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Historical and Artistic Self-Consciousness in Carballido's *José Guadalupe (las glorias de Posada)*

In an attempt to provide a working definition of the popular term "metatheatre," Susan Wittig posits that "*all* artistic drama [as opposed to popular drama] is metatheatre, drama cast in a self-conscious medium" (453).[1] In addition to self-consciousness, or the drama's own awareness of itself as art, she lists deliberate theatricality as a basic characteristic of metatheatre. The inward turn of this form of theatre calls the audience's attention to the work's internal creative process rather than to any social reality that may exist outside the play. In short, as critic Silvio Gaggi explains, self-referential art "calls attention to its own construction and makes itself as art a part of the content of the work" (45). A recent Mexican play, *José Guadalupe (las glorias de Posada)*, written by Emilio Carballido in 1976, meets this definition of metatheatre in both structure and theme.[2] The dramatist employs a series of plays-within-a-play as well as certain non-illusory devices to highlight the play's intrinsic theatricality. Furthermore, he emphasizes the work's metatheatrical structure and self-referential nature by foregrounding the concept of artistic creativity, and more specifically, the role of art in the interpretation and preservation of history. While paying tribute to one of Mexico's greatest yet least-known artists, Carballido underscores the similar way in which art and theatre revive, re-create, and transmit past history to the public.

Over the past four decades, Mexico's most prolific dramatist has produced a multitude of plays that traverse the gamut of dramatic styles, from macabre fantasy to strict provincial realism, from allegorical farce to works of explicit social protest. While the content of his plays varies almost as much as the form, Carballido has displayed over the years a steady interest in the history of his own country, particularly in the years of and surrounding the regime of Porfirio Díaz. In *Homenaje a Hidalgo*,

which premiered in 1960 and later in an extended version in 1966, Carballido pays a spectacular tribute to the founder of the Mexican Independence movement. Three years later, he extends similar homage to Benito Juárez, first Indian president and father of the Reforma, in his epic *Almanaque de Juárez* (1969). More recently, he again returned to the 19th-century in *Tiempo de ladrones. La historia de Chucho el Roto* (1984), a highly acclaimed re-creation of the now legendary bandit-hero Chucho el Roto. Among these historically-based dramas, *José Guadalupe (las glorias de Posada)* stands out as the most theatrically self-conscious, the most challenging for the potential director and the most panoramic in its sweeping view of pre-revolutionary Mexico. Rather than focus on any one historical personage, the dramatist captures the spirit of an entire nation at a tumultuous moment of upheaval and transition. In music-hall fashion, the author presents a series of sketches which together communicate the socio-political situation, customs and prevailing mood of turn-of-the-century Mexico. The source of the title and of Carballido's dramatic inspiration is José Guadalupe Posada (1952–1913), known as "el ilustrador de la vida mexicana," a popular engraver and lithographer who captured and recorded in his illustrations that particular epoch. Large projections of Posada's illustrations serve throughout the revue as a visual backdrop to the dramatic action as well as a tribute to the artist's work. The historical reality that Posada re-created in his increasingly famous rough sketches is even further stylized in Carballido's dramatic revue, so that the audience is actually twice removed from the initial reality. In other words, art refers back to art, which only then refers to an extratextual, historical reality. Carballido's unusual combination of history and art conveys not only their very interdependence but also his own personal concern with the role art plays in preserving and relaying our history.

The play's metatheatrical structure derives in great measure from Carballido's adaptation of Brechtian structure and distancing techniques, both of which may also be appreciated to varying degrees in his other historical pieces. Aside from their ultimate socio-political objectives, Epic, or Brechtian, works are a perfect example of metatheatre in the sense that they destroy any illusion of reality by making a conscious effort to expose their own theatricality. This purposeful destruction of illusion is commonly achieved through the juxtaposition of incongruous elements on stage, sudden transitions between contrasting episodes and the use of non-realistic lighting and setting. Carballido further increases the play's theatricality and simultaneously reduces any illusion of reality by relying heavily on farce, opera, dance and caricature—all artistic forms that stylize the work's historical base. As a result, the spectator is distanced from the work and obliged to regard each episode as a dramatized image of real life, an

image deliberately defamiliarized by means of non-realistic acting styles and staging techniques.

Whereas Brecht used similar devices to make the audience aware of extratextual social and political imbalances, Carballido draws on them to emphasize the revue's awareness of itself as an artistic entity. Unlike other Carballido plays with a distinctly Brechtian flavor—*¡Silencio, pollos pelones, ya les van a echar su maíz!, Un pequeño día de ira* and *Almanaque de Juárez—José Guadalupe* does not contain any explicit socio-political criticism or objectives.[3] The dramatist appears to be more concerned here with the aesthetic value of theatre as used in the communication and preservation of history, withholding any personal judgment he may have regarding that history and its impact on present-day Mexico.

Although Carballido subtitles the play "una revista," its structure is very much like Brecht's idea of *montage*, wherein "the various episodes of a play create a collective effect by accumulation but can be enjoyed separately as well" (Alter, 130). *José Guadalupe* consists of a series of sketches, which are experienced as independent events yet governed and linked by the thematic relationship between art and history. A program, included in the text and presumably to be distributed among the spectators, prepares the reader or audience for a dramatic potpourri:

PROGRAMA

1. Obertura
2. José Guadalupe (1)
3. La rosa de Hong Kong (rumba)
4. Los dos catrines (juguete cómico)
5. El chalequero
6. Las catástrofes
7. José Guadalupe (2)
8. Los 41
9. Soñar (melodrama)
10. El obelisco de Luxor (romanza)
11. La Bejarano
12. Caperucita Roja (cuento)
13. Las lavanderas
14. José Guadalupe (3)
15. Calaveras

Accordingly, Carballido presents a series a vignettes, or plays-within-a-play, each radically different from the next in both content and style. As Wittig explains, the play-within-a-play, the most common device of metatheatre, signals to the audience the theatricality of the entire work:

> The reduction of the dramatic situation to a framed, refracted miniature of itself calls the audience's attention immediately to the stage, the *medium* of the dramatic presentation; to the theatricality, rather than to the reality of the play, . . . to the artifice of life. (451)

This statement echoes and clarifies Lionel Abel's oft-quoted definition of metatheatre as "theatre pieces about life seen as already theatricalized"

(60). In other words, metatheatre makes no attempt to create the illusion of reality, but rather treats life as if it were already theatricalized. This is definitely true in the case of *José Guadalupe*, wherein Carballido develops his own dramatized images from those which Posada had already stylized in his illustrations. These theatricalized images are then strung together to form a variety show of musical, dramatic and narrative scenes.

While the various sketches range widely in topic, style and effect, the general presence of José Guadalupe Posada provides the play's structural and thematic unity through his dual function as both off-stage historical personage—present only in his artwork—and on-stage character. While Posada's 19th-century drawings serve as a constant visual background to Carballido's dramatic sketches, Posada, the on-stage artist, unifies the revue through three appearances on stage in which he expounds on the nature and function of art. A brief description of the twelve non-Posada scenes conveys the dramatic diversity and metatheatrical nature of the work and suggests that withouth the presence of Posada as both historical artist and on-stage character the play would be highly fragmented and most probably incomprehensible.

The first such scene, "La rosa de Hong Kong (rumba)," has a disorienting effect on the audience because of its brevity and combination of disparate elements. Three kimono-clad women appear abruptly, sing a vulgar rumba and just as suddenly abandon the stage. The only apparent justification for this bizarre scene is the enlarged Posada illustration of Oriental women projected in the background. While the exotic, stylized nature of the costumes and song contrasts sharply with the stark realism of the previous scene—wherein Posada humbly introduces himself—, the mere presence of one of his illustrations makes "La rosa de Hong Kong" an integral part of the whole. Indeed, the fusion of contrasting elements characterizes the entire revue. In this particular segment, for instance, the audience, led by the costumes and the projected illustration to expect an Oriental song, is disoriented by the sound of a popular, slightly obscene rumba:

> Soy flor de loto,
> flor de pecado;
> prueba la vida,
> prueba mis labios;
> yo no respondo
> si sale caro.
> [...]
> Ay, papacito,
> lo digo en serio. (3)

Although each scene is totally unrelated to the next, the transitions between sketches are remarkably rapid and effective. Without interrupting

the action on stage, the dramatist indicates scenic shifts through abrupt changes in illustration, lighting and music. "La rosa de Hong Kong" leads directly into "Los dos catrines," for example, when a waltz and a print of the Alameda promenade replace the rumba and illustration of the Oriental girls. "Los dos catrines" differs radically from the preceding scene in style as well as content. After Posada's narrative introductory monologue and the musicality of the "Obertura" and "La rosa de Hong Kong," Carballido finally shifts here into the dramatic mode with what he labels a "juguete cómico." To prevent any possible illusion of reality, the dramatist prefaces the scene with a highly stylized "cuadro plástico":

> Recortado en triplay formando un marco como las portadas de Posada, y con la firma y todo de Vanegas Arroyo, los personajes hacen cuadro plástico. El título dice: "Los dos catrines. Juguete cómico." (8)

Carballido uses this living portrait not only to distance his audience by making the scene's non-relaistic intent evident from the start, but also to give credit to Antonio Vanegas Arroyo, editor and Posada's long-time employer. The play itself portrays the comic efforts of two dandies to win the love of the young and silly Hipsipila. The combination of slapstick action and exaggerated character types offers a very entertaining scene while still retaining the stylized atmosphere established by the "cuadro plástico." This farcical piece functions in the revue not only as a humorous reflection on the customs of 19th-century Mexico but also as a metatheatrical recreation of the *sainete*, a popular dramatic style of that period.

A sudden change in lighting shifts the audience from the humorous to the shockingly macabre in "El Chalequero." As the scene opens, El Chalequero, an infamous rapist and throat-slasher of the day, prepares to leave his latest victim. His monologue is characterized throughout by a mixture of poetic and brutal images: "Ni gritó: gorgotea nomás. Como el arroyo, o el ojo de agua" (10). A tremendous sense of brutality is created through the six different illustrations of slain women that appear at intervals during the scene. El Chalequero's dark form, silhouetted against the backstage lights, enhances the mythic overtones of his monologue. He describes the sexual act, for instance, as the entrance into a dark earthen well: "...Como el fondo de un pozo... Un lodo aquí, hasta las ingles... Un lodo espeso, calientito..." (9). While the documentary aspect of the prints particularizes El Chalequero, the mythic thread of his monologue suggests universality. Once again, Carballido creates distance between the stage and his audience with this disturbing mixture of poetry and horror, myth and history.

As El Chalequero retreats into the darkness, pandemonium breaks loose on the stage with the opening of scene 6, "Las catástrofes":

> De golpe, entran corriendo y gritando todos, en ropa de dormir o en ropa interior de la época. Dos caen y empiezan a cantar un *alabado*.

Mientras: se despliegan por todos lados los grabados catastróficos [...].
Percusiones frecuentes.
Hablan todos. (10)

Carballido dramatizes here the turn of the century, the age of Naturalism, during which man believed himself to be the helpless victim of natural forces. Ten large illustrations of various catastrophic events—in which victims flee from flood, fire, earthquake and comets—portray their fear of Nature's/God's wrath. Beneath the illustrations, the characters gather to pray and lament their helplessness. Yet when one of them miraculously produces a bottle of whiskey from his pocket, the others promptly abandon their *alabados* in favor of a drink, while a young girl in the group sings an obscene song. As in the preceding scenes, Carballido produces a mixed, alienating reaction in his audience by showing the victims to be at once worthy of compassion and morally corrupt.

After the second appearance of José Guadalupe, the variety show continues with a scene portraying "Los 41," a notorious group of transvestites and homosexuals who were arrested during a private party. Three prints depicting their detention and subsequent deportation to the Yucatán accompany the dialogue, which is itself a blend of music, song and prose. Once again, the audience finds itself torn between pity and mirth as the actors alternately complain about their humiliating persecution and boast of the beautiful dresses they wore to the ill-fated party:

Mi traje tan precioso,
llegado de París,
y el día que lo estrenaba
¡me pasa este desliz!
[...]
Iremos con los yaquis,
con otros despojados,
y con los ofendidos
y con los humillados.

Todo porque en la fiesta
me puse este vestido.
Yo ya me lo pensaba:
mejor no haber venido. (16–17)

Scene 9, "Soñar (melodrama)," is one of the few in this series of plays-within-a-play that contain an obvious thematic development. In this short piece, the dramatist gives a melodramatic treatment to the eternal opposition between dream and reality as an archbishop effectively prevents Angélica, a beautiful but lower-class orphan, from marrying his illegitimate son, Gabriel. After Angélica makes a lengthy confession of their love, the

priest, no longer able to control his own lust, kisses her brutally on the mouth. The girl's escape from this horrible reality is depicted by two Posada prints of "La joven suicida," which show her leaping from the cathedral tower. Following the projection of these two images, Posada's portrait of Emile Zola appears with an engraved quotation from *Le Rêve*:

> Salía ella del sueño para entrar en la realidad. Aquel pórtico de luz cruda se abría sobre el mundo que ignoraba. (22)

The priest and Angélica are both forced by cruel revelations of the real world to abandon their religious dreams, his of saintliness and hers of a visitation from the Archangel Gabriel. Although the theme of dream and reality is well-developed, the melodramatic nature of the piece and non-realistic setting (the only stagecraft is a projected illustration of an altar) keep the scene in line with the non-illusory character of the other episodes.

The tenth segment, "El obelisco de Luxor," is similar to "La rosa de Hong Kong" in the sense that both are short pieces of musical verse and that neither bears any obvious relation to Mexican reality. A young man plays an Oriental tune on the piano while a young woman sings of the Luxor obelisk. Aside from the four Posada lithographs of Middle-Eastern subjects that appear in the background, the scene shows no connection with those that precede or follow it. The content of the poem itself, however, reflects the revue's underlying concern with history:

> Supo de guerras y de glorias,
> supo de historia, supo de amor,
> y es más eterno que la historia
> el obelisco de Luxor. (23)

A visual symbol of eternity, the obelisk has witnessed and withstood all forms of disaster and all acts of mankind. Yet, unlike history, the obelisk cannot be transformed, erased or forgotten by man.

Another jolting transition occurs when "La Bejarano," a scene as cruel and horrifying as "El Chalequero," follows directly upon the pleasant music and song of "El obelisco de Luxor." A famous criminal of the day, La Bejarano's name became synonymous with child abuse. While her monologue does not share the mythic qualities of El Chalequero's, the two scenes are quite alike in form and technique. The same backstage lighting is used to create a somber, silhouette effect as La Bejarano, standing over her abused daughter, delivers a lengthy monologue. Posada's illustrations of the famous crimes are not projected in either "El Chalequero" or "La Bejarano" until the middle or end of the scene, thereby forcing the audience to focus its attention on the monologue. Although La Bejarano explains that the beatings are to prevent her daughter from becoming a whore like herself, the audience detects in her speech and actions a desperate plea for respect and control:

> [...] Es necesario que alguien nos respete. ¡Es necesario tener algún poder, sobre alguien! Es necesario que alguien nos tema. Es necesario, alguna vez, sentir, sentir algo, en medio de este borrón eterno, de esta magulladora eterna, sentir intensamente, sentir.... (24)

While horrified by La Bejarano's unrelenting cruelty, the audience at the same time comprehends her irreversible fate of hunger, misery and humiliation in an equally brutal society.

With the opening of scene 12, "Caperucita Roja (cuento)," the audience shifts again from brutal reality to playful fantasy. Occupying nearly a quarter of the entire script, this play-within-a-play dramatizes and recreates the popular story of Little Red Riding Hood. In the style of "Los dos catrines," the dramatist deliberately gives the piece a stylized appearance by having the actors form a "cuadro plástico" in front of a cover illustration bearing the title and the editor's name. An overture precedes the action and establishes the operatic nature of the dramatization. All but the shortest lines are sung by the actors, who play multiple roles, using masks and disguises for quick character changes. An opening aria sung by Porfirio Díaz sets the satirical tone of the sketch:

> Entra Porfirio Díaz, muy solemne. Es el presidente de la República y se le nota.
> P.D.: Sepan, ciudadanos
> de este país. Sepan, personas.
> Oigan con atención y sepan.
> Oigan.
> La Presidencia de la República informa
> que una última acción de caza
> terminó con todos los lobos
> que durante tanto tiempo infestaban
> los bosques frondosos de nuestra República.
> La Presidencia de la República informa
> que han sido exterminados los lobos.
> Leñadores y niños ya pueden ir al bosque.
> La Presidencia informa:
> se acabaron los lobos. (25)

The subsequent story of Caperucita Roja and the wolf refutes, of course, Díaz's confident and reassuring speech. Besides the inclusion of the dictator, Carballido makes other comical variations in the well-known story: the grandmother is a nasty *suegra* who has been exiled to the forest by a possessive daughter-in-law; Caperucita herself is a rebellious teenager, more interested in sex and hallucinatory mushrooms than in a visit to grandmother's house; finally, the wolf hunters (Díaz's men) discover that the sleeping old woman is really a wolf only when they try to steal her belongings, including her fur coat. Aside from its operatic style, the episode shares many of the farcical and non-illusory features of "Los dos ca-

trines": slapstick humor, exaggeration of character traits and frenzied physical action, all of which allow the audience to laugh and enjoy from a safe distance.

Scene 13, "Las lavanderas," opens with a discussion among three women washing clothes in the river and ends with a celebration of the Mexican Revolution, which was the last major topic of Posada's art before his death in 1913. As the three *lavanderas* comment on the newborn Revolution, a young woman dressed as a soldier enters dancing dreamily to a festive polka and establishes herself as a human symbol of the struggle against oppression:

> LA QUE BAILABA: Yo soy el trueno que rueda por las montañas y va comunicándose como temblor de tierra; soy el cometa que anuncia cataclismos: trenes dinamitados, puentes hundidos, fuegos, incendios. (Las otras tres sacan ropa de sus cestas, se visten ahora de soldaderas. Las otras tres bailan oníricamenta ahora, mientras ésta habla).
> LA QUE BAILABA: Soy el alud, el torrente de rocas que barre todo. Soy una fuerza natural, soy el fermento de las catástrofes largamente guardado en el corazón de los hombres. (36)

The four female soldiers communicate, through images of nature's violence and their coordinated dance, the uniting of the *pueblo* against the forces of tyranny and injustice. At the end of the piece, the remaining actors enter on stage to join the Revolution, which now consists of a realistic polka and boastful *corridos* in which the actors glorify great revolutionary leaders like Villa and Carranza. Thus, in one short scene, Carballido is able to depict the birth and spread of the Revolution and at the same time the end of an era in Mexican history.

Following a final monologue by Posada, the revue ends with a skit entitled "Calaveras," named after the artist's most well-known series of illustrations. Justino Fernández describes these skeletal sketches as a representation of Posada'ś "vision and interpretation of the other world, of a fantastic world beyond that embodies, transformed and transfigured, this world of daily life and history" (142). The dream-like atmosphere of "Las lavanderas" resumes when the actors, all wearing skull masks of characters whom they have portrayed throughout the revue, dance dreamily to a festive, tropical tune. As the music becomes more lively, Posada, now also wearing a skull mask, joins in the dance and in the recital of "versos de calavera." When he and the others finally exit, all that remains on stage is a printing press, which suddenly sends Posada prints flying all over the stage as the final curtain falls.

The printing press itself functions not only as a piece of on-stage machinery, but also as a concrete symbol of artistic productivity. Occupying a central position on stage, the machine is always visible to the audience, and the rhythmic sound it produces while printing copies of

Posada's illustrations is audible throughout the play. When Posada himself is not physically present, the constant activity of the press helps to remind the audience of the artist's general presence behind the revue, while the on-stage production of art reinforces the underlying theme of artistic creativity.

This particular theme is expressed not only through the presence of the press and the projected prints, but also through the repeated appearance of Posada, who, in his three monologues, conveys his philosophy on the nature and purpose of art. In doing so, he unites thematically the rest of the revue, which is itself a product of his and Carballido's combined artistic inspiration. In his first appearance, Posada establishes his own creative capacities. A musical overture accompanies the rhythmic sound of the press as the artist produces copies of his illustrations. Suddenly, a group of characters springs from behind the press as if newly created by the illustrator's hand:

> Un desfile de personajes brota de detrás de la imprenta; giran en torno a ella y se transforman en otros: todos, conforme a los grabados del artista. Podrán ser unos en blanco y negro, otros en color. (1)

This opening action at once establishes the image of Posada as a creator of characters, both historical and fictitious, as well as his artistic license to transform reality.

In a lengthy description of his work, Posada humbly presents himself as an artist of the *pueblo*, as one who sees his duty as that of providing the people with an easily understood interpretation of their daily reality:

> Hago la Realidad y la pongo en las manos del pueblo, contradictoria como es, múltiple como es; pues nada más el Arte puede tratar de todo: de la infinita gama, de los extremos intocables e idénticos, de los muertos, de los vivos, de la trivialidad cotidiana, de lo que miro como visión dentro de mis ojos, de lo que miro fuera, de profecías, delirios, magias y tradiciones, de lo que las generaciones heredan; de las noticias ultramarinas. De los rebeldes. De la lucha de hoy. De lo que mira y juzga el pueblo. Porque el pueblo nos juzga. Y en mi trabajo y en mi vida, soy un artista. Y soy el Pueblo. (2)

As an artistic re-creator of the reality that surrounds him, Posada is reminiscent of La Intermediaria of Carballido's *Yo también hablo de la rosa*, who likewise describes her role as that of an artistic medium for the expression of daily reality:

> Todos los días llegan noticias. Toman todas las formas: suenan, relampaguean, se hacen explícitas o pueriles, se entrelazan,germinan. Llegan noticias, las recibo, las comunico, las asimilo, las contemplo. (94)

La Intermediaria, through her poetic interpretation of a train derailment, and Posada, through his re-creation of 19th-century Mexican reality, both

serve as creative media, by means of which daily reality takes on new forms and perspectives. Posada himself is consciously aware of his role as a creative artist, as one who creates a new reality on the basis of familiar images:

> También hago retratos: de la gente que veo del diario por las calles, de personajes de la política y de la Historia. También hago... cuentos, leyendas, fantasías. Crímenes, chascarrillos. Ilustraciones para versos y para letras de canciones, para noticias que nos llegan de aquí y del extranjero. Hago la Realidad en imágenes y eso es, a fin de cuentas, un trabajo de artista. (2)

During this introduction, the spectator, the direct recipient of Posada's monologue, adopts the role of the *pueblo*, the recipient of Posada's artwork. The audience's new identity becomes more explicit when the artist's newly-created characters reappear on stage and distribute among the spectators copies of his prints. As a result of this actor-audience contact, the latter necessarily becomes more directly involved in the revue. This involvement is, nevertheless, more intellectual in nature, any possible emotional participation having been precluded by the previously mentioned distancing techniques.

During his second appearance, in scene 7, Posada speaks in more detail about the art of engraving and lithography. The audience is suddenly no longer just the general *pueblo* but rather a group of small children watching him work through the shop window:

> [...] muchos niños vienen a curiosear por los vidrios. [...] Se nota que les gusta lo que hago, aparte de la curiosidad. Me pongo luego a dar explicaciones en voz alta, para que me oigan ellos, ya que ellos no preguntan, me oigan y sepan como se hace esto. Trabajo en plomo y en zinc. También uso a veces el cobre [...]. (14)

Following an explanation of the materials and instruments with which he works, Posada confesses that of his many young observers he is particularly fond of three—Gerardo Murillo, José Clemente Orozco, and Diego Rivera—all of whom, inspired by their first master, went on to create their own artistic monuments.

Posada's third and final monologue occurs during old age, at the end of his artistic cycle. The passage of time is evident in the old artist's forgetting of his own work, his more contemplative attitude and his anticipation of death. Although he speaks of death as something that man must accept as a natural occurrence, he nonetheless hopes that somehow he will live on in the minds of the people. This discussion of death and eternal memory leads naturally into the "calavera" scene, in which Posada dons a skull mask and joins the other skeletal figures in a ritualistic dance of death. In his own "verso de calavera," Posada describes himself as a monument of art and poetry:

Tuve la mirada abierta
a todo cuanto veía,
mis ojos fueron la puerta
por donde el mundo venía,
mi mano con línea experta
en el papel imprimía
la infinita realidad:
fue toda mi propiedad.
Mi recuerdo dejo al viento.
Mi nombre es un monumento
de papeles y poesía. (39)

Posada's memory is indeed present throughout the play in many different forms: the projected illustrations, the printing press and distributed copies of his prints, and finally, the appearances made by the fictionalized artist himself. The whole revue, in fact, could be easily summed up as a dramatic dedication to Posada's memory, an effort on the part of Carballido to rescue Posada from oblivion.[4]

But *José Guadalupe* is more than just a commemoration of Posada's work and 19th-century Mexico. It is a play about art in general and in its many forms, among them the theatre. The play's own self-consciousnes as art is evident on one level in the artwork of Posada and on another in the dramaturgy of Carballido. Both artists are plainly aware of their role in providing the *pueblo*-audience fresh new images of reality. With the help of his engraving tools, Posada was able to re-create reality and render it easily comprehensible to all. Carballido does the same, only with theatrical tools. Through the use of such non-realistic forms as farce, opera and dance, and through special visual effects, Carballido presents an even more stylized version of the same reality that Posada re-created in his illustrations. Both Posada and Carballido, in making the real world fascinatingly new and poetic, have succeeded in preserving their nation's history by transforming it into a lasting and tangible art.

While the presence of Posada—in the illustrations, the printing press, and the on-stage character—serves to express the play's thematic self-consciousness, the use of the Epic form produces its theatricality, its structural self-consciousness as art. The idea of the *revista* and its division into numerous plays-within-a-play emphasize the metatheatrical nature of *José Guadalupe*, its overt effort to dramatize life. The lack of traditional plot and suspense, combined with certain distancing techniques characteristic of Brechtian theatre, produces an emotional disorientation and detachment in the audience, whose attention is drawn instead to the play's metatheatrical process, which begins with images of Mexican reality and ends with a highly transformed and theatricalized version of that same reality. In transferring Mexican history to the stage, Carballido reasserts

his conviction that life is inherently theatrical. Wittig supports this interdependence between theatre and life when she states that "it is the metaphor of the theatre—dramatized action—that makes the metaphors of life—lived action—endurable, visible, conscious" (454). *José Guadalupe* is evidence of Carballido's own continuing belief that art, and more specifically theatre, is the most viable vehicle in the expression of history and of life in general.

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NOTES

1. To distinguish "artistic drama" from "popular drama," Wittig explains that "'popular' discourse is discourse conscious only of its message, while esthetic discourse is discourse conscious of itself as a made thing, a system of human signs that demand recognition as *signs*, not as natural phenomena" (454).

2. Unfortunately, *José Guadalupe* has to date been neither published nor staged. In a letter dated February 11, 1981, Carballido explains: "*José Guadalupe* has never been produced. It is very expensive and after the first try they did failed, everyone has forgotten the thing."

3. In a prior essay, I examined Carballido's adoption and adaptation of Brechtian techniques in *Almanaque de Juárez*. While the earlier play does share certain technical characteristics with *José Guadalupe*, its ultimate goal is more Brechtian in nature, as Carballido draws explicit parallels between current socio-political conditions and those that existed over a century ago.

4. Notwithstanding his popularity while alive, Posada was quickly forgotten by a nation swept up in the chaos of the Revolution:

> A pesar de su vida fecunda y de su inagotable talento, murió pobre en la fría mañana del 20 de enero de 1913. La historia que se escribió en los años que siguieron a su muerte no quiso franquearle sus puertas; José Guadalupe Posada "fue sepultado en una fosa de sexta clase en el Panteón de Dolores; sus restos, que nadie reclamó, fueron arrojados sieta años después a la fosa común en compañía de otras calaveras anónimas" (Rodríguez Santillán, 3).

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