



ROSALIE RAHAL HADDAD, *Bernard Shaw in Brazil. The Reception of Theatrical Productions, 1927-2013.* Bern: Peter Lang, 2016. 276 pp.*

The members of The Irish Theatrical Diaspora Project have taken on an aspect of the cultural history of Irish drama: its reception abroad. John Harrington's *The Irish Play in the New York Stage, 1874-1966*, Patrick Lonergan's *Theatre and Globalization: Irish Drama in the Celtic Tiger Era* and Peter Kuch's work on the reception of Irish plays in Australia and New Zealand have covered reception in the English-speaking world. Reception gets more complicated, however, when one turns to Irish plays that are produced in the non-English speaking world. Shifts in economic and political conditions, not to speak of the challenges of translation, have affected the reception of Irish drama in countries as Barry Keane's *Irish Drama in Poland* demonstrates.

Rosalie Haddad is Brazil's pre-eminent Shavian. In addition to her work on Shaw's drama (*George Bernard Shaw e a Renovação do Teatro Inglês*. 1997), she has published on Shaw's prose (*Bernard Shaw's Novels: His Drama of Ideas in Embryo*. 2004) and on his criticism (*Shaw. O Critico*. 2009). In 2008, she produced *Shaw's The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1935), a satirical allegory about a utopian society created on a fictional island that recently emerged from the Indian Ocean. Directed by Domingos Nunez for the Cia Ludens theatre company, a professional theatre company with a mission to research, translate, and produce the work of Irish dramatists in the context of the complexity of Brazilian society, the play ran from June 6-July 27, 2008 to positive critical response; however, the translation of "Unexpected Isle" as "Land of the Absurd" prompted reviewers to regard the play as anticipating the Theatre of the Absurd, the post war theatre of the '50s and '60s!

Haddad focuses her study on the history of five Shaw plays produced in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo: *Pygmalion*, *My Fair Lady*, *Arms and the Man*, *Candida* and *Mrs. Warren's Profession*. Her caveat "The present study is predicated on the belief the reception of Shaw's plays in Brazil must necessarily be seen within the historical context of the period when each production was staged" informs a study of Shaw in Brazil that is grounded in the context of the economic, political and social condition and on translations and adaptations for the monoglot English speakers.

Pygmalion was Shaw's most produced play (1927, 1928, 1929, 1942, 1956 and 1959) despite the country's lack of drama schools for aspiring actors and a cadre of experienced theatre critics. Shaw's didacticism was also alien to a Carioca audience more comfortable with light French comedies with happy ending. *Pygmalion* appealed more to the increased European immigrant population of Sao Paulo. Miroel Silveira's

adaptation of *Pygmalion* for its 1942 production, an attempt to nationalize the play and to make it a lighter entertainment, was welcomed by audiences but the unidentified drama critic of *Diário de Notícias* panned the adaptation. *Pygmalion* disappeared from the Brazilian stage after 1959, but it appeared as the Brazilian production of *My Fair Lady*, the musical based on *Pygmalion*, and as the popular *Pigmalião 70*, a soap opera created for Globo Television that featured a male Eliza, the poor street trader Nando who is transformed by a wealthy Paulista woman.

Haddad considers *My Fair Lady* a separate Shavian play. Despite the economic instability in the country at the time and the difficulty of translating the *My Fair Lady* text into Português Brasileiro., the first Brazilian production of *Minha Querida Lady* in Rio in 1962 was a commercial and critical success. Shaw linked language and class and used Eliza Doolittle's dropped "h," "the single most powerful pronunciation shibboleth in English," identifies the speaker as uneducated; however, one doesn't encounter those dialect/class markers in Brazil, so slang replace Eliza's working-class accent.

Arms and the Man Shaw's combination of social criticism and comedy about military heroics was produced in Brazil in several incarnations and under several different titles including an operetta called *O Soldado de Chocolate (The Chocolate Soldier)* which was the most commercially successful version of the play. Again, Brazilian theatre misinterpreted Shaw purpose with the play and replaced it with a production that guaranteed a good box office.

Influenced by Ibsen, the love triangle between the heroine, her dull pastor husband and a young poet that is the plot of *Candida* appeared to confuse Brazilian theatre critics. While the play was received with enthusiasm in Rio, São Paulo critics were unimpressed. Again, it was the fundamental alteration of Shaw's *Candida* in the Brazilian adaptation of the play that was criticized. Haddad attributes the critical difference between the reception of the play as a matter of the Paulista critics reading the play before attending the performance.

Zé Henrique de Paula directed the most successful production of *Candida* in 2008. Theatre reviewing was diminished by the military dictatorship; however, the review of Barbara Heliodora, who served as the drama critic of *O Globo* till the age of ninety was the only critic to engage with the details of the production concluded that the production with its music and other contemporary details was unfaithful to Shaw. Once again, Shaw had been adapted for a Brazilian audience interested in entertainment rather than social drama.

In *Mrs. Warren's Profession* Shaw defended a woman's right to prostitute herself as an ultimate solution to earning enough money to live a dignified life, and in doing so, Shaw challenged English censorship. When the play was produced in New York's Garrick Theatre in 1905, the cast was arrested. Published first in Brazil in 1947, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* was ignored until the 1960 Teatro dos Sete production of the play in Rio. Henrique Oscar's review in the *Diário de Notícias* of the production gave special praise to Fernanda Montenegro's portrayal of Vivie Warren. Many *ILS* readers will

recognize Montenegro from her role in the 1998 film “Central Station” for which she was nominated for an Academy Award. (In the tradition of the Shavian “new woman,” Montenegro told the Brazilian senate in 2006, “Culture is above all a social need. It is not a frivolity.”)

In many ways, the military dictatorship that started with military coup in 1964 and lasted until 1985 resulted in dark theatres in the country and the disappearance of serious theatrical criticism. During that period, the telenovela replaced the theatre as the major entertainment outlet for Brazilian audiences and yet, as Haddad demonstrates in her excellent analysis of Shaw in Brazil, there have been some successful productions in Rio and São Paulo for audiences who, despite their cultural differences, are drawn to Shavian drama.

Maureen Murphy

Note

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