THE PORTRAYAL OF THE REIGN OF MAXIMILIAN AND CARLOTA

BY THREE CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN PLAYWRIGHTS

by

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HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Perhaps one of the most bizarre episodes in the turbulent history of Mexico was the advent of the Second Empire and the brief reign of Ferdinand Maximilian of the house of Hapsburg and his consort Charlotte Amélie (Carlota Amalia) of Belgium. This empire, which endured from 1864 to 1867, represented the zenith of the French Intervention initiated in 1861 by Napoleon III of France.

The historical background of the Intervention had its origin in the Reform movement headed by Benito Juárez, the enigmatic Zapotec who, from the time of his appointment as Minister of Justice (1855) until his death in 1872, was the leading liberal of his country. In 1857, Juárez promulgated the Reform Constitution which separated Church and State for the first time in Mexican history. A fierce civil war, the War of the Reform, ensued between the Conservatives, who had the support of the landed oligarchy, and the Liberals, whose chief aim was to minimize the power of the Catholic Church. Tension between the two groups was heightened still further by the enactment of the Leyes de Reforma or Laws of Reform (1859-1861) which provided for freedom of worship, confiscation of all church property, suppression of monasteries, secularized cemeteries, and civil marriage.¹

The Liberals finally won the war, but the country was impov-

¹ E. Lefevre, Historia de la Intervención francesa (Brussels and London, 1869), p. 32
erished. Juárez, the President, declared a moratorium on foreign
debts held by the French, Spanish and British interests. Napoleon
III of France, who was quick to sense an excellent opportunity,
seized upon this moratorium as a pretext to intervene, bringing
Mexico under French control. He instigated an alliance whereby the
three countries agreed to support an invading army in order to force
the Mexicans to pay their debt. It was agreed that territorial in­
tegrity should not be violated during the Intervention; nevertheless,
it seemed apparent that the countries in question, in the best tradi­
tion of the era, had imperialistic aims.

President Juárez sent a group to Vera Cruz to discuss Mexican
rights with the foreigners. Shortly thereafter, the Spanish and Eng­
lish representatives decided to withdraw their troops. The French,
however, not only refused to leave, but staged an invasion. They
were defeated in the celebrated battle at Puebla on the fifth of May.
But this victory, heartening though it was for the Mexicans, was not
decisive. The invasion continued and the French sent more troops to
guard against a repetition of the disaster of the Cinco de Mayo.

The invasion had been launched, but strong measures were
vital to maintain control. On July 10, 1863, a provisional govern­

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2 Hilarion Frías y Soto, La Intervención y el Imperio (Mexico,
1957), p. 133.

3 Émile de Kératry, The Rise and Fall of the Emperor Maximilian

4 Martín de las Torres, Maximiliano de Austria en México
(Madrid and Barcelona, 1867), pp. 127, 176.
ment announced that Mexico was to have a constitutional monarchy led by a Catholic prince from one of the ruling houses of Europe. The most desirable candidate seemed to be the Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian of the Austrian house of Hapsburg, son of the Archduchess Sophie and the Archduke Franz Karl and younger brother of the Emperor Franz Joseph. Napoleon favored his appointment and suggested that a commission be appointed to offer him the crown. On October 3, 1863 such a commission visited Maximilian at his chateau, Miramar, near Trieste on the Adriatic Sea, and offered him the crown of the Mexican Empire.

Maximilian did not accept the offer immediately; he debated, he vacillated, he struggled inwardly. The puppeteer Napoleon became uneasy. Worried that the Hapsburg might reject the offer, he appealed to Maximilian's innate sense of honor; he informed him that it was too late to decline the emperorship gracefully without marring the honor of the family. This was something of a bluff on Napoleon's part, but it proved to be effective.

Others urged Maximilian to accept the throne. His young wife, the lovely, intelligent and ambitious Carlota, daughter of Belgian King Leopold I, was eager to be the first Empress from the house of Coburg. And the Emperor Franz Joseph, whether for personal or dynastic reasons, favored the experiment.

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5 Carleton Beals, foreword, José Luis Elasico, Maximilian Emperor of Mexico; Memoirs of His Private Secretary (New Haven, 1934), p. 68.
7 Ibid., p. 104.
Maximilian finally succumbed to such pressures, after demanding a plebescite from the Mexican people assuring him of their sincere desire to have him as their monarch. Votes were collected fraudulently and presented to him as proof of the popular will of the Mexicans. This, along with the French agreement to provide military and financial aid, proved to be the deciding factor. On April 9, 1864, the Archduke signed a pact renouncing his rights to the Austrian throne and the following day he accepted the crown of the Mexican Empire. 8

Maximilian and Carlota left almost immediately for their new dominion on the Novara. Arriving in Vera Cruz after a rather rough crossing, they received a lukewarm reception which provoked Carlota to tears; however, their reception in the capital was more heartening: there they were greeted by shouts and applause. 9

The Emperor was eager to do his new job well, but he was faced with serious obstacles. He immediately tried to gain the good will of the Liberals, and was successful to a certain extent, but his failure to modify the harsh Reform Laws incurred the enmity of the Conservative element. Then he inadvertently angered the Liberals, indeed the whole country, by issuing the "Black Decree", (October 3, 1865), calling for the death sentence for all persons in arms. Full amnesty was to be granted those who surrendered before November 15, and this

8 Ralph Roeder, Juárez and his Mexico (New York, 1947), II, 560, 564.

date was later extended to December first. This action, which was taken in good faith in the interest of restoring peace in the country, succeeded in alienating the Liberals. 10

The Mexican Empire was becoming a greater and greater financial burden upon the French. Napoleon, harassed by criticism from the United States and by unsettled conditions at home, decided to withdraw his troops. The Mexican monarchs had been expecting some sort of drastic action, and Carlota asked permission of her husband to go to Europe in order to force the French Emperor to keep his promises. If necessary she planned to visit the Pope and various ruling heads of Europe in order to gain her ends. The Empress left Vera Cruz on July 13, 1866 and arrived at St. Cloud on August 11. There she argued, she implored, she cast recriminations upon Napoleon, but to no avail; he remained steadfast. The French Emperor was in a difficult position; he had received a note from Secretary of State Seward of the United States, threatening war if France continued her occupation of Mexican soil. Furthermore, the French people were tired of paying heavy taxes to support the unprofitable venture. These pressures, plus his own disillusionment over the failure of his dream of a New World Empire, caused him to withdraw all support of Maximilian. 11

Worry, disillusionment and fatigue were taking their toll on

10 Harding, pp. 214-217.
11 Harding, pp. 232-244.
the well-being of the Empress. Her mind suffered the consequences of her strenuous ordeal. With her reason steadily giving way, she left Paris for Rome to beg the Pope's assistance. On September 27 she visited the Vatican and presented her problem to Pius IX. He was kind and solicitous, but he did not trust the liberal tendencies of Maximilian and for that reason rejected the concordat she proposed. By this time, Carlota was physically and mentally exhausted and imagined that she was being pursued by Napoleon's assassins; she refused to eat or drink for fear of being poisoned. She begged the Holy Father to give her shelter for the night. He finally agreed, thinking it unwise to allow her to leave in her distraught condition, and thus she became the only woman in history to pass a night under the Vatican roof.

When Maximilian was notified of the illness of his wife, he wanted to leave to join her immediately. But, the Conservatives begged him to remain and he did so. The unfortunate reign was fast drawing to a close and a tragic ending was inevitable. The forces of Juárez were closing in on the dwindling Imperial army. Beginning in the north, they had been working their way toward the capital, town by town. Early in the spring of 1865 the last French troops left, and Maximilian and his staff went to Querétaro, where his soldiers were opposing an army of 40,000 Liberals under General Escobedo. For seventy-two days the Imperialists resisted valiantly. Then, on the

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12 Harding, pp. 258-267.
evening of May 14, Maximilian was betrayed by Colonel Miguel López and captured. A farcical court-martial was held, and Maximilian I of Mexico was sentenced to death. On June 19, 1867, the Emperor and his faithful generals Miguel Miramón and Tomás Mejía were taken to the Cerro de las Campanas (Hill of the Bells) on the outskirts of the town and executed by a firing squad as some three thousand Liberal soldiers looked on. 13

Maximilian had died bravely, believing that his beloved wife had preceded him in death. In reality, she lived on for sixty years in a grim world of silence and shadows. Although she had occasional periods of lucidity, for all practical purposes she had lost control of her reason. The Empress died in Bouchout Castle in Belgium on January 19, 1927, at the age of 87. 14

Thus this strange imperialistic venture ended tragically, bringing death to Maximilian and sixty empty years of loneliness and insanity to his wife. What had been the significance of this brief though eventful interlude in Mexican history? According to John A. Crow, some historians consider it as relatively unimportant historically speaking; 15 whether this is true or not, it is a fas-

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cinating story which has attracted the interest of many people from diverse parts of the world for almost a century.

Many histories and biographies have been written by foreigners about Maximilian and his ill-fated reign, and it is interesting to note the different viewpoints which these efforts represent. Some writers envision him as a saintly, martyred figure who served as a human sacrifice. Others see him in a more unfriendly light as an intruder who assumed responsibilities which were none of his concern and paid his just penalty. There are still other, probably more realistic schools of thought which represent various points between these two poles. The factor which unites, or at least relates, these writers is their distance; they have all written about the Second Empire from the foreigner's point of view.

The Mexicans could not be as detached about these happenings in their own fatherland. This was especially true of the liberal followers of Juárez. Liberals of the epoch tended to criticize the Emperor and Empress harshly for trying to exploit the Mexican people and for attempting to impose the law of Divine Right on a country that knew nothing of such traditions. In their speeches and writings, they applauded Benito Juárez for his unrelenting pursuit and punishment of the unfortunate sovereign.

The Mexican authors of this century have taken a different viewpoint. As time has elapsed, they have been able to take advan-
tage of historical perspective. They have begun to perceive the truth of the reign of Maximilian and Carlota in a new light. Now the monarchs are neither saints nor ogres, but simply human beings caught up in a web of tragic events from which there could be no escape.

Unfortunately, the Mexicans have not written much of literary significance about these tragic human figures. But there are three plays, by three different contemporary Mexican dramatists, which in my opinion merit consideration by those who wish to gain insight into the Second Empire of Mexico. The works are Miramar, by Julio Jiménez Rueda; Carlota de Mexico, by Miguel N. Lira; and Corona de Sombra, by Rodolfo Usigli.

It is significant, I think, that the three works were first staged during the same period: Miramar in 1932, Carlota in 1943, and Corona in 1944. Despite the propinquity of the dates, there seems to be no mutual influence on the part of the playwrights; each one appears to have worked independently of the others, motivated by different factors.
MIRAMAR BY JULIO JIMÉNEZ RUEDA

O Miramare, a le tue bianche torri
attestate per lo ciel piovorno
fósche con volo di sinistri augelli
vengon le nubi . . .

Addio, castello pér felici giorni
nido d'amore costruito in vano;
Altra su gli ermi oceani rapisce
aura gli sposi . . .

Miramar, which had its premiere on May 14, 1932, is the first
of the three works chronologically and its author is the oldest of the
playwrights.

Julio Jiménez Rueda was born on April 10, 1898 in the capital.
During his life he has served in diverse capacities: lawyer, professor,
diplomat, historian, critic, lecturer, essayist, public official, and
dramatist. In addition, he has travelled extensively through Europe
and the Americas. 17

He began writing theatrical pieces late in his career. His ef-
forts in this direction seem to be the result of a literary evolution
which has progressed from the essay to the short story, from this genre
to the novel, and from the novel to the drama, farce and comedy which
he has explored successively. 18

16 Giosue Carducci, "Odi Barbari," Poesie di Giosue Carducci
1850-1900 (Bologne, no date), pp. 854-55.

17 Francisco Monterde, Teatro mexicano del siglo xx (Mexico,

18 Ibid.
What prompted Jiménez Rueda to devote his play to Carlota and Maximilian? In his foreword he notes his source of inspiration:

"Hace años cuando ejercía las funciones de conservador de las galerías históricas de nuestro riquísimo museo nacional, dos retratos causaron en mí vivísima impresión: el de Sor Juana y el de la Emperatriz Carlota Amalia... La obsesión por adivinar el secreto de esas dos almas me llevó a escribir, en tiempo, Camino de perfección y Sor Adoración del Divino Verbo y este Miramar." 19

Miramar is essentially a play in which the dramatist "recoge el pasaje histórico de Carlota y Maximiliano de Hapsburgo a su llamado imperio." 20 It is a play in three acts with thirteen principal characters. There is no real plot. Through a series of dialogues between various members of the royal entourage we learn of the important events of the reign. Maximilian himself never appears on stage nor do we hear his voice, and Carlota appears less frequently than many of the secondary characters.

As the title indicates, the castle of Miramar is significant in this work. It is a symbol of lost youth, fleeting happiness, and the disillusionment of Carlota and Maximilian in the face of their defeat. The castle is, in short, an ever-present, melancholy reminder of the peace which fate interrupted. In the words of the critic Carlos González Peña, "...la sombra del castillo se proyecta como agonista mudo de la tragedia que vivieron los archiduques." 21

19 Julio Jiménez Rueda, foreword, Miramar (Mexico, 1943).
21 Jiménez Rueda, foreword, Miramar.
The castle of Miramar reflects the state of mind of its inhabitants in romantic fashion. Between the first and third acts it undergoes a radical change. In Act I the atmosphere is gay and festive. Bands are playing in the castle parks, and happy townspeople are milling about in their most elegant finery. A holiday air prevails; it is the eve of the departure of Maximilian and Carlota for their new domain. The sadness of their leaving is tempered with optimism, for they have been called to carry out a noble task.

Act III is set in the castle three years later. It is 1867. Maximilian has been executed in Querétaro and his wife has suffered a mental breakdown. We see the same basic set decoration which we have seen in the first act, yet Miramar is not the same. All adornments have disappeared. Although Carlota is temporarily residing in the castle, there is no sign to indicate the presence of a monarch in the building. The appearance of the castle is extremely somber, mirroring the tragedy which has befallen its owners, and a heavy sadness pervades the atmosphere.

The castle overshadows most of the characters in the play. There is no significant character development during the course of the action. The people are not important in themselves; their role is to serve as observers and narrators of historical fact. In order to lend greater verisimilitude to Miramar the dramatist has given actual historic names to his personages. The most prominent in the play are: Count Bombelles, Commandant of the Palace Guard at Chapultepec; Countess Kollonitz, Lady-in-Waiting to the Empress; Lt.
Col. Günner and Commandant Shaffer of the Palace Guard; Tudos, the Imperial cook; Grill, the Emperor's valet; and Billimeck, an Austrian scientist who served as curator of the museum established by Carlota. Through the conversations of these and other characters we learn of significant events of the ill-fated reign.

The first act takes place on April 14, 1864. Carlota and Maximilian are preparing to sail for Mexico on the Novara. They are leaving their lovely home near Trieste on the Adriatic Sea. As the scene opens Tudos and Grill discuss the impending journey in melancholy tones. Our introduction to them sets the pace for the first act: "Tudos y Grill, ..., apoyados en la balaustrada, miran cómo la tarde convierte en mareas púrpuras las aguas del golfo. Melancólicamente melen sus almas en los compases de la polka que se apaga" (p. 9).

The servants reminisce. They speak of the ceremony in the castle in which Maximilian was crowned Emperor of Mexico. Grill describes the costumes worn by the Archduke and Duchess. When he refers to the black sash of the Order of Malta worn by Carlota, Tudos notes that black is an ill omen. As the men continue their discussion they mention various facets of the personalities of the principal players in the drama of Maximilian and Carlota. For example, they speak of the Emperor of Austria and Grill observes: "... es dura la mirada del Emperador Francisco José." Tudos replies: "La del Príncipe Max es, en cambio, suave y apacible" (p. 17). As for Carlota, they make the following statement: "Ejerce una influencia decisiva en el Emperador, si algo ocurre ... A ratos se dijera que ella es la verdadera autora de este viaje ..." (p. 19).
At this moment the mayordomo enters and interrupts the chatter of Tudós and Grill. The servants exit, supposedly to complete last-minute tasks, and Günner and Shaffer make their entrance. Their topic of conversation is, of course, the new adventure in Mexico. Shaffer is optimistic about the project. He assures his companion that conquest has already been achieved: "Está conquistado ya, Teniente Coronel Günner. La espada victoriosa de los soldados franceses nos ha preparado el camino" (p. 28). Furthermore, the Austrians have been sought out to bring order into the chaos of Mexico. Shaffer reminds Günner: "...Hemos sido llamados, que nuestra presencia es allí necesaria para poner fin a un estado de cosas intolerables" (p. 29). Despite these rationalizations, Günner is dubious. He confesses: "Pues a pesar de ello, Comandante Shaffer, tengo mis dudas sobre el éxito de la expedición" (p. 29).

The two men divert the direction of their talk from the general to the particular as they comment upon the motivations behind the acceptance of the Mexican crown. Günner believes that the Empress has been chiefly responsible. In his words: "Como que si no fuera por el valor y el empeño de la Emperatriz mucho me temo que el Príncipe Max seguiría coleccionando mariposas con el Profesor Billimeck en el parque del castillo de Miramar" (p. 32). Shaffer defends the Emperor, claiming that his position is a difficult one. He counters: "Situación difícil es la del Archiduque. Su augusto hermano ... no ve con buenos ojos la presencia de Max en estas tierras. Los Hapsburgos no retroceden ante nada, Teniente Coronel Günner" (p. 32).
There can be no doubt that Carlota is ambitious. Shaffer notes the words of her brother, the Count of Flanders: "... excesiva ambición tiene de ser la soberana de no importa qué y no importa dónde" (p. 32). The two men seem to feel that her great personal drive is the result, at least in part, of injured pride. They reveal that a rumored infidelity of Maximilian has led her to maintain separate quarters and devote all her energies and passions to the imperial venture. They intimate that, although she still loves her husband, her pride forces her to act as she does.

Shortly after this point in the first act, Anna Pfeiffer, the sweetheart of Shaffer, makes her entrance. Their love story is a leitmotif which recurs briefly in the third act. In the ensuing dialogue, which constitutes the only love scene in the play, Anna expresses her fears and doubts. She begs Shaffer to take her with him to Mexico. He reassures her, and promises to return quickly. As they embrace, Carlota appears suddenly. She smiles and tactfully requests an introduction to Shaffer's fiancee. The Empress favors the young couple: she assures Anna of a place of honor in her court, and promises Shaffer that he will be able to return to Austria soon to marry his beloved. As the grateful pair makes their exit, Carlota says: "Vayan con Dios y tenga la seguridad al Comandante Shaffer que mi mayor placer será influir cerca de Max para que los deseos de los prometidos se realicen" (p. 50).

The Empress changes her attitude quickly when they have gone. She confesses her sadness and fear to Rosa Munz, a lady-in-waiting.
Carlota feels somewhat trapped in a sense. On one hand, she is afraid of the vast responsibility which she is about to acquire; on the other, she finds the pleasant, uneventful existence at Miramar oppressive. She resents being watched by the Emperor and his court at Vienna, and she feels that Franz Joseph does not like her. All this makes Carlota unhappy. Nevertheless, her heart is valiant and she is most eager to do well in the new project. As she remarks to Rosa: "El pueblo que vamos a gobernar es inteligente y bueno. Max es un buen corazón. Yo haré todo lo posible por representar mi papel dignamente!" (p. 57).

Napoleon III is mentioned for the first time in the play in this scene. Rosa suggests that the Emperor of the French will probably be of great assistance to Maximilian. Carlota is not of this opinion. She states emphatically and prophetically: "El Emperador de los franceses es nuestro enemigo. Napoleón es un advenedizo. Napoleón es un traidor. Hay que tener cuidado. Los franceses harán todo lo posible por arruinaros" (p. 57). When Rosa comments that the Mexican throne will be raised upon French bayonets, Carlota responds quickly: "Y el corazón de los mexicanos. Esto será más fuerte que aquello" (p. 57).

The next scene serves to introduce Countess Kollonitz and Professor Billimeck. It is in a light vein. Since humor is singularly lacking in Miramar, it provides some comic relief:

Carlota: Simpática figura la de este profesor.
Countess: Figúreselo su Majestad charlando en latín con los indios del Imperio.
This light scene is immediately followed by an episode of
dramatic intensity. A gypsy, fleeing from a mob of guards and soldiers,
stumbles into the castle park. Carlota detains the girl and questions
her:

Carlota: ¿Sabes leer en la mano?
Gypsy: En mano del marino leña.
Carlota: ¿Y qué encontraste en ella?
Gypsy: Muerte, muerte, en país lejano. Tierra desconocida. Corazón destrozado...
Carlota: Has hecho mal en presagiar catástrofes, hija.
Gypsy: ¡No vayas tampoco, Maestá! ¡No vayas!
Carlota: No has leído aún en la palma de mi mano.
Gypsy: Pero sí en las estrellas. La estrella tuya pálida, Maestá. La estrella tuya parece llorar.
No vayas. He visto a tu esposo. Pecho lleno de sangre. Cara pálida, tan pálida como estrella
tuya, Maestá. (p. 72)

This brief encounter with the gypsy fortune teller upsets Carlota. Her
discomfort is heightened by the haunting Italian folk song urging Maxi-
milian to remain at Miramar:

Massimiliano, non te fidare
torna al Castello di Miramare
Il trono fraciso di Moctezuma
e nappo gallico, colmo di epuma.
Il timeo Danaos, chi non ricorda?
sotto la clamide trovò la corda. (p. 75)

Carlota orders that the singing be quieted. She cries: "¡Que calle!
¡Que detengan al hombre que canta!" Count Bombelles replies: "No
es un hombre, Majestad, es un pueblo" (p. 75). The first act ends
on a pessimistic note.

Act II is set in Chapultepec Castle on the evening of July 6,
1866. Carlota is preparing to sail for Europe to implore Napoleon
to keep his promise of support. It is a critical period for the Empire; the situation is hopeless. As Bombelles, Shaffer and Günner report, Napoleon is evacuating his troops. The Mexican government is in deep debt. Help from the Pope cannot be assured, for the Church is not satisfied with the status of the clergy and the confiscation of their possessions. Moreover, the United States is threatening to resort to strict measures, if necessary, in order to impede the residence of foreign troops in their neighboring country. They are invoking the Monroe Doctrine to this end.

The three-way conversation is interrupted by a summons from the Emperor. Count Bombelles leaves. His companions continue to speculate about the fate of the Empire. Günner predicts a rapid end. He believes "...esta interesante aventura toca a su fin" (p. 91), and feels certain that Shaffer will soon see Anna again. Shaffer in turn prophesies: "Y el Teniente Coronel iniciará, quizá, una nueva aventura de los cafés vieneses a los compases de un vals...mientras aquí...una Lupe, una Concha, una María, una Carmen añoren al soldado que se llevó sus ilusiones en una hermosa noche de luna" (p. 91). This is an accurate comment on the inevitable imprint which the conqueror leaves upon his conquest.

As the conversation continues it is reduced to the level of gossip. Günner and Shaffer discuss the alleged amorous activities of the Emperor, making references to the mysterious visitors who enter the castle through a secret door; the retreat El Olvido in Cuernavaca; a certain house on Vergara Street, and so on. They conclude this petty talk
by revealing that Carlota has not completely forgiven her husband since his indiscretion in Vienna, although she still loves him.

In the following scene we meet Professor Billimeck again. There is a sharp contrast between his attitudes in the two scenes. In the first act he was delighted at being able to take part in the New World adventure; now he is stunned at the turn of events. When Shaffer and Günner inform him of the precarious situation of the Empire he is incredulous, and leaves, bewildered and disheartened.

As Billimeck exits, Venisch enters and comments upon the state of mind of the monarchs. He confides that Maximilian: "Pasea sombrío por su alcoba," and that: "Me ha llamado a mí hace un momento, me ha mirado y me ha despedido sin pronunciar una sola palabra!" (p. 101).
Carlota is no less disturbed. According to Günner: "La Emperatriz ha llorado. La Emperatriz está sola en su alcoba." Shaffer adds: "Contra la etiqueta ha permitido que sus damas de honor la abracen. Es una valiente mujer. Al decir las sencillas palabras de agradecimiento por los votos que hacía la Corte por la felicidad del Emperador, temblaban sus labios" (p. 101).

In this scene two key words appear. The first is "estéril". When Günner observes that Maximilian has dedicated his existence to the happiness of the Mexicans, Shaffer responds: "No puede ser estéril ello, Günner" (p. 101). This usage foreshadows the principal theme in the following play, Carlota de México, and its importance will be treated in the next chapter. The second key word in this scene is "luces". Günner murmurs prayerfully: "Dios dé a la Emperatriz luces
para obtener de Napoleón lo que desea" (p. 102). "Luz" is the most important symbol employed by Usigli in Coronado Sombra and will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

In Act II, Anna Pfeiffer reappears. She and Shaffer are reunited. We assume that they will marry upon their return to Austria. Their happy love story contrasts with the sad fate of Carlota and Maximilian, and serves to emphasize the tragedy of the unfortunate pair.

In the latter part of this act Carlota reveals her bitterness toward Napoleon, whom she calls "el Príncipe de Mal". She displays her indomitable spirit and her unwillingness to abdicate. Carlota swears that: "Mientras dispongamos de seis pies de tierra el Imperio subsistirá" (p. 130). She then delivers an impassioned speech denouncing the Emperor of the French:

Sí, tiene lleno de sangre el mundo. Su caballo, como el de Atila, deja yermos los campos que pisan sus cascos. Tengo sangre de Orleans en las venas. Max es Hapsburgo. ¿Dónde está la nobleza del corso? No ha de vencer, Rosa Munz. Sacudiré la máscara al maligno, le gritaré con todas las fuerzas de mi alma que es un traidor, que es un malvado, que no se juega así con la suerte del mundo. (p. 131)

Even though the situation is grim, Carlota will not consider abdication. To her, it is literally a fate worse than death, as she indicates in this excerpt:

Volver a Miramar fugitivos, desterrados, expulsados primero de la familia reinante en Austria, después de nuestro Imperio. Encerrarse en esa roca durante toda la vida. Llegar a la vejez contemplando el mar. Oyendo las canciones de los pescadores, siempre tristes. La canción del mar. No, no, Rosa Munz, primero la muerte. ¿Primero la muerte, Rosa Munz? (p. 132)

The Empress eloquently expresses her theory concerning abdication in
the following monologue, which follows closely her actual recorded thoughts on the topic:

Abdicar es condenarse a la vida más triste y degradante. Es discerrirse un certificado de incapacidad. Esto no es perdonable sino en los viejos, en los pobres de espíritu, no en un príncipe de treinta y dos años (Maximilian's age at this point in the play is thirty-four). However, Jiménez Rueda is quoting from a statement made by Carlota two years earlier, and has chosen to overlook this discrepancy. La soberanía es la propiedad más grande que hay en el mundo. No se abandona un trono como si fuera una asamblea cercada por un cuerpo de policía. En los instantes en que se vincula uno a los destinos de una gran nación se sabe de los peligros y riesgos a que se expone. No pertenece a nadie el derecho de abandonarla. No conozco caso alguno en que la abdicación no sea una falta o una cobardía. (pp. 135-136)

In her final speech in the second act, Carlota gives evidence of the serious strain which has begun to undermine her mental health. She cries feverishly:

Salvemos el trono, Conde de Bombelles. La lucha será terrible. Las tinieblas pretenden ahogar la luz. Parea la fe se aniquila la esperanza en nuestras propias almas. Rosa Munz, Conde de Bombelles, amigos leales, venid a mí. Miradme, leed en mis ojos la angustia. No, no, Conde de Bombelles, no sois amigo leal. ¡Causaréis mucho daño a la Casa de Austria! Tú sí, tú sí, Rosa Munz. Tú sí. (p. 138)

The two women weep, Bombelles bows his head, and the curtain descends on the second act.

Act III is set in Miramar. Grill and Tudós appear again and recount the happenings of the last tragic days of the Empire. They tell Count Bombelles the pathetic details of Maximilian's execution. Here the dramatist has again followed the words of Maximilian closely. For example, when he receives a false message that Carlota has preceded him in death he says: "Así me voy más tranquilo al sepulcro. Ella era el único lazo que me unía a la tierra y ya se halla en el cielo" (p. 145). On his way to the Cerro de las Campanas he notes: "En un
día tan hermoso como éste quería morir." At the site of the execution he gives his handkerchief and hat to José Tudos and makes this request: "Lleva esto a mi madre y dile que para ella fueron mis últimos pensamientos." According to the cook, Maximilian's final words were "¡Pobre Carlota!" (p. 146) [In most accounts he is reported to have cried "¡Hombre!"].

Grill and Tudos wish to visit the Empress. Bombelles feels that this might be a severe shock for her, for she is unaware of the downfall of her Empire and the death of her husband. Bombelles describes her condition in this manner: "La salud de la Emperatriz es muy delicada. Se le ha ocultado todo. Pasea por los jardines esperando la llegada de Max de un momento a otro, o bien su embarque para la América a ocupar el trono que abandonara" (p. 147). When questioned about the possibilities of recovery, the Count replies:

El doctor Riedel de Viena cree que, con el tiempo y un reposo absoluto, la razón, ahora perturbada, de la Emperatriz Carlota volvería a su lucidez de antaño . . . . Ahora todo es para ella idea de persecución. Su Majestad Luis Napoleón, los franceses, Bazaine, México, Roma danzan en su cerebro confusamente. Grita a todo el mundo que la tenemos secuestrada en esta triste roca. Mirad, casualmente sale ahora del pabellón de caza, su residencia habitual. (pp. 147-148)

Tudos and Grill finally succeed in seeing Carlota. She does not recognize them. When they tell her who they are she asks if they have seen her husband. They are startled, but they lie and say that he is well. Bombelles assures the ex-Empress that she and Maximilian will soon be together in Mexico. She asks when Napoleon is going to set her free. The Count assures her that the French Emperor has no jurisdiction in Miramar. She is obsessed with the thought that he
intends to destroy her. She says: "El Emperador de los franceses quiso envenenarme en Roma. La protección del Santo Padre se exten-
dió sobre mí. Mi hermano, el Conde de Flandes, llegó muy a tiempo para salvarme. Los agentes de Napoleón recorren todo el mundo. El peligro acecha" (p. 153).

Considering Carlota's mental state the third act is generally understated. At times she seems quite rational. For example, when Bombelles gallantly remarks: "Los deseos de su Majestad son siempre órdenes para todos los que la rodean," Carlota responds: "Eso era antes, cuando reinaba, Conde de Bombelles" (p. 155). But in her next speech she manifests her illness as she speaks to her faithful servant:


From this point tension increases until the end of the third act. Carlota has guessed that she is to be returned to her childhood home in Belgium. She feels dread, for she wishes only to be with her husband. She demands again and again to know what has happened to him. She pleads: "¿Qué ha sucedido a Max? No he tenido noticias del Em-
perador. Se interceptó su correspondencia. Rosa Munz, acércate. ¡Hable de él! Tú sabes que él es toda mi vida. Joven, gallardo, valiente, lo he perdido todo. Rosa Munz, ¡Hable de él!" (p. 170)
When she does not ask for her husband, Carlota expresses the strange thoughts of her troubled mind, as in this speech: "A veces me parece que se incendia el Universo. Rojo, rojo por todas partes. El espíritu del mal acecha. Los malos pensamientos huyen. La razón triunfa...La selva...Los signos son contrarios. El buho nos mira con unos ojos muy grandes. La serpiente repta cerca de nosotros...tengo frío, mucho frío" (pp. 171-172).

The Empress finally verbalizes her deepest fear. Speaking of Maximilian, she cries in anguish: "Ha muerto, ha muerto. Lo vi la otra noche con el pecho cubierto de sangre...Pálido, muy pálido. Con el pecho cubierto de sangre" (p. 174). For greater theatrical effect Jiménez Rueda has echoed the prophecy of the gypsy in the first act. Carlota continues: "Me miraba con sus ojos azules...Tristemente. Quiso hablar y sus labios no se movieron. Tendí mis brazos y se perdieron en el vacío" (p. 175).

Rosa tries to console her mistress by saying: "Más tarde vendrá su Alteza Imperial por la señora" (p. 175). Carlota's sick mind is stimulated by this suggestion, and she indulges in a flight of fantasy. Exalted, then anguished, she delivers her final monologue:

Y emprenderemos juntos un gran viaje. La torre de la capilla de Laecken tiene una escalera muy alta. La escalera bíblica de Jacob. Se sube...se sube...se sube. Y se llega al sepulcro de mi madre. Días después de la boda llegó a sí. Max estaba a mis espaldas. Besé el mármol frío. Todavía siento en los labios el frío del mármol. Llorábamos los dos. Lloraba también mi madre...En una estrella...Como aquella...como aquella. Mi madre y Max me esperan...La escala de Jacob...La sangre en el pecho de Max. Las lágrimas. ¡Oh, Dios! ¡Llévame también! (p. 176)
According to the stage directions, Carlota stretches her hands toward the star in a supplicating gesture. The stage is dark. Only Carlota is illuminated by an eerie light which surrounds her in nimbus fashion. We see tears on her cheeks. The curtain descends slowly.

Carlos González Peña in a review in *El Universal* has said that *Miramar* is better suited for reading than for the stage. In his cautious criticism he maintains:

> El valor del poema dramático de J. J. R. es innegable. Escrito en linda prosa, ajustado en todo a la verdad histórica, de tal suerte que sobre su hermosura poemática cobra relieve de crónica fiel, tan fiel, que el autor acertó, a menudo, a poner en boca de la heroína sus propias palabras, concedérsele que es más propio para la lectura que para el tablado.  

I agree with this critique for the most part, although I do not believe the play may be classified as a dramatic poem. While there are occasional brief poetic lapses, *Miramar* as a whole is not a poetic work in my opinion, despite the claims of one anonymous critic that Jiménez Rueda "Ni una sola vez incurre en violaciones históricas," even though "Su fantasía de poeta fue sometida por aquella severidad .. .sin quitar poesía a la pieza."  

González Peña's observation that *Miramar* is better suited for reading than for viewing and listening seems valid. Indeed, the work resembles a closet drama on several occasions. Real action is virtually nonexistent; it is replaced by a series of dialogues between members of the royal entourage. Many of these dialogues are quite lengthy.

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22 *Miramar*, p. 321.

23 *Miramar*, p. 320.
and of a strictly informative nature. Often the characters simply repeat well-known historic facts without adding personal comments. Since the stage is best suited for concise, fast moving dialogue, this type of play tends to lag, and the attention of the audience lags along with it. In short, the factual, verbose style of Jiménez Rueda seems to be easier to read than to experience in the theater.

The style of the playwright is relatively simple, despite the length of the dialogues and the tedious repetition of names, titles, and so on. Generally the style is clear, although there are certain rather obscure passages. This lack of clarity may be due in part to the absence of stage directions and explanations, so essential in a manuscript of this type. At times Miramar seems to be a chronicle come to life, so closely does the dramatist adhere to factual reporting. If he seems to over-explain certain points, it is due to the very nature of his work. Except for his lengthy, detailed explanations Jiménez Rueda avoids exaggeration; he uses his language as a tool for communicating the historic facts of the Second Empire, rather than as an embellishment to grace his plot.

There is no real plot in Miramar. The author has presented no problem which must resolve itself in three acts. There is no crisis, no climax, no denouement. Because of this lack the play often resembles a tableau rather than a dramatic play. And, according to the manuscript, stage directions, lighting effects, sound effects and the like are all conspicuously absent from the work. Indeed, except for the physical change in the castle between the first and third acts, there is
little or no use of devices to create certain moods or impressions.

*Miramar* received mixed reviews at the time of its presentation. In his foreword Jiménez Rueda remarks that his play "...fue juzgado, como todo drama que se representa en público, con elogio, con desdén y con malevolencia también." Rodolfo Usigli evidently received it with disdain, judging from his terse comment: "La obra de Jiménez Rueda pasó casi inadvertida, y tengo la impresión de que su escaso éxito obedeció a razones de orden histórico ... Esta obra no es sino un comentario en forma dialogada de los acontecimientos del Imperio y casi una conversación entre sirvientes." 24 Francisco Monterde offers a different point of view:

*Miramar* ofrece en sus tres actos, síntesis de una vida, tres crisis de la protagonista. J. R., sin torcer a capricho la historia, sin desvirtuar los hechos ni cambiar la psicología de los personajes, bien lograda siempre, realiza su obra con procedimientos sobrios, y acierta al profundizar en el examen de las causas que precipitaron a Maximiliano y Carlota en su trágica aventura. 25

There is truth in both statements. Each critic is inspecting the play from a different vantage point, from his personal point of view. In judging this play we must remember that, in the last analysis, the author's primary mission has been to present an objective picture of the reign and the factors which brought it about and led to its downfall. In doing this he has portrayed Maximiliano and Carlota in a sym-

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pathetic light, although he has taken few liberties and has allowed his imagination little free rein. His viewpoint is conservative in this sense, for he adheres closely to the facts without really indulging in poetic license. Though he is sympathetic toward the hapless royal couple, he offers no impassioned plea for recognition of their tragedy and its significance. He is measured in his language and understated in his presentation. The end result of his technique is a play which is neither drama, tragedy nor comedy but rather an example of historic reporting on stage.
CARLOTA DE MEXICO BY MIGUEL N. LIRA

This play, a "suceso en cinco actos," was premiered on September 11, 1943 in the Palacio de Bellas Artes in the Mexican capital. Its author was born on October 14, 1905 in Tlaxcala. His career, like that of Jiménez Rueda, has been varied. In addition to his literary efforts as a poet, novelist and dramatist, he has served in several public posts. He has also practiced law and was the founder of a publishing house, Editorial Fábula. Until the time of his death he acted as district judge in Chiapas.

Carlota de México has been called "un drama en torno a la figura de la llamada emperatriz Carlota Amalia." Carlota is the central character in this work. Lira has spanned sixty-three years of her life, portraying her reign from the time of her coronation in 1864 until her death in Bouchout Castle in 1927.

The cast is large: there are thirty-one principal characters and numerous non-speaking players who act as palace guards, members of the court, soldiers, and priests. In each of the five acts there is a different set decoration as well as a complete costume change. There is also music and even dancing: at the end of Act III Carlota and Maximilian lead the members of their court in a quadrille.


27 Magaña Esquivel and Lamb, op. cit., p. 137.

28 Ibid., p. 138.
Act I takes place in the castle of Miramar. The set represents Carlota’s private antechamber. We see sofas, chairs and consoles in the Imperial style; pieces of statuary on marble columns; and plush red carpets. In the background we glimpse a bedroom. On the left there is a window overlooking the sea. A door on the right leads to the interior rooms of the castle. There are two portraits on the wall, one of Napoleon III, the other of the Empress Eugenie.

The scene opens on a bright April afternoon. It is 1864. Three attendants are preparing the diadem which Carlota is to wear for the formal ceremony of acceptance of the Mexican crown. From the beginning of their conversation we note the lyric quality so prevalent in Lira’s theater:

Magda: ¡Daos prisa!... que ya sube la marea y las olas se baten contra las rocas!
Genoveva: Si la tarde se apaga allá fuera, aquí la tenemos viva entre los dedos.
Lucrecia: ¿Cómo puede hacerse la noche con toda la blancura que brilla en nuestras manos?
Genoveva: Se diría que nuestras manos son conchas de nácar y que de ellas brotan los claros amaneceres de Miramar. (pp. 19-20)

This lyric quality, doubtless influenced by the theater of Federico García Lorca, will be treated in the final chapter.

The servants manifest their esteem and affection for Carlota in many ways. They dread her departure. Magda laments:

¡Cuánta palabra radiante dicen vuestros labios! Como si no fuera mejor guardarlas en el cofre de la boca para confortarnos

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29 Miguel N. Lira, Carlota de México (Mexico, 1944), pp. 17-18.
cual cuando Ella nos deje en soledad. Para entonces, no podremos ni balbucir su nombre: Carlota... Carlota Amelia... porque nuestro llanto nos volverá mudas y nuestros labios se tornarán lividos de angustia. (p. 20)

The spelling of "Amalia" as "Amelia" is unique with Lira. The Spanish equivalent of Carlota's French name, Charlotte Amélie, is Carlota Amalia. It is not clear why Lira has changed this spelling.

The major theme of the play is Carlota's barrenness and frustrated mother urge which expresses itself through her desire to be mother to the Mexican people. This theme is introduced promptly in the first act. When Genoveva remarks: "...Su Alteza se muestra feliz. México la atrae y la llena de gozo", Magda answers: "Así olvida su hastío" (p. 23). Lucrecia confirms Carlota's wish for a child: "¡Un hijo! ¡Un hijo es lo que quiere! ¡Cuántas veces la he oído pedírselo al mar, al viento, a las estrellas... ¡Un hijo!" (p. 25).

Lucrecia and Genoveva foresee a happy outcome to the impending Mexican adventure. Magda is of the opposite opinion. She describes her frightening vision of things to come in these words:

Ella se ve ya en ese castillo altivo. Lo recorre de oriente a poniente y de norte a sur. ¿Qué estrecho le resulta aún para su orgullo de Princesa radiante, pero también qué luminoso! Se diría... Pero, ¿por qué ha abierto de pronto la ventana y contempla el rumbo de las nubes? ¿Por qué se estremece su cuerpo? ¡Ah, sí! Es un viento de espanto que agita sus cabellos y le apaga la voz en la boca. ¡Qué horror de viento súbito! ¡Qué negro viento de odio! Ay, ¡qué dolor! Ay, ¡qué angustia! El castillo se cae. Es un castillo de naipes nada más. Basta un leve soplo y todo se desploma. Ese será su mayor sufrimiento: elevar un castillo de naipes en el aire de México, y que ese aire extraño lo derrumbe... Nubes negras son las que veo en ese cielo de México que pensáis tan radiante. (pp. 28-29)
Genoveva and Lucrecia are not convinced. They divert their conversation to a more frivolous theme: clothing. Referring to Carlota's coronation gown, Lucrecia comments: "El vestido es hermoso como el cielo y los lirios" (p. 32). This flattery marks the entrance of the Empress. She is accompanied by her principal maid-of-honor, Sra. Kuhachevich, an actual historic figure.

Carlota is tired. She speaks slowly, meditating every word. Her eyes are sad and her face pale. She appears to have been weeping. Carlota chats with her servants. She compliments Lucrecia on her handsome fiancé, Captain Von Dietmer, who is Maximilian's principal chamberlain. Here the Empress introduces the chief leitmotif of the play: her relationship with this man who worships her from a respectful distance. She confesses to Lucrecia: "...yo he visto muchas veces cómo los ojos de todas las mujeres lo persiguen, asediándolo, buscando de él una sola mirada. Si hasta os confieso que yo misma he sufrido esa peligrosa curiosidad" (p. 39).

The three attendants take their leave. When Carlota is alone with Sra. Kuhachevich, she reveals her despair at being childless. She cries: "...y ¡estéril! me gritan también esos muros y estas columnas...y ¡estéril! parecen decirme los cristales de las lámparas cuando el aire los hace cantar...y ¡estéril! me llamo yo porque cierro mis manos y las abro después y no encuentro en ellas la anunciación de una gotita de sangre o de rocío" (p. 45).

Carlota's confidante, in an attempt to console her mistress, reminds her that she has Maximilian's love. This fails to reassure
the despairing Empress. Sra. Kuhachevich, in a moment of inspiration, urges Carlota to devote her energies to the success of the Empire. She employs flattery. She insists: "...Sobre vuestro corazón se levantará el trono de México y a él le entregaréis toda vuestra plenitud maternal, vehemente y desgarrada. ¡Ese trono será entonces como vuestro hijo, Princesa Carlota Amelia, Carlota Amelia de México!" (p. 49)

Carlota responds enthusiastically to the idea of substituting Mexico for the child she cannot have. Reacting to the suggestion of her maid-of-honor, she says: "¡Habéis dicho Carlota Amelia de México? Vuestras labios son los primeros que pronuncian esa palabra de soberanía. ¡Os lo agradezco! Os lo agradezco además porque habéis creado en mi alma un nuevo amanecer: el de México" (p. 49). Sra. Kuhachevich replies: "¡El del trono de México que será como vuestro hijo, diríais mejor!" (p. 50). Carlota is completely taken with this idea. Overcome with emotion, she responds:

Quizá no estéis equivocada. Quisiera pensar mejor. ¡El hijo que me falta! El hijo que no tengo y que hoy nace para mí. Eso es ... ¡El trono mío de México! Al fin mío. Quizá tengáis razón. Es lo justo. Nada tenía y todo lo ambicionaba. Hoy es un nuevo Imperio el que nos nace de las manos como un sol. ¡Nos nace! ¿Lo oís, señora Kuhachevich? ¡Nos ha nacido un hijo! ... ¡Es el trono de México! ¡La corona de México! ¡El Imperio de México! ¡El poder mío, mío, mío ... el hijo mío desde hoy! (pp. 50-51)

In this highly exalted state, Carlota kneels and offers the following prayer in verse:

Madre de las Angustias,
gracias te doy,
por el hijo que creaste
para mi amor.
De rodillas ha estado
mi corazón,
en espera de un niño
de dulce voz.
Un niño de ojos limpios
claros de sol,
que a mí sólo alumbraran
con su fulgor.
¡Madre de las angustias
gracias te doy!
Mi carne se me abrirá
por su pasión,
deshojándose mustia
como una flor.
El latir de mi sangre,
¡ay qué dolor!
me apretaba de penas
el corazón.
Y el niño lo tenía
alrededor;
estaba entre mis brazos
y oía su voz.
¡Madre de las angustias,
gracias te doy! (pp. 51-52)

Maximilian enters, and Carlota attempts to convey her elation
to her husband. She cries: "Max... ¡Al fin tendremos un hijo!"
He cannot believe what he is hearing and asks her what she is trying
to say. She repeats: "¡Un hijo para ti y para mí! ¡Un hijo como un
sol! ¿Te das cuenta, Maximiliano? ¡Es el trono de México, el trono
nuestro!" (p. 57). Maximilian answers: "¡Pobre Carlota! ¡Quiera el
Altísimo que ese sol brille siempre para nosotros!" Carlota, who is
overly excited, repeats a sort of litany: "... ¡Al fin tenemos un
hijo... ¡Un hijo para ti y para mí! Un hijo, Maximiliano. ¡Nos ha
nacido un hijo!" (p. 57). In her agitation, Carlota has dropped a
lace handkerchief. This action has gone unnoticed by all present with
the exception of Captain Von Dietmer. He carefully retrieves the love-
ly bit of lace and tucks it away, next to his heart. Curtain.

Act II takes place in the Audience Room at Miramar. The
set decoration is similar to that of the first act. The portraits
of the French Emperor and Empress have been replaced by paintings
of Franz Joseph and the Empress Elisabeth. Two thrones are shadowed
by a canopy. Billowing curtains are suspended from the ceiling. It
is evening, and outside the furious waves crash against the rocks.
The wind whistles violently.

In the first scene Sra. Kuhachevich attempts to persuade Von
Dietmer to return the handkerchief to its owner. He refuses firmly.
This lace handkerchief leitmotif recurs at frequent intervals through­
out the play. As one critic has observed: "En el suceso de Lira la
intriga casi no existe, a no ser el endeble hilo de un pañuelo de en­
caje que se pasea por la obra." 30

The debate is interrupted by the entrance of the royal party,
which includes Count Zichy, Count O'Sullivan, Count Hadik, and M. Her­
bert, delegate of Napoleon III. Zichy, the master of ceremonies, an­
nounces Carlota and Maximilien, who in turn ascend to their thrones.
The ladies of the court remain on the left, and the chamberlains and
Master of Ceremonies stand on the right.

The Mexican delegation enters, headed by Gutiérrez de Estrada,
the Conservative leader. In a halting, tremulous voice he reads his

30 Antonio Magaña Esquivel, "Carlota: Dos interpretaciones,"
Letras de México, IV, June 1, 1944, 6. Note: This is the only compari­
son I have found of any of these three works. In this one-page article
he briefly compares Carlota de México and Corona de Sombra.
carefully prepared address. Maximilian responds in a clear, assured voice: "Yo os juro que procuraré por todos los medios que estén en mi alcance el bienestar y prosperidad de la Nación, y que defenderé su independencia y conservaré la integridad de su territorio" (p. 78). After shouting "¡Viva el Emperador y la Emperatriz!" the Mexicans pay homage to their new rulers and retire.

When Maximilian is alone with his wife, he confesses his strong misgivings over their project. He senses impending doom: "¡La furia del mar y del viento allá fuera, no es más grande que mi pena! No sé, no sé qué extraño presagio anuncia esa tempestad!" (p. 83). The Emperor wishes to be left alone. Carlota leaves. He sits down and begins to write verse which expresses his uncertainty and loneliness. Finally, he weeps. Carlota enters and tries to comfort her husband, but she too is moved as she reads his nostalgic, sentimental poem:

¿Es preciso que me separe de mi querida patria, del bello país de mis primeras alegrías?
¿Queréis que abandone mi cuna dorada y que rompa el lazo sagrado que a ella me ata?
La tierra en que he vivido los risueños años de mi infancia, donde sentí las emociones del primer amor, ¿tengo que abandonarla por objetos inciertos de ambición que excitaís en mi corazón?
Queréis seducirme con el brillo de una corona. Queréis deslumbrarme con locas quimeras.
¿Debo yo dar oídos al dulce canto de las sirenas?
¡Ay de quien se fía de sus halagadoras promesas!
¡Oh! ¡Dejadme seguir en paz mi tranquilo camino, el sendero obscuro e ignorado entre los mirtos! (pp. 85-86)

Carlota is touched and cries: "¡Pobre amor mío! Tienes el corazón sensible como un niño!" (p. 87). Outside, the sea and the wind continue their mournful song, and the curtain descends.
The third act takes place in the Imperial Castle of Chapultepec. It is 1866. In the background we see the blue sky of the valley of Mexico, shadowed by the leaves of the giant ahuehuete trees. We are looking upon the terrace with its chairs, planters and statues. It is late in a July afternoon.

The first scene is rather trivial. Three young ladies, sitting out a dance at an Imperial ball, are gossiping. Their chief topic of conversation is Maximilian. They discuss his purported amorous activities with great relish. Their exchange of confidences is cut short by the entrance of a matronly Mexican woman and her dashing young Belgian bridegroom. The latter speaks no Spanish, and his conversation is reduced to nods and monosyllabic utterings. This interlude provides a bit of humor. When the unlikely couple leaves, one young lady exclaims: "¡Qué maravilla! Sólo porque se ve puede creerse. ¿Cuántas barras de plata habrá costado Dalí?" Another asks: "¿Y cómo se habrán enamorado? Ella ignora el francés y él no habla el castellano." The third replies: "Pero los dos tienen ojos. Ella vio en Dalí la juventud. El, los brillantes y las perlas. ¿Qué necesidad había de hablar?" (p. 107). This conversation takes a more serious turn when one of the girls says that she does not approve of the practice of marrying foreigners. In her words: "...es reconocer que nuestra raza es siempre fácil de conquistar. Porque es abatir también el orgullo y la feminidad tan sólo por la vanidosa satisfacción de saberse entregada a unos ojos azules y a unas manos blancas formados en la luz y en el aire extranjeros... ¡Qué pobre y ridículo resulta todo eso!" (p. 108)
The gossip is interrupted by the entrance of Von Dietmer and Carrara, who intently discuss the affairs of the country. It is a scene reminiscent of Miramar, in which we learn of the events of the reign indirectly through Maximilian's personnel. Von Dietmer is optimistic. Carrara, a Mexican, is too well aware of the gravity of the situation of the Empire. The men reveal their diverse viewpoints in their discussion of the "Black Decree". Von Dietmer protests that the Decree is not the real cause of the trouble: "Pero en realidad ese decreto no es el origen del actual estado de cosas. ¡Recordad que Juárez ha tomado medidas mucho más rigurosas!" (p. 119). In reply Carrara argues:

...no olvidéis que "Juárez es hijo del país y los mexicanos no encuentran humillante morir a sus manos. En cambio, el Emperador, a pesar de su sombrero de anchas alas y su traje nacional, siempre será un extranjero?" Además, debéis tener presente que Juárez, en sus rigores, encarna la necesidad de mostrarse inexorable en la defensa de la independencia nacional, mientras que cualquier severidad de un extranjero representa una opresión, un sojuzgamiento. (p. 120)

This theory is what Usigli refers to as "la ley del clan" in his play. Carrara is a practical man. He is loyal to Maximilian, but fears that he will be defeated. Von Dietmer maintains that the Empire has nothing to fear from internal enemies, but Carrara insists: "Precisaría para ello contar con un verdadero ejército nacional. ¿No es posible victoria alguna con soldados harapientos, faltos de fe y entusiasmo y oficiales extranjeros de verdes dormanes y negros alamares que ignoran y desprecian a los mexicanos?" (p. 123).

The debate is interrupted by the appearance of Kuhachevich, the royal Treasurer. He requests that Von Dietmer return the lace handker-
chief to the Empress. Even though the relationship is quite innocent, people are beginning to murmur about the handkerchief incident. Kuchachevich suggests that it might be prudent if Von Dietmer returned to Europe to quell any gossip. The captain agrees to do so in order to protect the reputation of his Empress.

At this moment, which may be opportune or inopportune depending upon one's point of view, Carlota appears on the terrace in evening dress. Her face is beginning to mirror the tragedy which has already begun to take root. She and Von Dietmer are left alone. He asks her permission to return to Europe and to retain his coveted keepsake. Furthermore, he asks that she touch it once more so that he will be reminded of her whenever he sees the lace handkerchief. Carlota agrees to all three requests, although her response to the third is somewhat brusque. She says: "Os lo concedo también, pero ya habrá tiempo para ello. Ahora id a cumplir mi encargo, capitán" (p. 134). Rodolfo Usigli has said that this scene is the least faithful to Carlota's historical image. In his words: "... Va perdiendo gradualmente toda perspectiva histórica, especialmente cuando habla del pañuelo con capitán Von Dietmer." I feel that he is correct, for it seems unlikely that Carlota would respond to such a flattering request so impatiently. On the other hand, she is at least partly justified within the context of the play, for at this moment she is preoccupied with the problems of the Empire and is perhaps oblivious

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to amenities which she would never overlook under normal circumstances. Usiglie has several other objections to this play. These will be treated later in the chapter.

In the next scene Maximilian enters. He exchanges pleasantries with Von Dietmer, who then retires. The Emperor then reveals his fears and misgivings to his friends. He says: "¿Qué terrible es todo esto! Cada día se abre más el abismo y no puedo tender un puente. Es inútil que pretenda aparecer feliz ante los demás, si siento que poco a poco nos vamos hundiendo en el fuego de este país al que me trajeron con los ojos vendados" (pp. 135-136). Herzfeld and Kuhachevich confirm his worries by informing of the grave financial situation of the Empire. Although Maximilian regrets the sad state of affairs, he still harbors a faint hope of reconciliation with Juárez. Herzfeld, a very practical man, feels that this is impossible; Juárez is President and Maximilian is Emperor of the same country. Fire and water never mix.

Maximilian's friends hope that he will abdicate. They insinuate that he should return to the happy, peaceful Miramar. But, although the Emperor is not completely opposed to the idea, he knows that Carlota would never consent. Herzfeld talks to his old friend, hoping that he will change his mind, but he is soon cut short by the hasty entrance of the Empress and Marshal Bazaine. The latter is in his fancy dress uniform; his chest is heavy with military decorations. He carries a small whip which he constantly slaps against his leg. He is a military man through and through, and his demeanor is brusque
and insolent at times.

Bazaine has come to inform Maximilian of the official evacuation of the French troops. Carlota already knows of this, and her eyes are flashing angrily. The tension between the monarchs and the Marshal is evident. Carlota says with marked intention: "El Mariscal habla siempre en militar. No dice sino aquello que le ordenan decir, ¿no es así, Excelencia?" Bazaine replies shortly: "No es propio de un Mariscal de Francia contrariar el pensamiento de una Emperatriz. Pero si os digo que nunca discuto los mandatos de mi Emperador. Los cumplí y nada más" (p. 145).

Although Maximilian is momentarily shaken by the news, he recovers quickly. He calmly inquires whether the country is to be abandoned in the face of the revolutionary torrent. The Marshal retorts by saying that the Emperor still has his national army, but Maximilian is not deceived by this assurance, and counters: "¿Pero no basta para detener el huracán que vos, Mariscal, levantasteis con ese decreto que en mala hora firmé? Por lo menos, espero que se me permitirá ir substituyendo vuestro ejército por el que mi hermano... ha dispuesto enviar a mi servicio" (p. 146).

The Emperor believes that he has been betrayed by Napoleon. He asks, logically: "¿Y no creéis, Mariscal, que con esta actitud de Napoleón hemos sido traicionados? Sobre un montón de oro dijo que nos levantaría un trono y ya lo veis, nos ha hundido en el fango!" (p. 147). Bazaine argues that, to the contrary, Napoleon's assistance has been vital to the sustenance of the Empire. He finally proposes a solution. In reality, it is a bribe; Bazaine proposes that
Maximilian cede Baja California and Sonora to France, who will in turn keep her soldiers in Mexico for the protection of the Empire. Maximilian receives the proposal with indignation. He reminds Bazaine that he and Carlota have sworn to conserve territorial integrity in Mexico. The Marshal cynically replies that the land in question is inhabited by half-savage Mexicans. Maximilian is outraged and says pointedly: "Puede su Excelencia ordenar desde luego la concentración del ejército francés sin cuidarse de la llegada del contingente austriaco. Hemos terminado, Excelencia" (p. 150). Bazaine makes a hurried exit shortly thereafter, striking his whip violently against his leg. This is, in my opinion, the most effective scene in the play. It is fast moving, dynamic, and believable, and the sharp contrast between the two men is impressive.

Carlota and Maximilian are left alone. He confesses his anxiety in these words: "¿Qué incierto me parece ahora? Todo lo miro envuelto en brumas. ¡Todo! Y son tan espesas, que ni siquiera puedo encontrarte a ti que eres mi fuerza. Te grito y mi voz se pierde en las tinieblas. ¿Dónde estás, Carla? ¿Dónde estás que no me oyes?" (p. 152).

Carlota tries to bolster her husband's courage. She says bravely: "Mientras haya un Emperador aquí, habrá un Imperio, aunque éste no comprenda más que seis pies de tierra" (p. 153). When Maximilian hints of abdication, his wife replies emphatically: "Abdicar es otorgarse un certificado de incapacidad...y esto sólo es admisible en los viejos o débiles de espíritu, pero no es propio de un príncipe de 34 años lleno de vida y con el porvenir ante sí" (p. 154).
It will be noted that Lira has translated Carlota’s actual words here to lend verisimilitude to the dialogue. Unlike Jiménez Rueda, he has changed Maximilian’s age to thirty-four, in agreement with his age in the play.

Carlota decides to make the journey to Europe. She will appeal to Napoleon, Pius IX, and their allies and friends. In her historically accurate words: "Puesto que Napoleón, el Papa, nuestros aliados y nuestros amigos olvidan sus promesas, yo se las recordaré" (p. 157). The Empress is confident of success. To Maximilian, who doubts the prudence of such a venture, she says: "¡Lo que se niega sin vacilar a los ministro plenipotenciarios, una mujer puede obtenerlo! Hablaré con Su Santidad; obtendré hombres y dinero de Francia; haré pesar sobre los Estados Unidos la voluntad de Europa" (p. 157).

The Empress admits that her motives are not entirely unselfish. She makes the following confession: "No es sólo por ti por quien deseo vencer. ¡Es también por mi Imperio! He querido ser Emperatriz y lo he logrado. Pues bien, no voy ahora a perder mi soberanía por las intrusigencias de Bazaine o Bonaparte. ¡La muerte es preferible a la evidencia ridícula de un rey destronado!" (pp. 157-158). Maximilian is swayed by her confidence and enthusiasm, and consents to the journey. Carlota swears to defend their Empire. She refers to it once again as their son: "Es nuestro hijo y nadie puede arrebatárnoslo" (p. 158). Maximilian responds with these words: "Te creo, Carla, te creo, porque eres mi ángel tutelar" (p. 158).

At this moment Sra. Kuhachevich, Count Zichy and Captain Von
Dietmer enter. Zichy asks permission to announce the final quadrille of the ball. Permission granted, he exits. Carlota informs Von Dietmer that he is to accompany her to Europe. Maximilian is impatient for the ball to end. He murmurs: "¿Cuánto mejor sería que terminara esta fiesta odiosa sin el baile de cuadrillas?" Carlota replies prophetically: "¡Valor, amor mío...todo tiene su fin!" (pp. 159-160).

The dancers enter. Usigli has remarked of this scene that "...la única novedad de la...obra de Lira consiste en hacer que Maximiliano, uno de los pocos héroes trágicos de los últimos cien años, respetado hasta en México, baile en público una cuadrilla." 32 We must bear in mind that Lira is fond of incorporating dancing and rituals into his plays. Moreover, the scene serves to provide contrast between the distress of Maximilian and the light-hearted attitude of his guests, who are really unaware of the gravity of the situation of the Empire. It is ironic that the Emperor must appear gay and congenial, even though he is filled with anxiety over the fate of his dominion.

Even Carlota confesses that she is troubled. Forgetting her strong role for the moment, she whispers: "¡Estoy roída por la ansiedad!" (p. 161). Although she and her husband are separated by the patterns of the dance, their eyes meet, and each reads the thoughts of the other. As they near each other in the course of the quadrille, Carlota admonishes Maximilian to smile. He replies: "No puedo. ¡Siento la muerte dentro de mí!" Her retort: "¡Sonríele también a la muerte!" (p. 162). The curtain descends slowly as the lively music

32 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 68.
Act IV is set in the Vatican. Lira overlooks the visit of Carlota to Napoleon and Eugenie, which figures so prominently in Corona de Sombra, and concentrates on the second phase of her fruitless journey. In the anteroom of the Vatican we see frescoes; columns; marble inlays; three doors, one leading to the throne room, the other to the office of the Pope, and a third leading outside. The first two doors are guarded by Swiss Guards, the third by a Palace dignitary. Gilt chairs and marble consoles complete the sobriety of the set. It is a September afternoon in 1866. Two months have passed since the preceding act.

Carlota's entourage is on stage. It is composed of Sra. Kucha-chevich, Magda, Genoveva, Count Zichy, Von Dietmer and two Monseigneurs. The atmosphere is tense. No one speaks. One of the Monseigneurs tries to divert the group by offering to show them the Vatican, but they refuse to leave, lest their mistress call. This scene serves little purpose except that of affirming the loyalty and love of Carlota's subjects.

Carlota and Cardinal Antonelli, an actual person, emerge from the throne room. Her appearance is altered: her face is thin, her eyes sunken, her lips dry. She is wearing mourning dress, for her father King Leopold of Belgium. The Empress collapses in the nearest chair. When her anxious company gathers around, she rejects them. The ladies withdraw and she voices her despair to Antonelli.

At no time does the Holy Father appear in this act, even though
Carlota’s actual dealings were with him. This discrepancy has been criticižed by Usigli. He feels that history has been distorted in this Vatican scene in which "Lira escamotee al Papa, supliéndolo por un cardinal." 33 Probably Lira has done so in order to emphasize his interpretation of Carlota. He has deliberately omitted characters which might force him to treat other facets of her being in order to concentrate on Carlota the mother figure. For this reason he has not included Juárez, Napoleon, or Pius IX in his play.

Thus it is to Antonelli, rather than to the Pope himself, that Carlota protests. The principal object of her anger is, of course, Napoleon. She cries: "¡Hipócrita y falso siempre! Mas después de todo, ¿qué podía esperar yo de la palabra de un Bonaparte?" She continues: "Ninguna potencia terrestre puede prevalecer en su contra, porque el infierno está a su lado y nosotros no lo tenemos" (p. 170).

Carlota is obsessed with the idea that Napoleon intends to kill her. She fears being poisoned by one of his agents, and refuses to eat or drink. When she is offered a cup of hot chocolate in the Vatican, she refuses, saying: "Nada debo tomar. No quiero morir." When Antonelli answers that everyone must die, she responds: "Pero no morir envenenados. He pensado mucho en eso. ¡Ningún gran personaje muere de muerte natural! Hay que observarlo todo" (p. 183).

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33 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 69.
In her confusion, Carlota turns against her faithful companion Sra. Kuhachevich. She accuses the innocent woman of conspiring against her life and orders her away. Finally, she requests asylum in the Vatican. The Cardinal protests that there is no appropriate room for her, but she is adamant; she will stay anywhere rather than expose her person to Napoleon’s “assasins”. At the end of the act she repeats her anguished litany: “¡Santisimo Padre, salvadme! ¡Santisimo Padre, salvadme!” (p. 186). Curtain.

The final act takes place in Bouchout Castle in 1927. On stage are a bed; a gold clock; an easy chair; a chest of drawers; a dressing table with a tray and a silver pitcher; brocade chairs; and a table with a wire egg basket, and several bottles of water on top. Beneath the table are two chickens in a cage. These latter items indicate that Carlota still fears being poisoned; she will eat nothing which is not prepared before her own eyes.

Matilde and Leonor, the present maids of the ex-Empress, are on stage as the curtain ascends. They are discussing Carlota’s existence as they rearrange the furniture. Matilde, who has been in her service for many years, is explaining her life to Leonor, who is new to the job. She says: “Sentada aquí se pasa los días. A veces no habla, no oye. Parece como si hubiera vuelto de piedra” (p. 190). Leonor responds: “Me da pena. La Emperatriz Carlota no merecía la desgracia que ha caído en su vida” (p. 190). Matilde adds: “Es una tortura verla así, con su dolor infinito, en esta alcoba que es una
tumba. Parece deshabitada, fría, llena de largos silencios" (p. 190).

Matilde is the daughter of Von Dietmer and Lucrecia. On his deathbed, her father entrusted her with the cherished lace handkerchief, instructing her to place it in Carlota's hands when she died. Leonor asks to see the handkerchief. Matilde removes it from its tiny chest and says: "Cada hilo de este encaje, cada nudo de su tejido guarda un beso de mi padre. ¡Y todos eran para la Emperatriz!" Leonor asks: "¿Y tu madre lo veía besar el pañuelo?" Matilde answers: "Sí, y ella misma lo hacía, porque también la amaba. ¿Quién podía entonces resistirse a quererla? ¿Quién puede negarse ahora todavía a entregarle vida y corazón?" (p. 194)

In order to serve Carlota, Matilde has sacrificed her personal happiness; rather than desert the Empress, she broke her engagement. This noble act has cost her many tears. Her one consolation has been the lace handkerchief. In her words: "Es mi único tesoro y la sola gracia de mi vida. ¿Crees que hubiera podido soportar la agonía de este encierro, sin ese recuerdo que es para mí como un jubileo?" (p. 197)

In the next scene, Matilde says that Carlota often reminisces about her dead husband. She is wont to say: "Yo también tuve un esposo, emperador o rey. Era alto y rubio, y me adoraba" (p. 198). Usiglio believes that this act is made tedious by such historically inaccurate repetitions. Granted their inaccuracy, they are justified within the limits of this play. Carlota's talk of her husband is

34 Usiglio, "Teatro en lucha," p. 68.
related to the child theme which recurs in this same act. For this reason, if for no other, her mention of Maximilian is acceptable here.

Matilde claims that Carlota is obsessed with the idea of death. She does not wish to die, because an Empress owes her life to her people. She frequently repeats: "Un Habsburgo no huye" (p. 199). And she rarely sleeps. All this seems historically inaccurate also, although I have no evidence to the contrary. Whether or not it is true, however, it is in keeping with Lira's intent. The fact that she remembers her royal position justifies her reference to Mexico as her child.

At this point Carlota enters the stage on the arm of Dr. Van Hulle. She is like a shadow—an ancient, flaccid shadow with withered skin, white hair, and dull eyes. Her face retains none of the sweetness of her youth. She is wearing mourning dress and carries a bottle of water in her right hand.

Carlota and the doctor have been for a walk in the park, and she has spoken to him of her "son". Leonor is surprised. She asks: "¿La Emperatriz tuvo un hijo?" Carlota hears the last two words and echoes: "¿Un hijo? ... ¿Yo también tuve un hijo? Mío y de él. Mío y del "Amo del Universo". Mío y de mi amado Maximiliano" (p. 207).

Though the others attempt to quiet her, she continues: "El trono era mi hijo ... Mío y del "Soberano de la Tierra". No tenemos noticias suyas. Está bloqueado o muerto ... ¿Mi pobre tesoro bien amado!" (p. 208).

The ex-Empress continues to speak of her dead husband. She cries: " ... Max, tesoro mío! Era como la luz. ¿Quiero ver la
luz! Llevadme a la ventana" (p. 211). The symbol of light which appears so briefly will be repeated and magnified in Corona de Sombra.

It is snowing. Carlota peers out the window and asks: "¿De dónde vienen tantas flores?" (p. 211). They explain that her "flowers" are snowflakes. But the idea of flowers remains and stimulates certain memories. She recalls the days of the Empire. She imagines that she hears the Imperial band playing in the distance. Her excitement grows, and she exclaims: "¡El himno imperial es victorioso! ¿Lo oís? Venció al aire, lo venció. . . y ahora se oye fuerte y vibrante" (p. 213).

A Belgian band marches by outside the window, playing a lively military march. Carlota becomes quite alert. She imagines that her husband is calling to her, and cries: "¿Lo oís? Es él que me llama. ¿Es tu voz, Maximiliano? ¡Ese himno es tu voz de triunfo, te acuerdas? Nos juntó y nos separó. ¡Pero ahora toda la gloria será nuestra! ¡Tuya y mía! . . . Tuya" (p. 215). Slowly and quietly she sinks into the armchair. A tranquil smile graces her face; she appears to be sleeping. Matilde says that such disturbances as the band should not be allowed near the castle. The doctor, who has checked Carlota's heartbeat, replies that the ex-Empress no longer needs earthly peace. She is dead.

Matilde and Leonor fall to their knees. The doctor, his face glistening with tears, stares out the window. Matilde finally rises, goes to the chest, removes the tiny box which contains the lace handkerchief, and places the treasured relic between the stilled hands of her mistress. The snow continues to fall outside. Curtain.
The two keenest critics of Carlota de México have been Magaña Esquivel and Usigli. The first is relatively mild in his comments. He has said:

El autor no se preocupa en dar una respuesta al suceso del Imperio ni siquiera una versión capaz de crear un conflicto dramático y rebasar la simple anécdota ligada al conocimiento del público. Las divagaciones líricas, tan contrarias al género teatral que exige un lenguaje directo y preciso, se repiten en la obra con la frecuencia a veces menos sobria que sería de desearse. Y es lamentable, porque las excesivas palabras radiantes... dan sensación de abrumar a los actores y distraer la acción... esto no quiere decir que Lira desconozca, ni mucho menos, los verdaderos andamios que sostienen su pieza y los que le son precisos para darle vida legítima, pero acaso se deja mecer intencionadamente por el aire lírico que se respira en su obra poética y eso quiere que sea el meollo de su teatro. 35

In another study, this critic speaks further of the incongruity of lyric poetry on the stage. He sums up the problem in this manner: "... hay el peligro de dar a sus personajes un perfil romántico y a su lenguaje un tono de aria o de romance." 36 But although Magaña Esquivel does not approve of Lira's highly lyric tendencies as a dramatist, he offers a certain justification for this quality. In his words:

Poesía y teatro fueron populares antes. El público creó el primer poema. Luego, al paso del hombre natural a este personaje complejo de un mundo amenazado que es el hombre de hoy, lo mismo el teatro que la poesía se fueron retrayendo hasta hacerse un arte secreto, un arte cerrado y poco popular. Así es ahora por el afán de pureza y de limpiez en las aguas. Lira muestra en ello su probidad poética. 37

36 Magaña Esquivel, Sueño y realidad del teatro (Mexico, 1949), p. 120.
37 Ibid.
Usigli is more negative in his criticism. He objects to Carlota on historical as well as theatrical grounds. His opening words on this subject indicate the extent of his criticism: "Los historiadores pretenden que Lira se aparta demasiado de la verdad histórica, y los dramaturgos pretendemos que se aparta demasiado de la verdad teatral. Su posición, por consiguiente, no es muy cómoda." 38

Usigli's theatrical objections are many. He believes that Lira is intent upon creating spectacular theater in a country which cries for pure theater. He resents the absence of penetration into the souls and the problems of his protagonists. He says: "Ni un instante aprovecha Lira el pasaporte ilimitado de la imaginación para entrar en el alma y en el problema de sus personajes. Porque no son las palabras seudo-poéticas que dan poesía a una obra, ni a un carácter." 39 This lack of understanding results in a greater lack of unity of action, movement and logic, as well as a faulty realization of the tone and genre of his work. 40

According to Usigli, Carlota defies classification. It is not comedy, because the heroine becomes insane and dies; it is not tragedy, because "...tres figurantes episódicas y una característica la arrastran hasta los linderos de la farsa!; and it is not drama

38 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 68.
39 Ibid., p. 69.
40 Ibid., p. 68.
because the playwright has neither proposed nor solved any problem. Usigli concludes: "Salta de frases líricas a protocolarias y de estas a las oraciones en verso. No es, pues, más que un espectáculo." 41

Usigli objects to this work historically because he believes that Lira has not been true to his characters. In his opinion, Carlota has the mentality of the playwright. He says: "Independientemente de cualesquiera alteraciones de la historia para fines dramáticos—que aquí no son visibles—esta pieza está escrita desde afuera y desde lejos." 42

Some of this critic's historical objections have been mentioned previously. In addition to these, he mentions the invented frivolity of Maximilian. I do not feel that the Emperor is frivolous except perhaps on two occasions: the scene in Act II when he retires to his quarters to write sentimental verse and weep, and the brief scene in Act III when he discusses the "delicious quadrilles" with Von Dietmer. Otherwise he is portrayed fairly faithfully. His debate with Bazaine in the third act leaves nothing to be desired. Indeed, although he is overshadowed in the play by Carlota, his portrayal is, on the whole, more historically faithful than hers.

In regard to Carlota, Usigli believes her to be "una mujer histórica y desapacible, a veces mal educada." He especially objects to

41 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 69.
42 Ibid., p. 68.
the scene in which she is convinced by Sra. Kuhachevich that the throne of Mexico will be her son, and the following scene in which she attempts to share her elation with Maximilian. In his words, she greets her husband "...dándole a gritos una noticia que, aun en los casos de autén­tica preñez, resulta irrisoria en esa forma." 43

In brief, Usigli feels that Lira has approached his subject from the wrong angle. He comments:

Habría que enfocar esta tragedia de Carlota y Maximiliano, sin paralelo en la historia moderna, desde otros ángulos que aquellos en que se sitúa Lira. La ambición de Carlota, como la traición de Cuitiérrez de Estrada, constituye un acto del demonio. La locura de Carlota, como la muerte de Maximiliano, constituye un acto com­pensador de Dios. 44

This is a revealing statement. Here Usigli states in part his anti-his­toric theory, which is diametrically opposed to Lira's approach. It ap­pears that Usigli's criticism of Carlota has been motivated chiefly by his conflicting point of view. This factor should be recognized at the outset, before accepting or rejecting what Usigli has said about the work.

Certainly no one is better qualified than Rodolfo Usigli as a critic of Mexican theater. Yet he seems to overlook Lira's intent in creating his "suceso en cinco actos". I feel that Lira has attempted to write a poetic drama whose main theme is the manifestation of the matern­al instinct by Carlota toward the Mexican people. Lira seems to feel

43 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 69.
44 Ibid.
that Carlota was motivated by her barrenness; Usigli feels that this is of little or no importance. He feels that she was driven by her complex of ambition, that she was possessed by the Napoleonic demon which overran nineteenth century Europe. In his words: "Toda la vida política de Europa en esos años da la razón a Carlota, justifica sus ambiciones de poder, sin la menor relación con su esterilidad."  

Perhaps Usigli is right. But I do not believe he can completely discount the sterility theme as a motivating factor in the actions of Carlota. To say that there is not the slightest relation between her lust for power and her lack of children seems too dogmatic. I feel that Lira is within his rights in assuming his particular position, although it will be conceded that he diminishes the effectiveness of his portrayal through over-exaggeration. Nevertheless, he should be given credit for what he has attempted to do, even though his attempt has been less than perfect.

Generally speaking, Miguel Lira allows himself to be carried away on the wings of his lyric poetry. It is clearly his first love, and he strives to create poetic drama in Carlota as well as in other works. In his zest for this facet of his theater he sometime overlooks other aspects, and for this reason Carlota may seem uneven. This is true of the transitions between lyricism and prosaic dialogue; they are not as smooth as might be desired. It is evident, however, that the playwright has attempted to adjust his style according to the occasion.

45 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 69.
When Carlota gives thanks for her newly discovered "child", for example, she does so in verse. When Maximilian and Bazaine argue, their dialogue is fast-paced and forceful.

To study a play without having seen it on stage is somewhat hazardous, for we are forced to rely heavily upon the imagination, and our interpretation of the play may be too dependent upon our level of imagination. For this reason the playwright is wise to provide abundant annotations, directions and descriptions in his manuscript. In Lira's "suceso" such aids are infrequent. At the beginning of each act there is a brief description of the set decoration and the costumes, but beyond that there are few other indications. Use of symbolic devices is rare. One exception occurs in Act II, when Lira uses the roar of the wild sea to reflect Maximilian's chaotic frame of mind; another is found in the final act, where falling snow represents the approach of death.

Carlota de México is, in the last analysis, a lavish spectacular in which the dramatist has attempted to achieve a double goal: the exercise of his strong lyric inclination and a semi-psychological portrayal of his principal subject. This is a formidable undertaking, and whether we accept the play or not, we should appreciate Lira's ambitious efforts in his attempt to portray the reign of Maximilian and Carlota in a sympathetic, original fashion.
CORONA DE SOMBRA BY RODOLFO USIGLI

This play was first presented on stage in Mexico in 1944 and appeared in print in 1947. Although translations are rare among Latin American plays, Corona de Sombra has been published in English. The French version, La couronne d’ombre, was premiered in the national theatre in Brussels with success in 1948. The work has also been produced in France and Great Britain and televised in the United States.

Rodolfo Usigli was born the same year as Miguel N. Lira, 1905, in Mexico City. From childhood he showed evidence of possessing the vivid imagination vital to a serious playwright. He would listen to his semi-illiterate mother speak of Mexico’s fascinating past with great interest. It was through his mother that young Rodolfo first learned of the dramatic role which Maximilian and Carlota played in the history of his country. Rodolfo was intrigued by the Museum of History, where the huge portraits of the Emperor and Empress, Carlota’s golden coach, jewels and dresses, and Maximilian’s silver ring and chess set all undoubtedly soaked into his consciousness, to reappear years later in Corona de Sombra.

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46 Frank Dauster, "New Values in Latin American Theater," Theatre Arts, XXXV, 6 (1951), 73.
47 Antonio Magaña Esquivel, Sueño y realidad del teatro, p. 123.
Usigli's play is in three acts and features twenty-six characters, half real historical figures, half fictitious. The members of the latter group are not given names. Each act is divided into three or four scenes. The dramatist has employed a unique split-stage technique to solve the difficult problem of transition, since the action of his work moves backward and forward in time and space. His sophisticated, clever use of lighting methods is also useful in bringing about smooth transitions.

In Act I there are three scenes. The first is set in a double salon in Bouchout Castle in Brussels. It is January 19, 1927, the actual date of Carlota's death. At the beginning of this scene and all following scenes, and whenever necessary within the scenes, Usigli has given detailed directions for staging. He is meticulous. Every detail is important, and nothing is superfluous.

The double salon is separated and joined at the same time by a glass curtain. A door in the center of this curtain joins the two rooms. On the left hand side there is a glass door which leads to a terrace. To the right there is a door and a balcony in the background. We see little furniture: a console with candelabras, an armchair, a rocker, a sewing table, curtains. In the room to the left there are two doors, two armchairs, and a large marble table.

As the curtain ascends there is no one on stage. It is morning. Light floods in through the balcony door. A man enters through the first

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door on the left. He is old. He wears an excessively decorated uniform which bespeaks a subalternate position. The old man looks around carefully. Satisfied that he is alone, he speaks to someone outside the door: "Puede usted pasar" (p. 11). Professor Erasmo Ramírez, a fictitious Mexican historian, enters. He is short, solidly built and dressed in black. His face is unmistakably Zapotec. His appearance is reminiscent of an earlier era.

Ramírez has come to see and possibly speak with the ex-Empress Carlota Amalia. He hopes to be able to learn the truth of the significance of the Second Empire by questioning the aged Carlota before she dies. The porter is dubious about the prudence of having admitted the Mexican into the Empress' quarters; indeed, he almost feels as though he has betrayed her. Erasmo begins to question the servant. The latter asserts that Carlota never speaks, although yesterday he heard her exclaim: "¡Todo está tan oscuro!" (p. 13), the same phrase she had uttered thirty years before when he first entered her service. This introduces the theme of darkness which prevails as the chief symbol in Corona de Sombra, representing Carlota's insanity and the ignorance of the people in regard to the significance of her reign.

Erasmo plans to write a book in which Carlota will figure prominently. The porter anxiously inquires whether the historian will speak unkindly of the Empress. In reply, Erasmo says: "Yo soy historiador, amigo. La historia no habla mal de nadie, a menos que se trate de alguien malo. Esta mujer era una ambiciosa, causó la muerte de su esposo y acarreó muchas enormes desgracias. Era orgullosa y mala" (p. 15).
The porter is offended. He asks that Ramírez leave immediately. The historian is tenacious, however, and pursues his questioning. He asks if the porter is fond of Carlota. The reply is: "No es más que una anciana mayor que yo, pero la quiero como a nadie. Y usted me engañó. Primero me dijo que la admiraba mucho, y ahora la llama ambiciosa y mala" (p. 15). Erasmo responds smoothly: "La admiro. ¿Cómo no admirarla si todavía hay un hombre que quiere morir por ella cuando es ya nonagenaria? Tengo que hablarle, no hay remedio" (p. 15).

Although the porter still insists that the historian must leave, the sound of approaching footsteps and the voice of Carlota's lady-in-waiting oblige both men to hide on the terrace. Almost simultaneously, Carlota and the servant enter. The former is tall, slim, and erect. She wears a grey dress, and her abundant white hair is worn in an elaborate arrangement. Carlota does not speak. She goes directly to the chair in which Erasmo had been seated and picks up the book which he has left there in his haste. Carlota believes it to be a book which she has lost. She shows it to the servant who, thinking it to be the missing book, takes it and reads laboriously: "Historia de México" (p. 16).

Carlota reacts immediately to the name "México". She utters "México" three times, each time more forcefully than the last. She demands light. The servant brings a candelabra, and Carlota draws her hands near the flames as if to caress them. Something appears to have echoed in her faded memory. Opening the book, she reads: "Historia de México. México ... México" (p. 17). Suddenly she raises her hand
to her mouth with a gesture of horror. Her eyes dilate. Making a
great effort she throws her head back and shouts "¡Max!" (p. 17).
She falls to the floor in a faint. At this moment the doctor enters.
Seeing what has happened, he prepares an injection. Neither the doc­
tor nor the servant can believe that Carlota has voiced the name of
her dead husband. The doctor observes: "Quizás éste sea el último
ataque, la crisis definitiva. Toda resistencia tiene un límite. Me
pregunto quién puede haber traído aquí este libro" (p. 19).

When Carlota revives she requests more light. Then she gives
the servant a strange order: "Haced decir a Su Majestad que debo verlo
en seguida" (p. 19). The confused woman asks: "¿A Su Majestad el Rey
de ...?" and Carlota interrupts: "Haced decir a Su Majestad el Emper­
adór que tengo que hablarle con urgencia" (p. 20). She has evidently
regressed to 1866, the year of her ill-fated trip to Europe, and be­
lieves that she has at last returned to Mexico. Carlota speaks of her
endless journey, and her great fatigue. She summons a maid to bring
her latest blue frock, for she is rumpled from the trip. The servant
says in a low voice: "Es espantoso, doctor. ¿Qué quiere decir esto?
¿Qué haremos?" The doctor does not answer immediately. He first in­
structs that Carlota be left in the care of a maid, who must not con­
tradict her in anything. Then he asks that the lady-in-waiting call
the Belgian royal family. He believes that the ex-Empress Carlota
Amalia is dying. The servant asks: "Pero ... ¿ha recobrado la razón?"
Staring at the flames, the doctor replies: "Señora, la muerte se pare-
ce a la vida como la locura a la razón. Las llamas crecen mucho para apagarse" (p. 21). The doctor and the lady-in-waiting exit sadly.

Erasmo and the porter reappear from the terrace. Again the servant begs the Mexican to leave. Erasmo cannot leave, however, for he has an important mission: "Busco la verdad, para decirla al mundo entero. Busco la verdad sobre Carlota" (p. 22). The porter accuses Erasmo and his countrymen of hating their ex-Empress, and the historian explains:

La historia no odia, amigo; la historia ya ni siquiera juzga. La historia explica. Piense usted que he venido desde México para esto. Si usted no me ayuda, perderé mi esfuerzo y no tendré qué decir. Yo no creo, como todos en mi país, que Carlota haya muerto porque está loca. Creo que ha vivido hasta ahora para algo, que hay un objeto en el hecho de que haya sobrevivido sesenta años a su marido, y quiero saber cuál es ese objeto. Usted me dijo en el jardín que ha dedicado toda su vida a la Emperatriz; yo he dedicado toda mi vida a la historia, y las dos son lo mismo. (p. 22)

In this speech as well as in most of his others, Erasmo acts as the voice of the playwright, for he expresses Usigli’s attitudes toward history in general and toward Carlota and her role in Mexican history in particular. The historian’s name signifies a profound humanistic tendency as well as a search for enlightenment.

Ramírez finally wins the porter’s confidence with a promise to dedicate his book to him. The porter agrees to allow the historian to remain. At this moment Carlota enters in a blue silk dress, crumpled but still crisp, from the 1866 period. Her regression continues. She repeatedly asks for Maximilian. Noticing that the curtains are drawn, she opens them, revealing the figure of the porter. He attempts to apolo-
gize, but Carlota interrupts, ordering him to call the Emperor at once. Without looking, she opens the curtains still more widely and reveals Erasmo. He steps forward. She greets him with these words:


Os lo agradezco tanto, señor Juárez. (p. 25)

Erasmo Ramírez is stunned by this turn of affairs, but he maintains composure and bows respectfully. The lights dim and the partial curtain is drawn. Carlota continues to address Erasmo as Juárez. She tells him that she no longer feels that she hates him; indeed, she feels a certain amount of confidence in him. The historian takes advantage of the bizarre situation to begin questioning Carlota. He asks: "¿Por qué fueron ustedes a México?" She rises, lifts the candelabra, brings it close to his face and replies: "Yo se lo expliqué todo a Max, se lo expliqué aquella noche en Miramar. Aquella noche" (p. 25).

Carlota walks toward the dividing door. As she crosses over, the light on stage left is extinguished. There is virtually no interruption between scenes. The right side of the stage is illuminated by the same candelabra, but now it is Maximilian, in a dressing gown, who carries it. He deposits it on a small table. The room on the right is converted into Carlota's bedroom. The lighting is dim. Carlota enters from the back, wearing a dressing gown. In a clever bit of stage trickery she has quickly stepped into this gown and removed her white wig backstage. She
appears young, as she was in 1864. In order to solve the problem of disarranged hair she sits at her dresser and combs her long tresses during the first part of the scene. This skillfully managed transition saves time and provides a typical example of Usigli's formidable technical skill.

It is the eve of the departure of Maximilian and Carlota for Mexico. The new Emperor has grave doubts about the venture, and suggests that perhaps they should remain at Miramar. Carlota, the more ambitious of the two, does not agree. She explains her motives in these words:

Si tuviéramos hijos me dejaría engordar como las princesas alemanas, y dedicaría mi vida a cuidarlos con la esperanza de que alguno de ellos llegara a reinar un día—en Bélgica o en Austria, por un azar cualquiera. Creo que haría calceta y política, y si tuviera una hija la casaría con un monarca poderoso. Pero, ¿puedo alimentar esa esperanza? ¿Qué nos detiene, Max? No tenemos nada que nos encadene a Europa. Allá seríamos emperadores. (p. 27)

Maximilian has a ready retort to her reasoning. He says: "A mí me detienes tú, Carlota: tu amor, tu felicidad, tu tranquilidad. Nacimos tarde para los tronos, y llegará un día en que los tronos se acaben. Entonces los pobres príncipes serán felices, libres" (p. 27).

As they continue this debate, Maximilian makes this astute comment:

Eres ambiciosa, amor mío. El poder no dura, no es más que una luz prestada por poco tiempo al hombre. Una luz que se apaga cuando el hombre trata de retenerla demasiado. Por eso se han acabado y se acabarán las dinastías. El poder sólo sigue siendo luz cuando pasa de una mano a otra, como las antorchas griegas—y nosotros estamos fuera de la carrera. (p. 28)

Here Usigli has used his symbol of light, which recurs so frequently in the
play, in a slightly different context. Light is a symbol with endless possibilities. In *Corona de Sombra* it generally represents the power of reason and the dispelling of ignorance, and is employed with great effectiveness throughout the play.

Carlota believes that the Mexican soil will be able to absorb them. She assures her husband: "En la tierra de Europa no hay savia para nuestras raíces, Max; en México la tierra es nueva y nos absorberá" (p. 29). He disagrees, saying: "No, Carlota. Yo conozco la naturaleza, la he observado, la he estudiado. No es posible trasplantar ciertas raíces. Si fuéramos a México como conquistadores, tendríamos que regar nuestras raíces con sangre, y yo no nací para derramar la sangre de los hombres" (p. 29).

Carlota becomes angry and accuses her husband of being weak. He quickly retorts:

Me creo más fuerte que tú, que te dejas arrastrar por la ambición; me creo más fuerte que Napoleón, porque tengo escrúpulos; porque es más fuerte el que se abstiene que el que se rinde. Lo que tú llamas mi debilidad es mi fuerza. Y no cortaré la flor viva, si tú quieres, porque no tengo derecho a cometer la cobardía de privarla de la vida." (p. 29)

Carlota cries: "¡Sofisma todo, Max, sofisma, mentira!" He begins to leave. She quickly changes her tone, and in a broken voice pleads:

"Max, no te vayas" (p. 30). This is one of several excellent scenes between Carlota and Maximilian in which their relationship is captured with great delicacy and sensitivity by Usigli. Without detracting from their personal dignity he paints them as believable human beings.
In the other plays it is Carlota who predicts that Napoleon will cause them harm. Here it is Maximilian as he comments:

Tengo la idea muy clara de que los mexicanos no cayeron del cielo. Napoleón nos mandó a nosotros con algún fin tortuoso y sordido como él. Es cierto que yo lo admiro; pero esta noche he sentido crecer en mí una gran desconfianza. ¿No invadió a México en '52? ¿Nos dejaría reinar acaso? ¿No intentará reinar sobre nosotros y conseguir beneficios para Francia? Es un mal hombre. (p. 30)

Another reason for Maximilian's uneasiness is the document signed by so many unknown Mexicans, whose names mean no more to him than would a series of crosses. He ponders this idea and remarks: "Cruces. El nombre mismo del país tiene una x que es una cruz" (p. 31). This comment foreshadows in a sense the development of Maximilian as a Christ-like figure later in the play. Carlota, however, interprets this in a different manner. She says: "Quieres decir que allí se cruza todo, ¿no lo ves? Nuestra sangre y la de ellos" (p. 31). This apparently convinces Maximilian, for he answers: "Es verdad, Carlota, ¡es verdad! Todo se cruza allí. Las viejas pirámides mayas y toltecas y la cruz cristiana; los sexos de las mujeres nativas y de los conquistadores españoles; las ideas de Europa y la juventud de la tierra. Todo puede hacerse allí, ¿no crees que todo puede hacerse?" (p. 31).

As Maximilian becomes more inspired he reveals his greatest aspiration: he hopes that his new domain will be a democracy. He hopes to accomplish what he has not been able to do in Europe. He warns Carlota that it will be difficult. She is willing to face hardship, and she feels that she will remain happy come what may. The end of the scene is
Maximilian rests his head in Carlota's lap. She croons: "Maximiliano emperador--Maximiliano emperador..." He replies: "Es un sueño, Carla" (p. 32). She says: "Por eso es verdad, Max. ¿Quieres apagar esas luces?" He blows out the candles one by one, and out of the darkness Carlota's voice calls softly: "Ven, Max, aquí estoy" (p. 32).

The third scene of Act I takes place on stage left in the Emperor's private quarters in Chapultepec Castle. It is June 12, 1864. In the darkness we hear the voice of the aged Carlota narrating: "Nuestra primera noche en México, ya acostada, en mi alcoba, sentí un deseo imperioso de ver a Max. Me acerqué a la puerta de comunicación. Oí voces, y esperé hasta que las voces se apagaron" (p. 33).

A procession of shadowy figures passes from right to left, guided by the light of a candelabra. As they enter the room on the left the set is illuminated. Maximilian, General Miguel Miramón, and José María Lacunza, Maximilian's minister, are on stage. Other vague figures remain behind. Maximilian bids them goodnight. A lackey who had carried the candelabra exits, followed by the shadowy figures. The partial curtain over the room on the right is drawn.

The Emperor asks that Miramón and Lacunza remain, for he wishes to speak frankly with them. He asks Miramón why he, a Mexican, has supported the Second Empire. Miramón explains by relating a dream he has had in which the white man has been obliterated by the Indian in Mexico. In this dream a dark pyramid grew, filling the Mexican horizon and cutting all communication with the sea. He interprets his strange
Me pareció ver en este sueño, cuando desperté, el destino mismo de México, señor. Si la pirámide acababa con la iglesia, si el indio acababa con el blanco, si México se aislaban de la influencia de Europa, se perdería para siempre. Sería la vuelta a la oscuridad, destruyendo cosas que ya se han incorporado a la tierra de México, que son tan mexicanas como la pirámide—hombres blancos que somos tan mexicanos como el indio, o más. Acabar con eso sería acabar con una parte de México... "Y pensé que sólo un gobierno monárquico ligaría el destino de México al de Europa, traería el progreso de Europa a México, y nos salvaría de la amenaza del Norte y de la caída en la oscuridad primitiva." (pp. 34-35)

Maximilian is curious; he wishes to know more. He asks about the enigmatic Juárez: "Decídeme una cosa: ¿odía el pueblo a Juárez?" (p. 36)


Maximilian remains alone for a moment. Carlota then enters. She confesses to having listened at the door. She has heard the Emperor reveal that he plans to write to Juárez. She wonders why. His naive reply is: "... he descubierto que aquí no somos nosotros quienes corremos peligro: son los mexicanos, es Juárez. Por eso quiero escribirle... Quiero salvar a Juárez, Carlota. Lo salvaré" (p. 38).

Carlota is uneasy, and verbalizes her premonition about the Zapotec:
"No sé por qué, pero sé que lo odio, que será funesto para nosotros. Tengo miedo, Max" (p. 39).

In this scene the doubt experienced by Maximilian in the second scene is transferred to Carlota. She is already beginning to wonder if she will come to regret the Imperial venture. He tries to reassure her, promising her that they will return if she wishes. But he realizes that they cannot turn back, and admits: "No podemos volver, Carlota. Tú tenías razón; nuestro destino está aquí" (p. 40).

To lift Carlota's spirits, Maximilian suggests a walk in the castle parks. She agrees enthusiastically. Captured by the tenderness of the moment, she then makes a spontaneous suggestion: "He estado pensando ... No quiero perderte nunca de vista ... Haremos una gran avenida, desde aquí hasta el palacio imperial ... Yo podré seguirte entonces todo el tiempo, desde la terraza de Chapultepec ... ¡Dime que sí!" (p. 40). Maximilian agrees to this wifely request, and urges: "Vamos al bosque ahora." Carlota will go only if Maximilian promises not to speak of the Empire. He promises: "No hablaremos del imperio. Pero salvaré a Juárez" (p. 40). This last remark distresses the Empress. Disenchanted, she bids Maximilian a formal good night. He coaxes her with fond words: "No podemos separarnos, así, amor mío. Vamos, te lo ruego" (p. 41). He kisses her hand and puts his arm around her waist. Leaning her head on his shoulder, she wistfully murmurs: "Quizás sea la última vez" (p. 41). They leave together. The terrace door remains open. A sudden gust of wind extinguishes the half-consumed candles and the curtain descends.
Act II features four scenes. The first takes place on the right half of the stage, while the left half remains in darkness. The set represents the council room in Chapultepec. It is 1865.

As the curtain ascends, Maximilian and Carlota descend from their thrones. François Achille Bazaine is standing near the dividing door. Tomás Mejía, José Luis Blasio and Antonio de Labastida form a group apart. Standing alone to the right is Father Augustus Fischer.

Bazaine and the Emperor are discussing the so-called "Black Decree" which the French Marshal has coerced the latter into approving. Maximilian strongly advocates moderation in the execution of the decree. It is clear that he loves his people; he wishes to help them through love and faith rather than through harsh disciplinary measures. Bazaine, on the other hand, cares nothing for the Mexicans. He remarks indifferently: "Me importa la vida de mis soldados, no la de los pelados de México" (p. 47). The Emperor and the Marshal differ radically in their viewpoints, as Bazaine himself indicates in these words: "Lo que pretendo... es que Su Majestad haga frente a la verdad de las cosas. Pero Su Majestad es un poeta y cree en el amor... Soy un soldado y no un cortesano" (p. 46).

There is considerable tension throughout this entire scene; friction between the monarchs and the French Marshal increases with each exchange of words. Usigli has conceded that, to his knowledge, such harsh words were never actually traded among the three; this is one of several instances in which the dramatist has taken advantage of the poet's license.
in order to lend greater dramatic impact to his dialogue. Usigli justifies this small exaggeration by asserting that, although Bazaine did not actually do verbal battle with Maximilian and Carlota, he did cause them real harm, and was a real enemy within the Second Empire. 51

The situation becomes more and more tense. Maximilian finally dismisses Bazaine; but the latter, before retiring, makes the following distressing observations concerning the condition of the Empire:

Mi elemento es la fuerza, no la política. Soy abierto y franco cuando me conviene, y ahora me conviene. Mis maneras son pésimas, pero mi visión es clara. El imperio estaba perdido sin ese decreto, que no es más que una declaración de ley marcial, normal en tiempos de guerra. El imperio estará perdido si lo mitigamos ahora. Lo único que siento es que Su Majestad lo haya promulgado tan tarde. Unos cuantos colgados hace un año, y estaríamos mucho mejor ahora. El único resultado de la indecisión del Emperador es que ahora tendremos que colgar unos cuantos miles más. (p. 48)

Labastida, the Archbishop of Mexico, condones the decree as an effective means of restoring peace. In his opinion, it will not be so rigid in practice. He concludes: "Por una parte veo sólo efectos benéficos en lo moral, y por la otra creo que se derramará muy poca sangre—la estrictamente necesaria—gracias a la amplitud misma del decreto" (p. 49). Bazaine's cynical retort is: "No se hace una tortilla sin romper los huevos, señor. Lo que me maravilla, Ilustrísima, es que la iglesia siempre se las arregla para tener razón" (p. 49). The Archbishop then reminds Bazaine that the Church is infallible. This is an acknowledged anachronism, since Papal Infallibility was not officially declared until

However, Usigli asserts that he has taken this liberty in good faith, considering Pius IX as an eternal symbol of the strength of the Church.  52

The party leaves. When Maximilian and Carlota are alone, she comforts him and assures him that he has acted wisely. Bazaine has said that each government has two faces, and one of these is death. Maximilian feels confused. He says: "No traía más que amor, no buscaba más que amor. Ahora encuentro la muerte" (p. 52). Carlota replies softly: "La muerte es la otra cara del amor también, Max" (p. 52). Maximilian is sick at heart. He laments: "Estamos solos, Carlota, entre gentes que sólo matarán o morirán por nosotros" (p. 52). She joins him in his disenchantment; she also feels very much alone. She confesses: "Yo siento esa soledad como tú—más que tú. Me mato trabajando para olvidar que a ti te han amado las mujeres" (p. 52). He asks reproachfully: "Carlota, ¿cómo puedes ahora . . . ?" She interrupts:

No siento celos, Max—no hablo por eso. He dejado de ser mujer para no ser ya más que emperatriz. Es lo único que me queda. Me acuerdo siempre de nuestra primera noche en México, cuando nos fuimos cogidos de la mano a caminar por el bosque—nuestra última noche de amantes. Ese recuerdo llena mi vida de mujer y te amo siempre. Pero el poder ha cubierto mi cuerpo como una enradera, y no me deja salir ya, y si me moviera yo, me estrangularía. No puedo perder el poder. Tenemos que hacer algo, Max. Napoleón nos ahoga con la mano de ese insolente Bazaine con algún objeto. Cuando nos haya hecho sentir toda su fuerza, nos pedirá algo, y si no se lo damos se llevará a su ejército y nos dejará solos y perdidos aquí. Hay que impedir eso de algún modo. (p. 53)

Maximilian still harbors a faint hope of winning over Juárez. Carlota senses, however, that he is their worst enemy. They continue

their political discussion, but the Emperor's thoughts are elsewhere. He feels that power has come between himself and his wife. The final words of the scene are bittersweet. Carlota cries: "No digas eso, ¡por favor! Ven aquí, Max. Esta crisis pasará pronto y cuando haya pasado nos reuniremos otra vez como antes, como lo que éramos" (p. 54). Smiling faintly, Maximilian asks: "¿Una cita en el bosque mientras el imperio arde?" His consort responds smoothly: "Eso es, Max. Una cita en el bosque, dentro de muy poco tiempo. Ahora hay que luchar, eso es todo--y hay que desconfiar--y hay que matar" (p. 55). Maximilian covers his face with his hands; he cries: "¡Por orden del Emperador!" Carlota descends from the throne, sits on the steps by his side, and strokes his hair. Maximilian sobs. The lights of the candles are extinguished one by one, leaving the poor, silent figures in darkness.

Carlota, the octogenarian, speaks next. She narrates: "Entonces vino la última noche. Luces. ¿Dónde están las luces? La última noche" (p. 56). As if in reply, candles are lit in the room on the left. It is Carlota's bedroom, furnished with a secretary, an armchair, an ottoman, and curtains. The date is July 7, 1866.

In this scene Bazaine delivers the news of the complete evacuation of the French troops. Carlota is visibly startled, but Maximilian maintains complete composure. In this scene he reveals his courage as well as his moral superiority to Bazaine. The latter attempts to bribe the Emperor by assuring him that troops will remain if he, Maximilian, will cede certain Mexican lands to France. In reply the Emperor says:
¿Cree Napoleón que conseguirá amenazándome lo que no consiguió con halagos, con trampas y mentiras? Conozco sus deseos y hace ya tiempo que veo sus intenciones con claridad. El glorioso ejército francés fracasó en sus propósitos en 1862, y Napoleón pensó entonces que podía mandar a México, en calidad de agente de tierras, a un príncipe de Habsburgo. (p. 59)

Bazaine urges Maximilian to abdicate. In his deprecating words: "Pienso que vale más un archiduque vivo que un emperador muerto" (p. 58).

Maximilian informs Bazaine that he may leave and await orders to evacuate his troops. The Marshal protests, for this demand conflicts with his orders from Napoleon. Maximilian responds: "Sabad que el ejército que me envía Francisco José llegará de un momento a otro. Servíos hacer vuestros arreglos y esperad mis noticias" (p. 60). Maximilian has lied about the coming of the Austrian troops. His lie is effective. Bazaine is rendered momentarily speechless. Maximilian, who clearly has complete control of the situation, continues smoothly:

Creíais saberlo todo, ¿no es verdad?, como Napoleón creía dominarlo todo. La guerra contra él tenía que venir de todos modos, desencadenada por su ambición y por su hipocresía, y está muy lejos de ser el amo de Europa. Se os odia mucho en México, señor Mariscal: no publiquéis demasiado vuestra partida—podría atentarse contra vos. (pp. 60-61)

Bazaine asks whether he has reason to fear for his personal safety. The Emperor quickly replies: "Recordad solamente que, para vos, vale más un mercenario vivo que un mariscal muerto" (p. 61). Carlota bids the Marshal a firm good night. Bazaine hesitates. He is furious enough to kill in this moment. Making a supreme effort, he bows stiffly and exits rapidly.

Carlota is greatly excited; she asks if Franz Joseph is really sending troops. Maximilian responds slowly, with bitter irony: "Cuando un monarca necesita apoyar su trono sobre bayonetas extranjeras, eso
Maximilian is filled with despair; he knows that the end is fast approaching. There is no hope. Even abdication is impossible, as the Emperor explains in these words: "Estoy clavado en esta tierra, y arrancarme de ella sería peor que morir, porque tiene algo virginal y terrible, porque en ella hay amor y hay odio verdaderos, vivos. Mejor morir en México que vivir en Europa como un archiduque de Strauss" (p. 62).

Carlota is zealous in her desire to save the empire. She speaks persuasively to Maximilian: "Nuestro destino está aquí, Max, pero es otro. Éramos la pareja más hermosa y más feliz de Europa. Seremos los emperadores más felices del mundo. Max, yo iré a Europa" (p. 62). He tries to dissuade her, because he senses impending humiliation and disillusionment in such a journey. Carlota finally persuades him with her boundless enthusiasm. He lies gallantly, saying: "He pasado semanas preguntándome a quién podría yo enviar a Europa. Perdóname por no haber pensado antes en ti" (p. 64).

The latter part of this scene is at once tender and pathetic. Carlota suggests that: "...ha llegado la hora de nuestra cita en el bosque" (p. 64). Maximilian agrees; he says that he must first attend to urgent official matters, but he will meet her in half an hour. But in his heart he knows that he will be occupied all the night with affairs of state. He cannot lie to Carlota. He confesses: "No quería decírtelo. Tengo que dar órdenes de campaña a mis generales. La situación es
grave. Quizás pasará toda la noche en esto. Tú tienes que preparar tu viaje..." Carlota responds: "Sí. Estamos condenados, ya lo sé." He protests: "¡No lo digas así!" She says: "Nos veremos en el bosque, Max, pero a mi regreso. Sólo entonces podremos volver a ser nosotros mismos" (p. 65). Maximilian murmurs: "A tu regreso..." and she replies: "En el bosque, Max" (p. 65). She exits. The Emperor follows her with his eyes. When she has disappeared from view he lifts the candelabra and exits. The stage darkens.

The aged Carlota narrates: "Ahora sé por qué Max me hizo ese juramento entonces" (p. 66). A lackey enters the room on the right bearing a large candelabra. As he exits, Carlota enters, followed by a duke. The scene is St. Cloud, summer home of Napoleon III and Eugenie. It is August, 1866. Carlota has come to ask the Emperor of the French to honor his promise of military and financial support of the Mexican venture. Throughout the scene Carlota's growing mental distress is evident; there is a sharp contrast between the exhausted, desperate Empress and her frivolous French counterpart.

Napoleon and Eugenie attempt to avoid Carlota. When this is no longer possible, they try to divert her with plans for a ball in her honor. But Carlota is tenacious, and will not be distracted from her vital mission. She pleads with Napoleon: "Envíad otro jefe, reforzad las tropas, levantad un empréstito que os será reembolsado íntegramente. Cumplid la palabra que nos disteis" (p. 69). He replies: "Señora, tengo la impresión de haberla cumplido hasta el límite..."
en cambio? El odio de México para Francia. Me parece injusto" (p. 69).

The most violent disagreement between Carlota and Napoleon concerns the question of Mexican territorial integrity. He reminds her that she and Maximilian rejected his offer of aid in exchange for land. She in turn reminds Napoleon that they have sworn to conserve the territory of Mexico intact. The French Emperor retorts cynically:

"Estamos entre monarcas, querida prima. Yo también he jurado cosas. Son los lugares comunes de todo gobierno" (p. 70). When she presents him with his letters promising support, Napoleon, the practical opportunist, says:

Tened un gran imperio, pero os faltan dinero, armas y hombres. ¿Qué importan unos palmos de tierra más o menos en esa extensión territorial? Francia os ayudaría a civilizar a México. Max no es un ingenuo—no puede haber esperado un apoyo gratuito de Francia. Y si él lo esperaba, vos sois demasiado inteligente para que os escapara eso. ¿Comprendéis ahora? (p. 70)

Carlota is desperate. She casts recriminations upon Napoleon. She begs. Her voice falters. Napoleon and his consort express concern for her health and urge that she rest. Carlota replies that their promise of aid will restore her well-being more quickly than all the rest in the world. Eugenie orders orange juice to refresh Carlota. The latter takes the glass which is offered her, but suddenly drops it, as if seized by a sinister idea.

Although Carlota continues to plead, Napoleon remains steadfast in his refusal. The Empress of Mexico reaches the breaking point. She imagines that she has been poisoned, and directs a vigorous tirade at Napoleon:

Carlota walks toward the exit. Napoleon instructs the duke to accompany her and attend to her wishes. He suggests: "Si quiere descansar aquí, alojadla." In a lower voice, he adds: "Alojadla en el ala opuesta, donde no nos moleste" (p. 73). When Carlota has finally left, Napoleon and Eugenie make plans for their ball. Within the triviality of their conversation there is a suggestion of tension; they seem to be disturbed by a bitter remorse. The right stage darkens.

From the left Carlota is heard to cry: "Veneno, Santo Padre, ¡veneno! Veneno de Europa—cáncer de Europa" (p. 75). The room on the left represents the office of Pope Pius IX in the Vatican. As a candelabra is placed upon the table, we see the Pope. His back is to the audience. He maintains this position throughout the act.

Carlota has come to invoke his assistance. She hopes to obtain a concordat from the Church. Throughout the interview her severe nervous strain is apparent. She speaks at great length, denouncing Napoleon. Then she reacts, asking what she has said. A Monseigneur enters with a tray of hot chocolate; she serves herself, despite her obsession that she is in danger of being poisoned. She remarks: "¡Es un buen chocolate éste. El sabor me recuerda las tardes con Maximiliano, haciendo planes..."
para el bien de México. Santo Padre, el concordato es el único remedio. Decid que sí" (p. 77). The Pope explains: "...la iglesia pierde su poder temporal. Si accedieramos al concordato no podríamos ayudaros más que moralmente. La iglesia es pobre, y nos inquieta, ya os dije, ver que hace presa en Maximiliano ese espíritu del siglo" (p. 78).

Carlota tells the Pope that, although she is confident that he will accept the concordat, she has no time to lose. The Holy Father responds: "Siempre hay tiempo, hija mía—y hay un tiempo para cada cosa. Id ahora y descansad" (p. 78). She kisses his ring and prepares to leave. At the door she stops, saying that she cannot leave because Napoleon's assassins pursue her. Pius IX tries to dissuade her of this obsession. He says: "Vamos, hija mía, vamos. El Emperador puede ser débil pero no es malo, y no os haría daño nunca" (p. 79).

The Pope has attempted to comfort Carlota with these beautiful words: "Debéis perdonar y olvidar, hija mía. Los imperios de la tierra duran poco. Los tronos temporales son de ceniza y las coronas son de humo. El hombre es una sombra por la que pasan brevemente la sangre y el sol de la vida. Pero debéis confiar también, y descansar un poco" (pp. 76-77). Furthermore, he assures her that, if her cause is noble, she can have confidence in Divine assistance. She is not entirely convinced of God's intervention in the imperial venture. She declares: "Yo sé que fue el diablo el que nos llevó a México: ...y el diablo es Napoleón. Pero Dios no puede abandonarnos allá ni dejar que perezcan la bondad y la fe de Maximiliano" (p. 80). Pius IX replies: "Detrás de cada acto del diablo hay un acto de Dios, hija mía. Ese pobre pue-
blo os necesitaba sin duda" (p. 80). Carlota asks eagerly: "¿Qué esperáis entonces? Aceptad el concordato, Santidad" (p. 80). The Pope refuses with finality. He then urges her to forget her hatred for Napoleon, and to call upon the powers of love to achieve her ends.

Carlota responds:

Así decía Max. Amor, amor, ¡amor! Vedlo ahora, traicionado por Napoleón, sin dinero, sin hombres, luchando él solo por la causa del amor en la tierra. ¿No sabéis que los príncipes se retirarán de mí si les hablo de la causa de amor? Max no quiere tocar la tierra de México y yo no puedo traicionarlo. ¡No puedo! Tengo que volver a él, tengo que verlo en seguida—tengo una idea—la única idea de salvación. ¡Pronto! Decid a Su Majestad el Emperador que necesito hablarle luego. Es urgente. (p. 81)

The Pope and the Cardinal exchange looks. Carlota falls into the chair and remains quiet. Pius IX informs the Cardinal that the Empress will sleep in the Vatican; it is unwise that she leave in her distraught condition. The Cardinal is surprised and a bit doubtful:

"¿Una mujer en el Vaticano, Santidad?" The Holy Father replies: "Quizás la única en la historia. Infortunada. ¿Cómo podemos abandonarla si su corona es de espinas y de sombra?" (p. 82). The Cardinal bows and exits. Pius IX approaches Carlota. He joins his hands as if in prayer. Carlota becomes vaguely aware of his presence and exclaims:

"¡Este barco tan largo! ¿Habéis avisado a Su Majestad el Emperador que lo espero?" At this moment, the Pope turns toward the audience for the first and only time in the play. Lifting his eyes toward heaven he responds: "Su Majestad el Emperador está ya con vos, señora" (p. 82). He joins his hands in prayer as Carlota stares blankly into space.

Curtain.
Act III is divided into four scenes. The first takes place stage right in a salon in the castle of Miramar. It is still 1866. Carlota, a psychiatrist, a lady-in-waiting and a chamberlain enter. Immediately, Carlota asks for light. Logically, Usigli has employed his chief symbol, light, most widely in this scene. Carlota demands lights, and more lights, every few moments. The scene serves to establish the fact of Carlota's insanity. It is a most convincing mad scene indeed. The pitiful efforts of the ill Empress, struggling desperately to lift her clouded mind from its dark depths to the clear light of reason, are moving.

The psychiatrist describes Carlota's malady in the following manner: "Su Majestad ha perdido el dominio de sus sensaciones de sus centros nerviosos, la noción del lugar . . ." (p. 92). In regard to the possibilities of her recovery, the doctor is pessimistic. He admits: "... tengo pocas esperanzas . . . Mi ciencia tiene un límite, y Su Majestad se encuentra en la etapa más incierta de su mal. Lucharé por salvar su razón" (pp. 92-93).

The doctor has a spontaneous idea, and instructs the servants: "Venid, acercaos con vuestros candelabros. Repetid lo que yo diga." The three surround Carlota. The psychiatrist asks: "¿Es esto lo que pedíais, señora? ¿Son suficientes estas luces?" The lady-in-waiting continues: "Aquí están las luces, Majestad. ¡Mirad cuántas!" The chamberlain adds: "Las luces que Vuestra Majestad ha pedido." Carlota is confused. She says: "¿Pedido? Sí, os he pedido algo, ¿no es verdad?"
She sits down and tries desperately to remember: "Esperad . . .
¡Esperad!" (p. 93). Carlota stares into space. The light of the candles forms a fantastic circle about her face. She smiles feebly, and says: "Se me ha olvidado. Eso es, eso es. Se me ha olvidado" (p. 93).

There is darkness.

In the second scene we return to Bouchout Castle, to the present. Erasmo Ramírez stares at Carlota in fascination. She speaks:

Olvidado. Se me ha olvidado. Esperad. Sí, sí—eso es. Un papel. Un papel con orla de luto. ¿Por qué? Yo escribí una carta. Esperad. Oigo un ruido. Alguien ha roto un jarrón de Sevres. No--lo he perdido. No me deja pensar un rumor de campanas--veo petardos y flores, y mi hermano Leopoldo sonríe, con su gran barba negra. (p. 94)

Carlota is remembering many sounds, sights, and distant events. She asks again about the letter with a black border. Erasmo replies:
"Quizás ésta. 1868. Señora: Mucho os agradezco la expresión de pesar que envíais por la muerte de mi muy amado esposo el Emperador Maximiliano. Vuestras palabras me traerían consuelo si un dolor tan grande pudiera ser consolado" (p. 95). Carlota cries: "¡No! ¡No! ¡Max!" She stares at her hands, asking: "¿De quién son estas manos?" She touches her hair and her face, and says: "Esto no es mi rostro--Y estos cabellos muertos . . . ¿Qué quiere decir esto? . . . ¿Por qué?" She rises; she is a sad, wizened figure. She asks Erasmo where they are. When he tells her, she is incredulous. Taking a candle, she moves to the mirror and stares fixedly at her aged reflection. She cries "¡No!" three times, backs away, and drops the candle, which Ramírez recovers.
Erasmo finally convinces Carlota that it is 1927. He tells her that he is a Mexican. She orders him to leave. He convinces her that he must remain. Carlota inquires again about the letter; he tells her that he has seen a copy in Mexico. She comments: "Siento como si de pronto pudiera yo comprender todas las cosas, y esto no me tortura. No me asfixia. 'La muerte de mi muy amado esposo el Emperador Maximiliano.' ¿Cuándo? ¿Cuándo?" (p. 97). Ramírez supplies the information. Carlota responds: "¿Queréis decir que hace sesenta años que él me espera? Es monstruoso. ¿Por qué? ¿Para qué? ¿Cometí un crimen tan grande para merecer esta separación? No entiendo--no entiendo" (p. 97).

Carlota inquires about other important players who have figured in her personal tragedy. Mechanically, Erasmo enlightens her concerning the fate of Napoleon, Bazaine, Pius IX and others. She cannot understand why she has outlived them all. She says: "Todos han muerto aquí, y yo sobrevivo. ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué?" (p. 98). Then she scrutinizes Erasmo with great care, and asks: "¿Por qué creí que erais el señor Juárez? No lo sois, ¿verdad?" The historian replies: "Como él soy indio zapoteca, señora, y nací en Oaxaca. Benito Juárez murió el 18 de julio de 1872" (p. 98). Carlota says: "Cinco años después. Aun él murió."

Carlota continues to wonder why she has not been taken by death. She also asks what the present world searches for. Erasmo replies that, although man can now fly, he still conserves his old instincts, his lust for power. Carlota counters: "Como yo. ¿No es eso lo que queréis decir?" He replies: "Sí, señora" (p. 98). She then says:
Sesenta años. Sesenta años he llevado en mi cabeza esta pesada corona de sombra, y despierto sólo para adivinar el mismo sentido detrás de las palabras, la misma tácita afirmación detrás de las miradas. ¿Se me odia en México aún, como entonces? La ambiciosa, la fuerte, la orgullosa, la voluntad diabólica del pobre Max. ¿Nadie va a comprender nunca? ¿Nunca? Soy una mujer vieja—la más vieja del mundo. Sesenta años de locura son más largos que toda la razón humana. (p. 99)

Carlota asks whether Mexico still hates Maximilian. Erasmo does not have a ready answer. He explains to her that he has come in search of a new truth for Mexico. He has not yet found this truth. He confesses: "Estoy en la sombra yo también. No entiendo todavía muchas cosas. La razón misma de que viváis así, por encima de todos los que os amaron, por encima de todos los que os dedicaron su odio, sigue escapándome de entre los dedos" (p. 100). Carlota says: "Antes de irnos de aquí, decidme una cosa. Decidme cómo murió Maximiliano" (p. 100). Erasmo complies: "A las siete de la mañana de un día claro." She murmurs: "Ya no olvidaré la fecha. 19 de junio de 1867" (p. 100). The scene blacks out.

Stage right represents the death cell of Maximilian in the Convent of Capuchines in Querétaro. It is the day of his execution. As the scene opens he is seated at a small table. He rises, gazes out the window and smiles mysteriously. A sentinel opens the door to admit Miremón. A few seconds later, Mejía enters. Maximilian asks his companions in death to listen to a letter he has written to his son—the son he never had. In this letter he has said:

Hijo mío: Voy a morir por México. Morir es dulce rara vez; el
hombre es tan absurdo que teme la muerte en vez de temer la vida, que es la fábrica de la muerte. He viajado por todos los mares, y muchas veces pensé que sería perfecto sumergirse en cualquiera de ellos y nada más. Pero ahora sé que el mar se parece demasiado a la vida, y que su única misión es conducir al hombre a la tierra, tal como la misión de la vida es llevar al hombre a la muerte. Pero ahora sé que el hombre debe regresar siempre a la tierra, y sé que es dulce morir por México porque en una tierra como la de México ninguna sangre es estéril. Te escribo sólo para decirte esto, y para decirte que cuides de tu muerte como yo he procurado cuidar de la mía, para que tu muerte sea la cima de tu amor y la coronación de tu vida. (p. 102)

Maximilian burns this letter. Miramón and Mejía have been moved by it, and the former says: "Nunca creí, señor, que el amor de Vuestra Majestad por México fuera tan profundo" (p. 102). The Emperor replies:

"Los hombres se conocen mal en la vida, general Miramón. Nosotros llevamos nuestra amistad a un raro extremo; por eso nos conocemos mejor" (p. 102).

Maximilian's faithful generals protest that he must die. They praise his extraordinary courage, his exceeding valor. The Emperor replies:

¿Mi valor? Toda mi vida fui un hombre débil con ideas fuertes. La llama que ardía en mí para mantener vivos mi espíritu y mi amor y mi deseo de bondad era Carlota. Ahora tengo miedo... Miedo de que mi muerte no tenga el valor que le atribuyo en mi imperitente deseo de soñar. Si mi muerte no sirviera para nada, sería un destino espantoso. (p. 104)

As he faces his final moment, Maximilian's greatest preoccupations are the fate of Carlota and the motives of the traitor Miguel López. Mejía refers to López as a Judas. Maximilian admonishes: "No digáis esa palabra... Yo no soy Cristo." Mejía protests: "Os crucifícan... entre dos traidores." Maximilian says: "Sería demasiada vanidad, Tomás, pensar que nuestros nombres vivirán tanto y que resonará-
án en el mundo por el siglo de los siglos. No. El hombre muere a
veces a semejanza de Cristo, porque está hecho a semejanza de Dios.
Pero hay que ser humildes" (p. 105).

The captain of the firing squad enters the cell. The fatal hour has arrived. Mejía and Miramón precede Maximilian in leaving the room. Maximilian remains for a moment, looks around, and says:
"Hasta muy pronto, Carla. Hasta muy pronto en el bosque" (p. 105).

He exits. Sunlight floods the cell through the open door. Carlota asks: "¿Y luego?" As if in response, the voice of Maximilian, distant but clear, is heard:


The captain shouts his orders. There is a barrage of rifle shots. Maximilian shouts one word, "¡Hombre!", and the stage is quickly darkened.

The Fourth and final scene of *Corona de Sombra* takes place in the double salon of Bouchout. Usigli has planned the timing so that the room to the left reappears before the sound of the volley is completely mute. A moment later, the room to the right is illuminated. Carlota listens carefully. There is a brief pause, followed immediate-
ly by an isolated shot: the coup de grace. Carlota raises her hand to her chest.

In a barely audible voice, she murmurs: "Max. Es extraño, señor. Siento en mí una paz profunda, la luz que me faltaba" (p. 107). This light is the light of reason, which at last has penetrated Carlota's tortured mind. She is grateful to Erasmo for having led her to the truth. Knowing that she will soon be reunited with her husband "en el bosque", she asks what message she should give him from México. Erasmo replies:

Señora, he tardado en ver las cosas, pero al fin las veo como son. Decid a Maximiliano de Habsburgo que México consumió su independencia en 1867 gracias a él. Que gracias a él, el mundo aprendió una gran lección en México, y que lo respeta, a pesar de su debilidad. Han caído gobiernos desde entonces, señora, y hemos hecho una revolución que aún no termina. Pero también la revolución acabará un día, cuando los mexicanos comprendan lo que significa la muerte de Maximiliano. (p. 107).

Carlota thanks Erasmo and bids him goodbye. He asks her a final favor: "Señora, humildemente os suplico que digáis al Emperador que consiguió su objeto . . . Quiero decir que si el Emperador no se hubiera interpuesto, Juárez habría muerto antes de tiempo, a manos de otro mexicano" (p. 108). Carlota is deeply touched. She confesses to Ramírez that, were it possible to relive their lives, " . . . Maximiliano volvería a morir por México, y yo volvería a llevar esta corona de sombra sobre mi frente durante sesenta años para oír otra vez vuestras palabras. (Para repetírselas al Emperador" (p. 108).

Erasmo hesitates for a moment; then he kisses Carlota's hand. Gathering his belongings in silence, he exits quickly. Carlota looks
toward the front, smiles, and reclines in the armchair with a great sigh of relief. She says: "Ya podéis apagar esas luces. En el bosque, Max. Ya estamos en el bosque" (p. 108). The doctor and lady-in-waiting enter at this moment. The doctor approaches the ex-Empress, takes her pulse, listens in vain for a heartbeat. Silently, he extinguishes the candles one by one, and opens the curtains. Sunlight floods the still room, illuminating the cold, motionless figure. The King of Belgium appears in the first door to the left. The lady-in-waiting genuflects, weeping. All present kneel quietly, and the curtain descends.

Usigli calls his play "una pieza anti-histórica". This seemingly self-explanatory definition has caused comment and questions. The playwright therefore explains his terminology at some length. Insisting that the term "anti-historical" is not a new one, he refers to the Aristotelian differentiation of tragedy and history. According to this theory, an historical theme which is transferred to the stage should be treated theatrically from beginning to end. The poet becomes the interpreter rather than the slave of the historic event. As interpreter it is his obligation to allow his imagination free rein. In Usigli's words: "...si se lleva un tema histórico al terreno del arte dramático, el primer elemento que debe regir es la imaginación, no la historia. La historia no puede llenar otra función que la de simple acento de color, de ambiente, o de época...Sólo la imaginación permite

This theatrical treatment does not involve an alteration of the true fact; it is a matter of illumination. Usigli defends this concept in the following statement: "No se trata de alterar los hechos de la historia sino de alumbrarlos con la luz de un sentimiento contemporáneo a nosotros... De ver, en fin, mejor que el hecho histórico en sí mismo, los frutos que ha venido a dar en nuestro tiempo." In short, Usigli seems to view history as a living entity capable of growth and repetition.

Rodolfo Usigli's concept of history admittedly differs from the general Mexican viewpoint. The dramatist defines this difference in these words:

En México se cree que la historia es ayer cuando en realidad la historia es hoy y siempre. Por eso he inventado en Erasmo Ramírez a un historiador mexicano que busca en el presente la razón del pasado; que conoce todas las fechas; pero que sabe que todos los números son convertibles y no inmutables. Si Erasmo Ramírez hubiera existido, la historia que se escribe en México sería otra exenta por igual de las tendencias políticas contemporáneas y del liturgo de los siglos discursados.

Usigli concludes that, if history were as faithful and exact as poetry, he would be ashamed to avoid it. But, as he asserts, "En México, cada quien la escribe como puede y para el que puede, y la filosofía de la historia me parece mejor que ella misma."

The playwright feels quite strongly about his historical con-

57 Ibid., p. 165.
cept; he does not accept other points of view readily. It is logical, then, that he has had little patience with other theatrical treatments of the reign of Maximilian and Carlota. We have seen proof of this in his remarks concerning *Carlota de México*. Usigli feels that the Emperor and Empress have received worse treatment at the hands of Mexican dramatists and film writers and producers than they ever suffered under the Juarist liberals. He professes to have written *Corona de Sombra* motivated by his strong indignation at the injustice which had been committed. In his words:

> He escrito esta pieza movido sobre todo por un acto de indignación por la colérica conciencia de que la sangre de Maximiliano y la locura de Carlota merecen algo más de México que el soneto de Rafael López, que las cuadrillas y las oraciones en malos versos (a reference to Lira’s play), y que los intentos formalmente históricos (a reference to Miramar). 58

Rodolfo Usigli considers Carlota and Maximilian excellent subjects for a tragic play. He considers them highly original figures who lend themselves gracefully to the dramatist’s imaginative interpretation. The originality of the pair can be perceived in various characteristics, principally in Carlota’s ambition complex and in Maximilian’s complex of love. The Emperor and Empress of Mexico were victims not only of their personal passions, but of Europe and the age in which they lived as well.

There are other facets of their originality, such as the fact that they hesitated two years before accepting the Mexican crown, and the fact that Maximilian was executed in a country not his own, a coun-

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try in which he had no firmly anchored roots. Usigli views Maximilian as a new type of ruler, the democratic prince. He did not die to defend a tradition, a principle of government, or dynastic pride; his death was for another reason. His reason for having to die was to serve as liquidator of Europe's crime in trying to rule the New World. The dramatist feels that this strange circumstance causes Maximilian to transcend elementary logic; his death makes him an extraordinary, irreplaceable element of composition for Mexico. 59

Maximilian made his political error in trying to be a democratic governor in a country whose structure was already democratic in itself. For this reason, Mexico was blind to his democratic tendencies; the Mexicans saw him as the Emperor, the anti-Christ of Democracy. This is part of the originality of Mexico as well as that of Maximilian. 60

Usigli cites other aspects of Maximilian's originality. They include the fact that he was the last European prince to die as a result of juridical process. He was the last hero, prince of Europe. His death marked the death of European greed and the birth of Mexican nationality. The playwright concludes his remarks on the subject of Maximilian's originality with these words: "Un hombre que muere por un pueblo que no es el suyo, por un imperio que no existe; una mujer loca que sobrevive sesenta años a su tiempo, podrán ser lo que se quiera, pero son personajes originales." 61

59 Usigli, "Prólogo después de la obra," p. 149.
60 Ibid., p. 151.
61 Ibid., p. 152.
Had Maximilian been an ordinary prince, imbued with the principle of Divine Right, the problem of his reign would seem easier to resolve. But he was a democrat. Sensitive to popular vibrations, he made the mistake of confirming the Juárist laws and thus incurred the enmity of the Conservatives who had originally summoned him. Usigli maintains that Maximilian changed the course of history, in effect. In his words: "Considerados el poder de Napoleón y la situación de Europa, piénsense en que si Maximiliano hubiera aceptado vender a México, si hubiera sido un traidor, habría cambiado el curso de la historia." 62

Human virtues caused Maximilian to act as he did. These virtues ultimately led to his death. He was, in short, a paradoxical figure. As the playwright says: "Maximiliano . . .se ofrece a la imaginación con todas las contradicciones del mexicano. Eso es lo que le da una inequívoca calidad mexicana, y Juárez lo hace fusilar como si hubiera sido un mexicano." 63 It should be mentioned here that, although Usigli is highly sympathetic toward Maximilian and Carlota, he in no way wishes to defend the Intervention or the Second Empire. As he tersely states: "Para quien piense que defiendo románticamente la monarquía y la intervención, que abogo por el catolicismo o que estoy contra Juárez, reservo una gran desilusión." 64

63 Ibid., p. 159.
64 Ibid., p. 160.
According to its creator, *Corona de Sombra* revolves around two principal acts: the act of the devil and the act of God. Maximilian's death is a divine means. Even though it may seem to be a punishment, it is in reality the only way in which God can save him. Carlota's madness is the second act. It does not resemble a punishment so much as a prevention. Carlota was astute, intelligent and ambitious. Possessed by the Napoleonic, European devil she might have destroyed the divine work implicit in Maximilian's death, had not insanity gained control of her mind. If she had succeeded in defeating Juárez, the devil would have returned to Mexico, and no progress could have been made. Thus Carlota is punished by the only possible means: by time. But this same time which is her punishment is, in the final analysis, her pardon (proof of cyclical perfection), since she learns that time has taken all the heroes and villains who had played prominent roles in her tragedy; the act of God cancelled out the act of the devil.

Critical acclaim for *Corona de Sombra* has been unanimous. Frank Dauster calls it "one of Latin America's finest plays". José Juan Arrom considers it to be "a truly excellent play... with inspired use of modern theatrical techniques, brilliant and effective dialogue, profound characterizations and motivation." He feels that it compares favorably with Werfel's *Juárez and Maximilian* and that it "surpasses

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several other dramas on the subject. This comparison with the Werfel play will be treated in the final chapter.

No less a dramatic critic than the formidable George Bernard Shaw read *Corona de Sombra* in 1945. In this well-known letter he conveyed his praise to Rodolfo Usigli:

I really have nothing to say. If you ever need an Irish certificate of vocation as a dramatic poet I will sign it. When I was half way through the play, the end came into my head ready made exactly as it came into yours. Only, Maximilian was visible with the shooting party; and the volley was heard after the slow fall of the curtain. If the performance takes too long the scene with the alienist could be omitted as Carlotta's mental state is sufficiently established without it. But it is worth doing for its own sake if there is time for it. The play is pure tragedy from beginning to end, but never turgid or tiresome. English tragedy is always adulterated like the black and white sweets that children call bulls' eyes; but this Mexican tragedy is homogenous through and through, noble through all its variety and novelty. Mexico can starve you; but it cannot deny your genius.

The Mexican critic Magaña Esquivel describes Usigli's play in these words:

El autor no se desvía del sujeto y objeto de su obra. Su diálogo es directo y nutrido de intenciones y hábil, y los obscuros con que divide y liga las escenas de cada acto demuestran su creciente madurez de hombre del teatro. Acaso su obra sea lo menos histórica que puede darse, y ello fue su propósito; pero en lo convencional de la creación literaria es exquisita, puede creerse, gracias a eso mismo. De tal manera que es fácil el deseo de que, si las cosas no ocurrieron así, valdría la pena que así hubiesen ocurrido.

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68 Rodolfo Usigli, "Dos conversaciones con George Bernard Shaw y algunas cartas," *Cuadernos Americanos*, XXXII, i (1945), 226.

In another study this same critic asserts that the actual scenic realization of the play leaves something to be desired. He does not elaborate upon this comment; he simply remarks that Usigli the dramatist should reproach Usigli the director for this flaw. Not having had the fortune to see the play presented I can neither agree with or dispute this opinion. Arrom, however, has seen the production and considers the scenic realization satisfactory. In his words: "... adecuada técnica le ha permitido resolver, mediante el uso integral de efectos luminosos en un doble escenario, el problema estético de una acción que pasa rápidamente del presente al pasado y de un lado del Atlántico al otro."  

Corona de Sombra is essentially a psychological, rather than a political, play. Therefore, it transcends the usual classifications of Usigli's works. There are two strong tendencies which can be noted in his theater: he presents social criticism of Mexican life and social criticism of a universal nature at the same time in order to link his national themes with all humanity; and he delves into modern human psychology. For this reason, Vera de Beck concludes: "Corona de Sombra no puede quedarse limitada en ninguno de estos grupos aunque es una pieza basada en la historia política y motivos psicopáticos resultan de la situación." 

70 Magaña Esquivel, Sueño y realidad del teatro, p. 124.
72 Magaña Esquivel and Lamb, op. cit., p. 134.
73 Vera F. de Beck, "La fuerza motriz en la obra dramática de Rodolfo Usigli," Revista Iberoamericana, XVIII, 36 (1953), 370.
Corona de Sombra is considered one of the best plays in the Latin American theater, and its creator is thought to be one of Latin America's four leading dramatists. Rodolfo Usigli is a true pioneer in his profession. It has been observed, with a considerable degree of accuracy, that the theater is his religion. In his zeal for perfection and in his unyielding defense of his own theatrical principles, the irascible, enigmatic Usigli has made many enemies. Yet even they acknowledge his genius. Willis Knapp Jones has described Usigli's situation in these words:

Usigli...sabe lo que está tratando de hacer y por qué. Se da cuenta de que un dramaturgo que hable de una manera realista en asuntos sujetos a controversia será objeto de críticas y de antagónismo. Pero su contribución a la escena mexicana como dramaturgo, empresario y profesor de técnica teatral y su constante actitud polémica le han ganado un lugar preeminente en la historia del teatro mexicano.

Critics have praised this strange genius in lofty terms. Magaña Esquivel has referred to Usigli as the most universal genius which Mexico has produced in the past hundred years. The same critic, along with Ruth S. Lamb, has called Usigli the most extraordinary case in modern Mexican theater. Another observer has remarked that Usigli, who created the Mexican theater almost single-handed, is Mexico's foremost dra-

75 Beck, op. cit., p. 369.
76 Jones, op. cit., p. 174.
77 Magaña Esquivel, Sueño y realidad del teatro, p. 123.
78 Magaña Esquivel and Lamb, op. cit., p. 132.
Rodolfo Usigli's efforts are made more impressive by the realization that the lot of the playwright in Latin America is difficult at best. The sad truth is that the dramatist often cannot live by writing plays alone. Salvador Novo, an experienced Mexican playwright and contemporary of Usigli, has expressed this dilemma effectively in a study. In Novo's words: "The playwright is a strange animal. His life depends, as is the case with turtles, upon two different atmospheres. To write he must be ashore; to produce, he must be in the water. He is generally drowned... As long as plays do not sell more generously, it is clear that playwriting will offer little interest as a career."  

Salvador Novo feels that the splendid Mexican subjects available have not really been used to full advantage as yet; Usigli reflects this concept, and tries to overcome this slight to Mexican themes. He feels that the conscience and the truth of any nation live in their theater, and in his work he strives to express Mexico. Corona de Sombra is an excellent example.

I can add little to what critics have said about Corona de Sombra. There can be no doubt in regard to Usigli's exceptional technical ability, his excellent, fast moving dialogue, his profound characterizations, his keen sense of timing, and his sensitive treatment of provoca-

79 Gates, op. cit., p. 437.

tive themes. Words seem superfluous when dealing with Corona de Sombra, for the play speaks for itself. I can find no real fault with the work, except that it is a bit long. Nonetheless, the play does not lag. It can be read and re-read with ever growing enjoyment and appreciation. Perhaps the greatest significance of Corona de Sombra is that Rodolfo Usigli has captured not only the essence of Maximilian and Carlota, but the essence of Mexico itself in this highly imaginative anti-historical piece. He has done so more effectively than could any historian with all his dates and documented notes.
CONCLUSION

The reign of Carlota and Maximilian is a logical topic for dramatic presentations, for the entire interlude seemed like a fantastic real-life play in itself. Few events could be more dramatic than the transposition of European elegance and court life to a wild young country whose brief history had been written in blood. Nothing could be more dramatic than the execution of a handsome, benevolent young prince in a country not his own, or the sixty years of insanity endured by his ambitious young widow. These are elements of pure tragedy; they cry for literary expression.

Each of the playwrights under consideration has attempted to give expression of the historical fact on the stage. Their success, or failure, has been dependent upon their interpretation of history, their level of imagination, and their skill as theatrical craftsmen.

The similarities of the three plays are outweighed by their differences. Most of their similar points are superficial ones. For example, all three were written by Mexicans of the same chronological generation within a period of eleven years: Miramar came first in 1932, followed by Carlota de Mexico in 1943 and Corona de Sombra in 1944. Despite this coincidence, there is no real evidence of mutual influence or collaboration on the part of the dramatists. Usigli, and possibly Jiménez Rueda and Lira, was acquainted with Werfel's fine play Juárez and Maximilian, which might be considered as a precursor of the Mexican works. This play was premiered in 1926. Usigli modestly considers
it the best play on the subject.  

Juárez and Maximilian should not be compared with the Mexican plays, for it is basically different. It is written by a foreigner, who concentrates on Juárez rather than Maximilian and Carlota; though Juárez never appears on stage, Werfel has managed to make him the center of interest, and his spirit is present in every scene.

The most obvious similarity among the plays is the fact that the three authors have chosen various significant episodes in the reign to transfer to the stage. To lend a feeling of truth to these scenes they have often employed translations, or their reasonable facsimiles, of actual recorded statements, and have placed these words in the mouths of the characters who actually said them.

The most significant meeting ground is the sympathetic treatment of the Emperor and Empress by all three dramatists. Regardless of the sort of interpretation which they have given, each has been consistent in his kind treatment of the rulers. Without being anti-Juárist in any respect, all three have recognized, and been inspired by, the tragedy brought about by Napoleon's greed, Maximilian's innocence, and Carlota's ambition. With this common recognition as a point of departure, Jiménez Rueda, Lira and Usigli have written three distinct works representing three genres-within-a-genre. Studying the plays in chronological order, a definite evolution of philosophy

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concerning the reign and its significance is evident. Moreover, increasing sophistication in technical devices, dialogue and general style is apparent as the plays are studied in chronological order.

Miramar is the first and least complex of the works. It embraces the shortest period of time, 1864 to 1867, and is the only play which does not end with the death of Carlota. She is the most important character in the work, but the playwright does not preoccupy himself with the aftermath of her brief reign. He is content to simply present, through his secondary characters, the events of the imperial venture at the time of their occurrence. This characteristic causes Miramar to resemble a dialogued history manual at times.

Jiménez Rueda's play is the only one in which Maximilian never appears, although he is frequently discussed. Nor do Napoleon, Juárez, Pius IX, Bazaine, or any other principal figures related to the Second Empire, enter into Miramar directly. There are actual historic personalities present; however, these are not people who affected the reign in any significant manner. They are simply informers who serve to deliver information, third-hand.

In view of these facts we must conclude that Jiménez Rueda's intent has been strictly historical, principally informative. He has not been concerned with psychological interpretations of the persons involved. He has not attempted to ascertain what the reign of Maximilian and Carlota has meant to the history of Mexico. There is no strong undercurrent, no recurring theme, no personal philosophy ex-
pressed in Miramar. Indeed, the playwright is detached in his observations and conservative in his presentation. He seems to have written this play primarily to inform by providing historical data, and secondarily to entertain, by portraying real personages on stage. He says: "These are the chief episodes in the reign of Maximilian and Carlota" without becoming personally involved in their problems.

The reader of Miramar is at a disadvantage owing to the paucity of directions, annotations and descriptions in the manuscript. This detracts from the clarity of the work. The lack of symbolism is unfortunate, for there is nothing to stimulate the imagination of the reader. Scarcity of action causes Miramar to be turgid in places. Despite its defects, however, the play should not be judged too harshly. Jiménez Rueda should be given credit as a precursor, for he is the first of his countrymen who has devoted a theatrical piece to the reign of Maximilian and Carlota in this century.

Carlota de México represents the next step in the evolution of the theatrical portrayals of the reign. In one sense, Lira's play represents a transition between Miramar and Corona de Sombra, even though it is very different from these works. Like Miramar, Carlota de México features a certain amount of historic reporting by secondary figures. As in Usigli's play, there is a definite concept of Carlota expressed by the playwright. Apart from these similarities, however, there are few others.

The characteristic which especially sets Lira apart from his
contemporaries is his lyric poetry and his preoccupation with the ritual, the dance and the spectacular. This tendency, which is noted in all his plays, causes Carlota de México to resemble a spectacular pageant. It seems certain that Miguel N. Lira is well acquainted with the theater of Federico García Lorca, for the latter's influence upon the work of the former is unmistakable. This influence is evident when Lira's Vuelta a la tierra is compared with the Spaniard's well-known Bodas de Sangre. We might conceivably extend this comparison to include Carlota de México and Yerma, in that both plays are concerned with the anguish of childless women.

A formidable amount of theatrical prowess is required to be able to incorporate lyric poetry, dances and rituals into a play. Unfortunately, Miguel Lira is not as skilled as his Spanish counterpart. This is not the place for a comparison between Lira and García Lorca, even if such a comparison were valid. But it should be pointed out that Lira, like Lorca, has been primarily interested in the creation of poetic drama. This fact should be born in mind before any attempt to criticize Carlota de México is made.

In Lira's play, as in Miramar, Carlota is the principal figure. Lira's is a more complex portrayal. He spans her life from 1864 to 1867. Moreover, he applies his personal psychological and philosophical interpretation to his portrayal. The playwright views Carlota as a frustrated mother figure who attempts to compensate for her inability
to bear children by channeling her maternal instinct toward the Mexican people. Her ambition, according to his theory, is a question of diverting her energies. Time after time Carlota refers to Mexico as her child; she continues to do so until the time of her death. Lira has taken one facet of Carlota's personality, magnified it, and suppressed many outside factors which might mar the unity of his portrayal. In doing this he has created a Carlota who, of the three, is probably the least true to reality.

Maximilian is of secondary importance in this play. Lira's concept of the Emperor is not so clearly defined as is that of Carlota. Although Maximilian is not emphasized, his portrayal on the whole seems to be in greater accord with historical reality than does that of Carlota. We see him in various instances as the kind-hearted, sentimental Archduke, or as the dignified ruler debating with Bazaine, or as the disillusioned, troubled Emperor, but there is no real character development along any of these lines. We have only fleeting impressions. Yet his image is more convincing than Carlota's, perhaps because Lira has employed less exaggeration in its creation. Maximilian's weakest scene is the one in Act II in which he writes his sentimental verse and weeps. This is a detracting element, because the verse is not very good, and Maximilian emerges appearing rather foolish. On the other hand, his scene with Bazaine is one of the best in the play, probably because it is done in a relatively subtle manner.
Lira's play does not lack trappings: the sets and costumes are lavish. This is noteworthy, for the visual aspect is a vital part of the play. But Carlota de México wants for lighting effects, sound effects, and smooth flowing stage business. Lira is not ignorant of theatrical techniques; still, he seems to be carried away with his lyric poetry and spectacular presentation. He devotes the majority of his energies and talents to these elements, while overlooking effective theatrical devices and symbols. His play is, in the last analysis, a spectacular which features at least an attempt at psychological analysis of the principal character. Exaggerated, at times uneven, it is nevertheless an attempt by a Mexican to portray Carlota and Maximilian in an exceptionally friendly light, and should be recognized for what it has tried to achieve.

Rodolfo Usigli in his "pieza anti-historica" is the only one of the three dramatists to create a tragic play. He is also the only one to attempt to discover the true significance of the reign. And his answer is very convincing indeed. In the final act he reveals his philosophy concerning the Second Empire through Erasmo, who represents in part, the voice of the playwright. Maximilian's coming prevented the premature assassination of Juárez at the hands of another Mexican. His death marked the end of European interference in Mexico; more important, it heralded the coming of Mexican nationality. There is a valuable lesson in the Intervention and Second Empire for all Mexicans perceptive enough to appreciate it.
Usigli, like his colleagues, treats Carlota as his focal point. But this Carlota is not the mother-figure of Lira's work. She is the ambitious Carlota who was rewarded for her ambition by the loss of her husband and the loss of her faculties of reason. The title has a double significance: it refers to her insanity and to the ignorance of people inside and outside of Mexico as to the true meaning of Maximilian's martyrdom and Carlota's madness. Usigli hopes to lift the crown of shadows and bring illumination to the question of the Second Empire. Because of his profound psychological analyses, his linguistic prowess, and his skill as a dramatic craftsman, he succeeds admirably.

Corona de Sombra is the only work in which Maximilian acquires a lifelike, three-dimensional quality. In the other works he is generally overshadowed by Carlota. Here he is on equal footing. Usigli treats both principals sympathetically, without avoiding their human imperfections. Yet his Maximilian gradually develops as a Christ-like figure who is sacrificed for his people. The parallel is unmistakable, and is verbally insinuated in the third act when Mejía refers to the traitor López as "ese Judás". Maximilian's humble reply is "No digáis esa palabra, Tomás. Yo no soy Cristo." (See above, p. 85).

Usigli is a master of theatrical techniques. He has studied the theater extensively and done a great deal of experimentation. Indeed, he has devoted his life to the Mexican theater, and can be considered as its father. In this play he demonstrates his thorough skill
and vast technical knowledge very ably. To solve the problem of awkward transitions, for instance, he has employed a split-stage method. One half of the stage is blacked out while the other is in use. This enables the actors to move back and forth in time and space with a minimum of hesitation. Thus there is a smooth flow of action rather than a series of choppy scenes.

These blackouts and lighting methods serve a double purpose: they are symbolic as well as functional. When we hear the voice of the aged Carlota narrating from her faded memory, her voice comes out of the darkness. When she does not have control of her reasoning powers she constantly asks for lights, for she is desperately trying to lift the crown of shadows which clouds her mind. Carlota cannot have enough lights throughout the play. However, at the end, when she at last understands why her husband has died and why she has outlived him for sixty years, hovering between two lights of reason and insanity, she says: "Siento en mí una paz profunda, la luz que me faltaba" (See above, p. 87). And a moment later she murmurs: "Ya podéis apagar esas luces. En el bosque, Max. Ya estamos en el bosque" (See above, p. 88). The "bosque" symbolizes peace and escape from the trials of their ill-starred existence. "Bosque" is a chief leitwort in the play. It is used on four significant occasions: in Act II, on the monarchs' first evening in Mexico, when they stroll through the Castle parks like young lovers for the last time; in Act III, when it is the object of
their frustrated longing to escape the problems of the Empire; in Act III, before Maximilian is executed: ("Hasta muy pronto, Carla. En el bosque."); and in Act IV. The "bosque" begins as a symbol of earthly retreat and grows, during the course of the play, to symbolize eternal respite for Carlota and Maximilian.

*Corona de Sombra* is the only play in which Napoleon and the Pope appear. Juárez does not enter into the action directly, but his spirit is immediately perceived, and we are reminded of him by Erasmo, another solemn Zapotec. Bazaine appears as he did in *Carlota de México*. Probably the most marked similarity between these two plays lies in the treatment of the French Marshal. In both he is brusque, insolent, and antagonistic toward the Emperor and Empress. His role in *Corona* is larger, for he deals with Labastida and Mejía as well as with Carlota and Maximilian. Yet, in another sense, his role in *Carlota* is more significant, for he represents all the forces of opposition working against Carlota, since Napoleon, Juárez, and the Pope are absent.

Upon first consideration it might seem paradoxical that Usigli, in his "pieza anti-histórica", has included the most significant historical figures in his play, whereas Jiménez Rueda in his historical tableau, and Lira in his spectacular, have not. This inclusion is explained by the fact that Usigli has attempted to penetrate the meaning of the Second Empire, while the others, in reality, have not. In order to analyze the reign in a profound manner, he has found it necessary to include the
personages who, in part, brought it about and aided in its failure.
Napoleon and Pius IX are directly related to the tragedy of Maximilian
and Carlota. Napoleon and Carlota were both ambitious; in the play, the
scene between them is a battle of wills. Napoleon, having a distinct
advantage, wins. The Pope also played a vital role in the fate of the
rulers. He refused to sign a concordat which Carlota proposed because
he frankly did not trust Maximilian's liberal tendencies and regretted
the fact that Maximilian did not nullify the Reform Laws which were so
unfavorable to the Church.

Usigli has conveyed the relationship between Carlota and Maximil-
ian in a very believable, human light. It is a complex relationship
with many facets which he has captured faithfully. For the first time we
see them as human beings with human flaws, and we clearly sense the
reality of their tragedy. At times their scenes are so convincing that
we have the impression of eavesdropping. One of the most memorable
dialogues between the Emperor and Empress occurs in Act II, scene 2.
They argue about Carlota's proposed journey to Europe. She accuses
Maximilian of having no confidence in her, saying: "Ahora veo que no
confías en mí. Te han dicho que eres débil y que yo te manejó a mi ca-
pricho." He responds: "Nadie sabe lo que hay entre nosotros." Carlota
continues: "Hace mucho que lo sé, Max. Dicen que te dejo en libertad
de amar a otras para que tú me dejes en libertad de gobernar. Soy am-
biciosa y soy estéril, soy tu angel malo" (p. 63). The extremely human
quality which Usigli has succeeded in imparting to his protagonists in
no way detracts from their dignity; furthermore, it serves to accentuate the tragedy of their destiny from a humanistic standpoint.

There are several scenes which have been presented in radically altered form from one play to the next. One such episode is the scene in which Bazaine tells the Emperor and Empress of the withdrawal of the French troops from Mexico. In Carlota de México, Carlota receives the news first, and accompanies the Marshal to tell Maximilian. In Corona de Sombra, on the other hand, it is Maximilian who learns of the evacuation before his wife. Both scenes are similar, however, in that Maximilian uniformly receives the news with aplomb, after the initial shock.

The Vatican scenes in Carlota and Corona are essentially different. Their one similarity is the serving of hot chocolate in both scenes. Even this brief episode is changed from one play to the other. In Carlota, the Empress is served by Antonelli. She refuses to drink the chocolate for fear of being poisoned (See above, p. 46). In Corona de Sombra, however, Carlota joins the Pope in taking this beverage. The chocolate reminds her of Mexico and causes her to react and return to the motive of her visit to the Pope after a momentary digression (See above, pp. 79-80). Lira has emphasized Carlota’s obsession with being poisoned; he carries this theme through the last act. Usigli has used the poison theme in a more symbolic manner: it represents the greed and treachery of Napoleon III. Carlota repeatedly refers to the Emperor of the French as “Veneno” and “Cancer de Europa”.
The insanity of Carlota is treated in all three plays. Mira­mar deals only with the first two years of her madness, while the others extend their portrayals to the very moment of her death. Only in Corona de Sombra do we witness her gradual mental decay. An entire scene is devoted to her psychiatric examination. This realistic scene clearly reveals her mental state. The examining physician is not optimistic about her recovery. He admits to having few hopes of curing her (See above, p. 81). In Miramar we learn of Carlota's illness through Count Bombelles. According to his report, the doctor believes that Carlota will recover in time (See above, p. 22). In Carlota de México we have no medical opinions expressed concerning the possibilities of recovery. In this play, according to Usigli, Carlota goes mad a posteriori. 82 Usigli considers this one of the weaknesses of the work, and I must concur. Carlota's insanity is one of the most important facets of the tragic reign and should not be treated lightly in any significant work on the topic.

Corona de Sombra is the only work in which we witness, at least in part, the scene of Maximilian's death before a firing squad on the Hill of the Bells. It is, of course, one of the most moving scenes in any of the plays. In Miramar we hear the details of the execution related by Tudós and Grill, but the fact that we receive this information second hand detracts from the pathos of the episode. At any rate, the two inter-

82 Usigli, "Teatro en lucha," p. 69.
pretations concur with history for the most part, except in regard to the Emperor's final words. According to Corona de Sombra and to most historical accounts, Maximilian cried "¡Hombre!" In Miramar, however, Tudós reports that he uttered "¡Pobre Carlota!"

Carlota de México and Corona de Sombra end with Carlota's death. These death scenes have been described in their corresponding chapters. Usigli comments that Lira's Carlota dies as "una abuela azucarada". This seems correct, for we do indeed see a rather ineffectual, sweet old woman in the fifth act of Carlota. Usigli's Carlota remains in character throughout the play. The ex-Empress we see at the close of Corona de Sombra is the same Carlota we met at the beginning. Although she now knows and understands more than she formerly did, she is still essentially true to her own character and personality. We do not have this impression about Lira's Carlota; it is difficult to reconcile ourselves to the rather drastic change which she undergoes.

There are other minor comparisons which might be made, and other contrasts which might be pointed out; however, I believe these examples will suffice. As is apparent, I feel that Corona de Sombra is decidedly the best play relating to the reign of Maximilian and Carlota. Several other works have been written by Mexican playwrights since the presentation of Usigli's masterpiece, but none have surpassed it as technically excellent theater and as a penetrating analysis of a strange

83 Ibid.
interlude in Mexico's past. It might be well to mention these other works, however, as a point of reference. They include Segundo Imperio by Agustín Lazo; Adiós, Mamá Carlota by Dagoberto de Cervantes; and Malinche y Carlota, a one-act play by Salvador Novo.

It is to be expected that Rodolfo Usigli would produce the best play concerning the reign of Maximilian and Carlota, for of the three dramatists in question, he is the only full-time, professional theater man. In addition, he possesses a genius for his profession which is un­equalled in his country. Therefore, he has been able to continue a trend begun by Jiménez Rueda in 1932 and continued by Lira in 1943, adding the benefits of his marked theatrical talent, experience and dedication.

Corona de Sombra represents the culmination of the efforts of Usigli and his contemporaries to portray the reign in an effective manner. It is a thoroughly Mexican play; Mexico is the real hero. Corona de Sombra is, in short, a work which should be known by everyone who wishes to gain valuable insight into a significant chapter in Mexican history, a chapter which too many have regarded as unimportant.

It is not surprising that Miramar and Carlota de México are inferior to Corona de Sombra as theatrical pieces. Their authors are men who have divided their interests among many fields. In the case of Jiménez Rueda and Lira, playwriting has been almost an avocation, or at least one of many occupations. The drama is a complex genre which requires wide knowledge of other literary genres in addition to knowledge of its own techniques. The successful dramatist must be versatile, flexible, and devoted to his theater. This explains in part the success of
Usigli and the relative failure of his contemporaries.

I feel, nonetheless, that both Miramar and Carlota de México merit attention, each in its own right. They are valuable sources of information concerning the reign of Maximilian and Carlota. Furthermore, and perhaps even more important, both plays represent the sincere efforts of contemporary Mexican playwrights to portray the hapless rulers sympathetically. Both plays are significant as precursors of Corona de Sombra; it is to be hoped that all three works will inspire future Mexican men of letters to continue the trend of presenting Maximilian and Carlota in their works. The martyrdom of Maximilian and the insanity of Carlota constitute a human tragedy which deserves ever-growing recognition on the part of persons inside and outside of Mexico. Julio Jiménez Rueda, Miguel N. Lira and Rodolfo Usigli have made the first and most significant efforts in this direction in Mexico. It is to be desired that their countrymen will continue to attempt to find new meanings, of universal as well as national importance, in the tragic reign of Maximilian and Carlota.
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