I, Too, Speak of the Rose Study Guide

I, Too, Speak of the Rose by Emilio Carballido

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Carballido's *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* is considered by many to be his greatest play and has become a masterpiece of the Mexican theatre. This play was first published in 1965 in *Revista de Belles Artes.* In 1966, it was first seen on stage at the Teatro Jimenez Rueda in Mexico City

This one-act play was translated into English and published first in *Drama and Theatre* in 1969. The translation was by William D. Oliver. The play was produced in English in 1972 at San Fernando State College in Northridge, California, in a translation by Myrna Winer. This version of the play had the title / *Also Speak About the Rose.* This work received a couple of awards—the best play award in Mexico in 1967 and the Heraldo Prize.

I, Too, Speak of the Rose was also translated into French and produced in 1974. It received good reviews. It was also produced on French television.

Carballido's work has been influenced especially by playwrights such as Jean Anouilh, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller. Like much of Carballido's work, *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* employs realistic elements but has clearly an expres-sionistic bent to it. The play uses at times very poetic language and employs the metaphor of the rose throughout. On another level, it, like much of Latin American theater, has a social agenda and explores the state of poverty and criticizes the varied responses society offers to the problem. On a deeper level, the play explores questions about the nature of reality.

Author Biography

Emilio Carballido was born May 22, 1925, in Cordoba, Veracruz, Mexico. At the age of one, he moved to Mexico City with his mother. His father was a railroad man, and although he lived mostly with his mother, Carbalhdo spent time with his father in 1939, living in a more rural environment, and occasionally traveling on the train with his father.

He started to write when he was young, but began to write most earnestly when he was twenty-one. Within a couple of years he had several produced and published plays under his belt.

When he turned twenty-five, he became a father, had his first commercial production of a play, and was sent to study in New York on a Rockefeller fellowship.

Carballido pursued an academic career, working as assistant director of the School of Theater at the University of Veracruz, and later as professor at the National University in Mexico City.

Carballido has been a prolific writer, producing a large body of dramatic works, including more than thirty-three one-act plays, more than five full-length plays, more than fifty screenplays, short stories, and novels. His dramatic works have regularly been honored with awards. Some of his awards include Centro Mexicano de Escritores fellowship, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Festival Regional of the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes, Instituto Internacional de Teatro, Ruiz de Alarcon Prize, and the Asociauon de Criticos y Cronistas prize.

Carballido has spent time in the United States as a visiting professor at Rutgers University, the University of Pittsburgh, and the University of California. Some of-the major influences on his writing have been Jean Giraudoux, Arthur Miller, Jean Anouilh, Sor Juana, and Ines de la Cruz.

Although not identified with a specific school of dramatic writing, Carballido is considered an important voice in Mexican theater and as part of an important movement in the theater towards neo realism. His work has been performed extensively in Mexico, and has also been produced in the United States, Spain, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Israel, Columbia, Venezuela, and Cuba.

Plot Summary

The play is set in Mexico City in the 1960s, with the focus on two poor young people who accidentally derail a train, and then have to face the consequences of punishment and everyone's varying perceptions of their deed. The play is broken up into twenty-one short scenes, opening with a spotlight on the Medium. She has a long poetic monologue in which she sees her heart as a sea anemone and claims she stores part of everything she's seen in herself. She says she receives information about events that will happen.

The next scene starts in the dark with the sound of a train crash, and a Newsboy hawks his papers with news about a tram derailment. The play then shifts to a city scene with two young people, Tona and Polo, struggling to fish coins out of a telephone booth so they can buy candy. They tell a man who wants to use the booth that the phone is broken and eventually succeed at getting a coin but then gamble it away with Tona's bus fare on a bet with the candy vendor. Polo finds another coin and they buy candy. Tona asks Polo wrry he isn't going to school. He says it's because he doesn't have shoes and will not have money to get any for another week or so. They are joined by an older friend, Maximino, who clearly is watching out for them. He complains that his motorcycle isn't working but he is going to fix it at the garage where he works. Tona inspects his wallet and begs a picture from him which he signs. She says she will put it on her mirror. She makes run of the photo of his girlfriend, saying she's cross-eyed.

The next scene finds Tona and Polo in a dump along with a scavenger who begs money so he can buy a drink. Tona gives him all their money. They find things like an old engine, thorny flowers, and a tub that would be good for planting flowers. They discover the tub is filled with concrete and put it on the tracks in the path of an approaching train to try and break out the concrete.

The Newsboy appears again, announcing that the train disaster was caused by delinquent children. The Medium makes her second appearance, where she talks about dogs, cats, hens, and eggs. She also marvels at the wisdom of butterflies," bees, and snakes

While the Newsboy again sells his papers, a lady and gentleman discuss the train derailment and the poverty that caused these children to be so barbaric.

The scene changes to a schoolroom where a teacher lectures about the evils of delinquency, using their classmate Polo as an example. In another scene, two university students discuss the train derailment. They are envious of the inspired action and the children's courage, thinking the action a premeditated one against the establishment.

Maximino gets a call at the garage where he is working. He asks his boss if he can have a little time off to go get Tona and Polo out of jail. His boss wonders about why they were playing around a train.

At the scene of the train derailment, a scavenger packs a large sack with goods from the derailed tram. Several poor people come and gather food while wondering if this is stealing or not. They send for other family members to help them cart off as much as they can.

The Medium again appears to tell of a dream that two brothers had in two different cities. The dream instructed each brother to go to the other brother's house. They meet in the middle of the tap but are confused about where they are to fulfill the demands of the dream, so they stop where they are and build a little church and an altar where they pray and dance.

The Newsboy reappears, expanding the story, claiming that the damage from the train derailment is over a half million pesos.

In the next scene, Tona's mother and sister talk as her mother prepares to visit Tona in jail. They comment on her photo in the paper. Polo's mother visits him in jail, and moans over his impnsonment and berates him for being so stupid, not to have run from arrest. Their absent fathers are blamed for the children's delinquency.

The Newsboy again announces the news declaring that "schizoid children" have induced a public trauma.

The next two scenes are different interpretations of the event that happened. The first is presented by a Freudian psychologist who interprets all of the children's actions and the world before and at the time of the wreck, as having sexual significance. He sees the incidents as connected with repressed libido, or sexual energy.

A second professor, who is a Marxist economist, analyzes the experience based on class and economic factors. The children represent the lowest and poorest part of society. The action of the children, in his interpretation, is the natural result of years of oppression.

Maximino visits Tona in prison. Of course he wants to understand why she did it, but she is most interested in her picture in the paper and whether he will carry it in his wallet. He counsels her to avoid the other women in jail, whom she has found quite interesting. She asks him to carry only her photo in his wallet, not his cross-eyed girlfriend's. He agrees.

The scavengers appear again in the next scene at the dump. They are celebrating their abundance— the things they have scavenged from the train wreck. Some of the items they have traded for food and drink, including tequila, so they are becoming quite happy.

Lights come up on Maximmo calling his girlfriend from the garage, trying to explain what he has been doing. He ends up calling her a crosseyed bitch.

The next scene focuses on an Announcer with a rose to examine. He seems like the host of some kind of game show, with questions to answer. He asks his audience what

he has and then goes into a monologue about a rose, wondering what it becomes when the petals drop. He goes further to examine a rose fiber and then asks of these three images—the whole rose, the rose petal, and the rose fiber—which is the true image? Which one is the real rose?

The Newsboy again comes and promises that the paper offers the total truth of the train crash. The Medium appears briefly. She explains the derailment, seeing the children as becoming part of all that surrounded them, and in the process, unearthing truth. Tona and Polo join the scene and dance ecstatically. And as the Medium replays the incident, with a view much different than the two professors, she shows the future—Polo owning his own garage and Tona marrying Maximino. The play ends with a sort of chant that links Tona, Polo, Maximino, and the Medium, and looks at the reality of a unity among them, "a single beating heart.'

Characters

Announcer

Acting as a master of ceremonies, he energetically gives a lengthy monologue about the rose, the rose petal, and the rose fiber, and then poses questions to an unseen audience about what is the real rose.

Candy Vendor

He is selling candies and has no problem with gambling with Polo and Tona and taking away their money when he wins a coin toss.

Female Student

She is also a university student and is slightly envious of the action taken by the two children and the impact it had.

First Female Scavenger

She banters with the male scavengers, after having helped collect some of the food from the derailed train. She worries, though, whether they will be discovered by the police and blamed for stealing. She parties later with the other scavengers at the dump.

First Male Scavenger

He begs money from Tona to buy a drink. Later he discovers the food in the derailed train car and takes some. He runs off to share the good news of this plenty with others of his friends and family. Later he and his friends have a celebration with food and drink they bartered with goods from the derailed train.

First Professor

He is rather pompous and fastidious and imposes his own ideas on a current event, deciding what was really motivating Tona and Polo. He is a Freudian psychologist and interprets all of their actions based on this approach to understanding human behavior.

Gentleman

He sees the item in the news and criticizes the children as barbaric.

Maximino Gonzalez

He's a young man of nearly twenty-three who works in a garage. He has befriended Tona and Polo and looks out for them, even giving them money when they need it. He has an old motorcycle that isn't running but that he's going to fix. He defends his girlfriend's looks when Tona criticizes her but eventually turns against her, charmed and attracted by Tona's adoration of him. He is kind and caring and worries about the negative influences Tona is experiencing in jail.

Lady

She obviously likes sensationalism in the news. She thinks the poor are criminal, and that they are born that way without hope.

Male Student

A university student, he reads about the train derailment in the newspaper and declares it"wild."

The Medium

Dressed first in peasant garb, the Medium appears only four times in the play, and with each appearance her clothing becomes lighter and brighter and is finally all white. She is otherworldly and talks of things that seem unrelated to the central action of the play. She starts with a monologue about being a part of everything she sees and then comments on knowledge. She next appears with some old scientific illustrations and discusses animals in very poetic terms, including a warning about gold fish and a praise of butterflies. Later she relates a dream that two brothers had and the action it precipitated—a seemingly unconnected story. In the conclusion of the play she draws a totally different conclusion to the action in the play—a conclusion that connects the trains of thought she has laced throughout the work.

Newsboy

He starts out running on stage with his newspapers and calling out the news of the day. He is seen or sometimes just heard between a number of scenes later in the play, each time offering a different slant on the story of the train derailment. Throughout the play his newspaper changes, ending up with ancient parchment written in hieroglyphics when he offers the truth.

Paca

She is Tona's sister. She wants to visit her sister but is enlisted to babysit her younger sisters while her mother visits Tona instead. She seems a little amused about the event and the newspaper coverage and sends her sister a pin that she likes.

Don Pepe

He is a Spaniard, the owner of the garage where Maximino works He appears kind and understanding when he allows Maximino to go visit his newly imprisoned friends.

Polo

Like Tona, Polo is an average school child. He is fourteen years old. His truancy from school is based in his shame and embarrassment about his poverty. He doesn't have shoes to wear and he knows the teacher will inspect the students for polished shoes. Although he is poor, he is resourceful and knows how to find money, or fish it out of phone booths. But he is easily relieved of his money when presented with an opportunity to gamble and hopefully win much more. This happens a couple of times but he accepts it gracefully since he had nothing in the beginning. He, like Tona, isn't particularly bad, just unsupervised with too much time on his hands. His putting the cement filled tub on the rails was not premeditated, and his lack of fear and unwillingness to run when the accident occurred illustrate his purity of heart.

Polo's Mother

She visit's him in jail and what she's concerned about is whether she'll lose her job because of her son's notoriety. She berates him for being as bad as his no-good father but then sinks to criticizing herself for spoiling him.

A Poor Boy

He discovers the overturned opened car from the derailed train and wants to steal from it. He goes to get sacks to carry the food.

A Poor Girl

She is scared that she and the boy will get caught taking things from the tram but is assured that there is no one watching them, so she makes off with some food and gets help.

A Poor Man

He is certain that taking things from the abandoned train is stealing but is willing to help the poor woman with her sacks. He really doesn't care if it's stealing or not, because it's needed food-—corn and beans.

A Poor Woman

She is guilt-stricken and tries to rationalize that this isn't stealing since there is no guard at the train. She does not let her guilt keep her from loading up sacks and carting them off. She decides to tell other family members about this abundance.

Second Female Scavenger

She joins the other scavengers around the fire at the dump, enjoying what they have to eat and drink.

Second Male Scavenger

He is in the scavenger party at the dump and finds time to flirt with the female scavengers while enjoying their plenty.

Second Professor

This professor is less precise in his dress and demeanor but has a view of the world which colors his interpretation of the tram derailment. He sees everything through his Marxist economist rose-colored glasses and sees all of the children's actions as evidence of their social consciences and as a significant political protest

Teacher

She is an unsympathetic and harsh character who uses the train derailment to try and get appropriate behavior from her class.

Tona

A poor Mexican schoolgirl of twelve, she has little parental supervision and little money but plenty of time to hang out with her friend. She easily skips school, and although the press immediately labels her and her friend as delinquents, she is really just an ordinary girl who wants to have friends and play. Her friendship with Polo is not without problems —they bicker back and forth and blame each other when something doesn't go as expected. But she has a good heart and is very willing to share her bus fare to buy

something for them both. She is generous also when giving money to one of the scavengers. She has a crush on Maximino and the feeling comes out in criticism of his motorcycle and his girlfriend. She begs a photo of him and wants him to sign it so she can put it on her mirror. Later she is pleased to see he is carrying her photo from the newspaper. She is impressed with the cell mates she has, who seem a lot more real and interesting than the people she meets normally.

Tona's Mother

She is poor and trying to raise her children by herself. She is somewhat bewildered about what has happened and struggles to get time to go to see her daughter in prison. She doesn't trust the prison guards or the system and is worried about Tona missing school.

Woman Peddler

She is selling food and prepares jicama with chile for the children.

Themes

Social Criticism

Social criticism is often embedded in or clearly on the surface of Latin American theater. *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* does this by making a commentary on the social conditions of the times (1965) as well as questioning the solutions to the problems.

Although the play commences with a Medium, who throughout the play presents a broader, otherworldly point of view, it is soon clear that the play focuses on the lives of the disadvantaged. Tona and Polo are representative children in Mexico City who are clearly lacking in parental supervision and in financial resources. When Tona asks Polo why he isn't in school that day, he responds that it is because of his lack of shoes. He will have to go to school barefoot and stand in line when the teacher inspects each student to check if his shoes are polished. He says, "I'll be damned if I am going to polish my feet."

So Tona and Polo work to find money just to buy candy. As Carballido proceeds with the play, he clearly paints a picture of the lowest level of society. These young people may be denied an education because of their poverty.

There are other glimpses of the plight of the poor in the play. The scavengers at the dump, and those taking advantage of the derailed train, show a bottom rung of the socioeconomic structure that could not survive without the castoffs.

More of this is shown when the mothers of the children deal with the reality of this offense. Tona's mother is worried whether there will be consequences for her taking time off from work to go visit her daughter in jail. In the same way, Polo's mother worries for her job. Will she be fired because of what her son has done?

The scavengers demonstrate some concern for right and wrong and question whether emptying the derailed train car is really stealing. They decide ultimately that it isn't, and then the goods on the car are redistributed. Carballido looks at the derailment of the railroad car from many different angles and examines the social significance of each of them. The Newsboy shouts throughout about the varying views of this event. And although he makes some criticism about poverty and how the poor are treated, Carballido is not totally one-sided in his view. In fact, he almost pokes fun at the Marxist professor interpreting the incident as apolitical event and that the innocent action of these two young people was a major political statement He most clearly raises questions about the lack of power and control and the state of the poor in Mexico, but he also does not rely on one system to answer or solve the problem. This play represents a question more than an answer.

He attacks the school system that would willingly exclude students just because they don't have enough money for school. He takes issue with teachers that are without

sympathy. Also in the line of his criticism are university professors who will bend events to support their views. He notes the situation of single mothers who are struggling to raise children without support. And he also alludes to the effect of Yankee imperialism.

Truth

Truth is not singular, Carballido tries to tell the audience in *I, Too, Speak of the Rose.* In fact, there are many sides to truth. Truth is explained as a kaleidoscope, as the audience is shown ever shifting interpretations and understandings of one singular event. As the lines between truth and non truth are blurred, so the lines between reality and fantasy. Carballido enters the minds of key players in this incident and shows the inner thoughts of these characters, or what could have been the inner thoughts.

The reader or audience member is left without a firm foundation, wondering about the correct interpretation of the event. Eventually the conclusion may be that the many views of the incident show that there are many truths to consider. The Announcer points out a rose, then a lone petal of a rose, and then a microscopic view of rose fiber. Which is the real rose, he asks Which is the correct view? The viewer is left with this enigmatic question, and perhaps with an answer that all views are truth in some way, just as all of the views of the rose really are the rose.

Style

Monologues

Carballido begins *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* with a lengthy monologue by the Medium, which sets the tone for the rest of this one-act play. The action is often stopped and explanation is made of what is happening, or commentary is heard on the significance of it. This approach goes back to the Greek theater, when the action of the play occurred offstage. Often it was the Chorus that explained what had happened and at times the importance of it, before the main characters responded to the news and anguished over outcomes.

Monologues are found in Shakespeare's work often, like Hamlet's gloomy monologues or Macbeth's tortured ones. With these, the audience finds out more of what is happening within the mind of the character. A contemporary example of the use of monologue is found in Tennessee William's *Glass Menagerie* when Tom Wingfield engages in lengthy monologues as he introduces the audience to his memory, which becomes the present action of the play.

Within Carballido's play, monologues stop the action of the play, and in fact break the illusion that the theater creates—the illusion that the audience is in the space and time in which the action is supposed to occur and that the actions and characters are real. The character of the Medium seems to exist outside of the play, or outside of what might be called the frame of the play. She at tunes seems to be talking about different things than the main body of the play because other scenes and commentary speak directly of the train derailment. She doesn't speak of it directly but is more philosophical or spiritual in her reflections. When she appears, the audience is reminded that it is watching a play, that this is not real, it is only a representation of something. Monologues are used for the discussions by the two professors, as well as the Announcer. The Newsboy is woven throughout and has brief monologues where he is ostensibly selling his wares, but for the purposes of the playwright, announces a shift of perception of the event of the train derailment. Monologues wound together with other dialogue create a mosaic effect and further support Carballido's attempt to get the viewer to question reality and the nature of truth.

Nonconventional Style

Carballido's work often balances between realism and fantasy. He makes quick scene changes using changed lighting or blackouts to mark the change. The scenes are short and these short bursts that are punctuated by blackouts create almost a sense of images being flashed on a screen. The play presents the longest scene near the beginning, with a very realistic look at the life of the children and what was happening that afternoon for them in Mexico City.

The scenes switch to things that might have happened, so the viewer sees the response of academics whose ideas are then played on as if in a fantasy. So the Freudian psychologist presents a view of the repressed sexuality in these young people and places words in their mouths. The audience views his fantasy. Then the Marxist takes the very same scene and rewrites the script. The action is the same but the words are different. And again it is a fantasy. He is imagining what they might have been saying.

The scene with the announcer and his three views of the rose is clearly a scene from the imagination, juxtaposed with the realistic scenes of Tona and Polo in prison.

Some people have wanted to place labels on his work, but Carbalhdo has resisted that. Although he avoids in this play a traditional theatrical structure, he is not easily pegged. The scenes where the children are replaying the events leading up to the derailment are certainly in the imagination or a sort of fantasy of the professors interpreting the action. But then the playwright pulls the play back to some very realistic scenes, keeping the viewer on edge.

Historical Context

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. Just like Charles Dickens's description of the French Revolution, so too were the 1960s in the United States. The Democratic-controlled government made bold strides towards trying to deal with poverty and racism. The year 1965 was the year when the term "The Great Society" was coined and large appropriations were made to provide for programs to help the poor. And although concerned on paper with poverty at home, the U.S. government discouraged companies from selling wheat to the Soviet Union, which had experienced a devastating crop failure, by mandating that half of sales would have to be shipped in U.S. owned vessels. This would make the wheat significantly more expensive. Civil Rights legislation that had been passed was supported by concerned citizenry confronting racists and segregationist practices, forcing the government to deal with it. Sometimes, however, these protests took very violent turns resulting in the death of civil rights workers. At other times race riots in cities left lives lost and property destroyed.

But while the U.S. government was making attempts to better things for the poor within U.S. boundaries, it was at the same time engaging in a growing military action in southeast Asia, an initiative that was uninvited and was denounced by some countries as being clearly imperialistic. This war in Vietnam was not without opposition in the United States as well as in other parts of the world, with much of the protest coming from students and from the' arts community. The Civil Rights movement and the anti-war movement grew throughout the 1960s, creating a sense that some sort of revolution could happen within the borders of the United States, not just in less stable countries like those South of the border.

I, Too, Speak of the Rose creates a view of life on the lower levels of society in that tumultuous decade in the country right to the South. And while Timothy Leary was pushing psychedelic drugs meant to alter reality, the play is questioning what people perceive and what reality is. In popular culture, the rock group The Rolling Stones had major success with the song "I Can't Get No Satisfaction." The Grateful Dead started in San Francisco and was soon connected with both psychedelic drugs and psychedelic colors. Other popular singing groups included the Beatles, Simon and Garfunkel, Sonny and Cher, Bob Dylan, and Big Brother and the Holding Company with Janis Joplin. The message behind much of the music was either a criticism of society, or an attempt to escape it.

Critical Overview

Theater in Latin America is known to be a force for social change and so is often looked at not as entertainment but as a vehicle to make a statement. Carballido's work fits well within this tradition. His work is what can be called socially engaged.

Eugene Skinner in *Dramatists in Revolt: The New Latin America Theater* commented on *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* and labeled this work a masterpiece. "It delineates the repressive effects of ideologies and institutions through popular satire and alternating scenes of commentary and representation." For Skinner this play seems a complete work and shows what theater should do. Margaret Sayers Peden in *Emilio Carballido* agreed with Skinner on the significance of this play. She said it was "the most important one-act play written by Carballido, and one of his best plays of any length."

In the *Latin American Theatre Review* Sandra Messinger Cypess said "Carbalhdo's one-act play has one of the most provocative titles of the many suggestive works" by this playwright. Diana Taylor in *the International Dictionary of Theatre: Plays* saw this work as being about discourse, or the nature of discourse. "Discourses not only stem from differing traditions and create their own realities, but they also vie for explanatory power and authority." She saw this work as making a statement about a lessened importance of a eurocentric (white European) society as represented by the idea and talk of the professors. What emerges is another way of seeing things, or many ways of seeing things, which may be rooted in an oral culture, not one based on writing.

Jacqueline Eyring Bixler in the *Latin American Theatre Review* commented on later works by Carballido that gave evidence of characteristics which were consistent throughout his body of work. She mentioned two patterns of audience participation, that of fusion and that of fission. This latter, the fission, "produces an opposition or fission of impressions, which leads to a final fusion of concept. The pattern of fission, which is the one that characterizes Carballido's theatre, is naturally the more challenging for the audience, who is left to close the fissure, or bridge the conceptual gap." She saw this as allowing the audience to have a moment of seeing discovery. For her, this was participatory theatre, because the audience adds to the meaning of the piece, as they make the connection conceptually between the different levels of reality that exist in the play.

From the very beginning of his career Carballido attempted to mix fantasy and realism. According to George Woodyard in the *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture,* he has done that in new ways in *I, Too, Speak of the Rose.* At the same time he has been involved with experimental works "in his search for ways to express a Mexican reality deeply rooted in tradition."

In the play, Tona reflects on the star and its connection with the ancient primitive hunter and the artwork he produced on the walls of his cave. Skinner sees this as a statement the playwright makes about the real function of art. "The artist produces an image that persists long after the event or person represented ceases to exist. The sole function of

the artist is to affirm... the existence of his contemporaries as a complex web of creative potential." Peden, who has written extensively about Carballido's works, saw his most important contribution as being the personal blend of humor and fantasy in a realistic framework. These "create plays that transcend the specifically realistic and restnctively Mexican to achieve a theater that can be called modern, contemporary, and universal." At the same time, she said, the plays stay rooted in Mexican tradition.

Carballido himself is very conscious of the interrelationship of content and form."Content and form are exact equivalents one separates for purposes of analyses, for practical reasons, but the idea that they may be separated is fallacious; it would be like separating the heart from the rest of the bodily organs." He has done much experimenting and Peden labeled him the greatest innovator in form in the theater since Sor Juana.

He allows his audience or readers to make some conclusions. Emmaunuel Carballo has called him a "demonstrative" rather than a "directive" writer. The characters that he creates have a certain amount of freedom or autonomy but they see things with the playwright's judgments or biases.

Though critics talk about his realistic work, the playwright does not see it m that way."The majority of the things I do are not realistic; these days a minimum of my work is of that style. Many pieces have narrators, or have no set, or work through a series of expressiomstic or didactic or surrealistic motivations." Peden praised his social satiricism and keen social criticisms."Carballido has changed the course of Mexican theatre." Critics seem to agree that both in style and content Carballido has contributed significantly to the literature of his country.

Criticism

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Critical Essay #1

Worthington is a playwright and a teacher. In this essay she examines the use of metaphor in Carballido's play and how it enriches his message

The poetic imagery in *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* creates a rich tapestry as a background to the social criticism on the surface of the play, which makes the work much richer than just a political tract. Eugene Skinner in *Dramatists in Revolt: The New Latin American Theater* says that *I, Too, Speak of the Rose* "further elaborates the concept of human existence as a complex web of interrelationships through a fusion of realistic and poetic techniques."

This is clear from the very beginning when one is greeted with the Medium, a woman who wears simple peasant garb but speaks in poetic language. She weaves a teasing web of language, comparing knowledge to a heart that beats and distributes its currents into various canals. She compares her heart to a timid knock on the door, to a chick trying to get out of its cell, and then to a sea anemone. She sees herself and her memory as a collector of all things, and as a collector, she assimilates everything into herself, or is assimilated.

When she next appears in the play, she comes with a book full of animal and plant images and she ruminates about many. She thinks about man and his sense of property. Then she considers other animals. There is the cat who offers sacrifices—captured mice—and who also connects with the mysteries of the universe. There is the hen, the producer of eggs. There are snakes, gold fish, butterflies, bees. And the images she produces brings us back to the core thing—knowledge. What bees know What she knows.

She reappears later to relate a seemingly disconnected story of two dreamers and their similar dreams. This seems like a parable that spins our minds off onto other tangents. But at the end of the play, she takes her metaphors and tries to explain. "Now I'm going to explain the accident," she says. They children are gaining enlightenment. They are becoming everything around them, "they understand ... they see."

She ends the play and her explanation of the significance of the event by pointing out how all human beings are connected. She goes back to a metaphor she began with, the heart."Let us listen to the beating in each and every hand of the mystery of our single heart." "Through these references, Carballido proposes a mystical definition of knowledge; he intimates that knowledge posses qualities of beat and diffusion, and that these qualities originate in the pulsing center of the universe, the human heart," writes Margaret Sayers Peden in *Emilio Carballido.*

There is more than just the Medium's' poetic language in this work. At the core of the play is the metaphor of the rose. This image is not brought out too often, but it is very strong when it appears. The first encounter is, of course, the rose in the title. One is

expecting to experience the rose since one has been warned it is coming. It is, says Peden, "an extended metaphor concerning the nature of reality."

The rose first appears in the dump where Tona and Polo are looking for something of value to scavenge. Tona finds an engine and some flowers. There is no explanation of the kind of flower, but she admits to being packed by the flowers, and so the thorny stem of a rose comes to mind. It is an image of a perfect rose, a symbol of love and beauty, in the midst of a garbage dump. This juxtaposition of images is shocking and jarring. But this juxtaposition is part of the message of the play, the plain and simple beauty in the context of unpleasant situations. This is the reality to which Peden refers.

The idea of the rose is mentioned by the first professor, who examines the complexity of serf and likens this to the rose, that unfolds its petals. He is searching for the core, the root, which for him is in the sometimes repressed and unexpressed sexuality of the individual.

The image of the rose is again brought into the play when the scavengers are together and one man sings to a woman a little song calling her a rose of the few. It is a song about making love and the images of love are rather common and base and sung to another scavenger in a makeshift shelter at the dump. Here the image of the rose is common and banal.

The rose comes up again with the announcer. Suddenly the viewer is put in almost a game show environment, where one must compete for prizes, and three images are shown, the rose in total, a rose petal, and a microscopic view of the fiber of a rose. The question then is posed: which is the real rose Pursing the imagery of the rose and what it represents, one must then ponder this symbol of love and beauty and wonder at the evidence. Is life perfect and complete like the whole roses—is this the real picture, is this the real truth? Or is it the petal, the small dropped leaf that makes one think of the total flower, a part that has some of the smell and texture of the whole, and which one can close his eyes and imagine. Is this the moment in life when one experiences love and beauty—is this segment of the whole the true picture of the rose? Or is it the small fiber of the rose, like a fragment of human life, the beauty and love that at a daily microscopic level, without grandeur, without sweet smell, and without perfect construction, makes up real life? The relationship of Polo and Tona seems evidence of that rose fiber. It is a simple and at times painful thing. But it is, as much as any grander expression, something that is real and of value.

The action of the play focuses on a train derailment, the events that lead up to it and the results of the derailment. Although this event doesn't call attention to itself in the play as a metaphor, it is another core metaphor that runs throughout the work.

What does the derailment represent, or what is derailed? A derailment clearly is an abrupt halt to something that was on a rail, that was certain to happen. What is derailed? Many things. The lives of the children are derailed Their regular life of going to school and playing has come to a jarring halt as they are faced with the enormity of the consequences of their actions. They will never be the same. Perhaps, in a way, this

represents when their childhood is derailed. But at the end one has a bit of hope when the Medium gives a glimpse into the futures of Polo and Tona. Although their childhood and innocence have been derailed, their lives as adults are not without hope. Perhaps, in fact, the derailment is necessary for them to get onto another rail and take the trip towards adulthood.

More can be thought of as derailed in this work. There is a certain redistribution of goods that takes place when the train is derailed and the cars filled with food are off the track with their doors open. Something that seems sinister and bad contains something good as the poor rob the coffers of those better endowed with wealth and create a little bit more of life. This is a revolution on a small scale. So the derailment can represent a sort of revolution with the rebalancing effect that occurs in the economy.

Much of Mexican and Latin American tfieater attempts to make social criticism significant. This is certainly true for *I, Too, Speak of the Rose.* One can sense Carballido's biting and sarcastic criticism throughout the play. He arms his sights at many targets. He points to the school system, one without sympathy, that unfairly discourages the poorest from participating. Higher education also is criticized. The professors use their lecterns to impose their singular view of the world on the students.

Unfortunately their view severely distorts the truth of the actual event, and thus the viewer starts to question knowledge and existing systems of knowledge as we know them. Carballido even asks the audience to question the source of news as represented by the newsboy whose presentation of the news goes through a significant metamorphosis.

Although viewers will grasp Carballido's social criticism, they will stay much longer with the work, toying with the metaphors, with the poetic language, and questioning the nature of knowledge and reality. They will go with him to a deeper place where he questions not just social structures and politics but the very nature of knowledge and reality, and ultimately truth.

Source: Etta Worthington, for *Drama for Students,* Gale, 1998

Critical Essay #2

In this article, Taylor provides an overview of I, Too, Speak of the Rose.

I, Too, Speak of the Rose (Yo tambien hablo de la rosa) is a play set in modern Mexico City. Throughout the play only one thing happens—two lower-class children, Tona and Polo, derail a freight train carrying food and go to jail for an unspecified (though we assume brief) period of time. The rest of the play's 21 scenes focus on the process and politics of interpretation. For the police, the incident is a criminal offense. For the scavangers picking up the food, the strewn bounty is a miracle of good fortune. The mothers blame their children's vagrancy on the absent father. The school teacher refers to Tona and Polo as truants. For the university students reading the newspaper, the event is an anarchistic, brilliant act. The bourgeois couple, reading the same paper, refer to the children as "little savages, that's what they are. All of them. They're all a bunch of savages." A Freudian psychologist expounds on the repressed libidinal component to the act. The Marxist economist interprets the destruction as the logical outburst of an oppressed class. What does the derailment mean? Whose interpretation or discourse gains authority?

While many perspectives are introduced in the play, not all of them are equal. The Intermediaria (Medium), an indigenous, or "mestizo," peasant woman, dominates the play. She appears four times, linking the episodic scenes together by telling stories that indirectly elucidate the incident involving the two children. Interestingly, however, her perspective is not valorized as correct, but as indispensible m illuminating Mexico's racial and cultural mestizage. Carballido does not suggest that she knows more than the professors, but that her source of knowledge differs from theirs. She begins the play claiming "I know many things"' As she narrates what she knows—herbs, faces, crowds, the texture of rocks, books, pages, illusions, roads, events—we come to understand that her knowledge represents a mode of perception different in kind and origin from the "scientific," objective knowledge posited by the eurocentric professors. Her epistemological framework is primarily of an oral tradition, conserved by memory, and passed on by word of mouth: "I also retain memories, memories which once belonged to my grandmother, my mother or my friends... many which they, in turn, heard from friends and old, old people." Her orality is both a *product of* and a *producer of* a network of communication, and establishes her central position in it as much as literacy shapes the professors. The philosophic schools which shape the professors' perception, and the literacy maintaining it, do not, by and large, form the traditions within which most Mexicans have lived, and to different degrees still continue to live. In a country like Mexico, characterized by the co-existence of literary and primary oral cultures, consciousness changes according to how people receive and store information and knowledge.

The most immediate distinction between the oral and literary cultures we see in the play lies in the relationship between knower and known. The Intermediaria's knowledge cannot be called "objective"—it is not empirically verifiable or in any way outside or disconnected from herself as knower.

Unlike the professors with their methodological and causal framework, she does not aspire to the Cartesian ideal of objectification. From her first line in her first speech, the Intermediaria approaches knowledge reflexively, comparing it to her heart which, with its "canals that flow back and forth" connects her with the rest of the world. As the fluidity of her' speech shows, her way of knowing is anything but isolating or reductive—each idea opens a way to another, defying the possibility of any conclusion. The Intermediaria's role demonstrates the supreme importance of the speaker in an oral culture. In contrast, the professors' way of knowing is shown as eccentric in that they stand outside and removed from the source of their knowledge and information which now, in the literate society, lies in books and newspapers. Their physical presence is gratuitous; they only read or speak what has already been prepared in writing. They maintain a marginal, alienated position in both the acquisition and transmission of their knowledge. Alienation, then, is not an existential given, but a product of the knower/ known relationship. The separation between knower/ known changes, reduces and fragments human experience. Ironically, then, while literacy allows us to know more as well as more accurately, with greater abstraction and sophistication, it simultaneously widens the gap between knower and known.

Carballido's humorous play does not condemn or endorse any one perspective. Rather, it shows all of them as co-existing simultaneously within a highly complex society. If he condemns any position whatsoever it is only the folly of those who maintain that there *is* only one correct interpretation. His ludicrous characters (such as the Announcer of the game show in which the audience is asked to identify the one "authentic" image of a rose), illustrate not only the fallacy, but the potentially inquisitorial violence, of imposing any one view at the expense of others. There is only one valid response, the Announcer asserts; the rest "should be stricken from the books so that they will be forgotten forever. And any person who divulges them should be pursued by law. All those who believe in these false images should be supressed and isolated!"

I, Too, Speak of the Rose is a discourse about the nature of discourse. Discourses not only stem from differing traditions and create their own realities, but they also vie for explanatory power and authority. Historically, western theories have displaced Mexican and Latin American worldviews. In this play Carballido moves the marginalized experience to the very center of inquiry. This re-centering constitutes an important, liberating act for, by the same move, the eurocentric view (the professors) receeds, seen to be reduced in importance. Changing the relationship between the marginal and the dominant can change history, for as Hayden White points out in *Tropics of Discourse,* histories "are not only about events but also about the possible set of relationships that those events can be demonstrated to figure."

I, Too, Speak of the Rose is then a theatrical collage of many conflicting views of an accident and proposes a method of inquiry into the politics of perception and interpretation. Like the rose of the title, which Carballido depicts as a complicated and interconnected entity inextricable from (and inconceivable without) its multiple parts—stalk, petals, and fibers—the play too is made up of numerous, yet irreducible, interpretations.

Source: Diana Taylor, "*I, Too, Speak of the Rose,"* in *The International Dictionary of Theatre I Plays,* edited by Mark Hawkins-Dady, St. James Press, 1992, pp. 353-54

Critical Essay #3

In this excerpt, Skinner delineates much of the action in Carballido'splay, offering his interpretation of the major events and the play's themes and symbols.

Yo tambien hablo de la rosa (I Too Speak of the Rose) synthesizes earlier thematic concerns and technical achievements of Carballido. This one-act masterpiece further elaborates the concept of human existence as a complex web of interrelationships through a fusion of realistic and poetic techniques, as in *La hebra de oro.* Also, it delineates the repressive effects of ideologies and institutions through popular satire and alternating scenes of commentary and representation, as in *Silencio, polios pelones, ya les van a echar su maiz-* Finally, it succeeds in realizing both an explicit statement on the function of the theater and an exemplary model of total theater.

The action occurs in Mexico City during the present, and the central realistic event is the derailment of a freight train by two adolescents, Tona and Polo. The technique and structure of the play focus the spectator's attention on the process of interpretation rather than on the event itself. There are eighteen basic scenes with twenty-nine characters portrayed by thirteen actors. Transitions are fluid and rapid, effected by lighting and the commentary of the Medium and the Newsboy.

The initial scene establishes a nonrealistic atmosphere. A spot comes up on the Medium, dressed m peasant costume. In her monologue, she conjures up an image of her heart. The heart, like the rose of the play's title, symbolizes human existence, complex and fragile, but also precise and powerful. The Medium herself is an objectification of the social function of theater. In the final lines of her monologue, she outlines the following process: events are perceived and images formulated, and the latter are then communicated and contemplated. The artist provides a representation of the people and their surroundings, an image that is physical and integral as opposed to the abstract and fragmentary analyses employed by scientists and politicians to manipulate reality. With each appearance the Medium's costume becomes increasingly lighter in color until the pure white of the final scene. This externalizes the process of clarification through which art succeeds in transcending the chaos of diverse partial visions in a total concrete image.

During a blackout following the monologue, the event is first presented sensorially: the sound of the derailment, silence, lightning flashes; then the Newsboy: "Get your papers now! Delinquents derail a train!" Although apparently a neutral medium for the news, he varies his salespitch according to the version he is vending. The Medium, however, remains constant in her refusal to offer a limited fragmentary interpretation.

Scene 2 provides a realistic representation and employs a linear progression: street scene, derailment, effects of the derailment. The behavior of the young truants is spontaneous. They steal some coins from a public telephone, and then they decide to buy some candy. Their encounters with the Candy Vendor, the Old Woman selling *ji'cama,* and the young mechanic Maximino develop a contrast between human

relationships motivated by self-interest and, in the latter case, mutual respect. Later, at the dump, Tona and Polo give their remaining coins to a Scavenger. Objects that they find, scrap iron and flowers, are seen as gifts for their friend Maxi. In an unpremeditated gesture, they roll a metal tub filled with concrete onto the train tracks. The brief tableau (din of the crash, lightning, Tona and Polo awed by the wreck) suggests the import of the change effected by their actions.

In scene 3 the Medium reads from a Bestiary. Diverse interpretations of human existence are illustrated by animal images. They range from the canine guardian of physical integrity and property rights, the cat watching over man's spiritual integrity, the hen, fish, butterfly, and snake, to the bee that knows ' *'all* about solar energy and light. Things we don't suspect!" The latter most closely approaches the dramatist's concept of man as an intricate web of interrelationships based upon cosmic energy.

The next five scenes provide brief interpretations of and reactions to the derailment Commenting upon the newspaper report, a Gentleman identifies poverty as the cause of delinquency. A Lady agrees: "Oh, yes, then: poverty's something awful. But they didn't say anything about the trunk murder, huh?" Even if the cause is identified, there is no active response, only the passive consumption of journalistic sensationalism. The Teacher uses the newspaper to illustrate the "dangers of idleness." She, too, refuses to accept any responsibility or attempt to alleviate the problem. Two University Students react with greater sympathy, revealing perhaps a desire to rebel against society All three responses, however, contrast with that of Maxi Informed by phone that his friends have been arrested, he immediately requests that his employer give him money and time off so that he can go to the aid of the adolescents. Scene 8 shifts to the dump where the Scavengers and others reap the fruits of the wreck, carrying off sacks of food.

Scene 9 returns to the Medium. She narrates a story that is enacted by two dancers. Living in different towns, they both receive the same command in a dream: to dance and pray *together* at the sanctuary near the house of their brother. They meet in mid-route and, confused by the ambiguous dream, celebrate the rite at the place of their encounter. Each returns home, feeling he has only half-fulfilled the command. The anecdote reflects the image of human existence presented by the play. Man has no foreknowledge of the consequences of his actions. Therefore, primary emphasis is placed upon the process: contradictions should be faced and choices made in a spirit of solidarity with others.

The next seven scenes supply additional interpretations, and the basic opposition is human-vs.-inhuman response. First, we see Tona's mother preparing food and clothing to take to her daughter, and then Polo's mother visits him in prison. Both mothers are confused and vacillate in assigning blame. However, they do reveal a human maternal concern for their children's welfare and establish an obvious contrast with the two following scenes, which employ more elaborate distancing techniques. Both are introduced by the Newsboy: first, he hawks a Freudian analysis holding up papers covered with Rorschachlike ink blots and, later, a Marxist interpretation carrying papers printed in red on black. Each scene includes a narrator (Professor One, Professor Two) who comments upon his version as it is presented by Tona and Polo. The result is the

satire of two opposing overrationalizations: the first exaggerating the repression of the libido in the individual, the second stressing the exploitation of the proletariat under capitalism. The three following scenes underscore the inhumanity of the preceding ones by focusing upon the mutual bond of love. Maxi visits Tona in prison. He had come to free his two friends by paying then* fines. This is impossible because the derailment has resulted in a half-million-peso "crime." That the real crime is poverty is implied by Tona's expression of solidarity with her fellow inmates, who have violated society's laws in order to live. Tona and Maxi embrace as he vows to carry only Tona's picture in his wallet What had begun as idol worship on her part and friendship on his part ends in love. A scene at the dump develops a similar bond on the collective level. Here, it assumes a more popular and realistic form, as four Scavengers (two male, two female) celebrate around a fire with food, drink, and song. The earthy language of the songs contrasts strongly with the dehumanizing terminology of analysis employed by the two Professors. The scene concludes with the same gesture as the preceding one: the two couples embrace. Scene 16 returns to the Tona-Maxi plot. On the telephone at the garage, he breaks his engagement with his previous girlfriend and thus prepares the way for his future union with Tona.

Scene 17 restates the theses of the two Professors, adds a third, and requires the audience to make a choice. The Announcer illustrates the theses with three projected images and offers a magnificent prize to those who select the correct interpretation. In addition to the Freudian and Marxist rationalizations (rose petal and rose respectively), we have the weblike fiber of a rose petal seen under a microscope. This is the Medium's image, "primal matter" that is also"energy." The latter thesis destroys the former: there is no rose, no petal, only " a fusion of miraculous fictions.... Without the least possibility of rational explanation."

In the transition to the final scene, the Newsboy carries parchmentlike papers imprinted with magical signs and offers *all* the news. This introduces the Medium, now dressed in white, who gives her version. The previous representations by Tona and Polo, commented upon by the two Professors, were basically satires of exaggerated rationalizations, whereas the final scene achieves the total physical effect of ritual. The street scene included by the Professors is eliminated and dramatic intensity heightened as the Medium narrows the focus to the dump, where the change effected by the derailment occurs. As Tona and Polo enter, she explains: "They are changing into all that surrounds them." Their dance harmonizes with and evokes the creative potential of the cosmos. The flowers respond as a Feminine Chorus in a liturgy: "I have strength *...// have* promise..." The dump itself begins to glow from within, and the Medium adds: "With rhythms such as these we summon and arouse fertility." After the derailment, all the characters in the play embrace, kiss, dance, at first chaotically and finally in a chain, with precise and complex movements. A change from sterility to fertility occurs on all levels: Tona and Polo pass from adolescents to adults (she marries Maxi, he gets his own garage), the situation of the poor shifts temporarily from lack to abundance, and the cosmos itself participates in this realization of creative potential.

Now, instead of commenting upon the representation, the Medium addresses a question to the characters:

Medium (Asking in the manner of a teacher) —And now, what about that light from that star—extinguished for so many years?

Tona —... It kept flowing into the telescope.. but all it meant to say .all it meant to reveal .was the humble existence of the hairy hunter, who was drawn by his friend, the painter, on the walls of an African cave.

This exchange provides, within the play, a statement on the function of art. The artist produces an image that persists long after the event or person represented ceases to exist The sole function of the artist is to affirm, through an integral objectification, the existence of his contemporaries as a complex web of creative potential. Thus, the web becomes an image not of entrapment but of liberation, transcending, through a complex yet precise physical representation, the limits imposed by analytical rationalizations of human existence. The play itself is an exemplary realization of this concept of drama.

Source: Eugene R Skinner, "The Theater of Emilio Carbalhdo" in *Dramatists in Revolt-The New Latin American Theater,* edited by Leon F. Lyday and George W Woodyard, University of Texas Press, 1976, pp. 19-36

Topics for Further Study

Research the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers. Although there was undeniable evidence, a videotape, that the police officers did beat him, still they were acquitted. Discuss the possible different interpretations of the videotape that are possible.

Compare and contrast this play with Peter Weiss's *Marat/Sade.* Which play makes a stronger social commentary and why do you think that?

Investigate the work of two philosophers who discuss the nature of reality and truth Try to distill their ideas in a couple of sentences. How does this compare with the message found in this play?

Investigate the economic situation in Mexico at this time. How does this compare to the economic situation in 1965? Have improved trade agreements with the United States helped Mexico's economy?

Compare and Contrast

1965: The military action in Vietnam escalates with major U.S. bombing missions on North Vietnamese targets and a doubling of draft calls. This is a war that is looked on by many outsiders as an imperialistic action and based mostly on economic interests in the United States. Antiwar rallies attract crowds in major cities and on college campuses. Most of the antiwar support comes from the young.

Today: The Near East is the most potentially explosive section of the world, with Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein regularly acting in a threatening manner and the United States trading threats sometimes accompanied by bombing missions. Although the Gulf War of the early 1990s sparked antiwar protest, there is little response to any aggressive military actions.

196S: Martin Luther King, Jr., and more than 700 civil rights demonstrators are arrested for protesting Alabama state regulations for voter registration in Selma. This sparks further violence in the South and serves as a landmark in the civil rights straggle "

Today: While the Civil Rights movement has made great advances, there is still a great deal of prejudice and injustice toward minorities in America.

1965: Harvard psychology professor Timothy Leary, then 44, publishes *The Psychedelic Reader,* advising readers to use drugs and "turn on, tune in, drop out."

Today: Drug use continues to be popular with many people. The emphasis, however, seems to be on the "turn on," with fewer users actually employing drugs as a spiritual path. Drug use m the 1990s is often recreational. Yet it too frequently is symptomatic of social and economic malaise, with many people turning to drugs to escape the harshness of their reality.

1965: The International Society for Krishna Consciousness is founded in New York by Swami Prabhupada. Followers can be seen with shaved heads and saffron robes chanting "Hare Krishna." The way to enlightenment is through an ascetic life of devotion and spreading the truth, not through drags.

Today: Religious and spiritual cults have taken a dark turn. Many such organizations are accused of kidnapping and brainwashing their members. Other groups, such as the Branch Davidians, Heaven's Gate, and Aum Shinri Kyo ("supreme truth"), have turned to violence and mass suicide.

1965: The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and the Humanities (NEH) is founded and funded by the Congress. The organizations are meant to encourage and support the growth of the arts and of individual artists as a way to preserve and endorse culture.

Today: The NEA and the NEH straggle each year for Congressional funding. Both agencies have been under siege by right-wing Republican groups which have been offended by the work of some artists who have received grants.

What Do I Read Next?

First published in Spanish as *El Norte* in 1959, this novel by Carballido is the story of a woman growing old and her young lover, who discovers how alone he really is in the world. It was published in English in 1968 as *The Norther,* translated by Margaret Sayers Peden.

The famous Mexican muralist Diego Rivera died in 1959, but he was a contemporary of Carballido *My Art, My Life. An Autobiography* is a 1991 reprint of this work released in 1960. Rivera's work chronicles the struggles and triumphs of the workers, and evidence a strong leftist orientation.

The work of Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes is known internationally. Although he is also a playwright and a critic, his fiction has won him the most acclaim. *Burnt Water* is a translation of twelve of his stories written from 1954 and published in English in 1980.

Many call Mexican poet Octavio Paz the foremost poet in Latin America. His work *Selected Poems,* published in 1979, gives an interesting overview of his work He was at times a diplomat as well, and although a socialistic m his leanings, he was quite critical of the leftist movement.

The Golden Thread and Others is a collection of nine of Carballido's plays translated by Margaret Sayers Peden. Published in 1979, the play *The Intermediate Zone* may be most similar stylistically to *I, Too, Speak of the Rose.*

Further Study

Bixler, Jacqueline Eynng *Convention and Transgression-The Theatre of Emilio Carballido,* Bucknell University Press, 1997

This book is a newly published one with extensive criticism and interpretation of all the writings of Carballido, including his plays Camm, Hector Anguilar, and Lorenzo Meyer *In the Shadow of the Mexican Revolution; Contemporary Mexican History, 1910-1989,* translated by Luis Alberto Fierro, University of Texas Press, 1993.

This provides a good look at Mexican history in the twentieth century, with an examination of the economic situation and its impact on the poor,

Taylor, Kathy. *The New Narrative of Mexico: Sub-versions of History in Mexican History,* Bucknell University Press, 1994 This author present an up-to-date look at Mexican fiction in the twentieth century, combining both history and criticism of the works

Versenyi, Adam *The Theatre in Latin America Religion, Politics, and Culture from Cortes to the 1980s,* Cambridge University Press, 1993.

By exploring the history of Latin American theater, the author shows how the theatre has been a force for social change and has combined religious and political concerns

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Drama for Students (DfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, DfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of DfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of DfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in DfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by DfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

DfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Drama for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the DfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Drama for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Drama for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from DfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from DfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Drama for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Drama for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of DfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Drama for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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