

MARIÁNGELES RODRÍGUEZ ALONSO, *La crítica teatral en España: del franquismo a la Transición*. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2017. 315 pp.

Semiotics can provide a powerful tool-kit for the analysis of performance and dramatic texts, but it can also give rise to a tendency to work through theoretical frameworks rather laboriously and to make tenuous claims for scientific objectivity. This volume makes fascinating observations about the evolution of theatre criticism in Spain in the period between 1966 and 1982, but follows a problematic model that does not produce convincing overall conclusions and falls short in its 'pretensión globalizadora' (18).

Two introductory chapters set out the context and the methodology. A good case is made for the value of metacritical reflection on theatre reviews, not only for the information they provide about particular productions but also for the insights they offer into ways of thinking about theatre in general. The time frame is selected primarily for aesthetic reasons, as a period that saw 'el quiebre definitivo de las poéticas textocentristas y la conquista irreversible de regiones no verbales para la definición de lo específicamente teatral' (15). The political context is also evoked, but the significance of the landmarks chosen is debatable: the 1966 Ley de Prensa e Imprenta did not abolish prior censorship of theatrical performances, and the relevance of the consolidation of democracy in 1982 to theatrical practice is not made clear. The author has spotted that the political events in the middle of that period did not have much impact on the alleged shift from a text-centred model to a performance-based one: 'El análisis nos ha llevado a constatar que el cambio en el ámbito teatral se produce con anterioridad al cambio político' (16). Why it might have been expected to be the other way round is not explained. A starting point a few years earlier than 1966 might have produced a clearer picture—perhaps the beginning of the period of *apertura*, which is claimed to have been 'fundamental para el cambio en el ámbito teatral' (16).

The corpus of sources of reviews is sensible, comparing non-specialist newspapers (*ABC*, *Triunfo*, *Gaceta Ilustrada* and *El País*) with three theatre journals (*Primer Acto*, *Yorick* and *Pipirijaina*). The selection of productions reviewed is more problematic. Both Valle-Inclán and Lorca are included in recognition of the importance in the transition to democracy of the *operación rescate* (of the early twentieth-century *Avant-Garde*), while Buero represents the *operación restitución* (of works banned under Francoism). The problem with the latter assumption is that very few of Buero's works were banned; when Francisco Ruiz Ramón coined the term in 1986 (see 'Apuntes sobre el teatro español de la transición', in *Reflexiones sobre el nuevo teatro español*, ed. Klaus Pörtl [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer], 90–100), it referred more to the *Generación Realista* and *Nuevo Teatro Español*. The rest of the shows covered are by *teatro independiente* groups (Tábano, La Cuadra and Els Joglars). This is useful and becomes an important focus for discussion of changing conceptions of theatricality, but it tilts the balance of the selection in a way that is not representative of the theatrical panorama of the time. Emerging playwrights such as Alonso de Santos or Ana Diosdado might have been included, or more commercially successful ones such as Antonio Gala or even Alfonso Paso, still a dominant presence in the late 1960s. In general, the sample (sixty-eight productions) is simply not large enough to validate the quantitative analysis to which it is subjected.

The analysis in Chapters 3 and 4 is based upon classifying remarks made by reviewers as referring either to the 'texto literario' (including information about the author, the reputation of the text, the context in which it was written and the issues it addresses, as well as dramatic structure, character and language), or to the 'espectáculo' (acting, design, lighting, movement, music, the director's input and the response of the audience). The balance between the two categories is plotted across three phases (1966–1970, 1971–1976 and 1977–1982) for each of the types of publication and across each of the authors/groups and each of the publications, and is further broken down into the incidence of comments on particular aspects of each category. The headlines are that the proportion of reference to *espectáculo* in the non-specialist press increases from 58% in 1966–1970 to 64% in 1971–1976, then drops back to 56% in 1977–1982, while the