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Performing the Peninsula

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PERFORMING THE PENINSULA

Costumbrismo and the theatre of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries

Alberto Romero Ferrer

The “rediscovery” of popular culture, from the Enlightenment to the Romantics

The popular classes burst onto the political and social scene with the coming of the French Revolution, a unique set of circumstances which mark the beginning of the modern era, and which were to bring about dramatic cultural change founded on the ideals of liberty and equality. The people were to play the central role in this process, which was also to lead to a new political regime. However, after the events of Napoleon’s rule, that new system was to enter a period of decline, which demanded – for the sake of peace and order – that this revolutionary ideology be to some extent forgotten.

Yet it did not disappear entirely. Those popular classes who had been the driving force in the revolution did not vanish, for the cultural world quickly came to see them as a source of material which could be exploited to make connections between the new mentality and the emerging Romantic nationalist movement, which had the rediscovery of *lo popular* at its heart. Poets, playwrights, painters, musicians, illustrators, and journalists would thus treat this popular reality in their works, incorporating elements, characters, and situations which they found in its “rediscovery.” A cultural pact was thus established between these artists and the people, on which much discussion of a newly established “modernity” was to focus. In *costumbrismo*, this pact found one of its most important forms of artistic expression, especially if we focus on the case of southern Europe and the Iberian Peninsula.

The rise of *costumbrismo* in the eighteenth century, as well as its development in the nineteenth as a new way of looking at and reflecting Peninsular life in literature and theatre, in painting and music, both entail the discovery of “popular reality.” This requires accepting the existence of a range of customs, features, and character types that might conflict with more strictly uniform neo-classical dogmas, especially in the realm of theatre. These changes were also linked to the emergence of the bourgeois class as a new locus of power, particularly in the nineteenth century. Thus began the formal discovery of the popular classes, which the middle classes rapidly came to see as grist for their artistic mill, in the ceaseless search for essential national realities which could only be confirmed by these wide sectors of society still

uncontaminated by modernity, and its grand plan for cultural uniformity. Burke sums this up as follows:

Craftsmen and peasants were no doubt surprised to find their houses invaded by men and women with middle-class clothes and accents who insisted they sing traditional songs or tell traditional stories.

(1978, 3)

Songs, traditional customs, settings, and figures were soon given form in the theatre, as the platform of the stage thus codified an Hispanic-Peninsular imagination grounded in this recently discovered culture with ties to the realm of “craftsmen and peasants,” and in what it had to say about those supposedly native qualities in the different regional identities of the Iberian Peninsula.

This process, which began as early as the first half of the eighteenth century, really came into focus during the transition from the Enlightenment to Romanticism (1750–1850), once the resistance of the enlightened élites, who rejected *lo popular* and saw it as something barbarous, had been overcome (Escobar 1984). This conflict was particularly visible in the theatre, both because of the medium’s wide reach and because of the hope placed in it as a vehicle for the politics of the Enlightenment, as a means of education and a school of morality.

The *sainete* and the *tonadilla escénica*: Madrid versus Andalusia

The stage would soon bear witness to the restlessness that accompanied this “rediscovery” of the popular classes. This was partly due to the established tradition of short Baroque theatre which made use of characters and situations of popular heritage, but also because of the disappearance of the *entremeses de Trullo*, which were taken off the Court stage in 1780, to be replaced by the *tonadilla escénica* and the new eighteenth-century *sainete*. These changing tastes and dramatic practices would become one of the most intricate and hotly contested aspects of the battle fought over the theatre by the Enlightenment with its great programme of cultural modernization, which had no place whatsoever for the popular world which these theatrical forms endorsed.

Despite the process of refinement which the *sainete* and the *tonadilla escénica* had undergone with regard to their seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century predecessors, official Enlightenment culture was unrelenting in considering them both an anti-aesthetic kind of theatre, both inadequate and immoral, which had to be banished and which needed to be civilized, for they represented the lowest kind of cultural debasement. This conflict resulted in those forms of theatre taking on a markedly combative character, which led to a radicalization of their aesthetics, their characters, and their language, both at the level of the dramatic text and in terms of their staging.

The reflection of *lo popular*, and consequently of its defining regional, social, and linguistic variety was partly down to the influence of the theatrical antecedent of the old *entremés*, but it must also be linked to the more recent shifts in how reality was perceived, and the resulting impact on various artistic fields – a phenomenon known in literature as “mimesis costumbrista” (Escobar 1988). This approach is exemplified by Ramón de la Cruz, in his defence of his theatre as modern and civilized:

Pintura exacta de la vida civil y de las costumbres españolas [. . .] No hay ni hubo más invención en la dramática que copiar lo que se ve, esto es, retratar los hombres,

sus palabras, sus acciones y sus costumbres. Y queda convencido que yo invento cuando retrato los payos y los hidalgos extravagantes de las provincias de mi Nación, y los majos baladrones, las petimetras caprichosas y los usías casquivanos de mi lugar [. . .] Los que han paseado el día de San Isidro su pradera, los que han visitado el Rastro por la mañana, la Plaza Mayor de Madrid la víspera de Navidad, el Prado antiguo por la noche.

(1786: liv–lvi)

This perspective renders the *sainete* and the *tonadilla* two of the most important buttresses supporting the creation of an imaginary relating to national reality; and while the *comedia* focused its attention on the interests of the bourgeoisie, this new cultural imaginary demonstrated a wide regional and linguistic diversity, taking in situations, spaces, and characters which had to be interpreted – as indeed they were – as a more or less faithful mirror of life in the country, or a “[p]intura exacta de la vida civil.” Its references were therefore to real, everyday life on the street. Indeed, this is one of its most vital characteristics: its close relationship to contemporary popular reality.

In another light, we should not forget the possibilities opened up for *costumbrismo* by the revolution in stage design which essentially stemmed from the 1767 reforms of the Conde de Aranda, who ordered the *Junta de Teatros* “que se retiren los paños o cortinas de la escena y se sustituyan por decoraciones pintadas” (Arias de Cossío 1991, 30). Painters thus became indispensable in the creation of theatre sets, as the techniques and materials used to make them were rapidly updated, via the incorporation of scenery and backcloths which brought a greater realism to the stage. Nor were authors such as Ramón de la Cruz blind to these developments: he was thus able to bring the real world into his *sainetes* in a much more convincing way.

Of this real world comprised of “los hombres, sus palabras, sus acciones y sus costumbres” (Cruz 1786, liv), two aspects stand out. These are the *majismo* and *plebeyismo* of Andalusia and Madrid (Sala Valldaura 1988), to say nothing of other regional links – the gallery of characters from other stock, the Galicians, Biscayans, Cantabrians, and Murcians, all with their own idiosyncrasies of language, profession, and fashion, which may be seen in the *zarzuela Las labradoras de Murcia* (1769) or the grand finale *Las provincias españolas unidas por el placer* (1789). Nonetheless, it is the *majismo* of Andalusia and Madrid that demand most attention, as the theatrical correlates of a curious process of cultural vulgarisation visible among the most aristocratic strata of society (Martín Gaité 1972), who were to adopt as their own the fashions, behaviours, and linguistic patterns supposedly thought to belong to the common people, in a complex process of social transvestism and transculturalization which tends to give us an idealized picture of those sectors – peripheral *barrios*, craftsmen’s guilds, rural society – which are seen through the lens of eighteenth-century *majismo*.

The causes of this phenomenon, and importantly of its location in Andalusia and Madrid, lie in the respective economic and social contexts of those two places, being very specifically associated with the cities of Madrid and Cádiz. These were the two cities most exposed to cosmopolitan contamination, and therefore most inclined to imitate outside influences: Madrid because it was the capital of the kingdom, Cádiz because it was so cosmopolitan and had the monopoly on overseas trade. Drama also played a significant role in both cities, whose theatres became mirrors on their respective social and urban surroundings, reflected in the scenery and in the characters on stage. It is therefore no surprise that the *sainete*’s influence was both more widely and more consistently felt in these cities, as it echoed in comedic form the social dialectic of the dandy *petimetre* and *majo*.

This may be seen in the works of Ramón de la Cruz, or the Cádiz playwright Juan Ignacio González del Castillo – the two most professionalized *saineteros* of the period – as well as in many of Madrid's *tonadillas*, by musicians such as Blas Laserna, or the Andalusian works of an important composer such as Manuel García.

Many *sainetes* by both Cruz and Castillo made use of contrasts between the dandyism of *petimetría* – the emblem of modernity – and *majismo* – the image of more old-fashioned ways – as part of a play on more straightforward oppositions as the more “civilized” world of the city was systematically set against that of the rustic *payo*. This opposition was accentuated by the contrast between *currutaco* dandies and peasants, and the superiority complex of the former against the simple rusticity of the latter: peasants and craftsmen, villagers and inn-keepers, *majos* and *majas* from the periphery. The perspective of drama, which always looked favourably upon these villagers and *majos*, would set about ridiculing all kinds of affectations, whether in behaviour, speech, clothing, or action, as well as the resulting supremacy of *brío* or *bizarria* as the equivalents of being honest or natural, which were seen as the particular characteristics of the people, who were now being given a place on stage.

Both playwrights went through a particularly intense period, as far as this confrontation between *petimetres* and *payos* or *majos* is concerned, towards the end of the eighteenth century, whether that came via a recreation of a rural scene (such as La Mancha, or a cattle fair), or directly from dramatizing the ways of the city. This may be seen in Cruz's *La civilización* and *Las usías y las payas*, or in Castillo's *Un lugareño en Cádiz* and *La feria del puerto*. In all of these, censure is focused on the frivolousness of the customs which are fashionable in the city, the excesses of its luxury, and the importance placed on appearances, as opposed to a basic identity whose roots may be traced to other sectors of society which have not let themselves be contaminated by the invasion of modernity, presented as something alien to native qualities.

The first *costumbrista* images of peninsular life thus began to arise in the theatre, part idealization of the rustic world and part moral censure of *petimetría*. These images were projected from the enlightened perspective of the city, in order to indicate the design shaping the supposed cultural diversity of the Peninsula. That is the reason for the claim recorded in *El Censor* that “Madrid daba implacablemente la pauta a las provincias, y muchos de los lugareños que visitaban la corte se sentían intrusos en ella y se quejaban de ser puestos continuamente en evidencia a causa de su *rusticidad*” (Martín Gaité 1972, 54).

The *sainete* sees Madrid transformed into a literary stage, especially in the case of Cruz, who recreated the city both in his prolific run of short theatre pieces and in his *zarzuelas* (*Las segadoras de Vallecas*, 1768), paying special attention to the busiest public spaces, which offered better scope for a panoramic view of daily life. Thus, in *La pradera de San Isidro*, “se descubre la vista de la ermita de San Isidro en el foro, sirviendo el tablado a la imitación propia de la pradera” (Cruz 1996, 66).

In the case of Andalusia, evidence comes from such works by González del Castillo as *La boda del Nuevo Mundo*, *El día de toros en Cádiz*, *La feria del Puerto*, *La casa de vecindad*, *Felipa la Chiclanera*, *El fin del pavo*, *La maja resuelta*, and *El triunfo de las mujeres*. These offer a vivid description of life on the city streets, as an example of which may stand *Un lugareño en Cádiz*:

La escena se representa en la plaza de San Juan de Dios con puestos, vendedores, etc. A izquierda, tienda de mercader, con TENDERO. El POBRE MENDIGO tendrá delante del pecho dos manos postizas. El SARGENTO y los SOLDADOS estarán

paseándose. El CIEGO, a un lado, con su guitarra. El CALESERO se paseará con su látigo en la mano; el AGUADOR, con su cántaro y vasos.

(2008, 314)

It is also worth mentioning the work of the Sevillian Manuel García in this southern context, whose time spent in the theatres of Cádiz between 1791 and 1797 should not be forgotten for the construction of southern models of lyrical theatre which we find in his *tonadillas escénicas* *El majo y la maja* (1798) and *La declaración* (1779), the operettas *El seductor arrepentido* (1802) and *El criado fingido* (1804), or the monologue opera *El poeta calculista* (1805) (Subirá 1928–30).

This obsession with offering a portrait of city life also gave the *sainete* an added value as a fairly detailed record of various aspects of *intrahistoria*: dress, food and drink, decoration and furniture; when allied to the linguistic idiosyncrasies of its protagonists, this lent the *sainete* an extraordinary mimetic capacity. The purpose was precisely that of showing scenes of everyday life which were close to the spectators, and transmitting an illusion of reality, which was beginning to be constructed as the *costumbrista* imaginary of the Iberian Peninsula.

Romantic *costumbrismo* in the theatre

However, if the eighteenth century saw the beginning of this championing of *casticismo*, it was during the nineteenth century that the *costumbrista* outlook on Spanish reality really took hold in the theatres, as the bourgeoisie began to play a more central role in society. The development of this aesthetic took it from its incipient forms and its roots in the earlier tradition of the *sainete*, transforming it into one of the pillars of the theatrical and literary history of the period. In its more developed form, it had a wide variety of literary manifestations, and had significant implications for the moral, political, and administrative order of the country: in 1822, the state was divided into 52 provinces; these then were grouped into 15 regions in 1833.

The first step of this process is provided by Romantic *costumbrismo* and its designs on rediscovering Spanish reality, its attempts to preserve and bear witness to a world which the bourgeois mentality saw as being in danger of extinction. Spain had to be rediscovered. Literature and drama were thus full of “tipos populares, vistos en Madrid o en las diferentes provincias; gente que no vista a la europea, que habite en cuchitriles; alguna vez, tipos extrasociales o francamente fuera de ley” (Fernández Montesinos 1965, 120). This was a world essentially inhabited by:

[. . .] el torero, el barbero, la criada, la nodriza, el aguador, la lavandera, el alguacil, la gitana, el mendigo, el cochero, el calesero, el cartero, la celestina, la comadre, el sereno, la posadera, la cigarrera, el celador de barrio, los buhoneros, el portero, el ciego; en cierto modo, la doncella de labor.

(120–121)

Nonetheless, not every kind of character, location, or situation was ripe to be used in the theatre. The literary stage of Andalusia thus saw the development of a very particular line of thought regarding what would come to be termed the “género andaluz” (Romero Ferrer 1998). This was an original dramatic form, short in length as González del Castillo bears witness, but which incorporated the new contributions relating to technique and meaning afforded by articulating customs; it is defined by Fernández Montesinos as “narración dramática” (1965, 14), and predominantly depicts scenes and character types which are linked to the south. It

may therefore be established that Andalusian fashion gains a foothold in theatrical tradition through these works, whether comic or melodramatic in tone, which have a decidedly southern edge to them, marked by the areas discovered by Romantic travellers such as Mérimée, Dumas, Scribe, Lord Byron, Washington Irving, Gautier, Davillier and Doré, or Richard Ford; moreover, the particular historical, geographical, linguistic, and social forces that apply in the case of Andalusia see this southern take on the theatre become the cultural paradigm for the whole Iberian Peninsula in this period. Nor, in the theatrical context, should the relevance of the incorporation and development of southern dance be underplayed. The *género andaluz* was thus a syncretic hybrid of the *sainete*, dramatic dance, and the *tonadilla escénica*, which alternated with a show's main performance.

We are thus presented with a repertoire of material from the period 1839–1861, which ranges from the ethnic “cuadro de costumbres gitanas” to the “escena andaluza” or the picturesque “entremés lírico-taurino.” As Caro Baroja (1969) has observed, the vitality of the “pasillo andaluz” came from its grounding in the neo-classical model and later adjustment to the techniques of *literatura de cordel*, anchored during the nineteenth century in stereotypes associated with the most “savage,” and therefore more Romantic, part of the Peninsula. A non-theatrical equivalent to this process may be seen in Estébanez Calderón's *Escenas Andaluzas* (1847).

Examples are easily found in the plays of Tomás Rodríguez Rubí, who also published a collection of poetry, *Poesías Andaluzas* (1841), containing works which had already appeared in the *Seminario Pintoresco Español*, and his two collaborations on Andalusia in *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos*. Relevant works include: *Toros y cañas* (1840); *El contrabandista* (1841), which included music by Basilio Basili; *La simpatía o el cortijo de Cristo* (1842); *La venta de Cárdenas* (1842); or *La feria de Mairena* (1843).

The preference for the Andalusian stage may also be explained in terms of the potential this “Puerta de Oriente” offered for the aesthetic programme of Romanticism, where existing on the periphery was seen as one of a literary character's fundamental qualities. The character types of the gypsy, the outlaw, the bandit, and the *pícaro* all found in Andalusia a setting that was true to life, according to their literary needs, but it also provided them with a set of references and allusions closely tied to aspects of the social reality of the south. Andalusia was a highly visual theatrical space, as well as being a place of significant artistic prestige, outstanding in various areas of graphic design, engraving, and painting.

The stage was filled with crowds, festivals, and dances, which constituted a dramatic motif in themselves. The contexts and spaces chosen by a playwright allowed other fragments of reality to be suggested to the audience, whether visually or aurally. He would make use of situations that were clearly marked by native characteristics, but always focusing on expectation or surprise at what was put on stage. He had a choice of different motifs open to him, such as city or country; and within the city, he might use an inn, a street, or a tobacco factory as the most suitable setting in which to dramatize “everyday” action. Rodríguez Rubí's *La venta de Cárdena* (1842), José Sánchez Albarrán's *La fábrica de tabacos de Sevilla* (1850), or Gutiérrez de Alba's *Un jaleo en Triana* (1861) may stand as examples of this.

The initial *costumbrista* tendency of these works would solidify into a specifically Andalusian rural environment that was markedly agrarian and firmly set against the various changes whose influence on that century was now clearly felt. This may be seen, for example, in Rodríguez Rubí's *La feria de Mairena. Cuadro de costumbres andaluzas* (1857):

Vista del campo de Mairena: varios puestos repartidos convenientemente de fruteros, aguaduchos, buñolerías, etc., etc. Concurrencia de gente de todas clases: algazara que

se confunde con las voces de los que venden y con el ruido de las guitarras, castañuelas y panderos de una fiesta.

(3)

This description reveals to us an obsession for painting an image of the countryside of Andalusia that shows it as suspiciously inward-looking, totally unaffected by conflicts, and featuring a vivid *casticismo*. This image was to be frequently reproduced as the defining contemporary depiction of Andalusia, and at times even the definitive image of what was typically Spanish.

Costumbrismo, ruralism, and regionalism: from the *género chico* to rural drama

Up to the mid-nineteenth century, as far as the theatre is concerned, the Peninsular imagination had focused almost exclusively on Madrid and Andalusia, with other regional realities firmly relegated to a secondary role, including such types as the Galician night watchman, the rustic Aragonese, or the Cantabrian of the *sainete*. However, this situation was to change considerably during the second half of the century. Following the lead of Romantic *costumbrista* publications such as *Los españoles pintados por sí mismos* or the *Seminario Pintoresco Español*, an attempt was made to take the cultural diversity with which Peninsular reality had been drawn (however artificially) and transfer it to the theatre, always bearing in mind the theatrical trends and tastes of the day, although the results were not always successful.

After the initial fervour over Romantic drama had calmed, new directions were sought for serious theatre in Spain. Realism and its aesthetic offshoots and successors, from *costumbrismo* to ruralism, which had already found success in the novel, were also incorporated into the theatre, if with a certain reticence. As was noted by Yxart (1894–1896), realism will have only a small role on stage in a theatrical environment such as the Spanish, which is far from welcoming of this kind of perspective, especially in the declamatory genres.

These circumstances are most easily explained by the fact that these perspectives were being introduced to the dramatic context by way of musical theatre, as part of a debate over the creation of a national opera, as opposed to the Italian and French models. Dramatic realism seems to find its home in the *zarzuela*, thanks to the *casticista* revolutions introduced to the genre by Ramón de la Cruz. This is essentially the case in *zarzuelas* such as Arrieta's *Marina* (1855), later made into an opera in 1871, and Barbieri's *Pan y toros* (1864) (see Cotarelo 1934).

However, the political background of the last third of the nineteenth century was one of instability, as there had already been signs to indicate that the liberal regime would fail as a national project, and nationalist cries were beginning to be heard again from the periphery, giving voice to the Peninsula's other cultural realities, in the Catalan *renaixença*, Galician federalism and *rexionalismo*, the Basque problem, and Aragonese regionalism. In such a context, it was felt necessary to air these anxieties in the public forum offered by the stage, and these years saw the rebirth of the Catalan and Valencian *sainete*, as well as the appearance of Galician *enxebri*, the Basque and regionalist *zarzuela*, *ruralismo escénico*, and, vitally, the *género chico*. These theatrical forms contained an attempt to move away from a unified, monolithic view of Spanish reality, painting it instead as the sum of the various different cultural and linguistic traditions that made up the Iberian Peninsula. In short, they offered a new way of constructing and deconstructing the Peninsular imaginary.

During the last third of the nineteenth century, the Spanish theatre devoted itself to an intensely regionalist mode of theatrical depiction, with a wide array of titles including

especially the abundant *zarzuelas* of this sort, which went hand in hand with the resurgence of poetry in dialect and the regionalist novel. There was a great proliferation of different types of *costumbrismo* – Aragonese, Valencian, Murcian, Galician, Manchego, Catalan, and Andalusian – which all coincided with an important moment of incipient success for regional economies, especially on the periphery, as well as with a vindication of the emerging provincial middle classes keen to identify with their regions' most distinguishing traditions (Mainer 1972).

This new context brings us two further theatrical phenomena of quite a different ilk, but which combine to produce an image of the Peninsula grounded in a sense of what makes it different. The first of these is the *género chico*, a type of play-writing that was born to support the *teatro por horas* (Romero Ferrer 1993, 2000; Versteeg 2000), which could be seen on the Madrid stage from 1870. It was comprised of short, one-act pieces, with or without music, which were performed continuously with separate admission to each play. The objective was to make the theatre a less expensive place to go, thus opening it up to other sections of society whose means were more restricted (Membrez 1987).

One of the most interesting aspects of this phenomenon is precisely its kinship with Romantic *costumbrismo*. Indeed, we may even talk of a clear line of literary progression, which is already evident from the account of contemporary theatre. Here we find dramatic works where the story is little more than a pretext linking a series of scenes where certain character types are placed with some precision against an easily recognizable backdrop, representing the place with which they are indelibly associated. This is therefore a kind of theatre that is based on a reasonably short series of portraits of customs, as may be explicitly seen in titles such as Tomás Luceño's *sainete* – without music – *Cuadros al fresco* (1870), where the action takes place “en Madrid: época, la actual” (Romero Ferrer 2005, 268), and which stages a procession of the characters of “la viuda, la cuca, la verdulera, la criada, el cesante, el jornalero, el cafetero, el barbero, el ciego, el inválido, el agente de policía, el sereno, el jugador: gente del pueblo” (268). The approach taken to scenes and character types in this articulation of customs thus coincides with the perspectives offered by the modern *sainete*.

Within this essential schema, *género chico* works then focus on the same sections of “popular Spain” – the peripheral districts of Madrid or the Peninsula's rural environments – which had seemed to be the site of what was typically and particularly Spanish, the home of its most essential qualities. Into this aesthetic framework were then incorporated different landscapes, modes of dress, songs, dances, customs, and languages; it included music and rhythms that were drawn from popular or folkloric material; and drew the collaboration of set designers such as Augusto Ferri, Giorgio Busato, Bernardo Bonardi, Luis Muriel, and Amalio Fernández.

As had been the case in the eighteenth century, one of the defining geographical locations was Madrid, following the *casticista* fashions which gripped Spanish society at the end of that century. This may be seen in lyrical *sainetes* such as Ricardo de la Vega's *La verbena de la Paloma* (1894), José López Silva and Carlos Fernández Shaw's *La Revoltosa* (1897), or Miguel Ramos Carrión's sketch *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*. All of these feature a succession of various “genuine” images and character types from popular life – scenes which in *La Revoltosa* are confined to a “patio de una casa de vecindad” (189), in *La verbena de la Paloma* to “una calle” (415), and in *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente* to the “jardines de Recoletos” (370).

This dramatic realization of “los españoles pintados por sí mismos” thus brought into the world of the theatre the new realist-naturalist artistic model that implied considering “la sociedad como modelo de arte” (Yxart 1894, 82), which represented a tremendous innovation over the stagnant state of the rest of contemporary theatre. This was a new dramatic literature which

allowed the interaction of Spanish theatrical tradition and the new realist model, which within the realm of literature was supposed simply to extract “[lo] más auténtico y lo más real de la vida misma” (82).

This preoccupation with an objective reflection of reality implied an obsession with the accumulation of facts, though this always had to be tempered in order that it complement the overall premise of society being an artistic model whose ultimate aim was to portray the popular way of life, a clear nod to the *sainete* tradition of the second half of the eighteenth century. When Luceño wrote *¿Cuántas, calentitas, cuántas?*, he would add the subtitle “continuación de *Las Castañeras picadas* de don Ramón de la Cruz,” thus providing clear testimony of its artistic heritage. So from the *majo* of *Manolo* comes Julián in *La verbena de la Paloma*; from the *maja*, *La Revoltosa*’s Mari Pepa; from the *petimetra*, the affected *señorita* of *Agua, azucarillos y aguardiente*; from the old *currutaco*, Don Hilarión’s *viejo verde* – though things were moving in the direction of the grotesque tragedy of Arniches, or even Valle-Inclán’s *esperpento*.

Nonetheless, the *género chico* was also marked by the cultural influence of the periphery, and by a strong *casticismo*. The world of the Valencian orchard, the lands of Aragon, the saffron fields of La Mancha, the coastal setting of Cantabria, or a town in Guipúzcoa, together with the olive groves and farms of Andalusia, were all transformed into honoured stage settings full of literary prestige and dramatic force, both in the comic mode supported by previous tradition, and in its more melodramatic facet. The latter was grounded in the greater verisimilitude which the drama could exploit in the withdrawn, rustic world of the countryman, which was transferred to the painted sets in minute detail. Relevant here for the southern context are Burgos’s *El mundo comedia es o El baile de Luis Alonso* (1896), a comic work set in the working-class Cádiz district of La Viña, or Julián Romea’s *La Tempranica* (1900), a melodrama set in the plain of Granada. Miguel Echegaray’s comic *zarzuela*, *Gigantes y cabezudos* (1898), is a useful example of Aragonese realism; the dramatic *zarzuela* by García Álvarez y Paso, *La alegría de la huerta* (1900), represents the orchards of Murcia, as Arniches’s *María de los Ángeles* (1900) does the coast of Santander; Fernández Shaw’s *El tirador de palomas* (1902) may stand as an example for Peninsular Levante, as Burgos and González del Castillo’s *A fuerza de puños* (1912) does for Guipúzcoa.

The landscapes of these different Peninsular regions would then have to be given in great detail, as may be seen in *La alegría de la huerta*:

La escena representa un pedazo de la huerta de Murcia. La vegetación llega hasta el pie de la sierra elevada y escabrosa que se verá al foro. Campos de maíz, grupos de higueras chumbas, moreras, cipreses, palmeras, etc., etc. A lo lejos vence también casetas blancas y barracas de los huertanos. Dividen el suelo varias sendas; por el centro de la escena y cerca del foro cruza una acequia, que se pasa por un puentecillo de tablas. A la izquierda del espectador y a todo foro, una cuesta o rampa que figura la que baja al puente de tablas.

(Valencia 1962, 527)

Or again, in *La tempranica*:

Una explanada en la sierra cercana a Granada. A la izquierda, en segundo término, fachada de un cortijo y casa de cazadores, en cuyo centro está la puerta de entrada. Continúa formando escuadra con la dicha fachada con otro cuerpo de edificio que llega hasta el proscenio. Este trasto tiene una ventana a una altura que no puede ser

dominada sino subiéndose en el banco de fábrica que hay debajo adosado al muro. Otros bancos del mismo género a los lados de la puerta. Foro derecha, camino estrecho, por el que llega a la casa. Rocas y maleza al fondo. Es de noche. Se percibe el resplandor de la luna, que se pone poco a poco, haciéndose noche oscura.

(557)

As a final example of this tendency may stand Manuel de Falla's *La vida breve* (1913), and his "gitanería en un acto" *El amor brujo* (1915), written for Pastora Imperio and drawing on texts by Fernández Shaw and Martínez Sierra, respectively, where many elements of flamenco were also included.

In sum, this all came together to form a dramatic frieze which revealed a hidden and distinctive Spain, grounded in a regionalist ruralism which acted as a contrast to the genre's excessive *madrileñismo*, although rooted in the same traditional, folkloric background. It therefore offered a picture of Spain as a multicultural puzzle, with a great artistic depth in the first third of the twentieth century.

The second theatrical phenomenon which reflects Peninsular regionalism is rural drama (Paco 1971–1972). Under the influence of naturalism, the last decade of the eighteenth century saw the rise of a type of drama which also bears the strong imprint of regionalist *costumbrismo*, as well as that of Golden Age peasant drama such as *Fuenteovejuna* and *El alcalde de Zalamea*, and the rustic plays of Bretón de los Herreros (*A Madrid me vuelvo*, or *El pelo de la dehesa*).

However, beyond the extreme presentation of human passions, and the conflicts over an outmoded conception of honour very much modelled on Baroque predecessors, rural drama was always to feature a regional setting, whether that belonged to peasants or simply to the popular classes.

This was a kind of theatre conceived by and for the bourgeoisie, as opposed to the *género chico*, whose wider audience also included the lower classes. As a result of this bourgeois perspective, the vision offered of the rural environment often plays on an idealized view of it as a pure world of archetypal models of conduct, with rudimentary ethics and unmodified emotions, in stark contrast to the artificiality and deceptive appearances that typified the environment of the city. This was a *topos* present in the literary image of rural society throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was, therefore, a bourgeois vision of Spanish peasantry, reflecting values the middle classes could themselves admire, but only through the lens of an artistic contemplation of their identity.

This new literary means of lending dignity to the people, who now acquired all the honour of a tragic hero rather than maintaining their more usual comic manifestations, considered it important to a work's artistic integrity that the stage be transformed into a depiction of real life. One of its defining characteristics was therefore the construction of characters with distinguishing dialectical marks, which included an abundance of common expressions and popular sayings, in a constant attempt to convey the linguistic reality of the people depicted, as if they were a direct echo of real life. The same intentions lay behind the veristic staging which aimed to put the Iberian Peninsula on stage, by means of its different regional realities.

This is what we find in the naturalist regionalism of Ángel Guimerá, which makes the jump from neo-Romantic drama to *costumbrista* theatre with titles clearly linked to the Catalan *renaixença*, such as *Maria Rosa* (1894), *La festa del blat* (1896), or *Terra baixa* (1897) – a work which met with great success, and quickly became a classic of the Catalan repertoire. It is a strongly realist drama, where the weight of the setting and the hotly passionate characters, whose emotions were grounded in the love-honour code, are counterbalanced by the work's

psychological study of them, and its detailed analysis of their external appearance and their language. This all takes place in a rural context that forms a perfect background for conflicts to be played out, especially the protagonists' internal conflicts. In all these examples, Catalan regionalism also seems to see rural drama as a useful way of making itself heard, which must also be related to emerging ideologies that sought to reclaim the Catalan nation and its cultural and linguistic identity.

However, this Spain of the people and the countryside also made itself felt in other parts of the Peninsula, as may be seen in the plays of Feliú y Codina. His successful *La Dolores* (1892) was set in the Aragonese context of Catalayud, while *María del Carmen* shows us the Murcian orchard, and *Miel de la Alcarria* (1895) takes place in austere Castile, as will Benavente's plays *Señora ama* (1908), "en un pueblo de Castilla la Nueva" (1991, 52), and *La malquerida* (1913). Many other works were also to focus on the Peninsula's southern lands, as was the case in Codina's *La real moza* (1897). Indeed, the south was to find in rural drama yet another way to give expression to its own peculiar distinguishing characteristics.

It should therefore come as no surprise that Andalusia returns once again to the stage, although lacking its previous relaxed image, in different dramatic registers. This may be seen, for example, in *Malvaloca* (1912), by the Álvarez Quintano brothers, which features a suffocating Andalusian world full of prejudices relating to the protagonist's honour and the lover's untrammelled passion. Moreover, in this southern environment we will also find writers of other ideological persuasions, such as López Pinillos "Pármeno," as well as a considerable number of texts that focus on the social complexities of the world of the Andalusian labourer, and offer a harsh, coarsely realistic picture of that environment, for the sake of a certain kind of regenerationist discourse. We may see this in works such as *El Pantano* (1913), *Esclavitud* (1918), or the later works *La red* (1921) and *La tierra* (1921), to say nothing of the plays by Lorca in which this line of inquiry finds its culmination: *Bodas de sangre* (1935), and his "drama de las mujeres en los pueblos de España," *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936).

In one form, this great abundance of dramatic riches represented by the *género chico* and rural drama may be said to reach its peak in the early decades of the twentieth century with Sorolla's series of fourteen murals for the Hispanic Society of America, entitled *Las regiones de España* (1913–1919), which depicted the most characteristic scenes, landscapes, and customs of the different regions of Spain and Portugal. They represented two different ways of producing and understanding theatre which, whether consciously or not, were to make it their aim to project a multifaceted image of what was typical of the Peninsula, while also keeping in mind the tensions and conflicts between centre and periphery which mark the political and cultural rhythms of turn-of-the-century Spain, as well as incorporating the strong *costumbrista* tradition seen in earlier theatre. Along with other artistic and literary movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this rich seam of theatrical production was mined in order to advance the construction of national, regional, and provincial imaginaries that teemed with contradictions and remained in a state of permanent revision.

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