

Foreword

By Lucía Galleno Villafán, PhD. Queens University
of Charlotte

In a postmodern melodramatic style where fantasy and reality blend and the weather impacts life while commenting in the background that nature cannot be controlled, *Brave Women and Laughter (Quite a long night's journey throughout Latin America)* or *Sonrisas y Mujeres (Un largo viaje en la noche por Latinoamérica)* grabs you from beginning to end with its dynamism, abundant information, communication styles, and short phrases that burst with ideas of possible occurrences: “¿Y si vemos Putanieves?”¹. The three different stages where the characters simultaneously perform produce a chain of apparently dislocated happenings yet they are stitched together with erotic energy in an enveloping narrative of uninhibited life and in other cases secrecy.

The discourses feed each other through the three acts regardless of the order one chooses to experience this performance. The age and generation of the characters charge their actions invigorating life with different flames of energy: adolescence, middle age, the remembrance of historical female figures, fears, illusions, pretensions, violence, domination, suffering, deceptions, realizations, displacements, expressiveness, errors, atonement, Iberian colloquialisms highlighted by swearing, and women's understanding that their history was tailored conveniently by men. The totality of the play brings awareness to women's plenitude yet to be explored and increasingly understood by them.

¹Why don't we go see Whorewhite?

Submission and the wrongs done to woman by imposed restrictions has transformed the present into a radical life change.

This play lifts Woman from the chains of inhibition to focus on her liberation. Woman's intimate journeys through the eras, her sexuality, strengths, likes and dislike sare framed within the fluid sexuality of the current times bringing new complications to the table. The trivialities of life continually intermingle with current concerns in a manner that reduces the prevalence of the latter while claiming attention to themselves because life is about daily trivialities too.

Like in the *Rayuela* by Julio Cortázar, the audience in *Brave Women and Laughter (Quite a long night's journey throughout Latin America)* has the freedom to co-create this performance by choosing the order in which each of the three acts and Coda can be organized and viewed according to personal liking or experiential interest. Constructing unknown experiences and unimaginable discourses gives freedom to playfulness, triggers risk taking, and encourages the twisting and tweaking of the logical order from a counter-traditional stance. The energy resulting from this position liberates speech, shows the erotic imagination and sexuality as well as the obsessions and decisiveness of some unconfident male characters.

The rain turns into a diluvial experience of uncontrollable magnitude, darkness (blackouts) forestalls destruction. A communal suicide is offered as salvation because the characters no longer know how to function within nature. Forced

to return to a reptilian era where the crocodile has no problem living, but the characters do, brings the play to an end of the game but it leaves the communal consciousness of our times hanging from the multiple dimensions of reality, technology, virtual existence, and Woman's intergenerational and evolutionary dialogues.

By integrating diverse female characters from different generations—from a pair of teenagers, Mei (of Japanese descent) and Wen (an Argentine), who in the Spanish original speak colloquial Iberian Spanish frequently seasoned with imprecations equivalent to using the “f” word in English to Venus, seemingly a reference made to the Roman goddess and Cleopatra—this play conflates time and sets all female characters in the irreverent twenty-first century.

It is remarkable that the privilege of opening and closing the play is given to Mei and Wen (according to the order of the manuscript), who in Act One evoke that the present belongs to them through their freedom of expression, imagination, and desires. In the Coda they and other characters, but mostly them, pay homage to fifty plus great women in an Almodóvar-like style, again making their voices heard. A fitting recognition that those women settled the previous milestones that led Woman to take the reins of her life and create her own stories and history through their extraordinary voices. This is a play of our times that deserves not only to be read, but to be experienced.