

MARÍA TERESA GARCÍA-ABAD GARCÍA.
*PERFILES CRÍTICOS PARA UNA HISTORIA DEL TEATRO ESPAÑOL:
LA VOZ Y LA LIBERTAD 1926-1936*

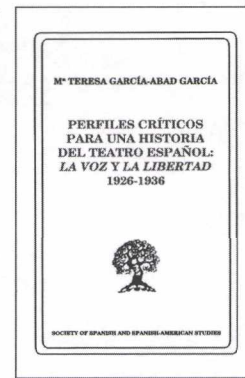
Lynn Purkey / University of California, Berkeley

A significant contribution to the field of twentieth century peninsular theater and to a lesser extent cinematography, *Perfiles críticos* chronicles the reception of theater in two Spanish newspapers *La Voz* and *La Libertad* during the turbulent period prior to the Spanish Civil War. As noted in the introduction, the rationale for the study is that the newspaper is an important means of gauging the theater's reception on many levels, not the least of which is the interdependent relationship between the critic and the theatrical work, as well as what Lotman refers to as the "social semantics" in which a work is conceived. This is of particular importance since, according to the author, the press was the most significant means of cultural diffusion in Spain during the prewar period.

While offering a penetrating analysis of problems concerning Pre-Civil War Theater and their causes, *Perfiles críticos* proposes innovative ways of looking at old problems, by employing different theoretical approaches, the most obvious being reception theory and semiotics. Insightful and meticulous in its scholarship, one of the most noteworthy aspects of the work is its analysis of the theatrical crisis of the time, which has traditionally been connected with the concurrent rise in cinema, especially after the transition from silent to "talking" films. However, rather than remarking upon the impoverishing effects of cinema as it drew audiences away from the theater, García-Abad concludes that the emerging film industry was actually a source of artistic enrichment, which made possible an era of new theatrical experimentation.

Structurally *Perfiles críticos* is divided into twelve chapters, preceded by the author's introduction, and a prologue written by María Francisca Vilches de Frutos, which gives a general orientation of the work and situates the two newspapers within the field of journalistic production. Following the main body of the text are a listing of the theatrical articles found in both papers and indexed by author and an appendix of key theatrical articles such as Ramón Sender's review of García Lorca's *Yerma* and Manuel Fontanals' description of the newest tendencies of the time in Spanish set design. Within the body of the text, each chapter is devoted to a specific theme; for example the first chapter traces the issue of censorship and its debilitating effect upon Spanish theater.

Perfiles críticos para una historia del teatro español: La Voz y La Libertad 1926-1936. Boulder Colorado: Society of the Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 2000. Pp. 367.



Other chapters are devoted to the “polemic of patronage,” the “anti-realistic” tendencies in costumes and set design, the roll of the fans in independent theater, the formation of the critics’ canon, and “the artifices of creation.” Beyond merely providing a general discussion of theater, a great deal of the work is devoted to the reception and discussion of many individual works and authors.

While scholarly and moderately dense in style, *Perfiles críticos* is also logical and lucid. Based upon thorough research and the author’s obvious familiarity with the Spanish Theatrical Scene, it is a probing analysis of theatrical trends during the tumultuous age prior to the Civil War. Moreover, the work contains a wealth of information of interest to scholars regarding Spanish Theater as well as the developing Spanish Film Industry during the twenties and thirties.

