers, Jacinto Benavente, and Carlos Arniches. By the late 1920s, a group of younger Spanish dramatists (including Enrique Jardiel Poncela, José López Rubio, and Edgar Neville) were in Hollywood, writing Spanish-language filmscripts. In the postwar period, it is a rare Spanish dramatist who has not collaborated on screen plays, as author of the source text, as scriptwriter, or as both; Fernando Méndez-Leite's basic reference, *Historia del cine español*, provides ample evidence of that fact.

In the 1980s, the pattern continued. Directed by Jaime Chávarri, Fernando Fernán Gómez's, *Las bicicletas son para el verano*

quickly moved, with considerable success, from stage to screen (1982, 1984). On the heels of his box-office hit, *Bajarse al moro* (1985), dramatist José Luis Alonso de Santos likewise provided source scripts for movie adaptations: *La estanquera de Vallecas* (dir. Eloy de la Iglesia, 1987) and *Bajarse al moro* (dir. Fernando Colomo, 1989). Film directors have also recently turned to texts by prewar Spanish dramatists: García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (dir. Mario Camus, 1987), Valle-Inclán's *Divinas palabras* (dir. José Luis García Sánchez, 1987). This presence of Spanish theatre in the cinema does not always meet with critical acclaim, but there is no question that it is a visible influence.

Film director Josefina Molina, who turned triumphantly to the legitimate stage in 1979-80 with her productions of Delibes's *Cinco horas con Mario* and Josep Benet i Jornet's *Motín de brujas*, suggests that the relationship between cinema and the stage — and television — is symbiotic. «Yo creo que la TV ya está influyendo en la literatura como en el cine. Eso es un hecho. Al igual que el cine ha influido en el teatro y éste en el cine, son realmente como vasos comunicantes» (29). Writing in the same 1981 issue of *Pipirijaina*, one subtitled «Del zoom al telón», Ángel Fernández Santos sees the relationship as more one-directional, with theatre making the more positive contribution to film. He finds the theatre, with a gamut of techniques that encompasses the «secuencia continuada» and the creation of «interioridad», to be a far more complex art and hence concludes that directors and actors make the transition more effectively from stage to screen: «La idea de que teatro y cine son, en éste y otros terrenos, vasos comunicantes, no es falsa, pero puede convertirse en una media verdad si no se añade que entre ambos vasos comunicantes los fluidos circulan mejor en la dirección teatro-cine que a la inversa» (24).

Whatever the validity of Fernández Santos's judgement, the theatre, film, and television worlds in Spain clearly overlap. Writers, directors, and actors move readily from one to another, sometimes changing their professional roles as they go. Fernán Gómez has achieved international acclaim as a film actor but is also a stage actor, playwright, and film, theatre and television director. José Luis Gómez directs and acts on stage and in film. Ana Diosdado, as actress and author, works both in television and in the theatre. Playwright and director Francisco Nieva has been a set

designer for both stage and screen; his credits in the latter category include major films by Carlos Saura. There is no end to the list of examples.

If C. B. Morris is correct that Spanish theatre before the Civil War was resistant to the influence of cinema, his assertion would generally not hold true today. Even if the same professionals did not participate in both cultural spheres, the impact of film images and techniques in our lives is far too pervasive to be easily ignored. Stage director José Carlos Plaza has expressed the issue succinctly: «Desde hace algún tiempo, mucha gente piensa de mí que estoy haciendo cine en el teatro, y posiblemente sea cierto. Porque... todos sufrimos hoy la influencia del cine» (1986:41). Explicitly or implicitly, playwrights, directors, actors, and spectators, as well as the characters within the plays, establish an intertextual dialogue with films and film codes that contributes to the meaning of the theatre text.

The possible forms such intertextuality may take are numerous, ranging from extensive, explicit relationships to indirect references. At the most obvious level, intertextuality may include the conversion of a movie script into a stage play or the introduction of actual film sequences within the play. In terms of *mise-en-scène*, there may be special lighting to create the effect of close-ups or of a cinematographic fluidity in time or space, or the use of a soundtrack to evoke a particular mood. More subtly, the expectations of individual spectators may be influenced by the presence on stage of a favorite cinema star, or the discussion of particular subject matter within the play may remind them of movies they have seen.

For example, at this latter end of the spectrum, it is worth conjecturing to what extent Verónica Forqué's well-established film persona created meaning for a Spanish audience, even before the curtain rose, when she appeared in *Bajarse al moro* (1985) or José Sanchis Sinisterra's *¡Ay, Carmela!* (1987). The dramatic text in performance may establish an intertextual dialogue whether or not it was intended by the original author. Paloma Pedrero does not believe that there is any influence on her *El color de agosto* (1988) from Philip Kaufman's 1987 film version of Milan Kundera's novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Personal interview), but people who have seen the movie can and do recall it when they discuss

the Spanish play ¹. The image of Pedrero's women artists painting each other's bodies becomes superimposed on a remembered film image of actresses Juliette Binoche and Lena Olin as photographer and model.

As the above example indicates, the intertextual dialogue between cinema, stage, and literature may, in fact, be a *mise-en-abîme*: A play evokes memories of a movie that in turn is based on a novel. Pedrero's first important play, *La llamada de Lauren* (1985), refers explicitly to the film personae of Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart. In the stage directions, the author indicates that the specific film she has in mind is Howard Hawks's *To Have and Have Not*. That 1945 movie, however, is not only based on a novel by Ernest Hemingway but was intended to remind the audience of a classic 1942 Bogart film: *To Have and Have Not* was «notable for first pairing of Bogart and Bacall as an imitation of *Casablanca*» (Halliwell 835). The characters within Pedrero's play cast themselves into the roles of the film actors; for them and for the audience, there is a layering of images drawn from a series of movies, perhaps seen as television reruns.

Casablanca itself was based on an unproduced play. While many plays have been made into movies, the opposite possibility, that of a movie script becoming the source of a later stage play, is far less frequent. A rare example is a cinematographic text by Ettore Scola; his *Una jornada particular*, in Carla Matteini's Spanish version of the Italian play from the original film script, was directed by Plaza in fall 1986 at the Centro Cultural de la Villa de Madrid. Within the Spanish theatre, a related case in point is José María Rodríguez Méndez's *Flor de Otoño: una historia del Barrio Chino*. His play, written in 1972 and first published in 1974, was made into a film in 1977 but did not reach the stage until 1982. The movie version, *Un hombre llamado "Flor de Otoño"*, directed by Pedro Olea, was well received and won for José Sacristán the best actor award at San Sebastián. Perhaps in part because of in-

¹ On three occasions when I have discussed Pedrero's *El color de agosto* without reference to the Kundera text, I have had others mention the movie to me. These occasions included a session at the Modern Language Association convention in New Orleans, December 1988; my graduate seminar in contemporary Spanish theatre, spring 1989; and a staged reading of a section of Pedrero's play at a symposium on translating women writers, State University of New York at Binghamton, June 1989.

tertextuality with the film, the stage production at the Teatro Español gave rise to negative criticism precisely for its cinematographic quality. José Monleón responded in defense of *Flor de Otoño* and Antonio Díaz Zamora's direction, affirming that theatre is spectacle and deploring a tendency among contemporary Spanish critics to reject productions that highlight visual effects. To prove his point, he traced the history on the Spanish and European stages of noteworthy theatrical productions that merged image with literary text. For the contemporary period, thinking specifically of *Coronada y el toro* (1982), Monleón identified Francisco Nieva as «uno de nuestros escasos dramaturgos a quien se le ha tolerado el carácter expresivo de sus soluciones escénicas» (23).

Nieva, who has sometimes lamented the difficulty he confronts in getting his works staged, might not agree totally with Monleón, but he has repeatedly joined in the defense of a theatre of images and acknowledges the influence of film on his own work. Writing in a 1980 issue of *Primer Acto* subtitled «Imagen y teatro», Nieva drew a number of parallels between Brechtian stage production and film techniques: «Las imágenes van a bailar y sucederse rápidamente ante nuestros ojos... como diferentes planos o 'tiros de cámara'. Y el teloncito blanco, a media altura... iba a servir como soporte de proyección de cortas frases informativas... y, a la vez, como medio de sugerir teatralmente el fundido cinematográfico» (1980:35).

For Nieva, the genius of Valle-Inclán resides in his cinematographic vision². Valle organizes his world in plastic signs, emphasizing objects and lighting. His novels and plays reveal «algo de planificación de un guión cinematográfico en su forma 'impresionista' de hacer avanzar el relato... como si trabajara con planos y encuadres precisos. Tan cinematográficos que, a veces, vemos la escena por detrás de un detalle compositivo... como algo que se aleja o se oculta a medias» (*En tela de juicio* 216). The visual structuring of the text is reflected as well in the dialogue: «Los

² Nieva, of course, is not alone in recognizing the cinematographic aspects of the theatre of Valle-Inclán. Swedish director Gun Jonsson affirms that Valle, even more than Brecht, utilizes «la forma cinematográfica de contar descripciones minuciosas de detalles y rápidos cortes de tiempo y espacio». For his own staging of *Divinas palabras* Jonsson sought a «casi filmico estilo de expresión» on the part of the actors. Jorge Urrutia similarly suggests that Valle is not thinking of a conventional stage set but rather of «una numerosa serie de planos». Therefore his drama «se objetualiza en parques, pueblos, campos, cruces de caminos».

diálogos parecen más bien ilustrar la imagen invocada y 'referida' como concentración de la mirada en la escena que se desarrolla» (216). In Nieva's terms, Valle has established the cinematographic «gaze».

In his own theatre, Nieva not only conceives of stage design and text as a whole but makes direct intertextual references to film images in his choice of subject, tone, and characterization. He clarifies that this was his approach in works set in the nineteenth century, such as *Te quiero, zorra* and *No es verdad*, two short plays staged together in 1988: «En algún sentido vivimos una época romántica. El cine ha romantizado mucho el espíritu de la gente. Quienes hemos sentido la influencia del mundo de la imagen, de la cultura del cine, estamos más acostumbrados al melodrama cinematográfico que a la comedia» (Interview 17). The result, once again, is a kind of refraction. The allusions to *La Dame aux camélias* within *Te quiero, zorra* may evoke in the spectator an image of Dumas's character as filtered through film, if not concretely as a reference to Greta Garbo in the 1936 *Camille*, certainly to a whole subgenre of romantic movies. For the set and costumes of *No es verdad*, Nieva suggests possible film antecedents: Polanski's *Tess* (1979), *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981), «o cualquier otra película que los jóvenes han podido ver y se hallan difundidas en vídeo» (1987:7)³.

Pedrero's *La llamada de Lauren*, Rodríguez Méndez's *Flor de Otoño*, and Nieva's *Te quiero, zorra* share an intertextual reference to cinema, but beyond that they differ radically as theatre. Pedrero's text may be classified as hyperrealism. There are only two characters and a single stage set. The duration of the action coincides with real time. Nieva's «vodevil superrealista» is similarly structured but far removed from hyperrealism. While Pedrero uses the Bogart/Bacall images to foreground the psychological reality of the characters, as his subtitle suggests, Nieva evokes Hollywood melodrama in a parodic, fanciful tone. Unlike either of these two plays, Rodríguez Méndez's text requires a markedly cinematographic mise-en-scène. It calls for temporal and spatial fluidity, simultaneous action, and a Valle-Inclanesque distorting lens for the

³ Playwright Harold Pinter received an Academy Award nomination for his film script based on John Fowles's novel. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is thus another example of interconnectedness between cinema, stage, and literature.

creation of grotesque images. Paradoxically, the influence of cinema on the stage may be found at the polar extremes of realism and anti-realism, of the well-made play and epic theatre. Its influence is sometimes overt, sometimes so imbedded in our culture that it passes by unnoticed. It may enhance the play's popularity, as Nieva obviously hopes in his stage directions to *No es verdad*, or it may arouse the hostility of critics who expect theatre to be «literary» and stage action to be unitary, not fragmented.

Among contemporary playwrights who have used film references or techniques on the stage with popular success are the so-called Nuevos, or hyperrealists, a group that includes Alonso de Santos, Fermín Cabal, Sebastián Junyent, and Pedrero. Along with director José Carlos Plaza, these younger authors are products of independent theatre, a movement that, like cinema, generally implies collective creation. That they are also longtime movie fans is readily apparent in their works. In a 1982 interview with Alonso de Santos, Cabal indeed recalls that «a los ocho años quería ser escritor, a los quince director de cine»; referring to Cabal's first five plays, Alonso de Santos suggests that they are in a dramatic current «más cerca del lenguaje cinematográfico y más cerca del gusto del espectador de hoy» (Cabal 1982:28,32). Hyperrealism in art reflects photographic images. It is not surprising that in theatre hyperrealism should maintain an intertextual dialogue with cinematography.

One of the salient characteristics of film is its propensity for realism. The camera presumably does not lie. Details appear on the screen, larger than life, and there is less need for the suspension of disbelief than in the theatre. The action of the movie unfolds uninterrupted by intermissions that call the audience's attention to the fact that what is happening is theatre, not reality. In the popular mind, film images remain fixed and become «truth». For that reason, movie stars may become permanently merged with the characters they portray, and we may assume, for example, that we know how the old West was because we have seen it so vividly, so many times.

The implications of the above generalizations are many on the contemporary Spanish stage. Perhaps it is a direct influence of cinema that some plays now run without intermission, lasting an hour and a half like many feature films. Examples include *Cinco horas con Mario* and *Molín de brujas*, the two plays directed by

Josefina Molina in 1979-80; *Fuiste a ver a la abuela???* (1979) and *Caballito del diablo* (1985), Cabal's most cinematographic texts; Junyent's *Hay que deshacer la casa* (1984), and Pedrero's *La llamada de Lauren* and *El color de agosto*. Directors like Gerardo Malla strike for realistic detail in set design: real stoves that produce real fried eggs or real hot water in Alfonso Sastre's *La taberna fantástica* (1985) and Alonso de Santos's *Pares y nones* (1989). Critics claimed that they could almost detect the locker room smells in Manuel Collado's hyperrealistic staging of Cabal's *¡Esta noche gran velada!* (1983). But, as I have affirmed elsewhere, critics who proclaim Cabal's characterizations and use of colloquial language to be authentic probably do so, not because they have a firsthand acquaintance with the boxing world, but because they and the playwright have seen the same boxing movies.

One aspect of these plays' realism resides in their treatment of cinema's influence on people's lives. César Oliva considers Alonso de Santos's *Bajarse al moro* to be a contemporary *sainete* with the portrait of a «joven marginado de la gran urbe» in which «el espectador también joven encuentra a su caricatura o la de alguien que le resulta familiar»; he specifically mentions Jaimito's «sentimentalismo — referencia a Bogart» (449). Indeed Jaimito has named his pet hamster «Humphrey» and, in his moment of greatest despondency, picks up his flute and plays «As Time Goes By», the theme from *Casablanca*. With considerable verisimilitude, Jaimito, as the movie-fan-within-the-play, reflects the wider audience's tendency when he views his own situation in terms of movies he has seen and identifies the movie star with the role played. As he talks to the hamster, his Humphrey Bogart stand-in, he asks him how he felt when *Ingrid* left him (82, emphasis mine).

In Junyent's *Hay que deshacer la casa*, there is a key scene that foregrounds the lasting impact of Hollywood films. A high-point of the two middle-aged sisters' reminiscences comes after they recall how they used to lie on their beds and imagine their future in terms of the movies they had seen. Laura always envisioned herself on her wedding day, entering the church with Spencer Tracy, just like *Father of the Bride* (1950). That memory evokes another, of *Singing in the Rain* (1952). «Es la película que más veces he visto en mi vida... Todavía me acuerdo de la música», declares Ana. Laura says she remembers, too. The stage directions then indicate that «sería maravilloso, que las dos actrices

cantasen en inglés macarrónico y bailasen alguna pieza de la película» (53). In the Madrid production in 1985, Amparo Rivelles and Lola Cardona responded with a splendid comic rendition of the title song, doubtless also bringing to spectators' minds memories of what has been called «perhaps the most enjoyable of all movie musicals» (Halliwell 744).

The intertextuality with film of the hyperrealistic *Hay que deshacer la casa* is, of course, far less complex than the cinematographic elements within a work like Rodríguez Méndez's intensely metatheatrical *Flor de Otoño: una historia del Barrio Chino* with its use of Brechtian and Valle-Inclanesque techniques. The stage directions make explicit references to film images: a minor character is «un joven parecido a Rodolfo Valentino» (133); the transvestite protagonist, practicing in his room, «se coloca las manos en las caderas y avanza hacia el espejo con andares de 'vamp' cinematográfica estilo Mae West» (140); in performance, «jugueteadó con su bastoncillo, nos recuerda una Marlene Dietrich misteriosa y arrogante» (148). The police and the «viudo» of another transvestite performer are described as «'gansters' de Chicago» (126, 144); this, too, like the boxing world of Cabal's *¡Esta noche gran velada!*, is a celluloid image.

In Brechtian fashion, *Flor de Otoño* requires the projection of newspaper headlines to provide background narration for certain scenes, and Lluïset-Flor de Otoño, in the cabaret, performs a self-referential song. But the use of music goes beyond that typical in a Brecht play; with its shifting motifs, it becomes the musical score of film. Stage directions, like those of Valle-Inclán, call for a cinematographic attention to detail and to light. As the curtain rises, it is night and the moonlight «se refleja, azulada y misteriosa, en los espejos del saloncillo» (123). In the reflected moonlight, we are to notice a series of images within this bourgeois parlor, including a variety of knickknacks and souvenirs, the symbolic «mariposas clavadas en la pared», an autographed photo of King Alfonso XIII, and un «Niño Jesús en un fanal» (124). Through the device of the moonlight filtering through the window, each of these objects can be highlighted in turn, thus recreating an essential filmic strategy.

At an obvious level, *Flor de Otoño*, with its markedly fragmentary structure, utilizes the cinematographic fade-out, and even the

dissolve, in making rapid scene changes and establishing simultaneous action. Moreover, for at least some spectators, the entire production may maintain an intertextual dialogue with *Cabaret* (dir. Bob Fosse 1972). The parallels with the American film, which appeared the same year Rodríguez Méndez wrote his play, are many: the setting is the 1930s, there is a dichotomy between a frivolous sector of society and a deteriorating political reality with its concomitant patterns of discrimination, the characters are engaged in role-playing within the role, the metatheatrical cabaret-within-the-text comments upon the wider dramatic world while providing a mirror for the spectators of the frame text as well⁴.

I have dwelt on *Flor de Otoño* because it is a concentrated example, but the cinema references and techniques utilized here have numerous counterparts in widely-varying works of other authors. The would-be robbers in Alonso de Santos's *La estanquera de Vallecas* (1981), like *Flor de Otoño* evoking a Mae West or Marlene Dietrich image, openly admit that the role they have assumed is based on film codes: «¡Manos arriba! ¡Esto es un atraco, como en el cine! ¡Vieja, la pasta o la mando a freír espárragos!» (13). César Oliva is quite correct in his description of Cabal's two plays directed by Angel Ruggiero: *Fuiste a ver a la abuela???* is a «modelo de cuadros que pasan rápidamente de un lugar a otro» (454) and *Caballito de diablo* is similarly structured on «fundidos y variaciones constantes» (456, emphasis mine). Psychological expressionism, like Jaime Salom's *La piel de limón* (1976) and *El corto vuelo del gallo* (1980), not only call for lighting effects to facilitate the flow between planes of reality but also introduce a cinematographic freeze. The teen-age characters in Diosdado's *Los ochenta son nuestros* (1988) discuss their situations in cinema terms: to return to the village, the injured outsider must be Superman or Robert Mitchum (27). In the same play, Diosdado uses both the freeze and slow motion: «Y a partir de este momento la luz adquiere un matiz irreal, y también las actitudes y los movi-

⁴ The movie *Cabaret*, too, is an example of intertextual mise-en-abîme: Christopher Isherwood's stories *Goodbye to Berlin* gave rise to a stage play, *I Am a Camera*, and a Broadway musical before the film was made; Joel Grey has made a lifetime career of touring in the musical version. Rodríguez Méndez did see the movie and agrees that there are some parallels with *Flor de Otoño* but was unaware that *Cabaret* was based on a stage play (Personal interview).

mientos de todos, que se producen como en cámara lenta, casi como en una danza...» (88)⁵. The examples go on and on.

In his recent *The Field of Drama. How the Signs of Drama Create Meaning on Stage & Screen*, Martin Esslin argues convincingly that live theatre and cinematic types of drama (movies and television) have more similarities than differences. Expanding on Tadeusz Kowzan's thirteen sign systems of live drama, Esslin identifies twenty-two sign systems common to all dramatic media; these he groups in five categories: «Framing systems outside the drama proper», «Sign systems at the actor's disposal», «Visual sign systems», «The text», and «Aural sign systems» (103-104). Additionally he identifies ten sign systems, divided into three groups, that are confined to cinema and television. Under «Sign systems derived from camera work», he includes such techniques as the close-up and slow motion. Under «Sign systems derived from the linking of shots», he lists the dissolve and the split screen. Under «The sign system of editing», he cites the rhythmic flow of images (104-105). At a literal level, Esslin is quite correct that the camera is characteristic of filmic art and not of live theatre. Nevertheless, as we have seen, contemporary directors and authors deliberately imitate some of those very strategies, recreating on stage the effect of slow motion, the dissolve, split screen (simultaneous action), the close-up, and even the rhythmic flow of images.

In speaking of her transition from screen to stage, Josefina Molina affirms that in her cinema training she learned to «hacer imágenes» (31). But she believes that she can create images on stage, using lighting in lieu of the camera, to shift the audience's gaze: «cuando tú quieres que mire algo, le provocas para que mire allí y no a otro lado» (29). In the 1980 production of *Motín de brujas* at the María Guerrero, the stage set represented simultaneously various locations within an office building. Individual offices were outlined by metallic frameworks. The spotlights shifted from one cleaning woman to another, each «framed» in an office,

⁵ French critic Mireille Willey attributes the first use of slow motion on stage to Argentinian director Jorge Lavelli and his 1972 production of Fernando Arrabal's *Bella Ciao* (32). I am aware of one earlier use, that called for in the stage directions of the Cuban author Manet, in his 1971 *Eux ou La prise du pouvoir*. The use in theatre of the varied rhythms of film may reflect a direct influence of cinema and/or the influence of other theatrical productions. Certainly the presence of cinematographic devices on stage is international in scope.

and thus provided the visual impact of a series of images in close-up. The 1982 production at the Teatro Español of Fernán Gómez's *Las bicicletas son para el verano* made similar use of a multiple stage setting and cinematographic lighting. According to director José Carlos Plaza, he has had a clear concept of the close-up on stage since *Bicicletas...*: «De entre los elementos que el teatro ha podido tomar del cine, hay uno que a mí me interesa especialmente, la recuperación del primer plano: la historia general parece haberse diluido para que de ella destaquen determinadas aristas» (1986:41).

The rhythmic flow of images, associated with cinematography, may be created on stage in a variety of ways. At the beginning of Pedrero's *El color de agosto*, María one by one hangs a series of pictures that she had painted of Laura. She calls the audience's attention to each in turn by giving it a descriptive name. Fernando Arrabal, who has worked in film as well as theatre, has defined cinema as «painting in motion» (113). At a literal level, that is what Pedrero captures in her opening scene. It is also what happens in Antonio Buero Vallejo's *El sueño de la razón* (1970) with the projection of Goya's paintings. In his experimental «Escenificación» on Picasso, *Guernica y después* (1987), Francisco Torres Monreal goes beyond slides to suggest that the paintings alluded to in the text be filmed, thus incorporating the movie or video camera into the live drama. The image-in-motion implied by this technique is not unlike the effect created in Ruggiero's in-the-round staging of Cabal's *Caballito del diablo* that featured television screens at each corner of the playing area.

The epitome of cinematography in theatre, of course, is the actual showing of movies. In a 1986 article in *El Público*, Antonio Fernández Lera discusses the work of Mike Figgis, a British artist «empeñado en que teatro y cine fumen la pipa de la paz» (70). For *Redhaugh*, produced in 1980, Figgis made a movie to be shown within the play. He believes that today «es posible utilizar las técnicas del cine en el teatro, pero esas posibilidades no se están explorando» (71). One Spanish director who does exploit those possibilities, however, is Plaza. *El Público* was indeed justified in labeling his 1984 staging of *Eloísa está debajo de un almendro* (1940), «Un Jardiel de película».

As the spectators entered the María Guerrero for that memorable production, they found themselves in a darkened theatre, with a movie in progress. At the front of the stage was a transparent screen on which they could view Vivien Leigh and Robert Taylor in

Waterloo Bridge (1940). And facing them, like a mirror image on the other side of the screen, was the other audience, the actor-spectators in a neighborhood movie house. Jardiel Ponce's prologue calls for such a setting, but the action of the original text takes place at intermission. It is Plaza who converted the theatre-goers into a movie audience and the dramatic text into another film. As Jardiel's prologue ended, signalling as well the end of intermission at the neighborhood movie, the title, film credits, and decor for the first act of *Eloísa está debajo de un almendro* flashed on the screen. Plaza clarifies, «Así he montado yo la función como una película que pasa ante los españoles del año cuarenta» (1984:129).

According to Alberto Fernández Torres and José M. Sulleiro, Plaza's strategy may be explained simply: «la obra pretende ser el cine dentro de un escenario... que figura ser un cine... en medio de un local teatral» (19). Within this *mise-en-abîme*, the intertextual dialogue with film codes continues. Jardiel's story and characters themselves referred back to movie antecedents. In the 1984 revival, there were added touches. For example, the musical soundtrack pointed to the parody of Hollywood melodrama that informs the third act. The staircase in the final stage set similarly evoked filmic texts; it is described by the critics writing in *El Público* as «digna de los descensos armoniosos y apresurados» of a Katherine Hepburn or of the title character in *Rebecca* (19).

Plaza's cinematographic staging of *Eloísa está debajo de un almendro*, complete with a movie-within-the-play, is an exceptional case, but there is no doubt that he is right about the pervasive influence of film. As we have seen, direct references to movies and/or the use of film techniques may be found in a wide range of stage plays in contemporary Spain, including works by playwrights of several generations. While some of the most overtly cinematographic productions, those with a rapid flow of visual effects, have not met with critical acclaim, plays incorporating filmic techniques have also been among the most successful productions of recent years. There is a strong belief among younger theatre professionals that cinematic codes form an essential part of contemporary culture. For that reason, their use in the theatre may attract new audiences who find themselves and their interests reflected on the stage. Spanish theatre may not have embraced the seventh art wholeheartedly at the beginning of the twentieth century, but as we approach the end, there is no doubt that stage and film have become «vasos comunicantes».

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