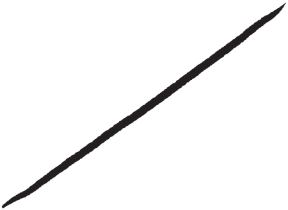


PANORAMA *OF GÉNEROS POPULARES* **DURING THE PORFIRIATO ERA**

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Abstract: In writing an introductory study on the recovery and publication of 12 popular plays from the Porfiriato era, located in the collections of the General Archive of the Nation and the National Library of México, two questions arose: the theatrical genre to which they belong, and consequently, which genres of 19th-century popular theatre influenced the recovered works. To this end, a chronological criterion places the 12 plays within the period of Mexican theatre history marked by the creation of the Mexican Society of Authors (1905-1906). The influence of the Spanish *género chico* on the Mexican plays may be evident, but not unquestionably due to the predominance of the Classic *Género Chico*, but rather from its manifestation as variety shows (*varietés*), lowbrow entertainment (*género ínfimo*), and revues, and the free-flowing influence of *vaudeville*, whose stage in Spain, and therefore in México, was influential from the 19th century until the first decade of the 20th. Meaning that the discourse of the scriptwriters of the Porfiriato flows from a grotesque mechanism of cultural criticism, inherited from more than one popular theatrical genre.

Keywords: Mexican theatre history, General Archive of the Nation, National Library of México, copyright, *género chico*, vaudeville, *género ínfimo*, revue, *varietés*, revista.

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1. The collection of Porfirian Mexican plays

With the intention of forming a collection of popular plays from the Porfiriato period aimed at a publication for dissemination, it was possible to locate 12 works in the holdings of the National Library and in the Literary Property Fund of the General Archive of the Nation, written between 1899 and 1910. The set of plays is heterogeneous and significant as an indicator of the popular theatricality of the Porfiriato, diversifying into 6 revues: *La cuarta plana*. Revue by Pedro Escalante Palma and Luis Frías Fernández, premiered in 1899; *¡Qué descansada vida...!* Revue by Rafael Medina and Juan Manuel Gallego, premiered in 1904; *El cabaret de Diabolina*. Comic-danceable devilry by Alberto Michel, premiered in 1906; *F. I. A. T.* Nonsense by Rafael Medina and José F. Elizondo, premiered in 1907; *La Onda Fría*. Comic-lyrical satire by José F. Elizondo and Humberto Galindo, premiered in 1909, and *El Pájaro Azul*. Modernist satire by José Ignacio González and Julio B. Uranga, premiered in 1910. 2 comedies: *Rendido al enemigo o La Bella Lucerito*. Comic-lyrical plaything by Carlos M. Ortega, premiered in 1907, and *El rosario de Amozoc*. Lyrical *sainete* by Humberto Galindo, premiered in 1909. The comedy-vaudeville *El figurín de París*. Comic-danceable-sportive humorous piece by Alberto Michel, written during June of 1908, and 3 parodies: *La vecindad de la Purísima*. *Sainete* of Mexican customs by Eduardo Macedo premiered in 1898, inspired by the *sainete* *Pepa la frescachona o El colegial desenvuelto* by Ricardo de la Vega; *Crudo*

Invierno. Mythological nonsense by Ignacio Baeza and Luis Andrade, premiered in 1910, with motifs from the opera buffa *Orphée aux Enfers* by Crémieux and Halévy, and *Chantecler* (*Su Majestad el Gallo*). *Zarzuela* by Benjamín Ortiz written during June of 1910, four months after the fable *Chantecler* by Edmond E. Rostand, premiered at the Théâtre de la Porte Saint-Martin, Paris, in February 1910.

2. The Mexican Society of Authors (1905-1906)

The collection of compiled plays, except for the *sainete* *La vecindad de la Purísima* and the revue *La cuarta plana*, produced before 1904, are linked to the creation of the Mexican Society of Authors (Quiroga, 443-450), whose founding was a consequence of the dispute between Pancho Cardona, the actor-impresario of the Teatro Renacimiento and the Arcaraz Hnos. company of the Teatro Principal, over the representation in México of the “Treaty of literary reciprocity between México and Spain” through which the Society of Spanish Authors would export the entire production of *zarzuela chica* and *género ínfimo* to a single company, granting it exclusivity for premieres.

With this intention, Cardona founded the Unión de Autores, S. A., to bring together Mexican theatrical authors and musicians and ensure union representation to obtain the aforementioned “Treaty of literary reciprocity,” secured after various trips and agreements in Spain.

Provided with a shelf of Spanish plays, Pancho Cardona obstructed the premieres at the Teatro Principal from February 1904, an aggressive behavior that motivated the dissent of numerous members dissatisfied with the turbulent figure of the Unión de Autores, who, from the 15th, regrouped as the Sociedad Mexicana de Autores. And by May 23rd, the still members of the Unión de Autores Mexicanos or Sociedad Cardona Illanes resolved to merge with the Mexicana de Autores into a single guild, the Sociedad Mexicana de Autores Dramáticos y Líricos, whose first premieres at the Teatro Principal were due to the pen of Rafael Medina: the revue *Chin-Chun-Chan*. Chinese conflict in 1 act and 3 scenes, written in co-authorship with José F. Elizondo with music by Luis G. Jordá, premiered on April 9th, and on September 24th, in the same theatre, the premiere of *¡Qué descansada vida!* Revue signed in co-authorship with Juan Manuel Gallego and music by maestro Luis G. Jordá (Olavarria, 2562-2564).

Pancho Cardona’s negotiation with the Society of Spanish Authors ended up canceled when Pedro del Villar, the proxy of the Arcaraz Hnos. Company, acquired the renewal of the contract for 1905 at a price of 5,000 pesetas per month: the Teatro Principal recovered the golden vein of Spanish plays. However, Cardona supplied the plays acquired in Spain to two zarzuela seasons opened

at the Teatro Renacimiento, of which he was the owner, the first from July to December 1905, and the second from January to March 1906; finally, both seasons were abruptly closed since, without valid contracts for ownership of the zarzuelas, Pancho Cardona had to agree to the seizure of works and payment of onerous fines, in addition to suffering the resignation of the leading performers, Soledad Álvarez *La Morronguita* and Rosa Fuertes in 1905, Úrsula López and Pilar Leredo in 1906, and to exchange the *zarzuela chica* performances for Mexican plays, among these, belonging to the second season of 1906, the comic-danceable devilry *El cabaret de Diabolina* by Alberto Michel.

Although the establishment of the Sociedad Mexicana de Autores Dramáticos y Líricos guaranteed the articulation of the mandate of Pancho Cardona's Unión de Autores Mexicanos: the defense of the "aggrandizement and progress of national dramatic art," this vocation did not pertain to the Teatro

Principal, as it discarded national works from its stage starting from the second lawsuit of 1906, thus excluding the members of the board of directors of the Sociedad Mexicana de Autores: president Rafael Medina, vice-president Alberto Michel, treasurer José F. Elizondo, and the board members, the instrumentalist musicians Luis G. Jordá, José Austri, and Alfredo Romero Campa.



Virginia Fábregas portrayed as Casiana, the cook of *La vecindad de la Purísima*. No imprint. Postcard. (Gelatin/chlorobromide. 9 X 14 cm.) Col. Carlos Villasana and Raúl Torres

Nor did it pertain to the Teatro Renacimiento¹, since from its purchase and renovation by the artistic couple Fábregas-Cardona, this hall, the most elegant and economical in the city, was a nucleus of Porfirian Frenchification by being the showcase for *vaudeville*, for Spanish High Comedy, and to a lesser extent for Mexican drama.

The exclusion of Mexican plays from the stage of the Teatro Principal led to hostility between the members of the Sociedad Mexicana de Autores and Pancho Cardona: without access to *La Catedral de la Tanda* it was infrequent to access the luxurious hall of vaudeville and High Comedy, which explains that from 1906 the Mexican plays took root in the so-called wooden playhouses or *jacalones* such as the Teatro Riva Palacio, administered by the instrumentalist composer José Austri, the Teatro María Guerrero of the Lelo de Larrea company, the Teatro Guillermo Prieto led by the comic actor Joaquín Pardavé, and among others the Teatro Apolo, where the old actor Miguel Inclán sustained *tandas* of *género chico*, succeeded by the actor-impresario Leopoldo Beristáin *El Cuatezón*, famous for the puns and tongue twisters of his impersonation as the Indian Chema.

3. The comedy of Maximilian in the Porfirian *sainete*

La vecindad de la Purísima. The picturesque Madrid of the initial *género chico* belonged to a modest street existence aroused towards the end of the reign of Isabel II, when from 1866 the first café-theatres settled in the peripheral neighborhoods to compete in three years with the official theatres whose sole function “(long, expensive, eclectic, and protocolary)” was discarded before the democratic values of the new model of urban leisure, whose format “‘a real per play’ (cheap, brief, amusing, and informal)” formed a public which, hero of the Glorious Revolution of 1868, witnessed a *género chico* of revolutionary dissemination, reformulated in the reality of the new bourgeois social order of the Bourbon Restoration of 1874 (Mejías, 2017, p. 105).

The popular condition of street rectitude of the initial *sainete* of the *género chico*² endures in the neighborly honesty of the *sainete* *La vecindad de la Purísima* by Macedo y Arbeu, set in a span of the Mexican social course in which the discarded Second Empire of Maximilian of Augsburg survives, symbolized in the family of the former “grand equerry” of the Austrian army, a remembered character whose

1 The name of the Teatro Renacimiento was likely due to the Parisian *Théâtre de la Renaissance*, which, along with the *Vaudeville*, the *Gymnase*, the *Variétés*, and other small theaters and café-concerts, became vaudeville halls starting in 1870, joining the halls of the *Palais-Royal*, the *Nouveaux*, and the *Attnée comique*, at a time when vaudeville had lost the *couplets* and critics classified it as “any cheerful work that, without literary, psychological, or philosophical pretensions, was based on situational comedy” (my translation; Gidel 72).

2 The *género chico* adopted from the eighteenth-century *sainete* of Ramón de la Cruz the authentic portrait of the popular Madrid inhabitant, dictated by the anecdote of daily reality, without criticism or praise.

family prospers upon the realization of the longed-for marriage of the daughter, Magdalena, to escape from the economic bankruptcy of the failed empire to the new flourishing order of the Restored Republic of Benito Juárez, materialized with the stable bourgeoisie of the presidentialism of Porfirio Díaz.

The *sainete* by Macedo and Arbeu parodies the *sainete Pepa la frescachona o El colegial desenvuelto* by Ricardo de la Vega, whose original premiere took place at the Teatro Lara in Madrid, in 1886, about the visit of the seminarian Moisés to a Madrid tenement house where he sheds his religious disguise to rescue his beloved “little chick” Laura. She lives locked up due to her father’s jealousy, Brigadier Torrente, and to rescue her, Moisés exchanges her in the room for a partying friend, Fernando, a *señorito* frequented by the spinster tenants, the Verdecilla sisters. When the Brigadier finds the intruder, a fight ensues to which the neighbors rush. Moisés does not miss the opportunity to obtain Laura’s hand, unmasking himself before everyone as a brave being. Moisés’s adventure unfolds as the extraordinary event of the daily life governed by Pepa, the concierge and former wet nurse of Moisés who, in addition to attending to all the neighbors, is the intermediary that facilitates the paternal emancipation of the young Laura. The protagonism of Moisés, which displaces the *sainetesque* daily life of the neighbors to the background, allowed in México the actress Josefina Duclós to premiere *Pepa la frescachona* as a comedy, in the central Teatro Hidalgo, in 1890.

In Macedo’s tenement house, conurbated to the Salto del Agua avenue—now Eje Lázaro Cárdenas—the tenants interact from dawn until noon of an ordinary day in which they express their status and trades, arts, tricks, and weaknesses: the morning purchase of food and laundry comments on the high cost in relation to the new metric measures incompatible with the usual weight measures; the lack of water despite paying the contribution to the City Council; the arrival of the garbage cart, followed by the policeman zealous about the cleanliness of the patios; the arrival of the *cambiador* or bartering merchant to whom the neighbors offer the pawned and already devalued items of doña Lupe, a *castor*³ with sequins and the riding chaparreras of the former Major, and emphasis on the usual debt of the preparatory students for clean clothes and doorman services, services offered and not charged by the self-denying doorkeeper Policarpa: all neighborly anecdotes expressed with the native speech of each character, the critical essence of the *sainete*, here articulated with the comedy of the courtships of a new generation divided between provincial students and young apprentice tradesmen.

3 The *castor* is the sequin-embroidered skirt of the “china poblana” dress, attire with which the *jarabe* was danced as part of the finale of benefit performances, where artists were honored at the end of the theater season, receiving gifts from the public and the total box office collection.

The comedy interspersed in the *sainete* tells of doña Lupe, former lady-in-waiting of honor to Empress Carlota and wife of the Major, who is unaware that her daughter Raquel is attracted to Pancho, one of the three sly students who trick the one suspected of being a wealthy firstborn, the naive Serafin, doña Lupe's favorite to start a courtship with Raquel, but Serafin is only worried about memorizing the key formulas for school exams. Another comedy tells of the Major's servant, the impetuous Encarnación who opportunely perseveres until capturing the sympathy of Casiana, doña Lupe's cook.

Although Pancho wins Raquel's love, revealing himself only at the end of his conquest as the fortunate son of a landowner, and the brave Encarnación Casiana's heart, the happy ending is only so if the everyday overflows, the unaccustomed, the fantastic element of the melodrama: due to a date error, the landlady Policarpa has prepared a voting booth: then the table prepared with paper and ink serves as a podium for the unforeseen pre-*esperpento* characters of the tenement landlord, the cyclist don Expedito, the pettifogger don Timoteo, the deaf clerk of a Minor Court, and a myopic official—all smokers and drinkers—whose mission is to search an abandoned dwelling where the only thing they seize is a shoe. The denouement occurs delirious after the fight between the jealous Encarnación and the carpenter Trinidad, drunk and affable husband of Policarpa, who, with their quarrel, run over the landlord with the officials, previously soaked with the water that the cook Casiana had thrown at a bird escaped from its cage.

In exchange for a cynical Moisés, hesitating between abandoning the timid Laura and turning for the attractive plump concierge Pepa, without a defined main character, Macedo atomizes the intrigue of *La vecindad* into subplots: the *sainete* of the tenants' daily life allows the evolution in segments of the comedy presided over by doña Lupe, highlighted among the sum of melodramatic elements that disconcert the accustomed standard day. Eduardo Macedo aligns himself with Tomás Luceño, the renovator of the *sainete* of a picturesque, formal, and modest Madrid, whose *sainete Cuadros al fresco*⁴, premiered in 1870, outlined the portraitist identity of social criticism originating from the *género chico* (Zurita, 1920, 17-21).

The tenement patio of the lyrical *sainete* allows instrumental freedoms: in the patio of *Pepa la frescachona*, from a room, a student pianist provides music for the tenor songs performed by Moisés: the prayer from Rossini's *Moses*, a romance

4 In *Cuadros al fresco*, the movements of the various residents and visitors of a hidden street in Madrid are displayed, from dawn to noon, among whose premises a betting house is concealed and where swindlers wander, hooking the unsuspecting to pass the time, among them a former revolutionary who, while watching the military parade, manages to have the swindler apprehended.

from Puccini's *Il trovatore*, the romance from Gounod's *Faust*. In *La vecindad de la Purísima* string music predominates, performed by barber bandoneon players, and by the students who strum the guitar and mandolin in praise of a little song by the timid Raquel, for whom they accompany her performance of the sicaliptic tango "El morrongo"⁵, about which Raquel comments, as a good Mexican soprano who appreciates herself, that her real inclination is opera. And, if in *Pepa la frescachona* the students play the Royal March or Marcha Granadera, the Spanish National Anthem on the piano to warn Moisés of the Brigadier's proximity, in *La vecindad* the students sing the Mexican National Anthem, as a demonstration of triumph and to carry the delicate Serafin on their shoulders to the handball court, after arduous arguments favoring physical exercise. The apotheotic finale that gathers all the characters, emblematic of the *sainete*, in Macedo's *La vecindad* is celebrated with the *sones* and waltzes of an itinerant organ grinder musician.

4. The *género ínfimo* of the Quintero brothers – A precursor of Porfirian *ínfima* comedy

The *sainete* *La vecindad de la Purísima* by Macedo fits the canon of the classic *género chico* produced during the period of splendor, between 1890 and 1899, not so the comedies *Rendido al Enemigo* o *La bella Lucerito* by Carlos M. Ortega, *El figurín de París* by Alberto Michel, *El rosario de Amozoc* by Humberto Galindo, and *Crudo invierno* by Ignacio Baeza and Luis Andrade, since these plays, written between 1907 and 1910 coincide with the period of fin-de-siècle decline, from 1900 to 1915, the span of the new artistic reality of the *género ínfimo*: "a form that broke with tradition and that historical perspective made seen as a corruption of the [chico] genre; [whose authors and plays] were therefore left out of the historical discourse" (my brackets; Jassa and Mejías, 2007, p. 44).

With the 20th century, the *género chico* was the formula limited to a bourgeois family success, sweetened with regionalist types and music, "incapable of evoking the most disadvantaged social reality" of a present urbanized and populated no longer by urban peasants but by impoverished inhabitants: "... now it is impossible to transmit the restorative optimism when thinking about the people who populate the lower-class neighborhoods" (Jassa and Mejías, 2007, p. 46). The Spanish crisis was fueled by the trauma of '98, the war with the United States when the loss of the colonies of Cuba, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico depressed the popular spirit, then fed back in the theatres with anti-American plays like the

5 "El morrongo" tells of the owner of a kitten who enjoys petting it. The tango by maestro Giménez, from the *ínfima* revue *Enseñanza libre* (A comic-lyrical piece by Perrín and Palacios), was popular for its eroticism during the Porfiriato, until the first decade of the 20th century.

ultra-patriotic *Cádiz*⁶ and *Cuadros disolventes*⁷. The lyrical *sainete* of popular customs and nationalist music symbolized with the new century “an outdated and anti-artistic dramaturgy” because it had lost its condition of criticism emitted by “the municipal guard, the pimp, the water carrier, the Galician...” The environments exposed since the Restoration were not friendly: the picturesque dialogue and music constituted an end in themselves, a theatre without significant action for the public’s present: the plot, narrative continuity, and denouement were diluted with the frivolity of a stage entertained with jokes intentionally inattentive to a present time of economic crisis (Mallada, 2019, 3-6).

The proliferation of small concert halls and cheap café-theatres neighboring the grand theatres erected the solitary artist over the large casts, modifying the obligatory scene from the classic *género chico*’s one hour to fifteen or twenty minutes, compensating for the lack of plot in these avant-garde spectacles with cinematographic views and *cuplés*. The immediacy of the mercantilist pieces dispensed with the “suite of dances” and the authentic Andalusian folklore in exchange for Anglo-Saxon dances like the *cake-walk* and tropical rhythms like the *rumba* and the *machicha*, performed by *cupletista* dancers whose eroticized bodies emancipated an audience addicted to sicalipsis. The zarzuela of the hegemonic authentic *sainete* of the last decade of the 19th century left the regional costumes for the *traje de capricho* (fancy dress), attracting a working-class public to a new era of cheap and artistically unpretentious spectacle; the “*ínfima zarzuela*” of the new 20th century was manifest, whose dialogical sicalipsis and visual eroticism were marginalized from the cultural and academic sphere of the dominant classes (Mallada, 2019, pp. 6-8).

The *género ínfimo*, properly speaking, begins in 1901 with the *pasillo El género ínfimo*⁸, the third work registered in the Society of Spanish Authors (S. Delgado cited in Jassa and Mejías, 2007, p. 48). Following a metatheatrical axis, *El género ínfimo* reproduces the interior of the *Salón Verde-Botella*, whose variety show function parodies this relay of the *género chico*, from whose old-fashioned environment it extracts the *maja* dancer, now a *cupletista*: Las Hermanas Pichichi, la Bella López, and Lolita Guiños; transferred to the *varietés* not only is Lolita Guiños acclaimed for interpreting an *aflamencado cuplé* but for offering herself as the passionate object

6 *Cádiz*. National episode, comic-lyrical-dramatic in 2 acts divided into 9 scenes, in verse, by Javier de Burgos with music by Federico Chueca and Joaquín Valverde, premiered at the Teatro de Apolo in 1886.

7 *Cuadros disolventes*. An improbable comic-lyrical-fantastic piece in 1 act and 5 scenes in prose and verse, by Guillermo Perrín and Manuel de Palacios, music by Manuel Nieto, premiered at the Teatro Príncipe Alfonso in 1896.

8 *El género ínfimo. Pasillo* by Serafín and Joaquín Álvarez Quintero, with music by Valverde (son) and Barrera, premiered at the Teatro de Apolo on July 17, 1901.

of a *voyeur* public that leans before her to be enraptured either by the vocal and dance execution, or by the clandestine vision of the artist's legs.

The emphasis of the new sordid reality of the peculiar public of the *infimidad* is provided by the dramatic form of the *pasillo*, a subgenre of the comic plaything of minimal duration without insistence on the portrait of the characters. In *El género infimo* by the Álvarez Quintero brothers, the middle-class types visible in other variety halls, indicated as “*Various more or less peaceful spectators*”, configure the caricatured picture of the small theatres transitioning to the *varietés* with artists in decline, like the magician Mr. Chirrín, impassive to the booing of his failed mind-reading act. In contrast, in the bitter detractions of don Anselmo and don Teodoro, the elderly regular attendees of the performances of the figurative



Salón Verde-Botella, persists the criticism that, in defense of the forgotten nationalist motifs, refuted the exoticism of the cancan of the Bufos de Arderius; in *El género infimo* the criticism of those old spectators who do not approve of what they nevertheless admire every night, is the source of argumentation of the metatheatricity, where themes about “a certain morality in the realm of the stage, problems of censorship over theatrical repertoires, the material situation of the theatre, or the continuous desires for its institutional reform” are common (Romero, 2005, 37-38).

María Conesa. *Dancer cupletista* actress. No imprint. Postcard FTPTO 1302. (Gelatin / chlorobromide. 8 X 13 cm.) Source: Fondo documental Armando de Maria y Campos (CITRU-INBA).

5. The Mexican *ínfima* comedies *Rendido al enemigo o la bella Lucerito*, *El rosario de Amozoc*, and *El figurín De París*

The transfer of the *género ínfimo* to the Mexican sphere produced hilarious comedies populated by *cupletista* dancers, and “fresh” (*frescos*), male characters obsessed with women, as in the comic-lyrical plaything *Rendido al Enemigo o La bella Lucerito* by Carlos M. Ortega, about the photographer Miguel Bannack, a declared misogynist, although an admirer of male politicians whose friend Julio, enraptured by a neighbor masseuse, does not hesitate to convince Bannack to let him climb to the rooftop of the workshop to spy on her, a secondary action to the challenge of *La bella Lucerito*, a Frenchified and Italianized artist who easily conquers Bannack with her dances and *cuplés*.

Morality predominates over sicalipsis even when eroticism flows liberally, as in the lyrical *sainete* *El rosario de Amozoc* by Humberto Galindo, about the rosary that the family of the seminarian Expedito will celebrate on the eve of his entry into the priestly school; the ceremony will be prevented by the friend Luisillo—a cross-dressing actress—who, an enemy of Expedito’s hypocrisy—in love with his cousin Milagros—not only installs him in a brothel house where a chorus of she-devils performs dances, but also forges the publication of a solicitation ad for a contracting partner to saturate the friend’s house with girlfriends of all kinds, among them a *cupletista* dancer whom the ultra-Catholic father of Expedito makes his favorite, and a *cocotte*, a stout woman who faints and rolls embraced by the father, a confusion that prompts Expedito to reveal his love for Milagros.

A diluted *infimidad* that substitutes the sentimental with plots nuanced by eroticism and comedy, expressive of the morally light, is interpreted in the Comic-danceable-sportive Humorous piece *El figurín de París* by Alberto Michel, which tells of Anita, a Parisian model who inherits a fortune on the condition of marrying the proxy of the deceased benefactress. Anita, an emblematic figure of Comte’s positivism, renounces scruples and even abandons her sweetheart René, another mannequin from the fashion house who, after time, gains access to the American’s mansion where he recovers the passion of the current Mrs. Webb. In a final scene, she is divorced, maintains her wealth, and enjoys the New York winter with René; fortuitously, the lovers have been reunited with Triolet, the music teacher and eventual lover of Anita who, without money, enlisted in the American army and wandering in search of the ex-model is also found by his calamitous wife Armida.

The triple romance of Anita with the mannequin René, with the magnate Mr. Webb, and with the professor Triolet is established with the games of *préparations* or preparatory organizers of the *suspense* of the comedy-vaudeville of

Eugène Scribe, here the *infima* anecdote of a beautiful model who has postponed the present of a mediocre courtship choosing the life of luxury of a millionaire New Yorker. The reunion with René, the divorce from Mr. Webb, and the return to Paris, once again engaged to be married, follows the happy ending unraveled in marriage and economic well-being of the comedy-vaudeville, without discrepancy with the atmosphere of a fairy tale superimposed on an *infima*, unpopular, and inconsequential story for being implausible, to which fiction Michel contrasts with the subplot of the burlesque incidents of the marriage of Triolet and Armida, the deceived wife, who are presented talking on the telephone from the same room of the fashion house, both lying about their respective whereabouts. The two stories are interwoven based on rapid scenes, similar to the hurried views of a cinematographic newsreel that emphasizes promoting modern artistic life, editing the singer's biography with laudatory passages, as during scene 2 of the second scene: the visit to Mr. Webb's mansion by the *variétés* artists Hércules, a muscular acrobat, and Violeta, a French *chanteuse* who interprets a song in vogue performed by Esther Lekain in 1907, "Ah! Si vous voulez d'l'Amour" by M. Burtsey and music by V. Scotto, to whom Anita returns the lyrical experience by interpreting a waltz with accompaniment from Mr. Webb on the piano.

Alberto Michel, established playwright of the Fábregas-Cardona Society⁹, incorporates the influential *variétés*, the new predominance of the *généro infimo* into the *pièce bien faite* or well-made play of structured intrigues refined by Scribe. However, the modernity of this Porfirian work still submits to the spectacularity of the vaudeville of the second half of the 19th century, when the *chansonnettes* or little songs were imposed on the minor French theatres according to an 1855 law that privileged dialogue only to the Comédie-Française; despite seeming false, Alexandre Dumas *fils* had to intersperse vaudeville little songs in *La Dame aux Camélias*, in 1853, a technique that proceeded from the 18th century to avoid tedious explanations to the public, according to Beaumarchais's precept: "what is not worth saying, sing it" (my trans., Gidel, 1986, p. 33). Henri Gidel explains the condition of the *couplet* in eighteenth-century song-vaudeville:

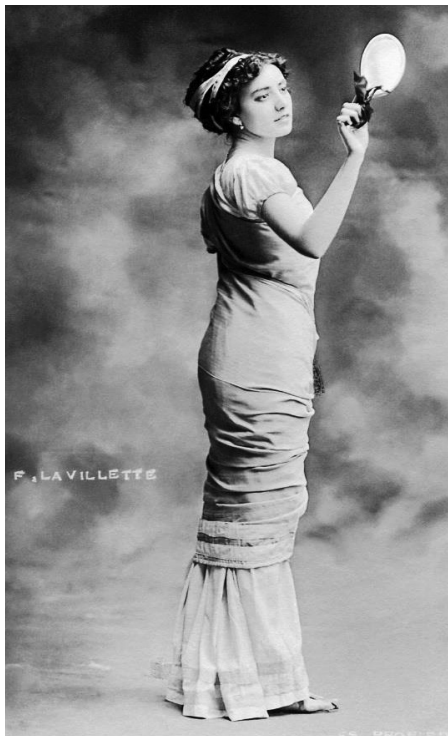
The moment when the author feels the need to interrupt his dialogue to blackmail his actors is not arbitrary: the *couplet* occurs when a character wishes to express some feeling of love, jealousy, spite, fear... or when

9 The theatrical society of the leading actress Virginia Fábregas and the actor-impresario Francisco Cardona was founded in June 1900 and lasted until January 1911; from the luxurious Teatro Renacimiento, later the Teatro Virginia Fábregas, Mexican society witnessed Spanish High Comedy and comedy-vaudeville, the latter in translations by José Castellanos Haff, a steadfast writer for the Fábregas-Cardona company (Quiroga, 2013, pp. 413-461).

the author wishes to “place” an ambiguity, to narrate some anecdote. Ultimately, its mission is to animate a scene (my trans., Gidel, 1986, p. 32).

Perceptibly, *El figurín de Paris* by Michel fluctuates between comedy-vaudeville, with intricate plots and subplots, choruses that prelude and conclude the acts, and scenes with little concluding songs of peculiar situations, on par with the new lyrical *sainete* of the *généro infimo* consolidated from the *couplet*, this being the climactic summary of a scene or a reduced picture to the musical essentials.

6. The journal-vaudeville



Julia Pacello. Mexican soprano actress.
F. La Villette. Postcard. (Gelatin / bromide.
8 X 13 cm.) Col. Carlos Villasana and Raúl
Torres

Romain Piana indicates among the first *journal-vaudeville* or newspaper-vaudeville *La Revue de Paris*. Episodic scenes, mixed with *couplets* by M. de Rougemont, De Courcy and Dupeuty, premiered at the Vaudeville hall in December 1829, in which the theatricalized newspaper is the *génie-commère* or entangling genius, the *Revue de Paris* itself presenting itself as “*le journal du beau-monde*” or “the newspaper of the beautiful world,” which offers its subscription to the passerby M. Jourdain, the *compère* or companion, an ordinary attendee, preferably provincial, whom the allegorical female guide will amaze with everything new in the Parisian capital in the course of the revue or review¹⁰. This scheme of a *revue de fin d’année* or end-of-year revue provided the superficial criticism of a “discontinuous form, without plan and without intrigue,” of the spectacular principle that prioritizes *exhibition over narration* (Piana, 2012).

10 The *Théâtre des Variétés* premiered the following year’s end-of-year revue *Les Variétés de 1830. Revue de l’année* by De Rougemont, Brazier and De Courcy. In it, various versions of Napoleon, such as Bonaparte from the Vaudeville theater, Napoléon from the Porte-Saint-Martin, L’Empereur from the Cirque, Bonaparte from the Ambigu, Napoléon from the Opéra-Comique, are characters witnessing the struggle between the current Napoleon and Robespierre for Liberty, held by the hand by each. *Les variétés de 1830*, revue de l’année. Par MM. De Rougemont, Brazier et de Courcy. R. Riga, Paris, 1831.

Since 1830, the criticisms of the *génie-commère* and the *compère* guaranteed the alignment of the parade of characters from social current events, as well as the fictitious dramaturgy of journalistic news in a scenic construction of intermediality or equivalence and mutual influence between the staged *revue* and the serial newspapers; this symmetry between the spectacular textuality of the *revue* and the illustrated satirical press is summarized in two conclusions by the writer Théophile Gautier, the first issued in 1843, regarding the page of commercial advertisements: "... that revues are little more than 'the putting into action of the fourth page of the newspapers'" (my trans.; Gautier cited by Piana, 2012), and about the characters, the caricatured ones, based on real figures, and the allegorical ones, based on the advertised products: "... that 'the real authors' are '[the caricaturists Paul] Gavarni and [Honoré] Daumier' and the small press" (my brackets and trans.; Gautier cited by Piana, 2012).

Piana locates during the periods from the July Monarchy to the Second Empire, from 1830 to 1870, the evolution from an anecdotal analogy to the real phenomenon of a "spoken, played, sung newspaper," with truthful quotes, advances of confidences, and current event deliveries, for a spectacular aesthetic of visual syntax of press caricature. In this sense, the revues *¡Qué descansada vida...!* by Medina, *La Onda Fría* by F. Elizondo and Galindo, and *El Pájaro Azul* by González and Uranga, all exhibit the caricature that Ernesto García *El Chango* Cabral drew of the poet of non-academic modernism typified in Ramón N. Franco, the authentic spoiled poet of the Porfiriato. The parodic evocation of the satirical press when it publishes the physiognomies of the subject and the battered object constitutes the *raison d'être* of the *revue*, given that the caricatures of the illustrated press are the model to transpose for a spectacular aesthetic of citations.

7. La cuarta plana

During the *Fin de Siècle*, in 1900, the surpassing of the established Arcaraz Hnos. Company meant the purchase of the Teatro Principal, the *Catedral del Género Chico*, from then on the equivalent of the Teatro Apolo in Madrid, although not because it was the residence hall of national authors, but the reference place for the *género ínfimo*, a subgenre of the Spanish *género chico*.

The new century had broken the revolutionary "modesty of street reality" of the *sainete*, whose original types and musical folklorism had generously spilled into the *chico* subgenres: parody, lyrical zarzuela, lyrical *revue* or classical *revue*, lyrical comedy or comic plaything, Andalusian *sainete*, historical comic zarzuela, and compressed melodrama; the *género chico* was about thirty years old, it was decadent and yielded to Europeanization and transformation towards Spain's

modernity. In Zurita's opinion, the weakened *género chico* "devoted itself to the roguishness and free love" of the *varietés*, the last spectacle fathered by the *género chico* with the denomination of *género ínfimo* (Zurita, 1920, pp. 88-89).

The Mexican *La Catedral de la Tanda* continued to assign the renown of zarzuela to the *ínfimas* productions, presented as *zarzuela chica* and objected by the more intellectual, who, like the Spanish critics, agreed that the brevity of the *género chico*—one hour in duration—was synonymous with a precarious atmosphere of morality regarding the extensive development of sentimentality of hegemonic theatre, from the eighteenth-century tearful comedy to the hyper-ethical bourgeois High Comedy. Faced with traditional drama, the *género chico* acquired expository complexity, harshness, and radicality in the portrait of a society reflected in ridicule and parodic satire, intoned with regionalist picturesqueness and the expressive flexibility of song, freer than in the *zarzuela grande* and opera, which the *género chico* parodies in music, plots, characters, and situations (Romero, 2005, pp. 33-34).

However, the permanent Saturday premieres and respective debut of Spanish dancer sopranos and actor singers in *La Catedral de la Tanda* diminished incentives for Mexican authors, as happened in September 1904, when the Arcaraz company refused to celebrate the one hundred performances of the revue *La cuarta plana*. The grievance to the authors Pedro Escalante Palma and Luis Frías Fernández, as well as to maestro Carlos Curti was remedied by the Fábregas-Cardona Society from the Teatro Arbeu, celebrating a "Mexican evening" with a program that included the drama *Después de la muerte* by Manuel José Othón, *La cuarta plana*, and intermissions of Mexican music, like the waltz *Dormilonas* by Miguel Lerdo de Tejada (Olavarría, 1961, pp. 2002-2003).

Premiered at the Teatro Principal, on October 28, 1899, *La cuarta plana* begins with the final scene of the play, in a metatheatrical game that in the form of a loop reintroduces the beginning of the piece: the writer Cavia despairs at the booing of the premiere of his *ópera prima*, blaming the failure on the librettist López and the musician Pérez. The mentioned defend their work and ask the public to judge the work, better than the booing audience.

The revue restarts in the second scene with a publicity agent who emerges from a curtain that reproduces the spread-out sheet of the newspaper *El Imparcial*, that is the front page unfolded with the fourth page of advertisements. The agent proclaims the effectiveness of his publicity task when from a box a lady gets herself invited to the stage; on stage, the woman performs a *déshabillé* or striptease to continue with a semi-transparent outfit without the coat: she is the National Press, she suffers from fake news and wants to visit the fourth page of advertisements to examine the truthfulness of the advertisers. The third scene is the mini-comedy of invigorating advertisements: Camacho, a suspicious life insurance agent visits

in vain the dwelling of Dr. Somatosa, whose nutritious brew benefits the milk productivity of a chorus of wet nurses; while the doctor shows off his daughter Benedictina, a stimulating liqueur, and the Yucatecan mestiza Saravia, another specific liqueur for all ailments, and they receive the National Press conducted by the publicist. The search for advertisements continues on the brand-new Alameda promenade where the dance of the armaments of the Armería Quintana and the proclamation of Chaquiras, a paper vendor —famous for the young actress Esperanza Iris— hindered by the artificial voice of a Phonograph; and dance and song of the refined morning newspaper *El Mundo Ilustrado*, strolling with various minor gentleman newspapers. The final scene, on the canoe ride in Santa Anita, the cigarette *Creto--Gangá* and *La Cubana* Panchita, a cigar, celebrate and receive flowers from the native *chinamperos* María Josefa and José María; the publicist and the National Press arrive there, and in a sudden move, the Press abandons the search terrified, due to the proximity of the weekly *El diablito bromista. Órgano de la clase obrera, azote del mal burgués y coco del mal gobierno* (Organ of the working class, scourge of the bad bourgeois and bogeyman of the bad government), an illustrated publication by José Guadalupe Posada that was aimed at the working class. *El diablito bromista* is celebrated with music and *jarabes* by its readers: the *China*, the Roto, the Charro, the Pelado, and the common people. In a concise sixth scene, the National Press and the Publicity Agent dismiss the revue with the same words as the opening.

8. One or more genealogies of Porfirian popular theatre

The originality of Porfirian popular theatre lies in the practical consequences with which it reacted to the inherited maternal theatricalities, like zarzuela, *género chico*, *género ínfimo*, revue, comedy-vaudeville, burlesque: necessary and transformable instruments to gestate new scenic conditions:

... the ideas imported to México, let us say, whatever they may be, suffer a process of acclimatization, whose assimilative phase can be called, in this case, “Hispanicization,” while the other phase, that of adaptation, can be called “Mexicanization” (Romanel, 1954, p. 28).

The denominations “Mexican zarzuela” and “Mexican *género chico*” are still questionable under a chronological criterion, since from the last years of the 19th century the nationalist Spanish *género chico* was transitioning to a past and worn-out identity facing the modernity of a *Fin de Siècle* consumer of the vileness and free love of the Parisian *variétés* abundant in Madrid and Barcelona, where the sung *cuplé* was the Hispanicization of the French *couplet*: a light and picaresque little song that becomes

independent from the theatrical scene during the transition from the 19th to the 20th century to originate the solo song of a performing artist of diverse compositions (María Moliner cited in Barreiro, 2007). The decadent types and environments of the *variétés* provided the material to its contemporary, the *género ínfimo* comedy, which contributed the textual and spectacular elements enjoyed in the revue.

A perspectivist criterion can apply to the Porfirian revue, since even though it proceeds from the Spanish *ínfima* revue, the latter maintains links with the revue-vaudeville. In Spain, the revue is defined as a “theatrical spectacle consisting of a series of loose scenes, usually taken from current events” (Montijano, 2010, p. 17), a description that pertains to *1864 y 1865*. Comic-lyrical-fantastic revue by José M. Gutiérrez de Alba, premiered at the Teatro del Circo, Madrid, in January 1865, which discusses the obsolescence of the Golden Age comedy of Calderón de la Barca, in addition to being the first Spanish political criticism revue. *1864 y 1865* is the first Spanish work of the so-called end-of-year works in which allegorical characters that influence daily life access social and political criticism: Crime, Urban Police, God’s Charity, The Devil’s Charity. However, the end-of-year revue dates back forty years in France. Henri Gidel cites “*Le Calendrier vivant* [*The Living Calendar*] (1817) or *Je m’en moque comme de l’an quarante* [*I Couldn’t Care Less About the Year Forty*], given on December 31, 1839” (my trans. and brackets; Gidel, 1986, p. 46), among the *vaudevilles anecdotiques* or anecdotal vaudevilles of the past and the *revues à couplets de fin d’année* or end-of-year revues with *couplets*, based on little scenes of current news. We understand that, if the physiognomy of the Mexican revue and comedy is not its own, it is concrete and historical, and definable from more than one “model landscape” (Romanell, 1954, pp. 182-184).

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