
LETTERS

THE EDITOR:

Reading the recent issue of TDR "devoted" (?) to Latin American theatre produced in me a certain amount of anger and a good deal of amusement.

(1) *Anger*: I don't wish to go into a discussion of Richard's polemics or Joanne's well-intended statements, or the omissions, etc. The anger has a very simple, concrete origin: *the utter lack of seriousness with which this issue was conceived and approached*. It's neither serious nor professionally responsible to announce an issue devoted to Latin American theatre, then later to devote it to film, Grotowski, LeRoi Jones. I might have found myself in full agreement with the way in which Latin American theatre was approached critically, to the point of concluding that *it doesn't exist*, had this been done in a serious, complete, and documented form.

(2) *Amusement*: It's pretty funny to hear accusations of "conformism," "reactionism," and "cultural colonialism" coming from people who, at the hour of judgment, adopted the ancient, traditional, and "colonial" North American custom of ignoring the true politico-cultural context, applying one's own rigid prejudices, *not knowing the language*, and paternalistically advising, from a library, how to make revolution.

Fortunately, amusement ultimately won out over anger.

I suggest that the editors of TDR learn Spanish and that during their next trip to Latin America they don't devote themselves solely to drinking, seeing what is picturesque, and meeting good people.

Jorge Díaz
Madrid

T46 was conceived and developed by Richard Schechner in full seriousness. His interpreter during his Latin American trip was Joanne Pottlitzer, head of the Theatre of Latin America in New York, guest editor and main translator for the issue. I take re-



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sponsibility for adding at the back of the magazine, after 130 pages of Latin American material, critiques of Grotowski and Jones—just as in TDR's film issue (T33), we published the text of Viet Rock as a supplement. As for "advising, from a library, how to make revolution," my Comment said nothing about forms of political action—but Mr. Diaz, a Chilean, wrote from his home in Franco's Spain, while Allende fought for and won power.—E.M.

THE EDITOR:

You and Mr. Richard Schechner have done a great wrong to the Latin American theatre with your preface and his interview in T46. We, in Latin America, are rather used to fighting against U.S. envoys who openly declare themselves imperialists; however, it is much more difficult to fight against people like you both who present yourselves as friends trying to help us take our first steps in theatre arts—but oh, what a pity!—we are only poor natives from south of the Rio Grande, so why waste an issue of TDR on such a poor subject. I am sure it would do you a great deal of good if you could understand that you possess the same kind of imperialistic thinking that is sometimes denied in your magazine. You think that everything in art is yours. If we use a stage, a garage, a truck, you think we are imitating you; we should try to find another place to perform. You don't understand that in our Latin America we developed many new techniques, devices, and forms long before you did it here. The only problem is that you have in your hands all the international information media: UPI, AP, ANSA, FP, none of which is Brazilian. If a stupid, vulgar thing like *Che!* is presented here, immediately all the international news agencies spread the news all over Latin America saying that certain actors and actresses were arrested on grounds of immorality. And we know that they were simply fucking onstage. Nothing so revolutionary; as you see, we also know those techniques very well. In fact, it seems that we know them so well, that we do so much fucking in our countries, that your government found it necessary to send Mr. MacNamara (whom we also know by his other name; Uncle Scrooge MacDuck) to our countries to distribute free pills.

It is true that Mr. Schechner did not see theatre in Brazil. He himself declares so in his interview. That is his problem; but it is our problem not to allow him to say that there is no theatre in Latin America, for the simple reason that he did not want to see it. He did not even want to hear about it. I remember very well a lecture he delivered at the Aliança Francesa in São Paulo. He told us about his experiences with "guerrilla theatre" that he had done in Grand Central Station and other places in New York. He was very happy and excited because we showed a great deal of interest in his experiences. He thought he was revolutionizing the Brazilian theatre just by giving us the idea of doing theatre in the streets. He was so excited that he didn't even notice that many actors and directors who were there listening to him had been engaged since 1956 in all kinds of theatre in the streets: theatre during political meetings, theatre as political meetings, theatre for peasants in the open air, theatre in factories, etc. Even though we told him our experiences, he preferred to ignore them so that he could feel better as an innovator.

No one has the right to do what Mr. Schechner did. No South American would have the right to come to New York, see just a few plays, like *Dionysus in 69*, for instance (which had its impact in U.S. theatre, but would have little importance in Brazil), and go back to his country saying that there is no theatre in the U.S.

Another imperialistic point of view supported by Mr. Schechner is that we have to be folkloric in order to be authentic. We have to do death rites and *macumba* in order to be Brazilian. Why doesn't he apply that same reasoning to himself? Why doesn't he put on plays about Apache death rites? Simply because he himself is utilizing an imperialistic way of thinking: we have to give you minerals and you give us machines; we give you coffee, lettuce, and tomatoes and you give us refrigerators and airplanes; we give you oil wells and you give us back gasoline. Of course, you establish the prices. We give you folkloric death rites and you give us "international good theatre, made in U.S.A." Of course, you establish the aesthetic standards.

Mr. Schechner insists on the fact that we try to imitate American theatre just because he