

Elena Guiochíns

Androgynous Playwriting

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promoted because
we are women
and not simply for our value
as playwrights,
authors or stage creators?
I imagine perplexed faces
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*"I" is just a convenient term
for somebody who hasn't got a real being.
Virginia Woolf*

I don't question my writing in the terms of Hamlet's dilemma: to write or not to write as a woman? I am and I write, simply this.

For me, the stage and writing are a core of energy for all things human; there is nothing more powerful than the detonators of dreams, actions and words, especially the word that, spoken internally, then acquires life on stage. My exaltation comes from a passion which I share with those who are accomplices of soul's life and creation. I am interested in offering the possibility of questions and answers on stage and this connects me to an audience in an individual and in a collective sense.

My awareness of identity in writing is genderless. Writing for theatre is for me absolute freedom, beyond good and evil, relativity and immediacy. I try to go beyond dualism; I am interested in human behaviour and in the subversion of values.

In Plato's *The Symposium*, he describes the human being as bisexual and as being round in shape. This reflects the divine perfection of the Whole-One. This concept of universal bisexuality serves the idea of a divided sexuality as a model and principle for all existence. The myth of the androgynous being first of all shows the deep dissatisfaction of human beings in their condition. We feel torn apart and severed; removed from a timeless "state" that is impossible to define and of which we have no precise memory. This separation constitutes a break, a fatal disaster for human kind, and, at the same time, a substantial change in the structure of the world. Not being conditioned by opposites gives absolute freedom, because a transcendental situation (which is inconceivable) expresses itself through contradictory or paradoxical images.

As a playwright, I search for the autonomous position of

the text. The uncertainties concerning women's identity and we women who write for theatre, often reflect prejudices and general discourse about "being women". The meaning of duality (devaluation and acknowledgement) goes beyond this for me. I am neither interested in the role of gender in writing, nor do I think that a female literary status exists. The credibility of women playwrights does not rest on imposing the "female" in an intellectual and artistic work. Is it not degrading to be promoted because we are women and not simply for our value as playwrights, authors or stage creators? I imagine perplexed faces reacting to what I say.

I like it when I discover a text or I see a production where women acquire a positive representation of themselves, one which belongs to them. But the "female question" as a theme for debate and negotiation in an artistic work or as philosophical discourse seems restrictive, poor and officious to me. I think it promotes a sort of marginal condition for women as a form of validation in relation to creation, and I find this humiliating.

Whatever is the way forward, I think that we have to get rid of this complex knot of "sexual difference" tied to writing. If we want to have a different idea of sexuality and of the political, social, intellectual and artistic life, it is of vital importance not to promote the role of gender within intellectual and artistic work.

Perhaps we are brought together because we feel that we lack a common world for women and because we are bound by the fact that we have devoted our existence to a great passion, theatre. In this sense the bonds are a crucial means of learning, revelation, challenge and also of both meeting and conflict.

In a contemporary world, one truth is the need to come into contact with each

other. I speak of bonds as a contaminating effect, as an inclusive category, for the simple fact that I am here today, sharing these ideas and listening to these words. A meeting among theatre conspirators is irresistible because it can make the journey less solitary. Bonds can also become networks of co-operation. They are an invisible home, a powerful means, an organic form of social organisation that is paradoxically intimate and expansive at the same time. I think that the consequences of this meeting should not be underestimated.

Each creator exists for something, each play has a sense and multiple meanings. There are a great number of perspectives and nothing should be taken for granted. Transformation has neither country nor gender. What is the way to be able to create bonds of confidence among ourselves and to modify a culture that wants us to be lacking in confidence in ourselves and in value of others? I am here to find out.

Translated from Spanish by Maria Ficara

ELENA GUIOCHÍNS (Mexico) is a playwright, author and director for theatre and television. Her latest published plays are *Mutis*, *Dos en su papel* and *Juan Volado*. In June 2000 Elena staged her latest play *Plagio de palabras* at the Teatro Coyoacán in Mexico City. In 1997 she received the Oscar Liera Prize as best contemporary playwright for *Mutis* and in 1998 the Concepción Sada Prize for best children's play for *Juan Volado*.