



**THE CIVIL WAR AT A
DISTANCE: SPACE AND THE
LANGUAGE OF DESIRE IN
*LAS BICICLETAS SON
PARA EL VERANO* BY
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By all accounts, the decade following Franco's death was a major watershed in Spanish history, one marking the country's first successful transition from a totalitarian to a democratic regime. The transition began when all political parties, including those outlawed by Franco (the Socialists and Communists), agreed to cooperate in preparing the new constitution,¹ and it was capped by the elections of 1982, when the Socialist Worker's Party came to power with a majority of the seats in the Cortes after four decades in "exile" (Hooper, 46). By the same year, the autonomy that Catalans, Basques, and Galicians had voted for in the thirties was reinstated and the same was being planned for all other regions. With the repatriation of Picasso's "Guernica" and of Dolores Ibárruri, "La Pasionaria," one sensed that the so-called "two Spains" were being reconciled at last, that the traditional schism between right and left, country and city, had all but dissolved, and that a new socio-economic context had given rise to a new order whose triumph over the "moderado" oligarchy had begun some two decades before.²

An important sign of this reconciliation was the emergence of the Spanish Civil War as a primary subject of general concern. A taboo theme throughout the life of most Spaniards, the war came to dominate the public forum through television, cinema, and all forms of kiosk literature, and thus enjoyed its long-awaited canonization as official history. An example of this phenomenon is *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, a play that depicts life in Madrid during the war and whose extraordinary popularity makes it a hallmark of this period of transition. Fernando Fernán Gómez began writing the script at the time of Franco's death and he won Madrid's "Lope de Vega" prize for it in 1977, when free elections produced the first democratic government in forty years. The play was initially staged at the "Teatro Español"³ in the spring of 1982, and it was held over by popular demand at another municipal theater, the "Centro Cultural de la Villa,"⁴ in the fall, that is, at the time of the Socialist victory. The text was published for wide-scale distribution by Spain's largest editorial company, Espasa-Calpe, in 1984,⁵

the year in which Jaime Chávarri brought out the film adaptation of the work that, by 1985, ranked as the fifth most lucrative movie in the history of Spanish cinema (*Cineinforme*; Larraz, 275).

The official prize and the play's subsequent representation in government-sanctioned theaters, its publication by a mainstream editorial company and success on film, and the string of sell-out performances all point to this play's value as an index of the horizons of the Spanish theater public's expectations at the time of the premiere: horizons, that is, as viewed from the center, for few works could lay greater claim to orthodoxy at a more pivotal moment in the history of Spanish culture.

The centrality referred to here is apparent to a certain extent in the commentary of those who qualify their support for the play by criticizing the author's treatment of the Civil War. Ignacio Amestoy defines the work as a retrospective "sin ira" in contrast to the "irate" response one would expect from a more politically committed writer (Amestoy, 4). José Carlos Plaza, who professes adhering to "un pensamiento más o menos profundo sobre la libertad individual y la necesidad de cambio," agreed to direct the premiere despite his reservations about a piece that he describes as "tierna" and as supposing "ninguna transgresión del orden" (Plaza, 19, 9). If his acquiescence (motivated in part by financial need) may be taken as a sign of the times, so too the statement by the critic who, writing in the right-wing *El Alcázar*, conditions his praise with the reminder that the "partidos republicanos" and not the military were to blame for the Civil War (Díez-Crespo, 35-36).

In view of such observations and keeping in mind that theatrical performance retains something of its ritualistic origins, we may see in the premiere of *Las bicicletas* a certain communion at the center of the various segments of Spanish society precisely when free elections reveal the ideological frontiers of that society to be less than distinct.⁶ This impression is reinforced by the discrepancies among critics who attempt to interpret the work ideologically. Eduardo Haro Tecglen, for example, defines *Las bicicletas* as a "teatro de autor," that is, as a work in which the referential value of dramatic language receives priority over staging techniques, authorship and acting over the role of the director. He contrasts Fernán Gómez's style with the prevailing vogue of the "teatro de director," the triumph of which stems, he claims, from "la pérdida de la propiedad de la burguesía" and from mounting pressure on stage managers to recapture a waning theater public (Haro Tecglen, 36). He thereby implies that the struggle against bourgeois values is channeled most appropriately through works that, like *Las bicicletas*, privilege meaning, a theory that counters José Carlos Plaza's belief in the revolutionary basis of drama that is *experimental* in nature ("teatro de director") and therefore motivated by a preference for technical

innovation.⁷ This discrepancy underscores the neutralizing power of Fernán Gómez's play, which obviously appealed to different critics of contrasting persuasions. It also signals the end of the long-standing controversy over literary commitment that polarized intellectuals during the Franco era and that, with respect to theater, is rooted in the early twentieth-century battle between the *noventayochistas*, who viewed their own writing as transgressive, and Jacinto Benavente, whom the former viewed as normative. The 1988 revival of Benavente's *La malquerida* on the same stage where *Las bicicletas* was first performed is significant in this regard. In presenting the work, Miguel Narros, the director, appealed for an end to the ideological differences that in the past have kept many from acknowledging Benavente's merit as a dramatist.

In view of these factors—the time and place of the play's performance and publication, the breadth of its appeal, and the discrepancies that it mitigates—we may interpret the premier of *Las bicicletas* in 1982 to signal the triumph of a dramaturgy that is inherently normative. The socio-political context is particularly important in this regard, for the premiere coincides with the emergence of a new ruling class whose ideology—conciliatory and eclectic—corresponds in politics to the conformity associated with the play. This coincidence prompts us to investigate further the possibility of a correlation between the extrinsic meaning of the performance and features that are intrinsic to the written text, that is, to identify the premiere's value as an icon of its moment and milieu by describing in detail the way in which the prevailing ideology of that time and place is encoded in the text.

Before we turn to the play's intrinsic elements that support this correlation, a clarification of the term ideology is in order. The notion is to be taken here in its broadest sense, as an adherence not to a specific brand of politics, but rather to a model of reality based on images, myths, and social values, for instance, that informs a specific work of art while corresponding to a mode of thought that is collective, culture-specific, and historical (De Marinis, Pavis, Villegas, and Althusser).⁸ It may be identified in the mechanisms of power and desire that transcend the individual and conscious will of the author, that constitute a community's network of shared expectations while they condition social interaction (Pavis, 76-77). As such, ideology is what bonds the complex macrotext that comprises the socio-economic reality and the arts and within which a given work and its author represent a single pulse. It is a tacit contract that links author and community and that is implicit in the conflicts and tensions basic to the dramatic genre.

Our intention here is to analyze this contract according to this definition and such as it exists in *Las bicicletas*. To clarify, we may rephrase these aims in the form of two basic questions: What is the essential desire that the play activates in the imagination of the Spanish public at this pivotal moment in

its history? What is the attendant ideology that surfaces from the confrontation suggested by its performance between the two most significant moments in 20th century Spain—the demise (1936-39) and reinstatement (1977-82) of democratic rule—and that sustains a work dedicated to one of the most politically explosive events in modern European history? The key to answering these questions lies in those elements that generate a sense of pathos, serving thus as the spectators' point of identification and vehicle for catharsis, and that distance the war as historical fact while foregrounding the event as shared memory (the "nostalgia" mentioned earlier). It lies in the "polyphonic" interplay of space and language that is particular to this play, that makes it a "privileged semiological object" for understanding the desire experienced by a broad spectrum of Spanish society at one of its most important crossroads.⁹

Of foremost importance for understanding this interplay is Fernán Gómez's strategy for encompassing a three-year national tragedy within the temporal and spatial confines of a single performance. He projects the war almost exclusively from within the intimate space of a middle-class family's home during the siege of Madrid. The family thus becomes the collective protagonist through whom the common experience is personalized. The antagonist, on the other hand, is the war that is perceived through sounds that punctuate the background as an impersonal barrier gradually closing in on the home.

The practice of microscoping human experience through the family, although a conventional device, is as important as the fragmentation of the text into seventeen short scenes ("cuadros"), a technique that facilitates a close-up analysis of the community's mood at key moments between the summers of 1936 and 1939. That is, fragmentation allows the author to treat the historical event in terms of its psychological effects and to intensify the audience's sense of pathos. He thereby interrelates social and textual structures semiologically (the family, the short scenes) in order to emphasize the shared psychological trauma at the expense of historical fact or empirical reality.

This trauma evolves primarily within the confines of the dining room, confinement being the basis upon which the play's chief analogy is developed: the family is to the urban population as the dining room to the city under siege. The dramatic space is encoded accordingly. The objects that we see in the dining room—food, drink, the table—suggest a code of social interaction that transcends the immediacy of the home, invoking the "espacio latente" (Bobes, 242-47) inhabited by the community at large. In the context of the home, they derive particular meaning from the shared emotional stress that increases as the siege (confinement) is prolonged. The bottle of anisette is a case in point. In the initial, pre-war scenes, it is a pretext for the community's gathering together to discuss freely their com-

mon concerns. It is associated with the precarious nature of life during war when food becomes scarce and Don Luis, who works for a *bodega*, is forced to trade liquor on the black market to provide for his family. In the aftermath of the Nationalist victory (in the penultimate scene), the bottle signals the family's uncertain future and social isolation—an extreme if not ambiguous form of confinement—on a final, bitter note. With both father and son unable to work because of Don Luis's political background, a friend arrives with a bottle of "Las cadenas," an anisette produced by a rival company, to toast to his own father's transfer to Barcelona.

As the action progresses it becomes increasingly apparent that what constitutes the dramatic space charges it with emotional significance, making it a prime vehicle for generating the pathos referred to earlier. The transformations that the room itself undergoes are critical in this regard, for in them we experience the tragedy as it is reflected in the community's habitat. These transformations are exemplified most notably by: the gun shot that violates the dining room in the fifth scene, a warning to the family to turn out the lights; the shades that are pulled in the tenth, blocking out the daylight; the movement, in scene twelve, from the dining room to the basement, the building's air raid shelter. As we witness this descent (literal and figurative) from an open forum into a dark cell, the family "descends" into a state of absolute solitude: neighbors die or disappear, Manola is widowed twice, and Luis is ultimately left friendless. The darkness and scarcity that paradoxically "fill" the stage convey the characters' sense of vacuity that grows as the community dissipates.

The play's spatial construct, which is thereby encoded in relation to the community's psychological development, acquires the status of a language, as is standard in drama (Ubersfeld, ch. IV), inasmuch as it orders the dramatic action into a meaningful image of reality with a coherent message. In *Las bicicletas*, this language is characterized by an inversion of the normal function of the objects once they are placed in this defamiliarized context, an inversion that creates an ironic distance between the world as we see it and the world as it should be. This is the lesson to be gleaned from the primary signs of the dramatic space—food, the bottle of anisette, the table—that in the first scenes denote a community's experience of bonding, as is customary during peace, yet are subsequently inverted to denote the precarious nature of those bonds during war. The global expression of this inversion is absence: days without light, a home devoid of company, the table lacking in food.

Equally essential to the meaning of space in *Las bicicletas* is the theme of love, which is projected against this backdrop of absence and thereby evokes notions of man's innate will to survive in the face of annihilation. As such, it is instrumental for the discourse of desire that links *Las bicicletas* and Spanish society ideologically at the time of the premiere. The theme contri-

butes to the play's historicity when Doña Dolores and her friends debate the merits of "free love," a popular convention in revolutionary Madrid. It provides comic relief when the adolescent boys discuss the latest erotic novels in the privacy of young Luis' bedroom. It generates pathos when Julio, who is eventually killed, proposes marriage to Manola while bombs explode nearby. And it is purely sensual when Luis meets María in her bedroom at night, and his heavy breathing is heard along with the distant sound of artillery.

The intertwining of love and war through thematic, visual, and audible schemes gains special value when viewed in relation to other major works of twentieth-century Spanish literature. As in Camilo José Cela's novel *San Camilo*, 1936, the adolescent is linked to the play's central irony, that is, to the telescoping of a time of cruelty and despair from the age of innocence, hope, and expectation. The bicycle is fundamental for this irony. Promised by the father to his son in the first scene, it is a gift rendered meaningless by the war. Semiotically speaking, the bicycle functions as do the walls which, in turn, remind us of Bernarda Alba's house in Lorca's celebrated play:

- Don Luis: Pues que [a Luis] le gusta meter mano, ¿no lo estás oyendo?
 Doña Dolores: (*Insistente*) Pero a María.
 Manolita: A María y a quien se le ponga por delante. Si cada vez que me cruzo con él por el pasillo, parece que el pasillo se ha estrechado.
 Doña Dolores: (*Casi en tragedia griega.*) ¡Manolita!
 Manolita: ¿Qué pasa, mamá?
 Doña Dolores: Que eres su hermana.
 Don Luis: Toma, pues por eso.
 Doña Dolores: ¿Cómo que por eso? Pero ¿qué decís?
 Don Luis: Que por eso se cruza con ella en el pasillo: no se va a cruzar con Marlene Dietrich (115).

Here, as elsewhere, the walls are associated especially with Luis. They "collapse" on the teenager, forcing his overzealous hands to seek even Manola's flesh.¹⁰ Like the bicycle, they designate the pathetic frustration of youthful passion.

In passages such as this we learn to view the adolescent as the primary agent of a dialectical opposition—love versus war—that is basic to Fernán Gómez's conception of the dramatic space and is therefore essential to the play's ideology. By various means, the adolescent comes to embody the play's core statement of desire, pure and unrestrained. In his secret conversations with Pablo in the attic, Luis discusses the latest "pornographic" novels and thereby relates the theme of love, albeit humorously, to the question of literature. The connection is reinforced by his predilection for

love poetry, which he reads (his own as well as Bécquer's) to Charo (Cuadro II) and to Maluli (Cuadro XII). In light of these factors, it becomes all the more significant that Luis should appear on the campus of the University of Madrid in the prologue and epilogue, at first speculating on the impossibility of war in such a place and, at the end, noting the irony of his earlier expectations. He serves to intertwine the theme of love with signs of learning, to dramatize the plea for survival through enlightenment that is basic to this work's ideology.

To these literary concerns we must add the question of genealogy inasmuch as it relates to the same primordial desire. Given the emphasis on familial ties, one may conclude that the name shared by father and son is more than coincidental. The meaning of this tie is sharply focused in the last scene when Don Luis responds to his wife's queries regarding the family finances:

- Doña Dolores: No me atrevo a preguntar.
 Don Luis: Es natural. Pero, anda, ármate de valor.
 Doña Dolores: ¿Has estado en la oficina?
 Don Luis: Sí . . . Bueno, más bien he estado en el bar de enfrente. Luisito y yo ya no somos de las Bodegas.
 Doña Dolores: ¿Qué dices? Lo de Luisito puedo entenderlo, pero tú llevas doce años.
 Don Luis: Ya. Pero he fundado ese sindicato.
 Doña Dolores: Pero Luisito no ha fundado ningún sindicato.
 Don Luis: Pero yo le he fundado a él (197).

The association Don Luis makes here between family and economy—he founded a union just as he “founded” his son— leads us from the adolescent to the very heart of the work's ideological framework. If incest through confinement threatens the continuity of the species, restrictions on the free organization of the working class is posited as a parallel danger. The boy and the labor union, based on the same ideal, designate but two of the various social structures that have fallen under the shadow of a single doubt.

A correlation is thereby developed between the play's spatial construct (the home), genealogical patterns (the family), and economic structures (the labor union). Whereas this correlation is aimed at eliciting the audience's emotional response, it also renders the work ideologically coherent. This coherence may be imagined metaphorically as a portrait of desire besieged within a void configured by walls and the war. The statements and activities of young Luis allow us to reconstruct this abstract notion through allegory as the process whereby Eros is delineated as a positive force in dialectical opposition to destruction (Mars) and death (Thanatos).¹¹ The hearth, the family, the oedipal overtones of mother-son relationships (Doña Dolores and

Luis, Doña Antonia and Julio), a reference to Greek tragedy (in the conversation between Manolita and her parents cited earlier) and various intertextual correspondences remind us that these concerns are part of the classical tradition within which the genre has evolved. On the other hand, the extent to which the play foregrounds itself as artistic apparatus demonstrates the work's modernity and needs to be considered as yet another facet of the ideological framework that conditions the play's reception in post-Franco Spain.

The foregrounding referred to here is initially suggested in the prologue, where we find Luis and Pablo at the University of Madrid debating the relative verisimilitude of war as represented in movies and in novels. Luis asks his friend at that point: "¿Te imaginas que aquí hubiera una guerra de verdad?" (48). The question introduces an ironic gap between ours and the characters' understanding of reality, since the university was in fact a major battle ground during the siege of Madrid. The gap is closed in the epilogue when Luis returns to the same place with his father and reflects upon his earlier illusions: [Luis] "¿Sabes, papá? Parece imposible . . . Antes de la guerra, un día, paseamos por aquí Pablo y yo . . . Hablábamos de no sé qué novelas y películas . . . De guerra, ¿sabes? Y nos pusimos a imaginar aquí una batalla . . ." (203). Yet the authenticity of experience is no more confirmed at the end, when the war is treated as the memory of an anticipated impossibility, than it is in the prologue, when Pablo and Luis argue about whether war seems more real in movies or in novels.

The inquiry into the nature and means of representation, a prevalent thread in contemporary Spanish literature and cinema, is developed through these and similar references to novels, poems, plays, and movies. Manola, an actress, is preparing to perform a play based on the siege of Madrid. Her father wanted to write comedies and her brother still hopes to do so. Such references create a pattern that is supported by other key factors: Don Luis's wavering between choleric and melancholic moods, a reflection of his quixotic roots; the landlord's religious statues that fill the basement; the frequent mention of the names of famous Spanish and American actors and actresses; and even the "paseo," a term borrowed from American gangster movies to refer to an occurrence painfully familiar to those who survived the civil war.

Such as they appear in *Las bicicletas*, these features suggest a cross-fertilization of reality and the arts by which both are reduced to the status of mere imagery. They serve as a reminder of the distance between fact and its representation, history and drama. The money that Don Luis is unable to redeem after the war is a case in point. The bills are "estampitas" that, like the statues, movies, or notions of the past invoked by reading or performance, can be invalidated as easily as they are issued. And as these bills, so too marriage. María recalls the facts of history when she states that, during the war,

“eran unas bodas muy fáciles, como las del cine” (192). Like money and divorce, many civil marriages “issued” in the Republican zone were eventually annulled by the military regime.

Yet the relationship between image and reality acquires a deeper meaning if we take marriage and money, family and labor union, to be reflections of a communal desire, and “cine” (as referred to by María), like literature, to be its unreliable mirror. The characters develop this link thematically in their aspirations to write and to act, whereas the book, a key prop, conveys it visually. Luis chases María around the dining room, for example, until Doña Dolores arrives, at which time the boy exits through one door with his arms full of books, the maid through another carrying cans of food (Cuadro V, 95-101). Luis, who pursues books by day and the maid by night, is revealed once again to be the main vehicle of the ideological tensions that inform this work. He brings two human appetites, food and sex, under the sign of a third one, literature.

That is, he suggests that literature, by its very nature and existence, constitutes a statement of desire, a notion that bears considering in relation to the play’s predominant speech act. If we accept the assertion that theatrical discourse is inherently illocutionary,¹² we may recognize the value of those verbal elements—“quizá,” “quiero,” “ojalá,” and verbs in the subjunctive—that, in *Las bicicletas*, cast the text in a hypothetical mode by conveying the anguish of the present as it is subordinated to the uncertainty of the future. Phrases like “en cuanto acabe todo esto” multiply as the play progresses, culminating in the most ethereal of all statements, one that defines conclusively the semiological force of the work’s title. For his new job as messenger boy, his father tells Luis at the end, “te vendría bien la bicicleta que te iba a comprar cuando pasase esto, ¿te acuerdas?” The boy responds by remembering that “la quería para el verano, para salir con una chica” (208). The play’s chief sign of desire—the bicycle that “vendría bien”—is thus linked to a present—the “verano”—that can only be reconstructed as a hypothetical future—“cuando pasase esto”—from the point of view—“¿te acuerdas?”—of a remembered past. Human experience, such as it is portrayed in *Las bicicletas*, is circumvented by memory as a vacuous time of hoping and waiting, and it is inscribed in the play’s discourse as the reiteration of an unfulfilled statement of desire.

Defined in this way, human experience finds its spatial coordinate in the image of a dining room devoid of food: an empty space for a present “emptied” of its meaning. Language undergoes the same process, a fact that shows how historical veracity and literary design are interrelated in the play. As time passes, the response “no sé” is heard with increasing frequency and conveys the community’s growing insecurity regarding truth. Radio broadcasts and newspapers cannot be trusted; people learn to lie even about their own feelings. When the war is over, María claims that she would be happy

to work for María Luisa, the reactionary landlady who represents everything that the maid's people fought against (Cuadro XV, 194). When Don Luis returns from the bank, having failed to redeem the value of bills issued during the war, Doña Dolores insists that "Radio Burgos" confirmed their authenticity. "Decían, decían . . . Bulos, mujer, bulos . . .," he responds (Cuadro XV, 195). Language, emptied of its meaning, becomes a self-serving, hypothetical statement of desire in an uncertain world. It is yet another casualty of war.

These factors lead us back to the fusion of spatial and linguistic codes in *Las bicicletas son para el verano*, a fusion that may be related in conclusion to the prevailing ideology in Spain at the time of the play's premiere. As we have seen, this fusion is realized through various signs that under normal circumstances represent positive values (solidarity, hope) but that are slowly converted here into negative reflections of desire, that is, into expressions of silence and images of absence. The adolescent is the key to this process, for through him the historical event is telescoped from afar and transferred onto the abstract plane of existential conflict. He allows us to envision an ideology that is, at best, only remotely connected to the image of the war as a conflict of classes or religious crusade, an image perhaps truer to historical fact and one that sustains much of the earliest literature written on the theme. Rather, the play's ideology corresponds to a portrait of the ethereal realm of the remembered emotional trauma that gains meaning, like the revelation of a repressed truth, as social and economic conditions change and past political rhetoric loses meaning. It is an ideology shared by a public whose immediate recollection in 1982 was of the war as the quintessential taboo—the primordial absence and definitive silence—that conditioned their perception of reality for nearly forty years and that, like the dining room and language deprived of their utility, was decipherable only in the various negative signs that constituted their external space.

By the same token, it is apparent that the psychological foregrounding of the effects of the war in *Las bicicletas* goes hand in hand with the artistic foregrounding of theater as such, a fact that is equally important for our understanding of the play's ideological consistency.¹³ By emphasizing the primacy of memory and artistic image over past action and empirical fact, the author conjoins the two as a single entity while he proclaims the value of language as the receptacle of communal awareness. In this way, Fernando Fernán Gómez adheres to an ideology rooted in international postmodernism and in the socio-economic reality of post-Franco Spain alike. He reaffirms the interrelatedness of the various discourses that constitute a culture at a given moment in time, the dramatic text being one of the most significant. He also promotes the value of literature for the canonization of events held to be crucial to a community's legacy, an ideology shared by those who militated for the transferral of "Guernica" to the Prado and for the par-

ticipation of all political parties in the negotiations that produced a new constitution. For, in the end, showcasing the legacy of the Civil War on stage, in the Prado, in the *Cortes*, and through the media is a single gesture that serves the interests of a new “official” Spain: that is, of the previously marginalized urban, educated middle class, like Don Luis, whose rise to power began with the demise of the “moderado” order and was consecrated after Franco’s death, and for whom the government-owned theaters and museums would constitute a vital clearing-house for renewing the country’s official image and restoring popular confidence in public administration.¹⁴

NOTES

¹ The first elections after Franco’s death (1977) kept in power the *Unión del Centro Democrático* (UCD) under the leadership of Adolfo Suárez. Suárez had served as the “Ministro del Movimiento” (1975-76) and Prime Minister (appointed by the King; 1976-77) and, according to Carr and Fusi (226), was responsible for achieving “what many had thought an impossible task: the restoration of democracy [and the promise that all major parties, right and left, would participate in the elections] through a gradual process and using the legal instruments inherited from Francoism.” The UCD lost its majority representation in the *Cortes* to the *Partido Socialista del Obrero Español* (PSOE) on October 28, 1982. For an overview of this period, see Carr and Fusi, 207-59.

² Associated with the *mayorazgos* and *señoríos*, the “moderado order” arises in the 1830s under Narváez and in response to Espartero and the urban *progresistas*. Richard Herr notes its decline in the late 1950s resulting from Franco’s modernization of the Spanish ministry and from the development of a “new elite, made up of high government officials, bankers, technocrats, and corporation managers” (260). According to Herr, the decline of this order is a direct result of the restabilization of the country-city axis of Spanish society: “The alienation of the common people of rural Spain from the urban groups holding progressive doctrines [...] was the most important cause for Spain’s political instability in the last two centuries. This alienation arose after the Enlightenment introduced an ideological schism into the ruling groups, and it is disappearing with the integration of the countryside into modern urban culture. Accompanying this process was the rise and fall of the moderado order, which rested on this alienation. If this is the case, it means that Spain is emerging from the era that it entered in the eighteenth century, from what we might call the age of rural-urban disjuncture” (283).

³ Although the rules of competition for the “Lope de Vega” prize stipulate that the winning play be performed in a municipal theater, such does not always occur. Domingo Miras received the award for *De San Pascual a San Gil* in 1974, for instance, although his play is yet to be performed.

⁴ “Premio Lope de Vega 1977, *Las bicicletas son para el verano* hubo de esperar hasta el 23 de abril de 1982, fecha en la que el Ayuntamiento cumplió su contraída obligación de

estrenarla. Se le 'reservó' un plazo relativamente breve, pero el éxito obligó a tomar la decisión de reponerla abriendo la temporada [82-83] del Español. Una inoportuna caída de Agustín González retrasó la fecha de la reposición, que tuvo lugar el 2 de noviembre de 1982. Casi inmediatamente comenzó la historia de las largas colas frente a la taquilla, de los llenos absolutos, e, incluso, de la reventa ilegal y alteraciones del orden público. *Las bicicletas son para el verano* se convertía en uno de los grandes fenómenos del teatro español de nuestros días, no sólo por su texto o la dirección de José Carlos Plaza, sino por su extraordinaria proyección en el público. Llegada la hora de retirar la obra de cartel, para seguir cumpliendo el programa de trabajo del Español, surgió la protesta. Una protesta a la que ha respondido el Ayuntamiento de Madrid trasladando el espectáculo a otra de sus salas, el Auditorio del Centro Cultural, conciliando así la necesidad de mantener el drama de Fernán Gómez y permitirle al Español el desarrollo de su programa" (Preface, *Primer Acto*, 195:21). "Después del éxito popular y de crítica, le ha sido muy difícil continuar representándose, por condiciones específicas del teatro institucional; y que, después, ninguna de las diversas tentativas para llevarlo a la empresa comercial ha podido prosperar (la última por negativa expresa del director José Carlos Plaza que, al encontrarse fuera de España, no ha querido que otras personas llevaran a cabo el trabajo de adaptación a un nuevo reparto, del cual él asume una responsabilidad total)" (Haro Tecglen, 39).

⁵ The play was first published in *Primer Acto*, 195 (Sept. -Oct. 1982). Citations hereafter correspond to the Espasa-Calpe edition, which includes revisions made by the author after the initial performances.

⁶ It should be remembered that the *PSOE* came to power after the convention in which delegates voted to delete the adjective "marxist" from the party's official description.

⁷ "Nuestra ideología en ese momento . . . era la técnica y la experimentación al máximo. . . . Y nos encontramos con que las capas superiores de la sociedad, las que en definitiva manejan las estructuras, eran capitalistas y que nuestro trabajo no tenía para ellas ningún interés al carecer de posibilidades valoradas con dinero" (Plaza, 8).

⁸ "It will appear that it is the play itself which is the spectator's consciousness, for the essential reason that the spectator has no other consciousness than 1) the content which unites him in advance with the play and 2) what this content becomes in the play itself: the new result which the play produces on the basis of this recognition of self of which it is both the image and the presence" (Althusser, cited by Pavis, 91-92).

⁹ Barthes (262): "one can even say that the theater constitutes a privileged semiological object since its system is apparently original (polyphonic) in relation to that of language (which is linear)."

¹⁰ Compare, for instance, the following reference from *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, in which the walls achieve similar meaning through personification: [Martirio, to Adela] "¡Calla y no me hagas hablar, que si hablo se van a juntar las paredes unas con otras de vergüenza!" (Act II, 166).

¹¹ An obvious link is thereby established between *Las bicicletas* and Rafael Alberti's *Noche de guerra en el museo del Prado* (written: 1956; first performed: Rome, "Piccolo Teatro," 1973). In that play, the Civil War is reenacted allegorically by fictional characters who appear in paintings in the Prado Museum. Of particular interest is the scene from Titian's "Venus and Adonis," in which Mars, transformed into a boar, kills Adonis out of jealousy.

12 "In a play the action rides on a train of illocutions" (Ohmann, 83); "Illocutionary action is action on a social plane. It relies for success on those things that make up a society: for instance, definitions of role and relation, stable distribution of power, conventions of intimacy and distance, manners" (Ohmann, 95); "At the base of all illocutions is a society. The rules for felicity, like the rules of grammar, are culture-specific; they regulate intercourse within a particular society" (Ohmann, 102).

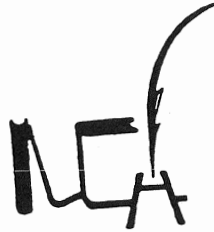
13 For a detailed analysis of foregrounding in dramatic literature, with reference to the Prague school, see Elam.

14 This essay includes portions of a lecture delivered at the annual meeting of the NEMLA (Boston, MA; 2 April 1987) and at the convention of the MLA (San Francisco, CA; 28 December 1987).

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