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### Reading Feminist: Re-reading *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* and *La revolución*

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**"READING FEMINIST": RE-READING  
ORQUIDEAS A LA LUZ DE LA LUNA AND LA REVOLUCION**

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**R**ecently I had the good fortune to see the performance of Vicente Leñero's *La noche de Hernán Cortés*, a play that has caused a mixture of admiration and horror among theatregoers, but even more so the staging of it by Luis de Tavira, the *enfant terrible* of Mexican directors.<sup>1</sup> A dazzling postmodern spectacle in all senses, de Tavira's text, following its lead from Leñero's, is a rewriting of traditional historical and theatrical discourse. That is, until it comes to La Malinche, and here, neither playwright nor director seems able to overcome, to deconstruct or to restructure the patriarchal semiotic that weighs so heavily on her person. She remains forever "la chingada," as Cortés takes her from behind, and then casts her aside, in a brief but very vivid and disturbing scene.

I note this as a way of entering one of the topics that concerns me here — that of resistance; resistance to the rewriting of discourse about women, and resistance as a feminist strategy for that very rewriting. But I want to emphasize not only writing, but also "reading" — the need to retrain the cultural "eye" to see, to take in texts from a critical perspective. In the case of the Leñero/de Tavira *Malinche*, for example, it was largely the women I spoke with who were bothered by her. Most of the men, however sensitive or sympathetic, seemed perplexed; and de Tavira himself has argued that he was only being "realistic," for La Malinche is still "la chingada" for most Mexicans.<sup>2</sup> And this in a performance that works very hard to thoroughly deconstruct all other Mexican cultural myths. To understand the importance of "seeing" differently, one has only to compare this *Malinche*, with Rosario Castellanos's in *El eterno femenino* or Sabina Berman's in *Aguila o sol*.<sup>3</sup>

But in the theatre, seeing is also a product of encoding; that is, of what is

presented as stimuli to the eye and the mind. The task for feminist theatre practitioners (be they male or female) therefore, is to structure the stage not simply in new "esthetic" ways, but in ways that purposefully try to de- and then recontextualize the male and the female, women and men, so as to help audiences and playtext readers in learning new ways of "decoding" with a "feminist" eye. By this I mean simply that all texts are, and should be susceptible to "feminist" readings, which will reveal textual and ideological dimensions not always immediately evident, and too often repressive for women. While some would argue that this is to be critically or theoretically reductionist, my sense is just the opposite, that by making the space for such a reading, theatre practice and criticism are enriched, they are made more dialogical, and certainly more surprising. For example, a feminist reading of two productions of Enrique Buenaventura's *La maestra*, one of them directed by the playwright himself, opened up to dialogue whether the text really is about "the teacher," or the town that is devastated by political violence. For the proxemic sign of having the father always frontstage, and his daughter in the foreground, re-enforced the sense of patriarchy's dominance, even when its most violent manifestations were being condemned.<sup>4</sup> And although this is not the only reading possible, it needs a special angle or way of "seeing" for it even to be considered.

In this essay I would like to take two texts written by men, for I think an important task for critics and theorists of Latin American theatre is to submit (or re-submit, as the case may be) its texts to a feminist reading. The texts I have chosen, Carlos Fuentes's *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* (1982) and Isaac Chocrón's *La revolución* (1972) are ones that I have written about before, but through a critical lens that did not take into full view the ideological implications of these texts for women.<sup>5</sup> As I re-read them through different eyes, the results have been at times stunning for me; thus this essay is something of a feminist deconstruction not just of the two plays, but of my own previous texts. Of course, the term "feminist" is itself a term ripe for deconstruction, given its instability and the many ways of conceptualizing and practicing it, not all of them harmonious or compatible.<sup>6</sup>

My own interests and ideological affinity are with gender studies, and the proposition that "male" and "female" are not just biological realities but also social constructs. Perhaps this is why a play like *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* was at first reading so attractive to me, because it seems to be about how our personnae are all image, all fabrication. As so many of Fuentes's texts, *Orquídeas* is a linguistic tour de force, full of word play, puns and intertextual jokes, an irreverent play that dares to take two of Mexico's most beloved female icons — Dolores del Río and María Félix — and turn them into either frustrated chicanas who think they are the movie stars, or the movie stars themselves, old and forgotten in an apartment in Venice, California. Obviously, ambiguities abound and the mirroring effect of women who are actresses, or of women who act at being actresses, of María and Dolores on stage while simultaneously

having images of their films projected onto a screen — all this is intellectually dazzling and theatrically compelling.

There is no question here that Fuentes wants to show to what degree Mexican “reality” is “made” of prefab myths, and the devastating effect this can have on personal and collective identities. On this level, Fuentes is certainly a critic, a “resister,” if you will. Yet on another, there is much to resist in *Orquídeas*, especially as concerns gender — its representation and self-presentation. For example, in the initial stage directions, the playwright indicates that ideally the roles of María Félix and Dolores del Río should be played by the actresses themselves (del Río was still alive at the time). However, and in the absence of actresses who look the part, the two leads can be played by “dos mujeres sonrosadas, rubias y regordetas. En última instancia, y en ausencia de todas las posibilidades anteriores, los protagonistas pueden ser dos hombres” (10). With this, Fuentes immediately makes clear that he conceives of his text as a play on “the real” and the “make-believe,” which is of course the essential play of theatre itself; thus, the tremendous potential for theatricality in the staging of *Orquídeas*. Dressing up, putting on make-up, mirrors, looking, and showing off are fundamental to how this play works, and to why it seems so very “postmodern,” in its seeming denial of a “transcendental signified.” I would like to take Fuentes up on his third option — the one that has men playing women — to briefly explore why in so many ways, *Orquídeas* is much more a **modernist** text, a parody of what it presents, rather than a presentation of “presentation,” and one in which the discourse on women is still very much the same old story.<sup>7</sup>

Cross-dressing is as old as theatre, and its stage function, as well as its sign meaning have varied according to artistic conventions and cultural discourses. Today, it is of great interest to a feminist critique because 1) the theatre is itself costume, make-up and pretense; and 2) because these are also the fundamentals in the construction, deconstruction and possible reconstruction of gender and gendered identities. Thus an all-male staging of *Orquídeas* would seem a very rich opportunity for the exploration of gender issues from a feminist perspective. However, the text makes this hard work; in other words, it is resistant, principally for being conceived as parody, with the playwright standing outside of, and above the world he creates. This is not to suggest that parody necessarily is itself a problem, but in this case, and from a feminist reading, it results in a text that plays **with** and jokes **about** gender, but does not open up spaces for a serious reconsideration of gender. In many ways, *Orquídeas* actually closes these spaces even more tightly.

Those familiar with the text will remember that it is loaded with references to posturing and imposturing, to showing, and seeing, that mirrors and wardrobes full of clothes are important items of the stage setting, that the character of María in particular is constantly changing outfits, and that with each change, she becomes “someone” else, but always another incarnation of the **femme**

**fatale.** This is the very stuff of transvestism, which in itself represents a serious and threatening transgression to gender identities. However, while there is pretense in his **persona**, the transvestite does not function in an unconsciously self-parodic mode. Yet because the characters in *Orquídeas* are made to be parodies of themselves, to have them enacted by men (with the audience knowing that they are men) is to carry the joke one step further. For example, the character of Dolores is throughout the play dressed as a "china poblana," with her typical costume and braids; she even has a favorite plant holder in the shape of a little pig. This rustic "campesina" image is an obvious parody of the celluloid Dolores del Río, but one that the character seems unaware of, for she acts the part with great conviction and little irony; in other words, the joke is on her, and to have her be a he would be to compound the joke, but not to explore why it is a joke in the first place. While the character of María is more conscious of her "irreality," she too is a parody of many other parodies: of Doña Bárbara, of Cleopatra, of Salome, of the vamp who raises her eyebrow in the way that only the "real" María Félix could. So again, to have a man pretending to be a woman who might be María Félix, "arqueando la ceja notoriamente" (38), may be exciting theatrically, but it still works as a doubled-layered parody, built much more at the expense of gendered identities than with the purpose of breaking them down.

That parody is at the heart of *Orquídeas* seems clear to me by its "hidden" plot structure. I say hidden, because at first glance the text seems to reject any traditional plotting, being much more open and multi-voiced. However, underneath this is the very traditional emplotment of the love triangle, and in dramatic terms, of the so-called "domestic melodrama," with its offshoots, the soap opera and the *telenovela*. For most of the action, María and Dolores are the "pareja" in crisis: they argue, insult each other, quarrel and make-up. Isolated from the outside world, they are the archetypal self-engrossed, dysfunctional couple, whose only concern is themselves and their "Mamá," who lives in the apartment above them. Their intimate microcosm is destroyed when a third character, the Fan, arrives to blackmail María and to propose to Dolores that she run away with him. Although Dolores leaves with the Fan, her real motive is to slit his throat with a broken bottle. She kills to protect María and their relationship, but in vain; for thinking she has been abandoned, María commits suicide.

There are both currents of hetero- and homosexual love in the Dolores-María relationship. Of the two, María is the most decidedly male — the "macha mexicana." She smokes "puros," talks dirty and is physically aggressive; she dominates, whereas Dolores is dominated. In this way, the "heterosexual" set-up is insinuated and reinforced. However, the fact that they are of the same sex, that they refer repeatedly to their love and to themselves as "dos reinas" and "la pareja despareja" (the odd couple), the fact that they are physically close to and sensual with each — all this hints at homoeroticism, which would make the fan

a rival of a different sort. Given these plays on "sexuality," adding the dimension of transvestism would seem to throw into question the very nature of that sexuality and of its male/female engendering. But, again, the text resists this, for despite all of this ambiguity and confusion, the paradigmatic "feminine" is what ultimately rules here.

Whether as women, or as men playing women, María and Dolores are obsessed with the things that supposedly obsess women: aging, weight and their appearance, that is, how they appear to the "male" eye. Their identity and well-being are dependent on their reflection, and on that reflection being youthful, beautiful, capable of producing desire. Aging is something to be so feared that Mamá must be protected from knowing that people younger than she have died, lest this remind her of her own advanced years. Indeed, Mamá's horror of aging explains her rejection of her two "daughters" when, as María so delicately puts it, they grew hair in their armpits. This Mamá, who never appears on stage but is ever-present, is egotistical, jealous, vain and above all, fearsome: the archetypal Bitch, a characteristic that Dolores and especially María, have inherited. Their verbal put downs of each other are like knife jabs — short, nasty and painful. They even engage in a "cat fight," rolling on the floor, scratching and pulling each other's hair. Given all the feminine "clichés" here, it is little wonder that when things go wrong, María turns to food (she has quite an orgy of eating after Dolores leaves) and sleeping pills. Cross-dressing in this case would be a case then of men parodying "essentialized" Woman, and largely at the latter's expense.

And this, I think, despite Fuentes's efforts at mocking the whole notion of a "paradigmatic female." In other words, his María and Dolores are parodies of the parodies women have become in Mexico's cultural discourse. There is in *Orquídeas* an awareness that gender is a social construction and that it is repressive, particularly for women. Yet still, because the text seems unable to fully overcome the parodies themselves, Fuentes's option of doing it in drag, while certainly making for exciting theatre and much playfulness, is far less effective, if at all, in problematizing or radically resisting gender construction in ways that a feminist critique would find wholly satisfying or convincing.

The above is not to deny parody its potential role in such a problematization. However, in *Orquídeas* parody becomes an issue of power, of the playwright's power over his characters, who are never set free and end being overwhelmed by a parodic play that takes precedence over all else. Thus the mostly surface value of cross-dressing in *Orquídeas*. There is one point in the text where this becomes all too evident, when Dolores, upon being told of Orson Welles's death, enters into word play with her former husband's last name, and those of H. G. Wells, William Randolph Hearst and Howard Hughes. She ends by saying "H. G. Wells escribe el hombre invisible que es Howard Hughes y Welles (¿cuál adapta a Wells (¿cuál?)" (79). While very clever, this speech is so out of the character's character and so very much in Fuentes's, that here, as

in so many other instances, the stage figures seem but a pretext for exploring something other than who and what they are themselves, and who and what they represent.

Gender and cross-dressing in *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna*, therefore, are also pretexts for something else, something that undeniably can make for a compelling performance. I have not tried to suggest otherwise here, but rather that, like its own insistence on the power of illusion and mistaken identities, this text can easily be taken for something that it actually resists being: a deconstruction of gender identity. Seeing this has turned me into a resistant reader of *Orquídeas*, and although I still find it clever, I am much more quick to spot false orchids under the false light of a false moon.

A feminist reading of Isaac Chocrón's *La revolución* has also made me see that text in a different, certainly more resisting way. But while I am not now as completely taken over by its characters as I once was, looking at them within the frame of gender definitions has helped me to see more clearly how Chocrón, well before most Latin American playwrights, was trying to break down the dangerous boundaries of homophobia set by Judeo-Christian cultures, boundaries that repressively impose a heterosexual gender/sex connection. By putting two gays on stage, by having them openly declare themselves "maricas," by placing them in a cabaret situation that directly involves the actual audience, by having that audience focus only on them — on their life and struggles together —, they become the paradigm of the couple, or "la pareja" in a way that resists the "straight" relationship, without entering into soul-searching about "gayness" or the normalcy of these two men who love and quarrel like all couples. In other words, Gabriel and Eloy are what they are — the former an aging transvestite, and Eloy, his business manager and a waiter at the cabaret.

But while being gay is not an issue within the play itself, it must be in any discussion of *La revolución* based on its reading or viewing by heterosexuals, who are expected to accept as normal something on stage that for many, if not most of them is considered abnormal off stage. In this way Chocrón indirectly forces on the outsider a reconsideration of sex/gender identities, as part of the "revolution" alluded to in the play's title. An important ingredient in Chocrón's strategy is to raise a heterosexual audience's more lurid expectations about supposed "homosexual kinkiness," and then not deliver, as it were, to build up but not satisfy a desire for the "forbidden." He does this primarily through his treatment of cross-dressing, which in this play is not a "staging" option, as in *Orquídeas*, but instead a way of being that also happens to be a way of making a living. In other words, it is integral to the play's textuality.

Gabriel, also known as Miss Susy, is the "show"; he is the she who the audience has come to "see." From the beginning of the two performances (of *La revolución* and of the cabaret act) there is a build up for Miss Susy's entrance. As Eloy says directly to the audience:

Buenas noches... mucho gusto... buenas noches... un placer... ¿ya están todos

aquí?... Sí, creo que sí.... enseguida comenzamos. (**Gritando**) ¡Ah, Miss Suzy [sic], ¿vamos a comenzar? ¡Ya están todos aquí! (**Baja el tono**) Enseguidita viene... debe estar dándose los últimos... ustedes saben cómo son las estrellas... ¡Sí lo sabré yo que trabajé con él casi quince años! (11).

The much anticipated spectacle of a man (él) dressed as a woman (Miss Susy) is, however, a let down, for when the star of the show comes out, to the fanfare of Mendelsson's *Wedding March* and framed by spotlights, it turns out to be Gabriel, dressed casually in khaki pants, a faded shirt with a flowery pattern and wearing sandals. This frustration of erotic desire occurs on various occasions, as Eloy announces the beginning of "la inigualable" Miss Susy's show, only to have Gabriel disappoint him and us (the readers or audience members) again. When Miss Susy finally does make her stage entrance, wearing a long pink dress and a Greta Garbo-like hat, the overall picture is one of "un esplendor marchito y arrugado" (55). There is little to desire here, and to add to this frustration, the audience is actually insulted, as Gabriel/Miss Susy addresses it directly as "Suckers" (57). After a short and rather abrupt monologue, he exits, then comes back in and "undresses." But the stripping is hardly a tease: Gabriel removes his wig, takes out his falsies and throws them up in the air. He then takes off his shoes and hose, and has Eloy unzip his dress. Underneath are Gabriel's usual clothes, the khaki pants and flowery shirt. There is nothing sensual, titillating or even parodic here. What Gabriel does is to "undress" fictions: that there is something forbidden and deviant about transvestites; that the homosexual transvestite is something to gawk at; that paying customers somehow can buy, that is, possess, the will of the performer. Said another way, Gabriel resists the text that has been written for him by straight audience members, and by the capitalist society that so depends on homosexual taboos. This rebellious act is, of course, also part of the play's "revolution."

The only dressing up that Gabriel does in "his show" is as Madame Chan the fortune teller, a transformation effected with minor props, such as a pair of gaudy eye glasses and, ironically, as a "man." Having had all his dresses stolen by no-good male lovers, Gabriel finds that the only outfit left for him is the one Eloy brings on stage: the traditional one of the male waiter. Eloy acts as his dresser, making Gabriel into a mock version of himself; that is, of someone imprisoned in the stiffness of his outer garb, of someone whose clothing reflects his role as servant to others. The "masculine" in this case is a sign of and for repression. Gabriel rejects both it and the "mock" or epidermal "feminine," the dressing and undressing of the "female" body for trade and profit, as well as for heterosexual pleasure. This is his revolution, and as such, it represents an important strategy in the play's resistance to established sex and gender identities.

However, this is not to say that the supposed "feminine" is not a quality associated with Gabriel. And it is as I begin to focus on this that my resistance

to the play begins. As in *Orquídeas*, the couple dynamic here depends on binary oppositions, on one of the partners assuming the male, and the other the female role. So while Eloy is recognized as gay, he operates on the “masculine” principle of domination, of rationality and of profit-making. He is the one who, according to Gabriel, brokers in human flesh, who sees all as a business deal without consideration of the human beings involved. Eloy sees himself as the stronger of the two, and accuses Gabriel of relishing the role of victim (“Te encanta ser la víctima” [77]), the archetypal female pose of weakness and passivity. And there is indeed much in Chocrón’s conceptualization of Gabriel that reinforces many of these essentialist notions about women, and even more so about the stereotypical effeminate homosexual, or the so-called “loca.” His prissy mannerisms, his speech (for example, his always calling Eloy “querida” and “mi amor”), the fact that women identify with him (or so says Eloy, who calls Gabriel “tan femenina” (45), plus the fact that most of Gabriel’s role models and idols are female (Cleopatra, rumberas, Greta Garbo) — all of this comes very close to making him a confirmation rather than a negation of socially constructed images of sex/gender essentialisms.

With the character of Gabriel, Chocrón walks a thin line between radical and traditional imagining, where in the risky venture of normalizing the homosexual, women and the feminine often are stereotyped or vilified. In fact, they are completely excluded in *La revolución*; its cast ends by being “all-male,” given Gabriel’s refusal to totally assume a crossed-dressed identity. Although women are not speaking subjects in this play, they are, however, often the “subjects” of the two men’s utterances, but in such a context that they become objects, and often quite negative ones. For example, Eloy’s mother is for Gabriel someone to be pitied and scorned, for being overly-protective, too solicitous of his friends and for never doubting that her son is the respectable bank employee she thinks he is. There are even hints that her “motherliness” may account for Eloy’s sexual preferences, which can go either way, something that Eloy seems to think makes him the better of the two, a valuation that he assumes the audience shares. At the end of *La revolución*, when Gabriel has come out with a rifle and starts shooting wildly, Eloy speaks of himself — “No te he creído” — and of the audience — “No te hemos creído” (78) — as if they were allies in their rejection of Gabriel. “La loca” is exiled from the circle of confidence, for being a man who is too much like a woman. But ironically, at times Gabriel also seems to be a “womanish” man who cares little if nothing for or about women. As he says, they have been but little parentheses in his life:

Lo que quería aclarar es que muy de vez en cuando aparecen señoras. Traídas por los otros, no por mí. Mis experiencias con ellas, y fueron unas cuantas experiencias, terminaron abruptamente, cuando una me dio un hijo. El chofer de camión de quien les hablé hace rato (44).

Seen within this frame, *La revolución* could be construed as a revolutionary dead-end for women, something that may be obscured by the play's daring both in its challenge to homophobia, and in its compelling play-within-a-play. As with *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna*, a feminist reading has made me more conscious of the dangers of only reading surface structure, of falling for "performance" alone. However, there is one important factor here that makes *La revolución* a text very different from Fuentes's: Chocrón does not so much seem to be parodying or having fun with, as he seems to be trapped by the male/female, masculine/feminine dualities that have been so internalized in our conceptualization of human relationships. Like *Orquídeas*, *La revolución* is plotted along the lines of a "couple drama," with the two characters spending almost all of their time on stage reminiscing about their past, about their love affairs, alternately being tender and savage with each other. They are "la pareja" whose crisis also ends in "domestic" violence. Because of the cabaret setting, the violence in *La revolución* is certainly more public, but even in the Fuentes text the audience's presence is repeatedly acknowledged: María and Dolores are also putting on a "show." Although Chocrón means to upset the standard sex/gender identity of the couple by making his a gay one, the problem is that even then "coupleness" still remains a power struggle, with a strong (male) and a weak (female) partner, a bitter and devious negotiation for profit and self benefit, a "war of the roses" with physical and verbal abuse for lethal weaponry. The gay relationship here reiterates too much the heterosexual paradigm by making of Gabriel such an obvious receptacle of and for the "feminine." In other words, while *La revolución* offers another way of thinking of the sexual make-up of couples, it is less able to re-image their en-gendered dynamics.

This is not to say that Chocrón has not tried for this re-imaging (something which I believe Fuentes has not), but rather that his failure is proof of how deeply engraved these age-old images are onto our mental maps, as well as the master narratives that help keep them in clear and powerful focus. Although clear may not be the best choice of adjective in this case, for Chocrón's focus of and on Gabriel is in the end blurred, and contradictory. He is the paradigmatic "loca," with all the giddiness and histrionics that implies; he seems to reaffirm rather than challenge popular (mis)conceptions about gays. By the same token, Gabriel's "femaleness" can be read as a subtle albeit unconscious misogyny. However, Gabriel is not so easily deciphered, for he is also the voice of revolution in the play. He is the one who wants to say goodbye to Miss Susy, to make something "significant" happen by forcing Eloy and the audience to take action for change:

¿Qué importa pretender con tal de creer en lo que se pretende? ¿No me entiendes? Oyeme, existe una urgente, muy urgente, necesidad de que volvamos a ser personas pensantes... Es muy urgente, Eloy. ¡Tírate! (46).

Gabriel, the feminine force of the couple, the feminine power of *La revolución*, displaces the masculine as the sign for strength. Yet his revolution is self-defeating, for in his wild shooting spree, he accidentally wounds himself. Eloy tries to shoo the audience away, insisting that "Aquí no ha pasado nada" (79); we know otherwise, but also that with Gabriel's death, it is "la loca" who has paid the price for transgression, both political and sexual. Taken a step further, as I feel a feminist reading must, this can also be decoded as a punishment of the "femenine" which dares to be subversive, which would assume a new role in the emplotment of revolutionary tales. So in the end, Gabriel and *La revolución* both resist (the heterosexual set up) and are to be resisted (for their potentially anti-feminist, or a least anti-female ideology).

I say potentially because I am here dealing with written playtexts, whose staging will ultimately rest on a given director's magical transformation of them into live performances. The results will and have varied, for ultimately it is, despite the "Sontagian" admonition to the contrary, a matter of interpretation. Both *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* and *La revolución* could have feminist stagings (to the best of my knowledge neither of them has), but only if they are first read with and through a "feminist" eye.<sup>8</sup> Certainly there is no one way of "reading feminist," but any way of doing it will help us to resist texts that are seductive but dangerous for women, or that are liberating for one repressed group, but possibly repressive for women. My re-reading of *Orquídeas a la luz de la luna* and of *La revolución* has shown me the importance of this, but it also had made me acutely aware of how difficult it will be to find new paradigms for conceiving of and living out our sexual and engendered identities, of how easily we are controlled by the ones already in place even when we want to break loose of them.

#### NOTES

1 See the published text of *La noche de Hernán Cortés*, as well as the introduction by Luis de Tavira, "Vicente Leñero: o teatro o silencio," in which he talks about his direction of this and other of Leñero's plays.

2 I am indebted to the many women theatre practitioners I had the pleasure of spending time with in the summer of 1992, especially to Estela Leñero, for her perceptive and candid commentaries.

3 Sandra Messinger Cypess's excellent *La Malinche in Mexican Literature. From History to Myth* is rather a definitive answer to those who would say that there is no ideological baggage behind representations of La Malinche.

4 The performances were sponsored by the University of California Humanities Research Institute at Irvine, as part of a conference on "The Other in Latin American and Chicano Theatre." The second performance was directed by Jorge Huerta, UC/San Diego. Sue-Ellen Case, of UC/Riverside, was part of a panel of mostly male commentators, and it is thanks to her very acute vision that the issue of gender was even brought up.

5 See Nigro, "A Triple Insurgence: Isaac Chocrón's *La revolución*," and "Pop Culture and Image Making in Two Latin American Plays."

6 The bibliography on feminist theory is extensive. In theatre, refer to Sue-Ellen Case, ed. *Performing Feminism. Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, and to Lynda Hart, ed. *Making a Spectacle. Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women's Theatre*.

7 I owe much to Claudia Ferman's study *Política y posmodernidad: hacia una lectura de la anti-modernidad en Latinoamérica*, in which she convincingly makes the argument that Fuentes works in the modernist parodic mode, that is, from the outside looking in, rather than becoming and sharing the views of the many postmodern voices.

8 I know that *Orquídeas* has been staged in Mexico in drag; according to my source, this is the only staging it has had. His analysis of it would not indicate that in any way it had feminist implications, but rather, the drag was more a surface element, a performance strategy. Of course, not having been there I cannot comment on how the cross-dressing was treated, or received. However, from conversation with someone who was there, it seems not to have brought up any issues about gender, or the political/ideological possibilities of cross-dressing.

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