Tempering Machismo: The Performance of Masculinity, Femininity, and Honor in *Aquí no ha pasado nada* by Josefina Plá and Roque Centurión Miranda

May Summer Farnsworth
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

El hombre no se hizo aún. Se está haciendo
Josefina Plá, "Cómo me veo" (1995)

In *Aquí no ha pasado nada* (1941) by Josefina Plá and Roque Centurión Miranda, a married couple refuses to uphold traditional notions of gender and honor in Hispanic theatre and society. The husband and wife characters openly criticize the prevailing machismo of their community even though they exemplify many aspects of conventional matrimony. Similarly, the playwrights incorporate elements of classic comedy and the honor code into their script but they question rather than affirm social mores. Thus, the performance itself, like its main characters, simultaneously confirms and disputes the *status quo*. This essay will examine the ways in which Plá and Centurión Miranda challenge their spectators' conception of gender, matrimony, and family in society through a surprisingly subversive form of domestic comedy in early twentieth-century Paraguay.

The two co-authors of *Aquí no ha pasado nada* came from different backgrounds and pursued many separate interests. Yet they shared a desire to promote and strengthen Paraguay's local theatre industry. María Josefina Plá Guerra Galvany (1909-1999) was born in the Canary Islands, Spain, but moved to Valencia with her family as a young girl (Aiguadé 8). At age 18, she married Paraguayan artist Julian de Herrería (pseudonym for Andrés Campos Cervera) and together they traveled between Spain and Paraguay for some years (8). Plá chose to settle permanently in Paraguay after her husband's death from an illness in 1937 (9). She collaborated on various theatre projects with Roque Centurión Miranda from 1932 to 1948 in addition to exploring her other talents: ceramics, poetry, journalism, criticism and narrative. When they began working together, Centurión Miranda was already active in the theatre

community as a playwright, director, performer and producer (Jones, *Behind Spanish American Footlights* 39). Since there were no dramatic arts institutions in Paraguay, Centurión Miranda's formal training took place elsewhere. He studied in Spain and France but returned to his homeland by the start of the Chaco War (1932-1935) (Centurión, *Historia de la cultura* 162). Centurión Miranda also dedicated much of his time to the study of speech and diction and published a book on the subject, *Principios de dicción*, in 1955 (163).

The Chaco War (1932-1935) influenced many writers and artists in the early 1930s, including Plá and Centurión Miranda. "Este hecho de trascendencia omnilateral tiene literaria repercusión inmediata: se hace automáticamente punto de inspiración para música, poesía y teatro. [...] El teatro paraguayo entra en una nueva etapa: contacto directo con la realidad ambiental" recalls Plá of the local artists' response to the war (Qtd. in Centurión, *Historia de las letras* 165). Indeed, Plá and Centurión Miranda's first play, *Episodios chaqueños* (1932), is written in both Spanish and Guaraní and portrays the lives of the country's poor and indigenous during the conflict. Two more pieces critical of the war followed: *Desheredados* (1933, originally performed in Guaraní) and *La hora de Caín* (1938). In the post-war era (1936-1947), when Plá and Centurión Miranda wrote *Aquí no ha pasado nada*, increased government control of the arts posed a significant threat to Paraguayan dramatic production and theatre criticism.[1] As Josefina Plá remarks in *Cuatro siglos del teatro en el Paraguay: 1544-1964* (1970), "fueron esos años [1936-1947] impropicios a las inquietudes culturales: época en la cual los más inocentes artículos sobre el teatro llegaron a estar sometidos a la censura policial" (226). Nonetheless, Plá and Centurión Miranda founded a radio-theatre program, *PROAL* (*Pro Arte y Literatura*), which operated from 1938 to 1939 (Aiguadé 10). They also began exploring new sociological themes in plays such as *Paterfamilias* (1941), which portrays grown illegitimate children coping with their parents' refusal to marry. In 1942, Plá and Centurión Miranda participated in the first annual theatre competition of a newly formed cultural group, *Ateneo Paraguayo*. First prize went to *Aquí no ha pasado nada* while two of Plá and Centurión Miranda's other plays, *Un sobre en blanco* (1941) and *María Inmaculada* (1941), earned second place and honorable mention respectively (Jones, *Behind Spanish American Footlights* 40; Aiguadé 9). This marks the last time Centurión Miranda and Plá wrote together, yet they continued to collaborate on other projects related to the theatre. Both artists also wrote a number of plays separately.[2]

In 1948, Plá and Centurión Miranda opened the country's first dramatic arts institute, the *Escuela Municipal de Arte Escénico*. Plá worked at the institute as an administrator and instructor until 1972 except for from 1948 to 1950 and 1958 to1963, during which periods the school was closed down for political reasons (Aiguadé 10). Government repression may partially explain why so few plays from early twentieth-century Paraguay have survived and been published

and why so little has been written about the playwrights. Centurión Miranda has fallen into obscurity and Plá is remembered more for her poetry, narrative, ceramics, and essays than for her numerous dramatic works. *Aquí no ha pasado nada*, for example, has scarcely received critical attention since its publication sixty years ago. Nonetheless the collaborators' body of work has received some recognition in recent years. In 1996, Jorge Aiguadé published a selection of Plá's theatre, which includes a few of the plays she wrote with Centurión Miranda. Additionally, Teresa Méndez-Faith incorporated *Aquí no ha pasado nada* and Plá's better-known play, *La historia de un número*, in a 2001 anthology of Paraguayan theatre.

Unlike Plá and Centurión Miranda's earlier works, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* focuses on the privileged class. While the play is realistic, it avoids the *costumbrismo* of previous regional pieces and emphasizes the exchange of controversial ideas and opinions (Aiguadé 12). Because the plot revolves around socially coded behavior regarding gender roles, parenthood, and marriage, it is useful to examine the ways in which gender is constructed in Western society. Judith Butler argues that gender is ultimately a theatrical performance (122). Femaleness is biological, she explains, while womanliness is a learned behavior (123). By equating gender with performance, Butler casts doubt on the concept of the individual as possessing a natural or "essential" feminine or masculine identity (129). These arguments can be used not only to understand how "woman" is enacted, but how "man" is constructed, learned and performed as well. José Olavarría and other sociologists who study masculinity in the Americas agree that gender is socially constructed.[3] While masculinity has many different faces, Olavarría characterizes ideal bourgeois "men" in twentieth-century Western culture as "personas importantes, activas, autónomas, fuertes, potentes, racionales, emocionalmente controladas, heterosexuales y [...] los proveedores de la familia" (12). In contrast, feminine individuals (women and feminized/ homosexual men) are expected to be "pasivas, dependientes, débiles, emocionales y en el caso de las mujeres, pertenecientes a la casa y mantenidas por sus varones," according to Olavarría (12). Just as Butler posits that females train to become women, Olavarría points out that male individuals in society undergo a process of becoming men (learning to fight, sexually penetrating women, dealing with emotional and physical pain, etc.) and an individual's newly acquired manliness must be approved by other men whose masculinity has already been established (12). In order to complete this process of assuming and successfully performing the role of "man," one must father and provide for children. In this way, the full-grown man establishes himself at the head of the nuclear family as its authoritative leader, protector, and responsible breadwinner, and thereby he validates his position in society (14). Conversely, it would seem that a female individual's ultimate entrance into womanhood culminates in the bearing of her husband's children.

The preservation of this patriarchal family structure has been the subject of domestic comedy for centuries. Theatre critic Claudia Cecilia Alatorre explains that *comedia* traditionally ridicules any behavior that threatens society's values:

> Normalmente, la comedia centra su atención en la progresiva evolución de una conducta que empieza dentro de los límites tolerables y va siendo cada vez más inconveniente hasta que rebasa todos los límites morales y legales y por lo tanto debe ser castigado; el grupo que ha sentido amenazado su sistema legal es el ejecutor, el castigo moral. La risa significa descrédito, desconfianza, burla, ver minimizado al otro; para el protagonista es vergüenza y escarnio. (68)

In general, early twentieth-century comedies, like their classical antecedents, continue to uphold society's value system and promote the dominant culture's view of gender roles in marriage and the family. Monogamy and marital fidelity (particularly on the part of the woman) are central to a successful male-female relationship in patriarchal society. Alatorre notes that contemporary comedies continue to defend monogamy against its perceived enemies: "la infidelidad, la inconstancia, ligereza de cascos (en contraposición a la heroica pureza), las trotaconventos y los poderosos perversos" (73). Jealousy, divorce, and marital disharmony threaten the preservation of private property, which was central to classic comedy, according to Alatorre (73).

In many ways, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* follows the traditional comedic formula outlined by Alatorre since its main characters come from an upper-middle class background and the play is set in a bourgeois drawing room. At first glance, Efraín and Muriel typify the ideal privileged couple in twentieth-century, Western patriarchal society. Efraín is absent for most of the first act since he is busy earning money and providing financial security for his wife. Muriel is content to stay at home and confesses to her friend Lea that she had always dreamed of marrying a successful breadwinner: "mi sueño desde que era niña; casarme con un rico" (7). Nonetheless, because seven years have passed since Efraín and Muriel married, friends begin to question the couple's ability to reproduce. Efraín and Muriel, it seems, are failing to pass this ultimate test of becoming "man" and "woman." Lea has already had three children and tries to persuade Muriel to realize her maternity: "Créeme, Muriel: ten un hijo; siquiera uno, antes que sea más tarde" (10). Later, the lawyer, Cárdenas, arrives with the intention of seducing Muriel while Efraín is not at home. After Muriel politely refuses Cárdenas's advances, the painter, Víctor, arrives with the same motive (13). Apparently, the other men in the play feel that they have the right to pursue Muriel given that her husband is failing in his masculine role by not providing her with children. Even though

they wish to seduce her, the men in the play criticize Muriel for improperl performing her womanhood. Víctor sums up his observations of Muriel in thi way: "Una mujer joven, hermosa, que no quiere a su marido" (17). He call her heartless, "sin corazón" and unnatural, "sin temperamento" (17). Muriel responds to these attacks with sarcasm: "Sin temperamento. Comprendo. Deb ser un defecto terrible"(17).

Muriel's unfinished portrait, which is also critically evaluated in the firs act, parallels her perceived gender incompleteness. Lea comments that it wil be a good painting if it is finished skillfully: "si concluye como empezó…" (Plá, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* 9). Cárdenas sees it as a good "'pose.' De la que definen carácter"(13). But, like Muriel's imperfect gender performance all of the characters notice a single glaring flaw in the painting, one that pre vents it from being realized as a work of art. It seems as though every artis who tries to translate Muriel's image to the canvas struggles with the painting of her eyes. This is significant because Muriel's way of seeing the world is dif ficult for her friends to understand. Perhaps her eyes are attempting to expres a viewpoint that those around her either cannot or will not accept. Muriel ex plains: "Hasta ahora nadie consiguió pintarlos. Cada retrato, dicen, tiene su dificultad. El mío tiene los ojos. Parece que quieren hacerles decir muchas co sas…y se hacen un lío" (13). The collective judgment of her gender/portrait by the community finally begins to color Muriel's own vision. Even though she is not bothered by the painting, "así como está no me parece tan mal," she feels pressured to have it finished in a way that will please those around her, just as she feels pressured to become a mother and thus acquire authentic womanhood (20). As a result, Muriel initiates a discussion with her husband about their gender roles. She apologizes for not fulfilling her obligations as wife/woman (which in Spanish is often reduced to the same word, "mujer"): "Soy yo la que pienso, a menudo, que acaso no he sido para ti la mujer que debiera" (21). Because Efraín loves and trusts her so unconditionally, Muriel realizes that he is not a typical man either. "Eres extraño" and "no te pareces a los otros hombres" she tells him (21).

In order to fully realize her potential as a "woman" she must help her husband to secure his position as a "man" and patriarch. Muriel understands that she must bear a child, yet thus far she has been unable to conceive with her husband. For this reason she decides to have an affair with Víctor (who will be leaving for Europe soon). It appears the only way to move forward in their performance as man and woman is for the couple to sacrifice "honor" for "parenthood." The second act takes place in the same house but five years have passed and Muriel has a five-year-old child, Lelio. Her womanhood is now complete and so is her portrait, which occupies a place on the wall. Efraín and Muriel are entertaining a variety of guests and exchanging parenting stories in a scene that indicates their admittance into the community as man and woman and as mother and father.

The issue of honor surfaces in Cárdenas's retelling of a court case in which he defended a man who killed his lover because she would not leave her husband. Efraín interjects that he considers a lover's jealousy to be more logical than a husband's. After all, according to Efraín, the husband occupies the superior position. Efraín reassesses the role of the husband and dismisses the lover as a threat using the rational "masculine" discourse of psychology:

> Los celos son signos de inferioridad. Esto no es una opinión mía. Es un lugar común psicológico. Y yo creo que el amante es inferior, casi siempre, al marido. Es hora de deshacerse del mito del amante, fraguado por la literatura emocionalista. El hombre que en la vida asume el papel de amante, en la mayoría de los casos es porque no puede, o no quiere, o no sabe ser marido. Y ninguna de estas tres razones afirma su superioridad. (Plá, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* 27)

In this way Efraín subjects the mythical lover to the classic tests of manhood. He reaffirms his own masculinity by arguing that a lover would be incapable, or otherwise unwilling, to perform the role that he has mastered: that of husband and father. He also feminizes the lover when he states that he has not been validated by scientific discourse but by "emocionalista" literature, a "feminine" genre.

Víctor emerges in a subsequent scene as the virtual incarnation of Efraín's depiction of the inferior lover. He has lost some masculine clout as he is now unemployed. When Muriel and Víctor are left alone, he expresses jealousy and anger at having been left out of his biological son's life. Muriel is unwilling to raise the child with Víctor and she combats his arguments by reminding him that he has fathered and abandoned other children. She accuses Víctor of obsessing over Lelio simply because his patriarchal authority is minimized by her decision to stay with Efraín:

> Desde que sentiste que en este caso todo no dependía de tu voluntad…porque la madre de este hijo tuyo es fuerte; porque no te precisa, y si llega la hora de olvidar, no serás tú el que más pronto olvida. Si así no fuera…si yo hubiese sido menos fuerte y te hubiese necesitado…¡Quien sabe si en este momento estarías tú!…Estarías lejos, tratando de borrar las huellas. (Plá, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* 33)

Throughout the conversations between the two former lovers, in both the second and third acts of the play, Víctor's masculine performance becomes more and more unstable. He is the one portrayed as unreasonable and incapable of controlling his anger while Muriel remains calm and rational. She openly admits that she chose to have an affair with Víctor in order to conceive

a child but chose Efraín to be the child's father (37). Muriel even finds Víctor protestations somewhat humorous and pokes fun at him when he accuses her being heartless again. She complains "hace tiempo que dijiste esto. No tiene mucha originalidad" (38). She jokes again when Víctor accuses her of playing games with him: "Oh, te aseguro que no eres divertido, Víctor" (38). These derisions remind the audience members that they are watching a comedy and let them know that Víctor's behavior is the one that should be scorned (38).

Víctor has completely lost control by the time Efraín arrives. He enters the scene just in time to wrest a gun out of Víctor's hand, which is pointed at Muriel. Efraín gallantly protects his wife and removes her from danger before confronting her assailant. Although he has known Víctor for years, he addresses him with the formal "usted." In *Dramatic Discourse*, Vimala Herman posits that politeness, such as the employment of the formal rather than the informal address, can be used as a strategy to create "distance between the interactants" involved in a dramatic conflict (241). This seems to be Efraín's intention as he, like Muriel earlier, reacts to Víctor's irrational behavior by demonstrating extreme emotional control. While Víctor is ridiculed, criticized and increasingly "emasculated" throughout the play, Muriel's infidelity goes unpunished. The classic Hispanic honor code, perpetuated in conventional comedy for centuries, becomes the play's next target. Efraín has no intention of laying blame on his wife, nor does he wish to engage in a duel with Víctor. Instead of following this archaic honor-code logic, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* offers alternatives to violence. Efraín explains that he understands the tradition but chooses not to follow it: "La costumbre, en circunstancias análogas, suele ser muy diferente, lo sé. Pero las costumbres me han parecido siempre poco interesantes y procuro seguirlas lo menos posible…" (39). However he clarifies that his unwillingness to use force does not signify inability or fear: "Yo podría habérmela tomado en el acto. Y no ponga usted en duda … que con todo éxito" (40). Since Efraín has secured the weapon, and is now directing the action, he declares that his view of conflict resolution goes against the typical ending for honor plays and subverts society's expectations of manly behavior: "Usted me ofrece un duelo, como saldo de este desagradable incidente. Muy bien. Es la usual prueba de hombría. Pero yo no me conformo con ella. No se la rehúso, entiéndalo bien, pero me reservo el derecho de pedir otra prueba" (40). Much to Víctor's surprise, this alternative test of manhood involves speaking honestly and openly about the extramarital affair and Lelio's paternity.

Throughout the course of the discussion, Efraín argues that his adopted fatherhood is infinitely more "real" than Víctor's biological paternity. He points out that in order to become Lelio's father he had to first remove his mask of manliness: "Le quiero más que usted, porque a la ilusión de esta paternidad he sacrificado todo prejuicio masculino. [...] Yo no puedo dar hijos míos a Muriel. Pero puedo darle el derecho de ser madre" (42). While in this way he admits that he does not conform to society's expectations of men, Efraín also alludes

to his masculine ability to provide for the child's financial security. Since Víctor is unemployed and incapable of restraining his emotions, and Efraín is infertile and non-aggressive, neither man completely conforms to their society's expectations of masculine performance. For that reason, it behooves both men to avoid the typical tests of masculine valor. During their conversation, Efraín questions the authenticity of Víctor's "love" for Lelio, "[a]hora mismo: si descubriese usted que no era su hijo ¿a dónde iría este exigente amor paternal?" (44), and offers his own concept of paternal love: "poca cosa es el amor que se funda en la simple paternidad fisiológica. Un hijo debe ser algo más que engendrado. Debe ser amado, mucho antes" (44). By the end of their long debate, Efraín has persuaded his rival to have a change of heart. Efraín's arguments are convincing and his message is enhanced by his fatherly performance. Víctor may be Lelio's biological father but he lacks the emotional maturity that makes Efraín a capable parent. Víctor now seems more like a child receiving life-lessons from a father and less like a violent rival. Eventually, Efraín trustingly hands the gun back to Víctor. As he puts away his weapon, Víctor demonstrates his agreement to curtail his masculine aggression while Efraín confirms his ability to discipline in a gentle and fatherly way.

Neither Efraín nor Muriel is penalized in *Aquí no ha pasado nada* for failing to properly perform his or her socially constructed gender role. Since a traditional honor play would have harshly condemned the adulterous woman, this feminist twist frustrated conventional audience expectations. North American theatre critic Willis Knapp Jones was actively studying, collecting, and translating Spanish-American theater at the time that the play emerged. Though he notes that it won a prize, he observes that "a major scandal developed when *Aquí no pasa nada* [sic] was first performed in 1942. Fruit was hurled by the spectators and insults by the critics" (*Behind Spanish American Footlights* 40).[5] However, Plá does not record this chaotic episode. In her appendix to *Teatro Escogido*, she states that *Aquí no ha pasado nada* won the *Ateneo Paraguayo* contest in 1942 but was only performed in 1956 by the *Escuela Municipal de Artes de Escénico* (26). She calls this a classic case of "encarpetamiento" (Plá, *Cuatro siglos* 229), a term she uses in the context of post-war political theatre: "Si alguna obra recogió ese malestar, cuyo único síntoma activo fue la política, esa obra permanecerá encarpetada" (226). Thus, though there is some confusion about the play's performance history, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* was definitely not an immediate stage success. Either it met with an aggressive public in 1942 or was simply deemed too controversial or shocking for the time period and was deliberately filed away for fourteen years. Both versions of events are understandable given the piece's non-traditional treatment of masculinity and its ultimate disregard for the preservation of Hispanic society's notions of marriage and honor. Jorge Aiguadé detects a deliberate attempt on the part of the authors to disturb the spectator: "Por si fuera poco, la pareja de dramaturgos tienen el coraje de mostrarnos

personajes quizás demasiado maduros para la sociedad de entonces, hacie
cosas demasiado libres, con lo que la intención del choque es evidente" (
North American readers unfamiliar with Spanish-American honor-c
themes might have been bewildered by the text, had there been a U.S. publi
tion of the play. *Aquí no ha pasado nada*'s absence from U.S. anthologies
the period may be understood in a passage from a lecture Willis Knapp Jo
delivered to university students in Ecuador in 1946:

> One source of amusement for you, according to dozens of your comedies that I have read, is infidelity. This isn't suitable for use in a North American textbook. Another comical situation is the trouble of an illegitimate child. This, too, could hardly form the chief topic for reading matter for young girls in the schools of my country. [...] I am afraid most North Americans consider in bad taste many of the plays of this sort written south of the Río Grande. Besides, it is one thing to read rapidly in English descriptions of sexual irregularities, and quite another to read them slowly in Spanish with pauses to look up the unknown words. (*Drama en las Américas* 11-12)

Whether it was 1942 or 1956, it is likely that *Aquí no ha pasado na*
shocked its opening night audience. Hostile spectators may have felt that th
reactions were justified because what had initially appeared to be a play ab
bourgeois family values, transformed itself into a distortion of two of the ha
marks of Hispanic patriarchal society: masculine paternity and the honor co
The spectators had been led to believe, by the play's title, that nothing wo
happen to disrupt their concept of "reality." By punishing individuals wit
the play who incorrectly perform their genders, angry spectators simulta
ously punish the play for incorrectly performing its genre, "comedy." Inste
of ridiculing gender misfits, this atypical comedy rewarded them and ridicu
the jealousy and double standards perpetuated by the honor code. Therefo
the play tampered with both "genre" and "gender," which led to its public
jection and/or "encarpetamiento."

It is possible that some aspects of the play seemed unreal to spectato
readers, potential producers, and publishers. Judith Butler's essay, "Perfor
tive Acts and Gender Constitution," describes gender performance in West
society as so insidious that its "authors" or actors come to confuse the perfor
ance with reality: "The tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, a
sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credib
ity of its own production. The authors of gender become entranced by th
own fictions whereby the construction compels one's belief in its necess
and naturalness" (123). By the same token, society's dutiful gender perform
are horrified by what they view as the "unreality" of a poorly performed gend

At one point in their final debate, Víctor protests that his antagonist's behavior is unreal, "pero…¡señor!…¡Eso es inverosímil!," to which Efraín responds logically, "¿por qué? No existen situaciones inverosímiles" (Plá, *Aquí no ha pasado nada* 40). Butler warns that "performing one's gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect" and that society "readily punishes or marginalizes those who fail to perform the illusion of gender essentialism" (129). This obsession with maintaining proper performances would seem to prove that there is an underlying understanding in the dominant culture that gender is, in fact, performed rather than acquired naturally, according to Butler (129). Therefore if the society's disapproval of Plá and Centurión Miranda's work stemmed from what they viewed as a misrepresentation of accepted social truths, their dismissal of the play revealed a reliance on performance to convince themselves of those truths. The daily performance of gender by individuals in society, along with the reflection of those performances in the theatre (performances of performances), are crucial to the creation and the maintenance of society's illusions of the "naturalness" of masculine and feminine roles.

Traditional notions of masculinity, femininity, and honor in Hispanic society were effectively upset by *Aquí no ha pasado nada* (both on and off the stage). Roque Centurión Miranda and Josefina Plá's innovative comedy skillfully reveals the ways in which gender roles are constructed and perpetuated through performance. Muriel and Efraín performed their genders up to a point but found that preserving their honor was incompatible with realizing the goal of parenthood (which their society also expected of a man and a woman). Efraín's performance of fatherhood is so effective that even the play's most reluctant character, Víctor, eventually agrees to let the couple construct their own idea of family and their own reality. However, the true ending of the comedy was not written in the script but rather improvised by the public. Whether the piece was kept off the stage through overt or subtle means, the dominant culture's apparent unwillingness to acknowledge the spectacle adds another dimension to the performance. The anxiety with which many individuals view their social system is reflected by the play's reception. By disapproving of *Aquí no ha pasado nada*, the mainstream public exposed its preference for a type of theatre that confirms rather than questions socially constructed identities.

NOTES

[1] The Chaco War resulted from a border dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay. began in 1932 and ended in 1935 with Paraguay gaining territory previously belongi to Bolivia. Tulio Halperín Donghi notes an increased military presence within Paragu following the conflict (243). According to Willis Knapp Jones both the war and go ernment censorship led to the collapse of the nation's theatre industry in the late 193 (*Behind Spanish American Footlights* 39).

[2] Roque Centurión Miranda wrote several pieces in Guaraní on his own includi two musicals, *Tapyi ocara* and *Ñandutí*, (dates unknown) and two dramas *Tuyú* (193 *Che tapyi* (19??). He also wrote plays in Spanish such as *Cupido sudando* (1924) a *La vida comienza mañana* (19??). Josefina Plá wrote a great many works independent including *Víctima propiciatoria* (1927), *La humana impaciente* (1938), *Fiesta en el* (1946), *El edificio* (1946), *De mí que no del templo* (1948), *El pretendiente inesperad* (1948), *Edipo en Nueva York* (1949), *El viajero* (19??), *La historia de un núme* (1949), *Momentos estelares en la vida de la mujer* (1949?), *Esta es la casa que Juan construyó* (1949), *La cocina de las sombras* (1950), *El profesor* (1950), *La tercera hu lla dactilar* (1951), *Media docena de grotescos brevísimos* (1951), *Las ocho sobre mar* (1965), and *Qué gran cosa es el teléfono* (19??). She also authored a variety works for children and a libretto for the opera: *Porasy* (1933). In collaboration wi Marcelo Guitart (Pseudonym for José Carlés), Plá wrote *Una novia para José V* (195?), *El hombre en la cruz* (1956), and *La casa de Pilar Sosa* (1959). Some of Plá dramatic works are lost and only a few of the surviving pieces have been publishe *Historia de la cultura paraguaya* by Carlos R. Centurión and *Behind Spanish Americ Footlights* by Willis Knapp Jones contain additional information about Plá a Centurión Miranda. Jorge Aiguadé presents an overview of Plá's theatre, including h unpublished works, in his introduction to *Teatro escogido.*

[3] Olavarría cites studies from the Americas between 1987 and 1997 that suppo this position in "De la identidad a la política: Masculinidades y políticas públicas. Aug y ocaso de la familia nuclear patriarcal en el siglo XX." He references the work Norma Fuller, David Gilmore, Teresa Valdés and Matthew Gutmann among others.

[4] In the *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, George Bernard Shaw applauds Henrik Ibsen f using discussion as an alternative to action-based scenes in his plays. He also notes th female playwrights in England used the technique frequently (220). I have observe that early twentieth-century Latin American playwrights also often replaced actio scenes with discussions and debates. Argentine playwright Malena Sándor (1913-196 employed a discussion strategy similar to Plá and Centurion Miranda's in her comedi (Farnsworth 66).

[5] December 17, 1942 is the date Jones gives for the performance in *Behind Spanis American Footlights* (40).

WORKS CITED

Aiguadé, Jorge, ed. "El teatro de Josefina Plá: El valor de la idea y el punto de vista femenino." Introduction. *Teatro escogido*. By Josefina Plá. Vol 1. Asunción: El Lector, 1996.

Alatorre, Claudia Cecilia. *Análisis del drama*. México, DF: Gaceta, 1994.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution." *The Twentieth-Century Performance Reader*. Ed. Michael Huxley and Noel Witts. London: Routledge, 2001. 120-34.

Centurión, Carlos R. *Historia de la cultura paraguaya*. Tomo 2. Asunción, Paraguay: Biblioteca Ortiz Guerrero, 1961.

_____. *Historia de las letras paraguayas*. Tomo 3. Buenos Aires: Ayacucho, 1951.

Farnsworth, May Summer. "The Well-Made (Feminist) Play: Malena Sándor's Challenge to Theatrical Conventions." *Latin American Theatre Review*. 37.1 (2003): 61-73.

Halperín Donghi, Tulio, *The Contemporary History of Latin America*. Trans. John Charles Chasteen. Durham: Duke UP, 1993.

Herman, Vimala. *Dramatic Discourse: Dialogue as Interaction in Plays*. London: Routledge, 1995.

Jones, Willis Knapp. *Behind Spanish American Footlights*. Austin: U of Texas P, 1966.

_____. *El drama en las Américas*. Guayaquíl, Ecuador: U de Guayaquil, 1946.

Méndez-Faith, Teresa. *Teatro paraguayo de ayer y de hoy*. Paraguay: Intercontinental, 2001.

Olavarría, José. "De la identidad a la política: Masculinidades y políticas públicas. Auge y ocaso de la familia nuclear patriarcal en el siglo XX." *Masculinidad/es. Identidad, sexualidad y familia*. Ed. José Olavarría and Rodrigo Parrini. Santiago, Chile: FLASCO, 2000. 11-28.

Plá, Josefina, "Apendice II: Ficha Bio-Bibliográfica." *Teatro escogido*. Tomo 1. By Josefina Plá. Ed. Jorge Aiguadé. Asunción: El Lector, 1996.

Plá, Josefina and Roque Centurión Miranda. *Aquí no ha pasado nada: Comedia en 3 actos*. Asunción: Imprenta Nacional, 1945.

Plá, Josefina. "Cómo me veo." *Alba de América*. 13.24-25 (1995): 39-46.

_____. *Cuatro siglos del teatro en el Paraguay: 1544-1964*. Asunción: Asesoría Financiera, 1966.

Shaw, George Bernard. *The Quintessence of Ibsenism*. NY: Brentano's. 1913.

Spanish *X* Revisited

John J. Stevens
University of North Carolina at Wilmington

1. Introduction

In its May 1947 issue, *Hispania* published a short article entitled "Two Rules in Need of Revision" (Shultee and Torrez), which ignited a debate over the pronunciation of the Spanish "letter," or grapheme, *x*.[1] In their article, Shultee and Torrez presented the results of an informal experiment from which they concluded that the Spanish rule of pronunciation that prescribes [s] for *x* before a consonant does not hold for speakers of Latin American varieties of Spanish, and that these speakers instead tend to pronounce *x* as [ks] in this position. In a letter to the editor of *Hispania*, Dwight Bolinger ("That *X* Again") entered the debate over *x* with a defense of Shultee and Torrez's conclusions, following up a few years later with a major article entitled "Evidence on *X*" in which he refuted the claim, made by the highly-regarded Spanish philologist Tomás Navarro, that Spanish *x* before a consonant is pronounced [ks] only in "casos muy marcados de dicción culta y enfática" and that in "la conversación corriente, la *x* ante consonante se pronuncia como una simple *s*" (*Manual* 140).

In support of his argument, Bolinger presented the results of a survey based on data elicited from 219 questionnaires that asked speakers throughout Latin America how they pronounced certain words containing *x*, as well as what they considered the "correct" or standard pronunciation of these words to be. Bolinger concluded that the norm, or prestige variant, for *x* among educated Latin American speakers of Spanish is [ks], regardless of environment. Navarro quickly rejected these findings on the grounds that Bolinger's methodology was inappropriate for this type of linguistic investigation: Questionnaires that elicit linguistic information directly from informants are notoriously unreliable, because there is often a discrepancy between what informants actually say and what they think they say or what they think they should say ("Investigación" 330).

The present study revisits the pronunciation of Spanish *x* using modern laboratory techniques and sociolinguistic methods. An acoustic analysis of recorded speech samples from 20 native speakers of peninsular and Latin American varieties of Spanish is performed in order to identify the phonetic variants of *x* and their distribution. The data are then examined within the