

REVIEWS

Lucía Díaz Marroquín, *La retórica de los afectos* (Estudios de Literatura 110, De Musica 13), Kassel: Reichenberger, 2008. 298 pp. ISBN 978-3-937734-59-0

The relationship between *emotion* and *reason* has fluctuated consistently within the Western-European territories, traditions and cultural identities. The same tension applies to the one existing between the realms of *pathos* and *ethos*. Ever since the Platonic dualism soul/body was inherited and assimilated by the early-modern humanists, their dilemma used to consist in finding the conceptual and physical *loci* where the phenomenon of *emotion* takes place. One of this search's objectives is achieving the perfect synchronization of the human spirit with the biological, visceral and even animal spheres configuring the masculine and the feminine natures. This provokes rhetorical and poetic consequences which, in the course of history, have often received severe moral condemnation.

In the 21st century, emotions are generally perceived and evoked according to psychoanalytic and post-structuralist viewpoints, deriving from Romantic perspectives which are still in force. This may lead us to forget

the sophisticated code inherited from the Platonic, Aristotelian, Galenic, and even the pseudo-Hermetic traditions which used to frame the expression of emotion before the Romanticism.

Díaz Marroquín's *La retórica de los afectos* offers the keys necessary to understand the performance of emotion –*affects, passions*– within the context of the Renaissance and Baroque Europe, the *unmediated* cultural heir of the Greek and Latin Antiquity. In her own words: “Este trabajo pretende describir la noción humanista de la *teoría de los afectos* de ascendencia aristotélica y, remotamente, también hermética, desde el punto de vista de la retórica textual, de la tratadística musical y de las convenciones gestuales.” (p.10).

The starting point is, therefore, the *actio*. Díaz Marroquín's book is a detailed, systematic and interdisciplinary study on the rhetorical *delivery*, aiming particularly at the description of the means used by actors and proto-operatic singers performing early-modern dramas. One of its strengths, in fact, consists in analyzing the vocal technique and the emotional resources a performer could employ at times prior to the generalization of the first treatises on dramatic and vocal practice.

The study's approach is critical, polyhedral and eminently practical. The concepts of *voice* and *gesture* are described as the means of transmission for the emotional *word*, which has to do with the author's many-sided profile as an academic (philologist and musicologist) and performer (mezzosoprano). Only someone who has experienced and practiced the operatic vocal emission could identify and analyze in such depth the reflections on the voice's hygiene proposed by Quintilian in his *Institutiones oratoriae* (p. 65). This multidisciplinary approach has obviously persuaded the editor, Reichenberger, to include *La retórica de los afectos* both in its *Estudios de Literatura* collection and in its *De Musica* series.

The book is structured in two sections: The first one analyzes several rhetorical and poetic sources, while the second one is mainly concerned with practice. Both of them are closely interwoven, given the author's consistent aim to link the theoretical sphere with the performing arts. The works studied belong to diverse cultural, linguistic and chronological European environments: Greek, Latin, Italian, Spanish, German, Dutch, French and English. Names such as Cicero, Quintilian, A. Quintilian, G. Zarlino, C. Monteverdi, G.M. Artusi, A. Kircher, J.J. Quantz share its pages with those of L.A. Carvalho, A. López “Pinciano”, J. Caramuel, P. Cerone, and P. Nasserre, particularly relevant to the Hispanic tradition. The result is a dense texture composed of innumerable threads, while the written discourse responds to the premises of a musical *fugue*, achieving completion and full significance at the very last accord. It is therefore a demanding text, some readers may find. However, for the sake of clarity, the author proposes tables and diagrams explaining those aspects which could bear some complexity, such as Quintilian's distinction between *ethos* and *pathos*, or C. Lebrun's typology of the human passions according to the degree of *openness* or *closeness* they imprint on the associated facial gesture (*Expression des passions de l'âme*, 1727).

This analysis of primary sources supports itself on further critical references such as Frances Yates' research on mnemonics, Marc Fumaroli's studies on early-modern rhetoric, Lorenzo Bianconi's numerous publications on the Italian opera and dramaturgy, Martha Feldman's studies on the Venetian madrigal, Andrea Battistini's ones on the Jesuit encyclopedic knowledge, Luis Robledo Estaire's research on sacred rhetoric, and the eloquent articles and monographies published by Evangelina Rodríguez Cuadros on the actor's technique in the Spanish baroque theatre, among many others.

The first chapter concentrates on the rhetorical and poetic *word*, describing the polemics on the evolution of the vernacular languages and their associated musical schools which took place in the course of the European Renaissance, especially the Italian *Questione della lingua*. It is the first step for an analysis of the different theories and intellectual trends which configure the dense, multi-directional and at times complex map of relationships engaging authors, performers and schools in early-modern Europe. Díaz Marroquín proposes notes and quotations aiming to the distinction of the controversial concepts of *affect* and *passion*. She also describes in depth the theory of the *attributa personis* as the Ciceronian *De inventione* explains it: A crucial set of criteria useful to depict and perform characters and *personae* within the rhetorical and the dramatic contexts (pp. 53-55). Other key systematizations, as the Hermogenean *types of style* and the different *decorum* schemes, appear in chapter 7.

The book's second section, "*Gestus-affectus. Del stile rappresentativo al vídeoarte*," introduces tools and paradigms allowing an *affective* analysis of some late-modern and postmodern poetic repertoires, especially those encompassing dramatic text and music. Díaz Marroquín's perspective seems broadly transgeneric, although she points out to the field of musical drama as the most fertile one regarding the performance of *passion*. The turning point would be the development of the *stile rappresentativo* and the accompanied vocal monody, by the end of the 16th century. This section's main goal consists in describing the strategies used in the early-modern period in order to awake the audience's empathy. Díaz Marroquín's point is, once more, practical, as her reflection deals with the actual performance of these repertoires in our days. She explores aspects as suggestive as those of the *national decorum* (*decoro de la nación*) and the cathartic power achieving *momentum* in the early-modern social *margins* –women, *graciosos*, foreigners. As for the mechanics of the rhetorical delivery, she mentions the conventional hand gestures and languages, reproducing plates from J. Bulwer's treatises *Chirologia: or the Natural Language of the hand* and *Chironomia: or the Art of Manual Rhetoric* (1644) (pp. 256–257). Finally, she pays attention to relevant treatises on vocal technique, among them Pier Francesco Tosi's *Opinioni de' cantori antichi e moderni* (1723) and, even more significantly, Manuel Patricio García's *Traité complet de l'art du chant* (1847), which Díaz Marroquín has studied and edited since the publication of *La retórica de los afectos* (Reichenberger 2012; CSIC 2012).

Díaz Marroquín's most original contribution appears in the study's final chapters: Is it possible to *move* the current public's *affects* and *passions*, living in a society so far apart from the early-modern one, both conceptually and psychologically? As an answer, she chooses late 20th century artists who, using different means, achieve similar goals as those attained by the classical masters of rhetoric, by the authors of the baroque plays and by the early composers and librettists of the proto-operatic dramas. Some of these are the videoartists B. Viola and Nam June Paik, the stage director P. Sellars and the group *La Fura dels Baus*.

The study's last section operates as a foreword for the present economic crisis. In view of the economic difficulties many theatres –including opera theatres– are currently encountering, Díaz Marroquín wonders whether the practice of performing repertoires created centuries ago may still achieve coherence on the 21st century stage. She concludes that the key lies in the controversial field of *memory*. This concept may be understood in the classical sense, as one of the canons of rhetoric, but also in the mnemonic, in the historical one and, over all, as the *affective memory* described in treatises on dramatic technique such as García's or, later on, Stanislavski's. As she affirms, “[La] memoria estetiza la experiencia personal y, superadas las fases de dolor en el acceso a determinadas zonas, se la ofrece, fertilizada, a la interpretación dramática” (p. 297). Human beings, no matter whether we live within the limits characterizing the pre-Romantic subjectivity or beyond them, seem to experience similar patterns of thought and emotion, although our circumstances may be different according to the diverse power schemes we live in. Analyzing the pre-Romantic emotion, therefore, implies identifying these circumstances and translating them to codes intelligible to the 21st century reader and performer. Díaz Marroquín's *La retórica de los afectos* operates as this kind of translation: A lucid, lively and critical travel across the at times tortuous, but always fascinating territories of *reason* and *emotion*.

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