

## odds and ends

o'clock in the morning to go to the best bakery in Mexico City, La Providencia, where one asked for Guadalupe "the Mole" who chose the best-baked bread for you. Then you went on to buy vegetables and herbs, choosing the smallest carrots, round and cambrai onions with tails and all, and three kinds of chilis: serranos, chipotles and guajillos. You also picked up green tomatoes, wide-eared lettuce, radishes, celery, thyme, laurel and sweet marjoram. At the Izazaga market you

was cut up taking special care of its heart, which was put in to cook with the chicken before being seasoned with guacamole (avocado sauce), pickled chilis and onion, oregano, sliced cheese and tomato.

Now you were finally ready to place the bread on a damp white-wood cutting board, to take up a very special, very sharp knife (there was once a famous tortamaker who wore down her excellent knife from spreading so much

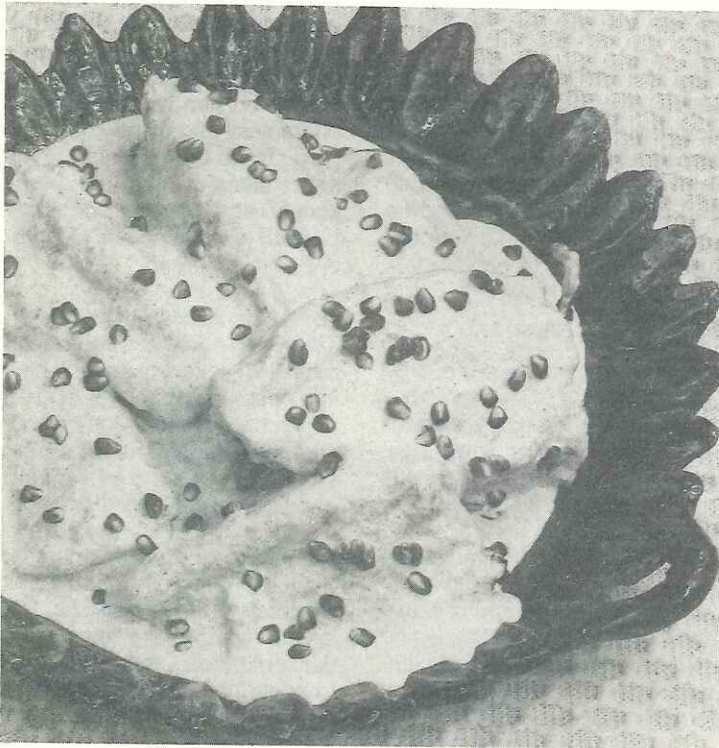


Photo by Bob Schalkwijk

Chilis in nogada

went to the herb-sellers for a deers-eye, a traditional amulet used for blessing, and purchased a piece of tequesquite, a kind of carbonate. At La Merced market you purchased smiling ranch-chicken, grateful filet, brains that did not smell of sea-breeze, drained turkey, eggs that had not been injected and Chihuahua cheese.

Back at home you put blessed water on to boil for a broth, and you threw in a piece of tequesquite, vegetables and an unwashed chicken lavishly handled to improve its taste. You let this simmer for four hours along with the deers-eye, and checked it constantly. The leg of pork was prepared by smearing it with lard and garlic and then spicing it up with broad chili. The filet was stuffed with almonds, then fried and plunged in pulque (a kind of liquor made from maguey) bought especially for the occasion at "La gloria de la Conesa." The turkey

butter), to slice the bread open with the care and precision of a surgeon, and to wash your hands because of possible microbes. Then you hollowed the bread and proceeded to fill and garnish it with the same frenzy you applied to getting your ingredients together.

The torta is not as old as mole or chilis in nogada, yet its origins are just as baroque. Even in its modern version, today's good torta-makers are constantly inventing minute works of culinary art to please customers at Meche's, Luis', the Thousand Tortas, the Turtles and Fat Abraham's.

De Gaulle spoke of the difficulty of governing a country whose people ate hundreds of different kinds of cheese. How do Mexican rulers feel about the culinary baroque of their people? ★

Teresa de Jesus Yanes and Emma Rizo

## Theater

### Mirror, Mirror On the Wall

How can a play reflect that part of the human condition that no one wants to talk about, or that when they do, they are very careful to keep its secrets from touching their own lives? Contemporary theater that retains traditional discourse and dramatic structures cannot respond to or represent this situation. Nor can the problem be resolved all at once; rather it requires years of experimentation with innovative dramatic forms and speech. *Mirrors (Espejos)*, a new play that recently opened in Mexico, takes important steps along this long path.

*Mirrors* is the creation of a rather odd couple: Juan José Gurrola and Raúl Falcó. Gurrola is an internationally recognized playwright and actor with 30 years of experience. Falcó is young, knowledgeable in all aspects of theater and guided by an indomitable energy to reach the peaks of his profession.

*Mirrors* reveals the authors' difficult lives in the hallucinations of an aviator who unfolds as classic characters: as Narcissus, the handsome man who scorns Eco the nymph and becomes the dandy (the Marquis), who lurks by the pool to feed his spirit on the passionate storms that rage within him.

"That's why not much can be said... Yet again the wax will melt. And once more you will fall into the water that will be your grave where you shall live forever more."

Into the cabin of his plane, crashed into the desert on the way to New Delhi, Marquis Narcissus hallucinates a variety of situations that take him from Paris to a sleazy nightclub in the Caribbean. He enters into a philosophical dialogue with Tiresias, confidant of the gods of Olympus, and is condemned to live the rest of his life without Eco's love, whom he once

scorned, trapped in the fleeting love of prostitutes. He will live in the Hell of the fleeting love of prostitutes, love that is bought. Life is constructed in the play through the constant repetition of the daily routine, using the speeches of classic authors such as Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, Saint John, Villaurrutia and others as the main vehicle for expression. The work is part of an effort to create a new kind of theater, in a world whose logic of development seems to have gone astray; theater that obliterates dramatic conventionalisms: lineal time development, ordered sequences, the narrative climax and all the categories that stifle meaning. It is theater that seeks to fuse art and life into a single, simultaneous experience, that erupts in front of the audience and invites reflection.

The artifice created in *Mirrors* is developed by borrowing the pictorial techniques of a collage, introducing fragments of other separate works into a new and inter-related whole. The technique generally consists of four elements, although they may not always be applied precisely. They are: the section, the previously formulated materials or message, the assembly and discontinuity or heterogeneity. "That way the audience witnessed scenes in which they could see Desdemona, Lady Macbeth and others together for the first time," according to noted Mexican theater critic Bruce Swansey.

Something similar happens in *Mirrors*. Fragments of literary classics move from one context to another. Each quote mutilates the linearity of discourse and time, conveying a double meaning: the original fragment in its context and a new meaning emerging from the new whole. The play blasts out in all directions, yet retains a classic concern: man's fate, love submerged in base passion and all of the contradictions that shape contemporary life.

The absence of a narrative core, an indication of the play's modernism, explains Raúl Falcó, "allows us to use psychic manipulation in profoundly realist theater where we enter the subconscious realm. *Mirrors* unfolds strictly within this rigor and this necessity, while at the same time there is strong dose of reiteration that adds a new element with each repetition as part of fiction's privileged domain." A verbal surface is structured that reflects and represents the characters and situations that enunciate it.

If this were not the case theater would cease to be a "mirror" for life and for the customs that confine us. After all, it is a place of the spirit where St. John, Sister Juana Inés (also of the Cross), Villaurrutia, López Velarde, don Francisco de Quevedo and Lucientes all converge, contributing together to the show's new interpretation.

According to Gurrola, it's a matter of washing down the scaffold where both directors have been the hangmen; they start out by judging themselves. "We both know that there is a scaffold behind intelligence and we want to cleanse those frames for theater. We use a variety of weapons, the most outstanding of which include visual and verbal violence, vengeance, pornography — of great importance — which never becomes eroticism."

AN ILLUSION OF REALITY

"Love's enigma was completely protected...and I saw that I was with death, and I saw that in life, I was dead," intoned Sister Angélica. The excellent acting by Juan José Gurrola (Tiresias), Mauricio Davison (Narcissus, alias "The Marquis"), Gabriela Araujo (Sister Angélica), Mariana Botey (Eco) and a dozen other actors creates the daily reality of modern society, marked as it is by increasing emotional complexity and incomprehensibility.

The tragic-farce in two acts and countless disconnected scenes, contrary to its essence, abandons the realist illusion and opens the way to a literary journey that erodes away any trace of credibili-

ty by affirming a mixture of representations in which man's dark side appears and assaults the viewer.

At times humorous, at others dramatic and shocking, the play dilutes and equates sexuality with all of the desires of whoring. Sexuality does not exist, only relationships that are initiated through language: "What is said and what is named defines the possibilities that bodies will come together in one or another way; it is not necessary to understand because it is perceived." That is what creates the possibility that the viewer will identify with what happens on stage.

The constant flow of scenes from different periods completely does away with time as measure and linearity. Rather, it gives way to history's great cycles that seem to repeat themselves in the dialogues of a Greek tragedy, or those of Sister Juana Inés de la Cruz, St. John, Villaurrutia and even Shakespeare himself: "Contemporary man is made up of the same elements as his ancestors, and he continues to suffer from the same contradictions despite the modern world's invasion of us, presenting the same situation behind a different appearance, but at the root of things, we are still the same salt." The challenge for new theater lies in how to treat these unresolved problems, without turning to moralistic formulas or terrestrial forms in use since Aristotle's *Poetics*. An echo of this reaches those viewers who seek a different response to their reality. ★

Ramsés Ramírez

Cinema

GABY BRIMMER, A Gigantic Film Production in Mexico

The cameras began to roll in Mexico City on September 22 as Mexican film-maker Luis Mandoki directs the production of *Gaby Brimmer*. The leading roles are played by noted Swedish star Liv Ullman and Argentine Norma Aleandro (1985 winner of the

Cannes prize for best actress for her role in *The Official Story*, also this year's Oscar winner for best foreign film). Rachel Levin, a U.S. stage actress making her film debut, plays the title role as Gaby. Robert Loggia (*Scarface*, *Prizzi's Honor*) and Lawrence Monoson, who had an extraordinary role in *Mask*, round out the cast.

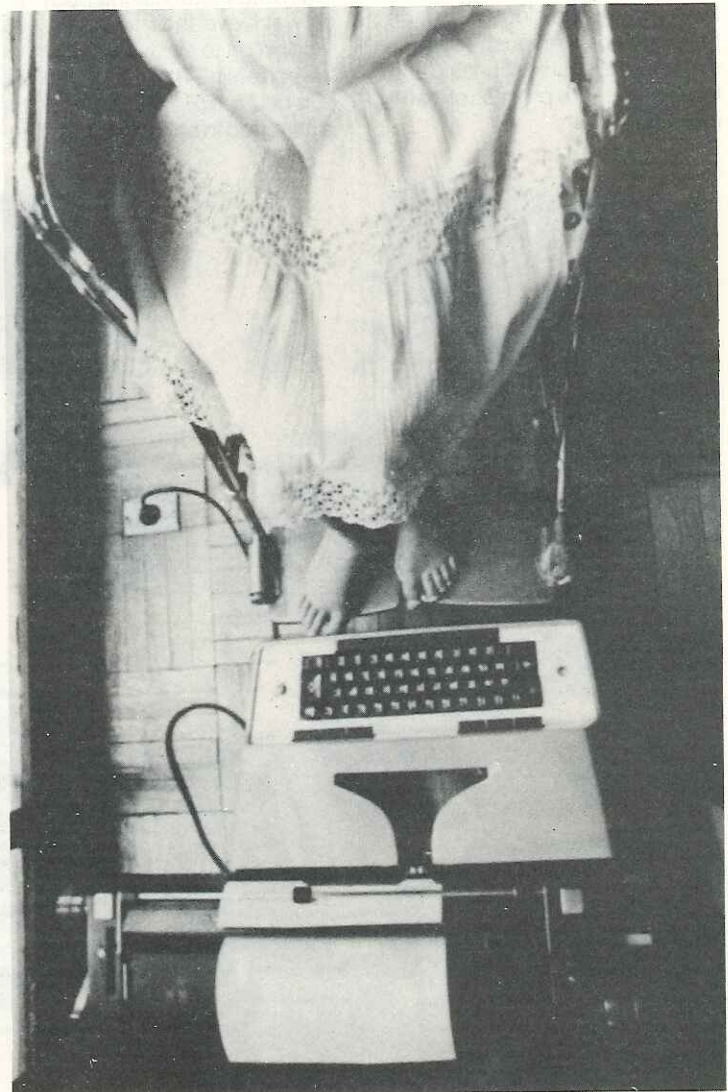
Hungarian Lajos Koltai (*Mefiste*, *Angy Very*, *Colonel Red!*) is photographic director, Alejandro Luna (*Frida*) is in charge of set and Lucinne Donnai, a native of France and long-time resident of Mexico, with years of experience in theater and opera, is wardrobe director.

Very few times has such an outstanding cast and technical crew worked together in Mexico under a Mexican director (in recent times we can only recall *Fox-Trott*, directed by Arturo Ripstein). To make things even more unusual, Mandoki, born in 1954, is practically a debutante in the movie world. While he has made several shorts, he has only one full-length feature to his credit, *Motel*



The aviator hallucinates in *Mirrors*

Photo by Carlos Gattell



Gaby's difficult way of writing.

Photo by Rogelio Cuellar