



Iglesias-Simón, Pablo. *De las tablas al celuloide. Trasvases discursivos del teatro al cine*. Madrid: Fundamentos. 2007. 350 pp.

*De las tablas al celuloide* is the latest work by Spanish playwright and drama historian Pablo Iglesias-Simón. Iglesias-Simón is one of the youngest figures in Spanish drama production and historical research. Having written and premiered over the last four years works such as *Alicia ante el espejo* (2004), Iglesias-Simón is currently working as a professor of artistic direction in the Real Escuela Superior de Arte Dramático in Madrid.

*De las tablas al celuloide* is the first publication from Iglesias-Simón's doctoral dissertation *Trasvases discursivos del teatro de finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX al Cine Primitivo y al Cine Clásico de Hollywood*, recognized in 2005 with the Honors and Distinction Award of Universidad Complutense in Madrid, Spain.

As its title suggests, *De las tablas al celuloide* investigates the cinematic influence of drama discourse in the early years of film history. The main thesis of this book is that the stage apparatus and the narrative pattern of some of the plays from the 19<sup>th</sup> century inspired the development of cinema of that time. This work by Pablo Iglesias-Simón is of great importance both to film historians and drama historians. The author has been able to combine successfully his double background as a historian and a drama producer in order to approach such a broad topic as intermediality in theatre and cinema.

In order to establish a proper frame of reference, Iglesias-Simón establishes an in depth analysis of the theatre discourse of two different historical periods: the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Golden Era of the Broadway Theater in the 30s. The author goes on to determine some of the main features of drama that influenced the development of the film industry over its early years. Leopold Lewis' *The Bells* (1871) serves as a starting point to show the reader how different features of theatre –the view of the spectator, the large sets, illumination, etc.- were examined and exploited by film pioneers such as George Méliès in making a specific cinematographic apparatus. By displaying minute charts and drawings from the time, Iglesias-Simón demonstrates the close relation between the scenographic directions of theater and film. This may be Iglesias-Simón's major contribution to the understanding of film, insofar as his work helps comprehend the transition of the conception of film from a technical curiosity to an art form.

The second part of the book explores different stage features of Broadway Theater and its influence in the early days of the Hollywood Film industry in the early 30s. Despite lacking the minuteness of the first part of the book, Iglesias-Simón manages to present clearly the influences of drama plays on the Hollywood films of the time, such as the predilection for realism and the regular presence of a solid lead character in order to elicit the empathy of the viewer.

Despite proving successfully the main thesis of his book, that is, the close ties between both arts forms, *De las tablas al celuloide*

nevertheless presents certain shortcomings. The over-explanation of the individual development of scenographic features of both genres limits severely the interdisciplinary analysis that the title of the book suggests, accounting to only the final conclusions in the last chapter. This limitation gives the book a more of an introductory rather than interdisciplinary approach.

Owing to its topic and analysis, *De las tablas al celuloide* is mainly aimed at a scholarly reader. Yet, due to its plain vocabulary and explanatory narration, this book remains by all means accessible to readers not familiar with film and theater history, offering the reader stimulating understanding.

In conclusion, by writing *De las tablas al celuloide*, Iglesias-Simón has constituted a remarkable work that will help to develop alternative ways of interdisciplinary film research.

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