

Thematic Development in Chilean Theatre Since 1973.

In Search of the Dramatic Conflict

by

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CHAPTER FIVE:	EXILE AND RETURN.	228
1.	The 1970s and Exile: Cultural and Political.	228
2.	<u>José</u> : A Drama of Return and Intrusion.	233
3.	<u>¿Cuántos años tiene un día?</u> : Cultural Inner Exile.	243
4.	<u>Primavera con una esquina rota</u> : The Arms of Dictatorship.	250
5.	<u>Regreso sin causa</u> : The Black, the White and the Grey.	260
6.	Two Silent Parts or a Mutual Deafness?	271
	Notes.	280
CHAPTER SIX:	RUPTURE AND CONTINUITY. MEMORY AND FORGETTING.	282
1.	The Question of Space.	282
2.	Memory and Forgetting.	284
3.	<u>La balsa de la Medusa</u> : Out of the Impasse?	294
4.	Conclusions. Rupture, Continuity and Change.	308
	Notes.	326
GLOSSARY		328
BIBLIOGRAPHY		333
1.	Plays Consulted.	333
2.	Chilean Theatre.	335
3.	Latin American Literature and Theatre.	340
4.	Background.	341

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents.

ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a study of the development of the theme in Chilean theatre under authoritarian rule following the military coup of 1973. In the first chapter, in order to set the period within a historical perspective, I study the development of theatre since the founding of the first University theatre in 1941, a year that is regarded as the beginning of modern Chilean theatre. It is shown how the themes treated are expressions of the dominant preoccupations of each period, dealt with through social realism, psychological drama, folkloric theatre and the absurd. It is illustrated how, by the sixties, theatre was regarded in politically committed circles as an important medium for comment on society and committed theatre came to the fore and how this is a major factor in its development since the coup.

Once theatre has been defined as having a social role, it is inevitable that it will be affected by social and political changes in society. So, with the military coup and the repression of freedom of expression, theatre, like the other arts and media of communication, suffered a period of silence, which became known as the "cultural blackout", in the initial period after the coup. But by 1976 theatre began to prove its resilience when new works appeared, dealing primarily with the most salient social problems of the period, the social cost of the regime's economic policies on the lowest sectors of the community.

In the main chapters of this thesis I study the themes that have been treated on stage, those of unemployment, marginality, the manipulation of power, marginalisation and of exile and return. These chapters examine how theatre has become an important medium of expression in the otherwise repressive environment. This is as a result of theatre's relative freedom from repression: censorship is primarily economic in nature, and few plays have been expressly banned, although there are sporadic attempts to prohibit plays that are deemed to be politically dangerous.

In this space for freedom of expression theatre has examined the reality that lies behind the healthy and prosperous image of the regime's propaganda. Along with the themes of contemporary relevance, there has been a constant study of the state of the individual in dictatorship. Theatre presents an overwhelming impression of a society in a state of impasse, with a mass of people who feel socially, economically or culturally marginalised. This thesis concludes that theatre in Chile since 1973 has been an important means of expression and that the dramatic space has been used both to voice dissent and to explore the inner self of the individual in what is commonly portrayed as a prolonged period of impasse in Chilean society.

INTRODUCTION

The shape and content of this thesis are suggested by the nature of the development of contemporary Chilean theatre. With the radicalisation of Chilean society in the sixties and the polarisation that accompanied the election and term in office of the Popular Unity government, the performing arts were deemed by many artists and intellectuals to hold a unique position and unique possibilities for the building of social awareness and the relaying of a political message. The years 1970-1973 were characterised by the amount of debate about the social role of the arts, and in theatre there were concentrated efforts to stimulate cultural expression in the working class and shanty town areas of the capital and among the peasantry. After the military coup of 1973 in which the Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende, which had embarked on the "pacific road to socialism", was overthrown and the regime of General Augusto Pinochet was installed, activity in the theatre was seriously curtailed.¹ Apart from the almost total disappearance of popular and amateur theatre, there were blacklists of actors and actresses prohibited from appearing on television, many actors and directors went into exile, often after periods of repression and/or imprisonment, and censorship meant a period of silence. This must be seen within the context of the regime's programme of "cleansing" society, of curing it from the Marxist illness it had suffered under the Popular Unity regime. Any form of expression that evoked the ideology of Popular Unity was wiped out.²

In 1976, however, the presentation of new Chilean plays with overt reference to contemporary problems such as unemployment opened an extremely productive period in Chilean theatre. In the reduced

space for communication and the transmission of information, theatre began to assume a special role, that of a space for commentary on the state of the country. This is both a continuation of and a break from the role that had been assumed until then. It is a continuation in so far as Chilean theatre has always been characterised by a tendency to give priority to themes relevant to the times; it is a break in that, as a result of its peculiar capacity for coded language, and its ability to reach an audience in an environment in which acts of community, meetings and gatherings are prohibited, it has taken on a role of filling gaps in the painting of an overall picture of the country, a role that would otherwise have been performed by the media. In some cases it has been the first medium to comment openly on the issues of the day. One of the major reasons for this leniency in the regime's approach towards censorship in the theatre may be that the theatre audience is notoriously small, about 1% of the Santiago population, so that the damage that can be done by a dissident voice in the theatre is seen to be minimal. Another reason is that the regime must be able to point to some form of freedom of expression. Yet the answer to why theatre should be treated with relative indulgence is more complex and lies in the nature of its development since the middle of this century and in its role as a form of artistic expression of the urban middle class, which is politically a vitally important sector of the community.³

This thesis will examine the nature of the themes that have found their way to the stage as an expression of the "inquietudes colectivas"⁴ of this sector of the community, and it will study their relation to the major social, economic and political issues and their development in the dictatorship. I will deal only with plays that have been written and had their first performance in Chile after

1973. I have not made reference to the lively commercial theatres that perform foreign works or lighthearted comedies, or to the café-concerts. Nor have I referred to works written outside the country, even when, like the latest plays by Jorge Díaz, they have been performed in Santiago, since the aim of the thesis is to study the themes of new works written in the circumstances of authoritarian rule. Because of the wide use of slang and lumpen Chilean, a glossary has been added. This covers only those chileanisms and slang expressions that appear in the passages quoted throughout the thesis.

In Chapter One I will trace the development of theatre since 1941, when the Teatro Experimental de la Universidad de Chile was founded, with special reference to the themes dealt with and with special emphasis on the period since 1968 when, with the radicalisation of society, many professionals embarked on the task of making theatre more accessible to large sectors of the community. The dramatic conflict most in vogue in the sixties became clearly set within the context of the fight against economic and cultural dependency, against imperialism, against the capitalist construction of society. There was little new drama, the most significant development of these years being in terms of form and the use of creación colectiva, inspired in Living Theatre. By 1973, although there was a large popular movement, professional theatre was lagging behind and suffering from a general problem of disorientation: What was the professional's role in the "new" approach to theatre? What was the role of the now berated author and director? Was art for art's sake valid? In short, middle class Chilean theatre came unstuck. While attempting in form and content to reflect the "revolutionary process", it only echoed it at the level of mirroring the disarray in society and the dislodging of the bourgeois

dramatist.

This period of disorientation continued after the coup, though of course for different reasons. There was still little original drama as companies fell back on the classics of international theatre, relying on their universal and allegorical nature to comment on injustice, the abuse of power, the fight between good and evil. It was not until the regime was showing signs of permanency and the nature of its project for Chilean society was becoming clear that new plays began to appear. Again they were the expression of intellectual unease about the nature of society, and the means of expressing this was through the study on stage of those who had suffered most as a result of the new order, in which model behaviour would be in tune with a passive, conformist élite, pandered to through images of renewed national unity and the material benefits of modernisation and progress.

In Chapter Two I will look at how theatre tackled the most serious problem of the period, that of the social cost of the regime's economic policies in terms of huge rises in unemployment and levels of deprivation in the lower sectors. Pedro, Juan y Diego (1976), by David Benavente and Ictus (Chile's longest running theatre group), is set on a government minimal employment scheme and was the first in a run of plays dealing with the problem of work and unemployment. In terms of the line of theatre Ictus has developed over the years, Pedro, Juan y Diego, is a break, not least because the characters portrayed on stage are far removed from the middle classes who usually populate Ictus productions. But also because of the nature of the treatment of the subject, which is sociological reporting rather than psychological interpretation. This new approach related to the group's desire to adapt to "los nuevos datos

que entrega la profundamente transformada realidad económica, cultural y política del país, para poder así satisfacer su objetivo global de hacer un teatro nacional e históricamente contingente".⁵

The following year Los payasos de la esperanza, a play about three unemployed clowns and their attempt to find support in Church solidarity organisations, was presented by the Taller de Investigación Teatral. This group was created by teachers and students from the Catholic University disillusioned by the silence of Chilean dramatists and the perceived social emptiness of a University theatre that was being administered primarily as a business enterprise. They sought to fill the void of social comment and to provide a "teatro didáctico de servicio".⁶ Not surprisingly, we can see in their project echoes of the workshops that had proliferated in the late sixties, for the director had been involved in the Taller de Experimentación Teatral and later in the Teatro del Errante, which studied new forms of theatrical expression. Los payasos de la esperanza was followed in 1979 by Tres Marías y una Rosa, written in conjunction with David Benavaente. This play, whose protagonists are arpilleristas (women from shanty towns who are the artists of arpilleras, testimonial tapestries), introduces another aspect of unemployment, namely the displacement of roles within the family. In the second chapter I will study these three plays and refer to others that deal with similar themes, namely, Cuántos años tiene un día (1978) by Ictus and El último tren (1978) by Gustavo Meza and Imagen.

The third chapter will deal with plays written between 1978 and 1983, and whose theme is power. The plays are set against a dominant ideology professing the "curing" of the nation through the fight against contaminating influences, that is anything that falls within the broadly interpreted category of Communism. La Feria, with Una

pena y un cariño (1978), a play whose form takes that of a rehearsal for a touristic spectacular of picture postcard Chile, explored the nature of the dominant cultural ideology as represented in the musicals, the café-concerts, and the idyllic tourist version of a country in total harmony. By creating parallels between this image and the lives of the actors, primarily unemployed people in dire economic straits, La Feria sought to unveil the reality behind the propagandistic image. Baño a baño (1978), by far the crudest attack on the junta, also aimed to explode myths of purity and decontamination, as represented in Government rhetoric. And Marco Antonio de la Parra has provided the most effective images of a world stagnating and decomposing as it clings on to a mystified past in Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido (1978). With No + (1983), the Taller de Investigación Teatral turned to one of the archetypal domains of power and domination, the classroom. The play is a mime that evokes the perpetual renewal of cycles of subversion and domination. This chapter will explore the interpretation of power as patterns of stagnation and renewal, of appearances and reality.

Up until now the works studied are productions by the same relatively small number of groups, Ictus, Imagen, Taller de Investigación Teatral, La Feria, with an emphasis on collective creation and few new dramatists. In Chapter Four I will concentrate on the work of the most prolific new dramatist in recent years in Chile, Juan Radrigán, whose background and themes of his works have led him to be called "el dramaturgo de los marginados".⁷ Radrigán came to the theatre, he has said, as a way of communicating in contemporary Chile: "A partir de 1973 se agudizó la injusticia. Había que decir las cosas y no había manera de comunicarse. El teatro surgió de este silencio."⁸ He began working in shanty town

theatre, gradually forming a group, El Telón, that performs in the popular districts of Santiago as well as in the traditional city centre venues. His work was first introduced to the Santiago public in 1979 when Los Comediantes put on his Testimonios de las muertes de Sabina, which is based on a true story. It is a drama of the lack of access to the means of information, of the consequent injustice and of a perpetual gnawing fear of punishment for crimes of which the protagonists are unaware. In this chapter I will look at Radrigán's plays as studies in marginality and as chronicles of the remoteness of power as experienced by the lowest sectors in contemporary Chile.

By the late seventies space for some limited expression was opening up. The Catholic University's theatre journal, Apuntes, reappeared; there was re-emergence of amateur theatre and of other modes of expression such as canto nuevo, supported, like other forms of alternative communication, by the magazine La Bicicleta; and many formerly blacklisted actors and actresses were again allowed to appear on television. With the approval of the new constitution, and the plebiscite that put Pinochet in power in a "democracia protegida" until 1989,⁹ there has been some opening of the space for a permitted alternative cultural expression, although recourse to states of emergency or siege can halt it at any time. And with the publication in 1982 of lists of exiles permitted to return, the issue of exile and return has gained prominence in the public eye. From an essentially individual or family problem it has come to be of national importance, partly because of the possible political repercussions of the reintegration of returned exiles into national life. It is with the return from exile that we find the other source of new drama, which will be dealt with in Chapter Five.

Ictus were again among the first to tackle the subject on stage

when they adapted the novel Primavera con una esquina rota (1984) by the Uruguayan Mario Benedetti. It is a lyrical treatment of the theme, enhanced by the fact that it is a vision of exile largely shown through the eyes of a young victim, and exile is perceived as essentially a human, not merely a political problem. Older groups, contemporaries of Ictus, returned from exile to mixed receptions. Alejandro Sieveking and the Teatro del Angel came back to Santiago in 1984 raising great expectations in the theatre-going public and among critics. Their first stage work, La Comadre Lola (1985), a costumbrist curiosity with seemingly little relevance in Chile in the eighties, was a great popular success but did not appeal to the critics at all and cannot be said to add anything to Chilean drama. Agustín Letelier tried to interpret the choice of play, and summed up the disillusion of many people: "Quizás Alejandro Sieveking no pretendió hacer una gran obra con La Comadre Lola. Quizás gradúa su ingreso a nuestro teatro con una llegada graciosa y sin complicaciones que le permita armar un espectáculo atrayente para un público que sólo se quiera divertir. Si ese es su propósito, es muy probable que lo cumpla, pero para quienes admiramos la calidad artística de Sieveking, esta obra es una desilusión. Diría, también, es una falta de respeto, y espero que no sea una claudicación."¹⁰

No such preoccupations hindered La Compañía de los Cuatro when they returned in 1984 with the most overtly political play about exile and return to date, Regreso sin causa by the young playwright Jaime Miranda, who also lived for ten years in exile.¹¹ This has been a huge success with critics and public but, towards the end of 1985, ran into problems that have raised questions about the new freedom of expression. The play was given the Premio Municipal de Literatura in the theatre section in May 1985, but in June the competition was

declared "desierto" and the prize null and void, because the work was "altamente inconveniente".¹² The logic of the censorship was transparent: like many plays, it is highly political, but its main problem was a huge audience drawn by the subject of the play, and also by the popularity of its two actors one of whom, Julio Jung, was a star of the most popular soap opera, Matrimonio de papel.

One of the most promising dramatists and directors, Ramón Griffero, who spent his formative years in exile, returned to Chile in 1983 when he presented the work Historias de un galpón abandonado. Since then he too has dealt with the theme of exile in Cinema Utoppia (1985). His group, Teatro Fin de Siglo, work on the margins of the established theatre world. Their audience is predominantly composed of young people and students in search of a theatre that will express the anxieties and preoccupations of a generation that has grown up under dictatorship. Thus, while Cinema Utoppia deals on one level with exile, on another it deals with problems such as drug addiction, homosexuality, alienation in the present and, as the name of the group suggests, nostalgia for a distant past.

It is the constantly changing perspective of the old and the new, of the sense of rupture and continuity that will form the basis of Chapter Six, in which I will sum up the development of Chilean theatre since 1973. In this chapter I will look at themes and patterns that underlie, to a greater or lesser extent, all the drama of the period. Theatre has made the inner self a constant sub-theme during this period. This inner self is often expressed in terms of memory and forgetting, dealt with to best effect in sketches like Marco Antonio de la Parra's Toda una vida (1979), in which an inmate of an asylum lives lost in the memory of the fall of the dictator Ibáñez, a memory that finally transforms the attitude of the young

nurse who looks after him, immersed as she is in the consumer world. Here the world inhabited by the old protagonist in his imagination is alive, but his place in the outside world has been rendered redundant, his is a truncated history. The opposite is shown in La balsa de la Medusa (1984) by Egon Wolff, in which the bourgeoisie is the subject of the study. Trapped in a luxurious mansion, a group of guests abandoned by their host find themselves face to face with their deepest guilts and fears. A world of moral stagnation is revealed, and the all important will and ability of the bourgeoisie to survive is left in doubt. In a final section, I will sum up by relating the themes studied throughout the thesis to aspects of rupture, continuity and change in society, and I will address the question of freedom of expression in the theatre since 1973.

The quest for "Chilean^rness" has been paramount since the forties. In the fifties the dramatists of the University generation came into their own, plays were set in a bourgeois mould, often relying on a fundamental melodramatic conflict and resolution, set within the boundaries of the family and the individual in society. Conflict arose from the intrinsic fears and inhibitions of these classes, based in the perceived precarious nature of their position, and this drama found a constant theme in doubts about the middle classes, their position in society, their moral codes, the human values they held most dear. It was a class portrayed as at once secure and fearful. Dramatic communities were attacked and intruded upon by a changing society, by the dissolution of moral codes, by pressures from above and, finally, by the threat of intrusion by the lower classes.

As society in the sixties became more polarised the dramatic conflict became clearly set within the context of the fight against

economic and cultural dependency, against the evils of imperialism and capitalism. By the time of Popular Unity revolution was a key issue in the arts as well as in politics, and in the theatre there was a sense of an imposed revolutionary form, especially in the organisation of amateur theatre, based on what Brunner has called the existence in Chile of the myth of "una cultura popular y obrera alternativa pero latente, identificada con la concepción marxista cuya garantía de validez se hallaría depositada en los partidos que se proclamaban portadores de la conciencia revolucionaria de masas".¹³

The theme of marginality has been a constant in theatre since the sixties. On one level it takes the form of social realism, set in the sixties within the context of the possibility of social reform through political consciousness raising and organisation. It delivered a political message and a warning aimed at directing the collected audience towards notions of left wing change, ultimately towards the promise of a "new" future with Popular Unity.

When new plays began to be performed after the coup, the marginal sectors were once more to the fore, again as an expression of real social problems, but also as an expression of intellectual unease at the way society was developing. But why should middle class dramatists and groups turn to the study of marginal sectors, social, economic, cultural? It would seem that it is a result of the constant fear that all is not what it seems and the study of marginality is, perhaps, one way of learning how things are. The portrayal of the marginal sectors is a way of revealing the ugly underside of a society that has been cleaned up, that is a parcel that has been decontaminated by the regime and handed back to the public for their consumption. And the public in receipt of such a parcel is also the

audience in the theatre.

The presentation of so many lumpen characters is an expression of the theatre community's search for a way out of a period of impasse. The plays present an overall image of a society that is paralysed, where the conflict of the sixties has been eradicated. The characters do little, there is little conflict, development or resolution; things happen far away, they are suggested, they are rarely made explicit, but they define the lives of the characters on stage who live awaiting the moment of resolution of a prolonged period of impasse. Especially in the first period the characters echoed the general disorientation of theatre as to its place in society: "... los protagonistas no sabían qué hacer o qué decir, no tenían interlocutor válido, giraban, añoraban, recordaban...".¹⁴ Chilean theatre since the coup has essentially been a theatre in search of the dramatic conflict.

NOTES

1. There is a huge bibliography on the Popular Unity years and the military, but for the coup, see Julio Faúndez, "The Defeat of Politics: Chile under Allende", Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe, 28 (1980), 59-76; A. Valenzuela, The Breakdown of Democratic Regimes. Chile (John Hopkins University Press, London, 1978); and for a more recent study with a historical perspective, see Harold Blakemore, "Back to the Barracks: the Chilean case", Third World Quarterly, 7, 1 (1985), 45-62.
2. See Soledad Bianchi, "El movimiento artístico en el conflicto político actual", Casa de las Américas, 130 (1982), 146-54. For information about other forms of expression such as new song, see Fernando Barraza, "'Canto nuevo': vieja obsesión por decir verdades", Mensaje, 317 (1983), 125-37; Catherine M. Boyle, "Chilean Song since 1973: An Overview", in Chile After 1973: Elements for the Analysis of Military Rule (Liverpool: Centre for Latin American Studies Monograph series No. 12), 43-64; Bernardo Subcaseaux, "El 'canto nuevo' (1973-1980)", Araucaria de Chile, 12 (1980), 201-06. And for a good introduction to the way the different stages of the regime have affected the theatre, see María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius, "Transformaciones del teatro chileno de la década de 70", in Teatro chileno de la crisis institucional 1973-1983 (Antología crítica), eds. María de la Luz Hurtado, Carlos Ochsenius and Hernán Vidal (Santiago: CENECA and University of Minnesota Latin American Series, 1982), 1-53.
3. See A. Borón, "Desarrollo económico y comportamiento político", Revista Latinoamericana de Ciencia Política, 1, 2 (1970), and Catherine M. Boyle and David E. Hojman, "Economic Policies and Political Strategies: Middle Sectors in Contemporary Chile", Boletín de Estudios Latinoamericanos y del Caribe, 38 (1985), 25-27.
4. Teodosio Fernández, El teatro chileno contemporáneo 1941-1973 (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1982), p.182.
5. Maneras de hacer y pensar el teatro en Chile: Teatro Ictus, María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius (Santiago: CENECA, 1984), p.75.
6. Maneras de hacer y pensar el teatro en el Chile actual: Taller de Investigación Teatral, María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius (Santiago: CENECA, 1979), p.11.
7. See Pedro Bravo Elizondo, "El dramaturgo de los marginados: entrevista con Juan Radrigán", Latin American Theatre Review, 17, 1 (1983), 61-63.
8. Interview with Juan Radrigán, "El teatro que surgió del silencio", Pluma y Pincel, 12 (1984), p.35.
9. See "Plebiscite Success Strengthens Pinochet's Personal Position", Latin American Weekly Report, 19 Sept. 1980, p.6.

10. Agustín Letelier, "La Comadre Lola", El Mercurio, 15 April 1985, Cuerpo C, p.9.
11. See Pedro Bravo Elizondo, "Regreso sin causa: Jaime Miranda y sus razones", Latin American Theatre Review, 19, 2 (1986), 79-84.
12. "Fue presentada querrela contra Alcalde Bombal", El Mercurio, 9 July 1985.
13. See José Joaquín Brunner, "Cultura e identidad nacional: Chile 1973-1983", Documento de trabajo, 177, FLACSO (Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales), May 1983, p. 11.
14. Juan Andrés Piña in Seminario: situación y alternativas del teatro nacional en la década del '80 (Santiago: CENECA, 1983), p.40.

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

1. Before 1941

It has long been undisputed that 1941, when the Teatro Experimental de la Universidad de Chile was founded by a group of students from the Instituto Pedagógico in Santiago, is the key year in the history of modern Chilean theatre.¹ Jorge Sánchez V. recalls: "La puesta en escena de La Guarda Cuidadosa, entremés de Cervantes, y Ligazón, esperpento de Valle Inclán, significaba la definitiva superación de una etapa y, a la vez, el inicio de una nueva era del teatro nacional ... Inserto en un especial momento histórico, político, social y cultural, el Teatro Experimental surgió en medio de una serie de circunstancias nacionales y extranjeras que de una manera u otra posibilitaron su nacimiento."² There are a number of factors, social, political and cultural that led to the formation of the Teatro Experimental, and the subsequent importance of the University theatres as the "fuerzas propulsoras" in contemporary Chilean theatre.³

The most important social factor was the growing strength of the middle classes. Since the turn of the century the power of the old land-owning aristocracy had been in decline, and the growth of new sectors, notably in the mining centres, industry and commerce, had been in evidence. Ricardo A. Latcham recalled in 1930 the distance of the aristocracy from the reality of Chilean life, accusing them of a "momificación espiritual" that contrasted sharply with the attitudes of the emergent middle classes: "Mientras tanto, aparece en Chile una

clase media estudiosa, compuesta de profesores universitarios y secundarios, de escritores, periodistas y abogados, que poco o nada influye en los rumbos de la patria. Esta clase media fluye y vive un poco al margen de la política; pero a su lado surgen legiones más audaces, del mismo estrato social, que avanzan resueltas a la conquista del poder."⁴

By the 1920s the new generation of artists was not, as before, composed predominantly of members of the aristocracy, but of people of middle class extraction who were, by profession, teachers, journalists, civil servants.⁵ Power was "conquered" by these sectors in 1920 when Arturo Alessandri won the Presidential election at the head of the Liberal Alliance, a coalition formed by the Radical and Democratic Parties and some sectors of the Liberal Party. From then the middle sectors grew in political strength until 1938 and the election of Pedro Cerda Aguirre and the Popular Front, when "el aparato estatal pasó casi absolutamente a manos de dicho sector, organizado o vinculado especialmente al Partido Radical y al socialismo, que en sucesivas alianzas mantuvo el poder hasta los años 50. De ese modo, durante la década del 40 la hegemonía política de la clase media fue indiscutible."⁶

How important was this in terms of theatre? Hugo Montes and Julio Orlando provide the clue: "El género dramático, alma del complejísimo arte escénico, surge en ambientes culturales evolucionados. Acelerar en forma artificiosa su desenvolvimiento, perjudica la autenticidad indispensable de correspondencia entre el arte y su medio."⁷ Theatre is a complex art form whose existence depends on three factors: the playwright, the actor and the audience. The concentration of power in the middle sectors was accompanied, even pre-empted, by a search for a means of expression that went

beyond superficial and picturesque costumbrism. Opera and the facile hispanified dramas or foreign fare of the touring companies had satisfied the élitist, europeanised outlook of the old oligarchy, the hackneyed themes had epitomised their "mummification" and distance from Chilean reality, but now the demand was for a different kind of art, an art that was in tune with the Chile of the twentieth century, reflecting the reality and preoccupations of a new audience, urban, educated, middle class.

The environment in the late 1930s and 1940s was one of great cultural dynamism. Essayists such as Benjamín Subercaseaux turned their attention to the national character of the Chilean; Gabriela Mistral's work was gaining international acclaim, not always matched by national recognition, prior to her winning the Nobel prize for literature in 1954; Pablo Neruda, Chile's second Nobel prize poet, produced his most famous early works; the writers Fernando Alegría and the generation of 1938 were exploring new forms of expression in prose; in 1938 the journal Mandrágora was founded in the Instituto Pedagógico de la Universidad de Chile, dealing not only with literature, but with art and philosophy. Education was the key to the rise of the middle classes, and the Universities were to become the natural place for the fomenting of talent, of literary groups, of magazines. In the Catholic University the School of Architecture became the breeding ground for artists and sculptors such as Nemesio Antúnez and Roberto Matta. It is worth noting that the two University theatres were founded precisely in the Instituto Pedagógico of the University of Chile and the School of Architecture of the Catholic University.

Theatre was undoubtedly the poor relation. It had stagnated since the 1920s.⁸ Many blamed the advent of the moving picture in

1929 which stole away the audiences and tempted the empresarios of the stage to convert their theatre halls for the more lucrative cinema business, but this was not the only cause (indeed, as Julio Durán Cerda says, it had a good result in the long term, since "en los planos arquitectónicos de muchos edificios céntricos, se consultaba la construcción de una pequeña sala de teatro, y surgieron así los teatros de bolsillo"⁹). Theatre could still be accused of the failings of Chilean literature that Raúl Silva Castro had complained of in 1930: "La literatura chilena es una literatura de que están ausentes todos los grandes problemas de la vida y todas las inquietudes de la inteligencia."¹⁰ Basically, the dramas were of bad quality, still the products of costumbrism, and did not satisfy audiences in search of expression such as could be found in painting, sculpture, poetry and the novel. The decline of the Chilean theatre in the years from 1928 to 1938 was notorious:

Desde La viuda de Apablaza no se adelanta un paso en esa senda naturalista. Ni en otras. Viene un interregno en el que el teatro chileno arrastra una existencia anémica, sostenida por una producción mostrenca y rutinaria, encaminada únicamente a la obtención de un pronto lucro económico de empresarios, actores, cabezas de compañías y autores. La depresión financiera mundial desatada por aquellos aciagos años del 30 se conjuraba también en esa mengua artística. Con frecuencia, los propios directores de conjuntos arreglaban una pieza ajena o la escribían ellos mismos, aprovechando circunstancias de la actualidad política, todas de ínfimo valor, con que medraban en aquel marasmo. Proliferó un tipo de obras menores, de mezquino

aliento costumbrista que solían integrar programas de variedades o de complemento de alguna obra mayor, incapaz de llenar por sí sola una función, o, en fin, acababan presentaciones radiofónicas de auspicio comercial.¹¹

In 1935, in an attempt to provide incentives for national drama, a law was passed creating the Dirección Superior del Teatro Nacional, designed to protect authors' copyright, to promote theatre through prizes, to subsidise foreign companies performing Chilean works, to form touring companies and, most importantly, to free from taxes those companies whose cast was 75% Chilean and performed primarily Chilean works.¹² This is an important indicator of the general cultural atmosphere. But for the immediate reasons behind the renovation of theatre in Chile we have to look to direct artistic influence.

The outstanding source of inspiration for the theatre was the exodus of many artists from Spain in the throes of the Civil War.¹³ Among these was Margarita Xirgú, whose company arrived in Chile in 1938. The tour was a revelation to the Chilean audience, exposing the underdevelopment of Chilean theatre, the unadventurous use of the stage and the dated treatment of themes. Nothing could compare with the combined talents of García Lorca, Salvador Dalí and Margarita Xirgú. It was this unveiling of the inadequacy of the Chilean stage that prompted the founding of the University theatres.

The creation of the University theatres, then, was the result of a culmination of many different social, political, artistic and cultural factors, the major among these being a dynamic artistic environment in the country, and the decline of the old oligarchy accompanied by the ascent and consolidation of the power of the

middle classes, from which both the creators and the audience of contemporary Chilean theatre come, represented by 1938 in the Popular Front government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda.

2. 1941: The University Theatres

According to Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, by 1941 it had become "indispensable" to create "un movimiento teatral de extracción culta y proyección auténticamente nacional".¹⁴ The members of the Teatro Experimental were acutely aware of the task before them, a task they saw in terms of breaking the old mould of theatre in Chile and revitalising the national stage as a true reflection of society. They set out four aims: "Difusión del teatro clásico y moderno; formación del teatro escuela; creación de un ambiente teatral; presentación de nuevos valores."¹⁵

The first aim (difusión del teatro clásico y moderno) was intended as a return to the roots of drama, especially of the Hispanic tradition, in the belief that the only way to learn about theatre was to start from the beginning. The classics and modern drama were, furthermore, part of the programme of educating a theatre-going public and as such they have remained in the programmes of the University theatres until the present day.

The founding of a drama school sought to rid the stage of the "monstruous" productions of old by creating professional actors, directors, scenographers. A school was first founded by Agustín Siré in 1949. Initially it had no financial backing and the courses were given by "profesores ad honorem", who did the best they could to provide a three year course. It was not until 1959 that the school was formally established and became the Instituto de Teatro de la

Universidad de Chile (ITUCH).

The third point (creación de un ambiente teatral) showed the importance given to the audience. The ideal was to attract an audience from sectors other than the old theatre- and opera-going élite, that is, from the middle and working classes. This was done partly through the teatros carpa, mobile theatres that performed primarily Chilean works in working class districts both in the capital and the provinces. Amateur groups were encouraged through festivals, the first of which, the Festival de Teatro Aficionado was held in 1955, and then every two years until 1968. But the real success of the "ambiente teatral" is to be found in the creation of other University groups and schools. The Teatro de la Universidad Católica, TEUC, was founded in 1943, significantly, as has been indicated, in the innovative School of Architecture. This was followed by the Teatro de La Universidad de Concepción, TUC, in 1947; in 1958, by the theatre and school at the Catholic University in Valparaíso; in the same year TEKNOS, the theatre of the recently founded Universidad Técnica del Estado; and in 1962, a theatre was set up in the Universidad de Antofagasta in the north.

The "presentation of new values" refers to the encouragement of a new, professional approach to the theatre, and new "hombres de teatro", especially dramatists. It echoes the desire to introduce the "grandes problemas de la vida y ... las inquietudes de la inteligencia". This was promoted through an annual drama competition, the winning work of which would be produced in a collaboration between the author and the group.

During the forties dramatists such as Zlatco Brncic (Elsa Margarita, 1943) and Enrique Bunster (Un velero sale del puerto, 1943) presented dramas characterised by "una atmósfera alegórica, de

alta ficción poética, de fantasía, de ensueño, de personajes interesantes, de acontecimientos mágicos, es decir, allí había todo aquello que aparecía ausente en el teatro del día".¹⁶ The theatre of these dramatists was a step away from the purely Chilean themes portrayed in worn-out costumbrism; it sought to be universal, and absorbed the influence of the modern greats, of García Lorca, Eugene O'Neill, Maeterlinck.

If 1941 is the year of the beginning of the University theatres, then 1955, with the appearance in that year of three "mujeres de teatro", María Asunción Requena, Gabriela Roepke and Isidora Aguirre, is the year of the emergence of the University dramatists, those who were created in the new "ambiente teatral". In the early fifties there was a resurrection of the Chilean classics that reached its highest point in 1954, "sin duda una de las fechas de la escena chilena moderna",¹⁷ when The Teatro de Ensayo de la Universidad Católica presented Santiago del Campo's adaptation of Martín Rivas, the 19th century classic by Blest Gana. It was, indeed, a return to all things Chilean. Martín Rivas is regarded as the classic Chilean hero, the embodiment of the highest Chilean values, the novel is set in a period of the awakening consciousness of the middle classes and culminates in the Liberal uprising of 1851. After a ten year parade of the wealth of international drama, both classic and modern, the stage was set for a return to the exploration of the essence of being Chilean. It would be too long to study in depth the dramatists who appeared in the fifties, but it is important to introduce the major styles and themes, since they continue to dominate Chilean theatre.

3. The University Dramatists

Following Durán Cerda, we find three fundamental trends. The first notable thematic trend was that of the historical drama, hardly surprising in a "country of historians", as Chile is so often called. María Asunción Requena's first play was Fuerte Bulnes (1955), a historical drama about the lives of the colonists of the region of Magallanes in the extreme south in the 19th century; her El camino más largo (1959) is the story of Chile's first woman doctor, Ernestina Pérez; and Ayayema (1964) studied the lives of the almost extinct "alacalufe" Indians of the extreme south in their fight for survival, and the conflict between them and the corrupting influence of the white traders. This historical vein was taken up by Fernando Debesa in Mama Rosa (1955) about the life of an aristocratic family over the first half of this century, and that of their mama, the traditional nanny who becomes an integral part of their family life. It is fundamentally the story of the decline of the old aristocracy, the family conflicts involved in their adaptation to the modern structure of society, and of the fate of the servants, which was intrinsically linked to that of the family. His other play of this period, Bernardo O' Higgins (1961), is a dramatisation of the life of the great libertator, of the wars of Independence and his death in exile in Peru.

A critical study of the middle classes was the essence of the work of Egon Wolff and Sergio Vodanovic. All of Egon Wolff's output - Discípulos de miedo (1958), Mansión de lechuzas (1958), Parejas de trapo (1959), Niñamadre (1962) - has been related to the middle classes, to their inherent limitations, linked, above all, to the deep fear of the loss of their position in society. His best works,

Los invasores (1963) and Flores de papel (1970,) are nightmare renderings of this fear and its realisation. Sergio Vodanović, who started out in comedy, turned to problems of individual integrity and social justice in El senador no es honorable (1953) and Deja que los perros ladren (1959), and then to social satire of the falseness of appearances in Viña: tres comedias en traje de baño (1964). And Fernando Cuadra set his dramas in the mould of psychological realism, with such works as La niña en la palomera (1966), based on the true story of the kidnap of an adolescent girl, in which the author studies the impossible dreams and aspirations of the teenage girl from a lower class family, suggesting that inevitably she will become a prostitute.

Other dramatists wrote in a more poetic style. Gabriela Roepke's small output, including Las santas mujeres (1955) and Una mariposa blanca (1955), verges on the absurd, but is always set in a vacuum surrounded by realism. Alejandro Sieveking's work has involved the psychological study of tense human relationships, in Mi hermano Cristián (1957), Parecido a la felicidad (1962), and the poetic folklorism of Animas de día claro (1962) and La remolienda (1965). The most acclaimed poetic dramatist was Luis Alberto Heiremans, who died in 1964 at the age of thirty six. He was the author of the first musical comedy written in Chile, La señorita Trini (1958). The protagonists of his major works, Sigue la estrella, Los güenos versos (1958), Versos de ciego (1960) and El abanderado (1962), inhabit a world of poetry and popular tradition and religious symbolism. Heiremans looked forward to a dramatic form that would "stylise" realism by delving into the symbolic depths of the individual, and constitute existential studies of "la angustiada condición del hombre".¹⁸

Jorge Díaz was the first Chilean dramatist to exploit the theatre of the absurd. As in the case of Wolff and Vodanović, his frame of reference is the world of the middle classes, but while being based in this external reality, his plays do not aim at psychological interpretations but, rather, lay bare the emptiness of the social values accepted by the middle classes, his audience. In El cepillo de dientes (1961) he attacked the standard, sterile world of modern man, the vicious circles of ritual and incomprehension, the inherent absurdity of life, and for the first time in Chile, the audience was incorporated into the dramatic action as its passivity was mocked. El velero en la botella (1965) ostensibly looks at youth in society (the theme of La niña en la palomera (1966) and El Wurlitzer (1964) by Juan Guzmán Améstica), through the protagonist, a boy born into a world where communication is impossible, but essentially it is a play about the power or impotence of language as expression. In other works, notably Topografía de un desnudo (1966), Díaz joined other dramatists in a study of the marginal sectors of Latin American life, namely those who live on the rubbish tips, whose lives and deaths are of no import to anyone and who live sunk in endless perpetual misery. His is a drama of the coherence of the absurd in a world such as that created around the interests of the Latin American bourgeoisie.

These dramatists formed the backbone of Chilean theatre in the fifties and until the mid-sixties. The most successful theatre production in Chile has been Isidora Aguirre's musical, written in collaboration with Francisco Flores del Campo, La pérgola de las flores (1960). It had an unprecedented run of 976 performances and was a great success in Europe when the Teatro de la Universidad Católica went on tour in 1961.

Isidora Aguirre had begun in drama with the light comedy Carolina (1955), but had turned to social comment in Población Esperanza (1959), which deals with the growing problem of the poblaciones callampas, shanty towns that had begun to spring up around the major cities in the fifties, as a result of the incapacity to cope with migration to the cities. In Los papeleros (1963) she wrote in the style of Brecht about the miserable life of the people who live on the rubbish tips, gathering paper, which they then sell for miserable rates to the owner, who, in turn, sells it to factories as raw material. As in Población Esperanza, the central theme is the need for the deprived sectors of the community to fight together for a better way of life, a fight that is undertaken in the shanty town, but impossible in the rubbish tip.

La pérgola de las flores, while being primarily light musical entertainment, dealt with a truly Chilean theme, the plight of the flower sellers whose market was beside the San Francisco church in the Alameda, the central avenue through Santiago. In 1929 the market was threatened with demolition and removal to another site when a plan to widen the Alameda was proposed. But the level of public protest and the fight put up by the flower sellers won a respite of 15 years. The social background of La pérgola de las flores is far removed from that of Los papeleros and Población Esperanza, but they share the same central theme of the need for the individual to fight for justice.

The success of La pérgola de las flores, light entertainment in the tradition of the Spanish zarzuela, is proof that a wide audience was in existence, for it is wrong to suppose that the theatre of the University dramatists existed in isolation. Alongside it, in the halls of Santiago, what have come to be regarded as pre-university

companies continued, catering for a public that sought light entertainment, melodramas, farces.

The actor, director and dramatist Lucho Córdoba's main aim since he set up his own company in 1937 with his wife Olvido Leguía until his death in 1980 was to entertain and make people laugh, a simple and, for some, a highly dubious project. His comedies were in the old mould, centred around a principal character, played by himself (the principal character in the plays aged at the same speed as the actor), and his works were generally in the sainete form. While his plays took place in a never-changing vacuum, humorous social allusions to contemporary events were never far from his work, which was firmly rooted as a stationary "afirmación de la clase media acomodada ... en su mejor momento".¹⁹ The other husband and wife team who survived until 1980, Américo Vargas and Pury Durante, followed the same lines of entertainment, again involving lighthearted satirical commentary, and also made use of high comedy from the international repertoire. These companies and a few more, the most famous of these being the companies of Alfredo Moya-Grau (1956-66), Silvia Piñero and Miguel Frank, provide a constant in Chilean theatre, on the margins of and impervious to the political haranguing of later periods. The theatre-going audience in Santiago is not exclusively composed of conscientious, politically active middle-class intellectuals, for there is always an audience for musicals, comedies, foreign works.

By the fifties, Chile was widely held to be at the forefront of the theatre in Latin America. Willis Knapp Jones, writing about the theatre season in 1957, declares that finally "Chilean dramatists had come into their own" and adds: "Of all the countries I visited in my winter theatre circuit, I could put Chile at the top for abundance

and excellence of plays, and when it comes to a national theatre, in the sense of playwrights and themes that are products of the country, there is no other South American nation even near to it."²⁰ The themes in Chilean theatre were still primarily a treatment of local reality, but now with a greater emphasis being placed on the study of the psychology of the middle classes and the inner motives for human behaviour. At the same time the study of marginal sectors was creeping in to some plays with the greater evidence of these sectors in the cities. Meanwhile, by the sixties the social face of Chile was changing again and new sectors were calling for power.

4. 1967: The University Reform

In the fifties and early sixties the diffusion of theatre had never been so great or so seriously undertaken, there had never been so many good dramatists. But between 1966 and 1969 the number of original works began to diminish.²¹ By 1966 the perennial problems, those of the relevance of Chilean drama to the immediate social environment and of the size of the theatre-going public, came to the fore again. Audiences had been falling away. Two factors serve to explain this. Firstly, in 1962, television had made its debut for the coverage of the World Cup, held in Chile that year. The immediate impact was hardly noticeable, for television was too expensive for a large sector of the population, but as prices fell and savings and hire purchase plans became more common, it soon began to affect theatre audience numbers.

The other reason has to do with the very nature of the University theatres. The sixties were years of rapid social change. The Christian Democrats were elected in 1964 under the leadership of

Eduardo Frei, with a far-reaching social reform programme, the "revolution in liberty". They were in power until 1970 when the Popular Unity coalition won the general elections and Salvador Allende was elected President. Their programme was the more radical "Chilean road to Socialism", and the revolutionary intent of Popular Unity satisfied the anti-imperialist, Cuba-inspired ideology of the intellectual left wing by promising a greater commitment to a Chile free from political, economic and cultural domination. The Universities were both a mirror of and an agent for change in society, and University theatre was far from immune to the polarisation of these years. The most important cultural/political event of the late sixties was the University Reform of 1967.

The process of University reform began in 1967 in the Catholic University of Valparaíso and was brought to a head with the occupation of the central building of the Catholic University in Santiago in August of the same year. Rooted in the ideal of active democracy at all levels, the main objectives of the University reform were the democratisation of the University system in order to halt the exclusion of many sectors from access to education, and a demand for academics to step down from the ivory towers they traditionally inhabited. These were broadly summed up as "democratización externa" and "democratización interna". As far as the University theatres were concerned, this involved the rejection of foreign cultural domination, which was seen by the prevailing ideology as an essentially alienating force that had moved from a general "extranjerización" to the more perfidious "norteamericanización".²²

University theatre schools became part of inter- or multi-disciplinary academic structures. In 1968, ITUCH became DETUCH (Departamento de Teatro de la Universidad de Chile), which in 1969

became part of La Facultad de Ciencias y Artes Musicales y de la Representación that grouped together music, dance and theatre. As part of this new Faculty, DETUCH defined an outlook that went hand in glove with the dominant anti-dependency leftist ideology and sought to create "un teatro nuevo que responda a la ideología de la Nueva Universidad: anti-imperialista y anti-burguesa".²³ Theatre was regarded as an instrument for the promotion of social change and almost without exception works were chosen for their relation to the political and ideological atmosphere.

A brief look at the plays performed by DETUCH during the period provides ample evidence of the policy in practice. In 1969 El Evangelio según San Jaime by Jaime Silva became one of the few plays by a Chilean author to provoke a real public outcry. It is a grotesquely ridiculous version of the New Testament written in verse in huaso Chilean,²⁴ set in the feudal land system, thereby constantly evoking the injustices of land distribution. God the Father is "un tirano y un patrón" governing earth from heaven through fear, while Jesus Christ is a revolutionary hero whose mission on earth is to incite rebellion among the peasants and bring down the tyranny of his father. Mary's Immaculate Conception is announced after her meeting in the garden with an absurdly phallic "Gallo Intrusivo" and Joseph is referred to throughout as "El Sordo José". Mary's marriage to such a man is greeted by one of her neighbours with the words, "De sólo verlos/me dan ganas de llorar" (p.16). El Evangelio según San Jaime touched the fragile sensibilities of the middle-class audience. Hans Ehrmann details some of the attacks the play received, the vehemence of which led the critic to conclude that "Chile is free, easy and democratic on the surface, but once God and Country are touched on aggressively, the silent majority comes to life".²⁵ The intensity

of the middle and upper classes' defence of God and Country would later be seen in more concrete terms in their support of the military coup.

The same year DETUCH presented Isidora Aguirre's Los que van quedando en el camino, which narrates the massacre of peasants in Ranquil in 1934. Set in 1969, it uses a peasant woman as the vehicle for the evocation of the Ranquil massacre, thus juxtaposing two periods of agrarian reform,²⁶ with the accompanying expectations and ultimate disillusion of the peasants. The play is divided into two parts, "Los días buenos" and "Los días malos". The peasant woman tries to remember only the good days, when the battles against the limitations of the peasants (illiteracy, fear, lack of unity, faith in paternalism) were undertaken and the peasants began to set up their own movements. But she is haunted by the "ánimas" of those who had died during the bad days, which began with the change of government and the ensuing retreat on the agrarian reform, and culminated in the revolt when the peasants found themselves isolated and without support. The "ánimas" represent the need for organisation and solidarity, and through them the didactic message of the play is presented: that even those who seemingly died for nothing and with no awareness of the worth of their sacrifice, gave their lives for the revolutionary cause: "De los que van quedando en el camino también se hacen las revoluciones."²⁷ The printed version is introduced by the Communist senator, Volodia Teitelboim, as "Agitador y político, en el sentido brechtiano",²⁸ but the play is lacking any Brechtian complexity of analysis, its major failing being the manicheistic approach, shown most clearly in the titles of the two parts.

In 1971 the problem that preoccupied DETUCH was that of the decadence of the middle classes. El degenérisis (1971) by Edmundo

Villarroel and Jorge Rebel was described by one critic as "un estudio teatralizado de la alienación de la clase media chilena", but its impact on critics and public was minimal.²⁹ The other production that year, Chekov's The Cherry Orchard, was interpreted by its Uruguayan director as dealing with the theme of "un mundo muerto, agotado, que va hacia otro más feliz, hacia una nueva realidad",³⁰ an interpretation that reflected the hoped-for demise of bourgeois society to be replaced by Popular Unity's "nueva sociedad". Another review is very definite about this, seeing the play as "la problemática de un régimen en decadencia que vive sus últimos momentos. Sus personas están aferradas a un mundo que comienza a declinar desplazado por la clase trabajadora y el despertar de la lucha social. La tierra deja de ser, desde el momento en que se vende el jardín de los cerezos, propiedad y dominio de un minoría inconsciente que sufre por la pérdida de sus bienes".³¹

Gerardo Werner's La gran prescripción (1972) was based on the case of the Nazi war criminal Walter Rauff, who found refuge in Chile where he could not be brought to justice, partly because Chilean legislation does not contemplate the crime of genocide and also because too long a period had elapsed since his crimes for him to be tried under Chilean law. It was intended by the author as a warning against the ever-present danger of fascism (read, the forces of the opposition against the Popular Unity "peaceful road to socialism").

The other production in 1972 was María Asunción Requena's Chiloé cielos cubiertos dealing with a community in the island of Chiloé composed primarily of women who await with resignation the return of their menfolk, forced to leave the island in search of work and who rarely return. It assumes the poetic mix of myth and reality peculiar to Chiloé, when the young protagonist resists "woman's destiny" by

abandoning her husband on their wedding day and surrendering her love to the ghost of a young shipwrecked sailor. In thus choosing love in death she defies the "defeat" that marriage would mean for her, and seeks, instead, hope and happiness. Through this mythical element Requena studied the limited fate and alternatives of the women of Chiloé, and through elements of social realism such as fledgling development projects, she exposed the problems of an island in a state of dire economic underdevelopment.

In the Catholic University during this period similar changes were underway. In 1967 the Teatro de Ensayo had been dissolved, and became the Centro de Teatro of the newly organised Escuela de Artes de la Comunicación (EAC), which united teachers, researchers and artists from the fields of theatre, film and television. The aim was to enrich the contact between those involved in the communicating arts and to put an end to the traditional isolation of one from the other. Between 1968 and 1969 a new group, the Taller de Experimentación Teatral, presented three works and in 1970-1971 another group, the Taller de Creación Teatral, worked under the direction of Eugenio Dittborn, former director of the Teatro de Ensayo.

Whereas the University of Chile displayed a radical thematic line in tune with the ideal of motivating political change, the Catholic University's approach tended more towards a greater interest in experimentation. To some extent this echoes the founding ideals of both theatres, since ITUCH was founded by education students and TEUC by students from architecture. In the Catholic University, above all in the Taller de Experimentación Teatral, the "democratisation" called for in the University reform was internalised in their preference for workshops and creación colectiva, a form which involved greater

collaboration between all the members of the creative team and which was deemed to end the "tyranny" of the director.

The first workshop creation in Chile was Peligro a 50 metros (1968), a play in two parts based on texts by Alejandro Sieveking and José Pineda. The first, Obras de Misericordia by José Pineda, takes the form of a "symposium" in which the seven corporal and spiritual acts of charity as practised by the bourgeoisie are "analysed". This idea gives unity to the ensuing systematic denunciation of the bourgeoisie, attacking repressive education, hypocritical attitudes to sex, the generation gap, hippies and Christian duty. Bourgeois society and North American imperialism are allotted the blame for the greatest part of the suffering in the world. The second part, Una vaca mirando el piano, by Sieveking, repeats the over-simplifying pattern and is a parable on indifference and individualism in a world where luxury and depravation usurp the public imagination, leaving nothing but indifference for real *social problems*.

In effect the work is far from "revolutionary", for it falls into the trap of much theatre purporting to be revolutionary. As Domingo Piga puts it: "En esta búsqueda de nuevas formas, se ha llegado a la falacia de creer que un teatro es popular y revolucionario en la medida que lo es formalmente, por sobre toda otra consideración. De acuerdo a este principio, se niega, por una parte, el carácter de popular a cualquier obra que conserve la fórmula tradicional del realismo burgués, a pesar de reunir múltiples características de contenido popular. Por otra parte se ha caído en el formalismo de conceder más importancia a la forma, a la estructura nueva de una obra, al valor externo revolucionario, aunque su contenido sea débil. Se olvida que la mejor forma revolucionaria es la que mejor sirve o de mejor manera realza el contenido."³²

The revolutionary message of Peligro a 50 metros was no more than a regurgitation of views that were clichéd even by then.

The next production, Nos tomamos la Universidad by Sergio Vodanović, deals with the occupation of the central building of the Catholic University at the height of the University reform in 1967. Although this is an "obra de autor" it lends itself to collective work and improvisation. The author's notes advocate sparseness of decoration and restraint in the use of effects to separate scenes, in order to achieve openness of the stage; suggest the use of the actors' Christian names; and invite a fair amount of ad-libbing throughout the play.³³

The play revolves around the activities of one group of students who take part in the sit-in and whose task it is to make a "monigote" (a puppet) of the old rector to be burned on the day of triumph. The characters are, on the whole, poorly-defined stereotypes whose value lies in that they represent different personal motives for taking part in the sit-in, ranging from the need to belong, reaction against a strict upbringing and the desire to rebel, the longing to remain young, the search for the renewal of past, betrayed ideals. Nor are any easy solutions allowed for. The women are kept in their place in the kitchen, an indication of the limitations of the "new" egalitarian mentality, and the seeds of disillusion are sown from the very beginning. The "monigote" they make is essentially a symbol of decay. This is dramatised through the process of its creation: Silvia, its artist, first draws an angelic face and then transforms it: "Subrayé los rasgos. La sonrisa pasó a ser una mueca. Lo que era armonioso se convirtió en una caricatura" (p.91). The transformation it undergoes is a parallel to their experience, as from a symbol of idealism and unity it becomes one of disillusion and

disunity. The protagonists' disillusion is born when they find out that political and personal interests have joined to arrange a compromise with the University authorities and the puppet must not be burned, lest such a symbolic act offend. The final scene juxtaposes the triumphal "Himno de la Toma" with the despondent words of the group of students who know they have been failed, and through a character who, as a child, witnessed his elders suffering the same experience, the play suggests that history repeats itself in rounds of illusion and betrayal.

In 1970 the Taller de Creación Teatral presented Todas las colorinas tienen pecas, a work in three acts based on Obra gruesa by the poet Nicanor Parra. On the whole, Todas las colorinas tienen pecas was lukewarmly received. As with other works that Parra has written in collaboration with theatre groups, there is an inherent contradiction in theme, presentation, style and relation to the audience. Parra's antipoetry resists political classification, for it does not profess revolution in partisan terms, but aims to subvert accepted codes of thinking and behaving by gnawing away at the linguistic edifice that houses the status quo, by revealing the emptiness of the staunchly guarded petit bourgeois world. The inconsistency arises from the fact that the other part of the creative team seeks to impose narrowly defined political messages, working within the kind of conventional political framework which is the target of Parra's attack. This leads to a certain unevenness in the work, as a result of which the audience is alternatively cajoled with familiar, conformist political views, or épaté by a poet who seeks to undermine the very foundations of their being.

After the dismal failure of the next production, Paraíso para uno, based on stories by Alfonso Alcalde, the Taller de Creación

Teatral was dissolved and the Centro de Teatro returned to the trustworthy hands of Eugenio Dittborn and a run of "obras de autor", two Latin American works - La gotera en el comedor by the Uruguayan Jacobo Langser, examining the attitudes of the Latin American middle classes in times of political crisis; and Tres de última by the Argentinian Alberto Paredes, focussing on questions of love in a revolutionary atmosphere -; and two works by Chileans of the pre-University generation, Alzame en tus brazos by Armando Moock and Almas Perdidas by Antonio Acevedo Hernández. In effect, this follows the Teatro de Ensayo policy of introducing Latin American theatre and popularising Chilean authors.

In the other University theatres the pattern is broadly similar. The Teatro de la Universidad Técnica del Estado, TEKNOS, was one of the most dynamic groups. In 1968 TEKNOS produced Pan caliente by María Asunción Requena, and in 1972 her Homo chilensis, a lighthearted look at the Chilean psyche in ten episodes that lay bare the national strengths and weaknesses.

Pan caliente deals with the tensions created in a población callampa by the existence of exceptional social aspirations. The central character is a teenage girl, Marisela, who has lived away from the shanty town and attends school. She has greater expectations from life, her driving force being the illusion of moving on in the world away from the squalor of her origins. The conflict is between her and a young man, Juanucho, who dreams of organising the shanty town dwellers to fight for their rights, and the tension derives from the disdain these two characters have for each other's dreams. The drama develops around the white dress Marisela must have for her school leaving ceremony and which her mother has made at the cost of great sacrifice. When her drunken father finds the dress and,

believing it to be an angel, embraces it and soils it so much as to destroy it, the community clubs together to provide another dress and the fare for a taxi to take her to the ceremony. Juanucho contributes despite his disdain for Marisela's upward aspirations, and Marisela, having experienced the kindness of her own people, begins to understand "el alma de esa gente miserable, maloliente".

Pan caliente is coherent with the prevailing ideology. The moral is made explicit towards the end by an old man who tries to help Juanucho understand why such poor people should choose to spend their money on a dress rather than on the necessities of life. He compares their reward to bread, "pan calentito, recién salido del horno", one of the simplest, but best things in life: instead of buying food for their hunger, they feed their hidden reserves of community and caring. On one hand the destroyed dress is a symbol of the impossibility of surviving without stain in such an environment, but on the other, it is a symbol of the possibility of triumph through community spirit.

This adherence to a politically defined thematic content found expression as agitprop in the works of the Teatro Nuevo Popular, founded in 1971 in the Universidad Técnica del Estado as a pilot group of the Central Unica de Trabajadores (CUT). It aimed to defy the theatrical norms of the professional theatre by taking theatre to working class areas all over the country, producing works with the minimum of stage clutter and opening theatre to all by not charging an entrance fee. The works produced were essentially agitprop. La maldición de la palabra, by Manuel Garrido, dealt with the attempts of a group of peasants to form a trade union, and focused primarily on the limitations of their ability to do so as a result of their lack of education. Like Isidora Aguirre's Los que van quedando

en el camino, La maldición de la palabra explores the need for the peasant and the worker to be in control of their own means of expression.

In 1972, with the same theme and aims, the Teatro Nuevo Popular presented Tela de cebolla, written by Gloria Cordero after a period of observation and research undertaken with the actors in a textile factory which was taken over by the workers in a toma.³⁴ Tela de cebolla uses a historical perspective to expose the process through which the workers become aware of the levels of political, economic and sexual exploitation they suffer, and gradually, with the advent of the Chilean road to Socialism, become the owners of what they produce. When it was presented to the workers who actually took part in the toma, it caused many arguments, the actors being accused of missing out important details. One critic points to the advantages to be gained from such an experience: "La confrontación de esta experiencia con el juicio de los obreros espectadores enriquecerá sin duda a los artistas para evitar el esquematismo, la caricatura fácil, el mensaje político consignístico, desligado de la imagen artística."

35

In the University of Concepción the efforts to promote theatre were well coordinated, but they were not without problems.³⁶ While the more traditional plays were boycotted by some because, in the opinion of one critic, "TUC se quedó al margen de la reforma, que carece de una línea artística definida, que no es un grupo 'comprometido'". The new works, often by the Taller Experimental, such as La revolución nuestra de cada día by Juan Curilem, were boycotted by those with a more traditional attitude because, the same critic suggests, the opinion was that "se dan puras obras para rotos".³⁷ A traditional middle class audience obviously felt insulted

by the propaganda being presented them.

After the reform University theatres produced plays that displayed a high degree of social commentary, if not political commitment and propaganda. An integral part of the place of theatre in the "new" society was the importance given to amateur theatre. In form and content this was similar to the works of the Teatro Nuevo Popular and the Taller Experimental, and was essentially agitprop.

The first University interest in the promotion of amateur theatre was in 1955 when the University of Chile, in line with its policy of creating "un ambiente teatral", organised the first Festival Nacional del Teatro Aficionado e Independiente, which was subsequently held every two years until 1969. In the first years the Festival grew in strength. In 1961 Orlando Rodríguez declared it a great success and was of the opinion that amateur theatre was more innovative and adventurous than professional theatre. Out of 65 works presented that year 36 were by authors of Chilean origin and 15 were original Chilean plays. Psychological realism, which was the most popular form in professional theatre, did not figure as prominently as works dealing with social, political and regional problems, dramatised in forms that used collective creation and showed the influences of Brecht and Ionesco.³⁸

By 1968, when the call for radical change was gaining momentum, critics of the paternalistic organisation of the festivals began to see the narrow links with University theatre as the major impediment to the further development of amateur theatre. In that year the last Festival Nacional de Teatro Aficionado e Independiente was held and the same year the first Festival de Teatro Universitario y Obrero de la Universidad Católica took place under the auspices of the recently created Vicerrectoría de Comunicaciones, among whose functions was

that of supporting the organisation of the many amateur groups in the country.³⁹ During this festival a seminar entitled "Realidad Actual y Proyecciones Futuras del Teatro Aficionado" was held and the Asociación Nacional de Teatro Aficionado (ANTACH) was formed to unite and organise amateur groups in the country, to provide training schools and to guide the groups through "coordinadores" and "monitores". Organisational matters were dealt with and new activities planned in Conventions attended by regional delegates. Again festivals were the centre-pieces for the diffusion of popular drama and these were held regularly.⁴⁰ With this seminar the lengthy "analytical study" of the role and proposed development of amateur theatre began.

ANTACH proposed the emancipation from University influence, which was seen to thwart the creative capacity of amateur groups, it rejected "imported" works, repudiated a theatre for élites that was purely artistic and entertaining, and called for the creation of a theatre "for the masses and by the masses". The themes and dramatic forms employed would, in theory, make it possible to make theatre into "una herramienta de pedagogía jovial": amateur theatre as organised by ANTACH was to be a vehicle for political education. But it was not until 1972 that ANTACH finally stepped out of the wing of University sponsorship, when the Catholic University withdrew support from a process that was becoming ever more radical. At this point ANTACH entered what was defined as a new and definitive stage of authenticity. But what did this imply?

The answer is graphically illustrated in the only festival to be organised by the "new" ANTACH. This, the first Jornada Nacional de Teatro de Trabajadores y Estudiantes, took place in the province of Coquimbo in the north of the country (held there as a way of

"decentralising" the organisation). Seventeen groups took part in this meeting, and 87 performances were given in total, with an overall audience of around 15,000. The themes treated were primarily those of the class struggle and the contemporary political environment, in plays with titles such as Nosotros los de abajo by Sergio Arrau (Grupo Los Ñires), Te invitamos a pensar, a collective creation by Grupo América made up of students and workers, Venceremos and Rosa by Fidelina Rojas (Grupo Pedro Lenín Valenzuela). Chilean authors represented were Jorge Díaz, with Requiem para un girasol, Antonio Acevedo Hernández, with La canción rota and Armando Mookk, with Crimen en mi pueblo.

While prize-giving was frowned upon, a committee judged each group's level of artistic development and political commitment in terms of the level of "reflexión y análisis relacionados con el proceso que vive nuestro país", the use of collective creation, and the presence of a "política teatral".⁴¹ The categories into which groups were classified bears witness to the nature of the assessment: "Advanced Groups" were those who displayed a solid relation between their work and the dynamics of the Popular Unity process, that is those who were completely in tune with Popular Unity; "Transitional", those who, as the name suggests, were slowly developing but were still not fully in line; "Grupos Desubicados", those who failed to respond to the objectives of amateur theatre as outlined by ANATCH in discussion and training, that is, those who were out of line with the Popular Unity process. Amateur theatre as defined by ANATCH was essentially agitprop. Collective creation was regarded as the best form through which to articulate the members' experiences, plays were required to be politically clear, and they were largely based on sketches revolving around shallow social types, presenting black and

white renderings of problems and their solutions, which were, in effect, hoped-for alternatives. The objective was to provide an educational experience for the audience. An Encuentro Nacional de Directores de Teatro in May 1973 set about the reorganisation of the association, primarily in terms of the search for different sources of financial support and the planning of the activities for 1973-74, but this was ANTACH's last activity and the coup saw the complete disarticulation of the organisation. By this time there were 350 affiliated groups; there is no doubt that ANTACH's claims of "masificación" were justified.

The nature and growth of ANTACH in the years 1970-73 must be seen in a political light. At the first Convención Nacional de Teatro Aficionado in 1968, Orlando Rodríguez spoke in no vague terms about the development of bourgeois theatre: "Su teatro, el burgués, entretendrá, o a lo más satirizará a la propia burguesía, pero nunca impulsará el reemplazo de esta burguesía por los sectores mayoritarios de la sociedad. Porque si ello ocurriera, el autor y sus intérpretes serán rechazados por el medio social burgués. Entonces, remitiéndose al caso de Chile, no puede haber un teatro popular donde los intereses de las minorías determinan el arte y culturas nacionales."⁴² Theatre, like agriculture and industry, had to be wrested from the hands of the bourgeoisie, and theatre was interpreted as part of the "Arte igual herramienta política contingente" equation.⁴³ At the time of the reorganisation of ANTACH in 1972 the boundaries of "correct" amateur theatre were being ever more strictly and restrictively defined in accordance with the common perception of a "new spirit", a "new culture", in short with commitment to the Popular Unity process.

The positive side of ANTACH lies in that it gave cohesion to

many non-professional groups, provided an organisation in which to work and an opportunity for amateur groups to present their creations for criticism. But the negative side lies precisely in the nature of the organisation. Amateur theatre, as we have seen, has developed in a paternalistic structure, guided by other groups or institutions, moving in the period studied here from university to political patronage. Inherent in the growth and organisation of ANTACH lay its greatest restrictions: set within the framework of an aligned movement, amateur, or student and workers' theatre was dependent for support and cohesion on ANTACH. With the coup it could not, by definition, continue to exist, and suffered the same fate of many amateur agitprop experiences before it, disintegrating along with the political organisation on which it depended for support.

5. Independent Theatre

Looking at the criticism of Chilean theatre in the period 1968-1973, it seems to have disappointed anyone who had expectations of radical cultural and artistic change, especially after the election of Popular Unity. The most common complaint was that theatre did not reflect on any level the revolutionary changes that were taking place in society. Yet, it would seem that the opposite is the case. The crisis in Chilean theatre during this period, if crisis there was, arose from the fact that it reflected all too accurately the ideological turmoil and polarisation of the moment and, more positively, the diversity of cultural expression.

Latin American eyes were focused on Chile, the testing ground for the "peaceful road to socialism". But hopes for spontaneous

cultural renovation were confounded. In 1971, for the first time, there was no Chilean representation at the festival of theatre in Manizales, Colombia. Sergio Vodanović explained this as a decision of the director of the festival, Carlos Ariel Betancur: "Y después de una breve permanencia entre nosotros Betancur pensó que, por este año, era mejor no defraudar las expectativas que en toda Latino América había sobre el teatro chileno."⁴⁴ Two years later, in 1973, when Chile was represented by Los Mimos de Noisvander, one participant complained that, like Peru, Chile was, to all intents and purposes, absent because it was badly represented. By this he meant that the groups were not sufficiently committed political agents of their respective countries. Sergio Vodanović answered this by saying, firstly, that Los Mimos, a professional group of mime artists who, during these years moved from classical mime to more contemporary representations, were, in fact, official cultural ambassadors, and, secondly, that in Chile theatre expresses "justamente lo que está reprimido". That is, that the space for the freedom of expression in all other areas meant that theatre did not play an overtly political role.⁴⁵ But how did independent theatre really reflect the changes in society?

The best established group in Chile is Ictus, which was born in 1955, as a breakaway from the Catholic University. Ictus began as an amateur group, but by the beginning of the sixties had turned professional and had their own theatre in the centre of Santiago. Their most innovative work in the sixties was in collaboration with Jorge Díaz, who presented his first works with Ictus, introducing concepts of the absurd and innovative approaches to the Chilean stage. It was working with him on Introducción al elefante y otras zoologías (1968), a play dealing with dictatorship and the military

in Latin America, that the group took the first steps towards a distinctive style of collective creation and for the first time aimed to provoke direct audience reaction.⁴⁶

With Cuestionemos la cuestión in 1969 Ictus produced its first true collective creation based on a text by Nissim Sharim. It is a series of tenuously related sketches which create opposing images of individual distress and unresolved infrastructural social problems. The sketches include an aggressive group therapy, and a family dinner, with hints of Ionesco, infuriating in its presentation of the members' total inability to communicate. The misery of shanty town life, presented as morbidly compulsive television viewing in one sketch, is juxtaposed with a political debate resembling a boxing match about the provision of a new football pitch in an aristocratic part of the city. And the play ends with the breakdown of a retiring secretary who despairs of facing the future emptiness of her life. It is a mosaic of contemporary political, social and individual preoccupations, presented with recourse to humour and the absurd, and a denunciation of vacuous political debate.

During this period (1968-1973) Ictus produced a weekly television programme, "La Manivela", composed of satirical and humorous sketches dealing with topical issues.⁴⁷ As a result of this, Ictus did not produce a new play until Tres noches de un sábado in 1973, a production that drew from the television experience. It approaches the class problem, never far from the stage during this period, but in terms of personal and family relationships, not as political conflict. Delfina Guzmán has explained its success in the following terms: "En ese momento, a nadie le interesaba cómo se iba a hacer el amor en un régimen socialista: a nadie le interesaba cómo se iban a relacionar la gente entre sí. Entonces llega un momento en que

el Ictus, en medio de la Unidad Popular, entrega Tres noches de un sábado y resulta que esta gente que no habla de la nacionalización del cobre, que no habla de Reforma Agraria ni del desabastacamiento, ni del imperialismo, en plena época de la UP, recoge un rasgo de su tiempo. Y la obra se convirtió en éxito de dos años, lo que revela que era un problema social, que aquello era sentido por la gente como algo muy importante."⁴⁸ It was the only work on stage at the time of the coup that did not have to interrupt performances. On the other hand "La Manivela" was taken off the air, to reappear for only a short period in 1975. We will return to these points later.

The café-concert was rising in popularity as an alternative theatre for "un público culto y profesional que de alguna manera no encontrara satisfactorio el teatro 'político' directo"⁴⁹ and the most successful group was El Túnel. Their presentation of Jean Genet's Las Sirvientas in 1972 aroused a lot of interest; criticism underlined the scandalous nature of the play, principally because of the biography of the author and, secondly, because the maids were played by men. It was also attributed a certain snob value, linked to the supposed desire to "epatar", and the newspaper Puro Chile sneers that "la notable obra de Jean Genet puesta en escena por el grupo 'El Túnel' es ya tema de conversación entre los snobs. Entre la gente que quiere estar de moda".⁵⁰ It was thus interpreted as a sensational device for attracting an audience, not as a play worthy of note for its intrinsic dramatic qualities or for the quality of the interpretation. El Túnel also had a great success with the café-concert, Agamos el amor by Edmundo Villaroel, a humorous "reportaje a la noche santiaguina" that ran for more than a year.

The journalistic vogue of assessing everything according to its political contingency was also applied to Alejandro Sieveking's

production of George Bernard Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession, proclaimed as "un palo al capitalismo". The same company, Teatro El Angel, made up of a group of actors who had reacted against the excessive experimentation in the theatre of the University of Chile, next produced a highly acclaimed version of La Celestina. El Angel rejected overtly partisan theatre as an ineffective means of communication with their still predominantly middle class audience, and instead they performed works that were, Sieveking has said, "hipócritamente políticas",⁵¹ that is, they aimed to attack bourgeois values subtly, thus promoting a gradual, not a sudden transformation. Put in cruder terms, they did not underrate the political intelligence of the audience.

Alejandro Sieveking, along with his forays into workshop theatre and his participation in the production of foreign works, wrote three plays of real dramatic worth in this period. In the same year as Peligro a 50 metros (1968) he presented Todo se irá, se fue, se va al diablo in a DETUCH production. It is a complex, psychological piece in three temporal stages, revolving around the memory of a grotesque crime discovered in the protagonist's family's beach house. With La remolienda (1970) the dramatist returned to a popular vein in a folkloric comedy of errors, a story of confusion and innocent mistaken encounters in a brothel with an all's-well-that-ends-well finale. La mantis religiosa (1971) was born of the idea of providing the public with "hypocritically political" plays. It is a Kafkésque treatment of the rigidity and innate hypocrisy of social customs and sexual mores, set in the home of three spinsters locked in rituals of sexual guilt and destruction. The sisters are exposed as the tyrannical vigilantes of morals while possessing a horribly perverted moral code.

Egon Wolff, in this period, presented El signo de Caín (1969). This is ^a study of the relative values of socially accepted failure and success, evolving around the life of the protagonist who, after a brilliant start to his career, had lost his job. Now, years later, his former colleagues try to redeem him by reintegrating him to their bourgeois world. While his companion, a working class woman, longs to better herself and provide a promising future for her son, he rejects any offers of work, deriding her upward aspirations. The main protagonist is a man who bears "el signo de Caín", who through his clear, probing and analytical mind, inspires fear in others. Yet while the sign of Cain represents this troubling spirit, it is also a sign of failure and betrayal, for it is revealed that the protagonist had fled from the life he had led before after having blamed a failed experiment on another man. He now lives isolated, clinging to past ideals, and is cursed by the sign of Cain he bears. Thus, the play becomes a complex battling ground for conflicts between different social classes, and for concepts of faithfulness to ideals. All these are themes that form constants in Wolff's writing.

In 1970 Egon Wolff presented Flores de papel, a devastating parable of the paralysation of the Chilean middle classes in the face of popular revolution. It is portrayed through the experience of Eva, a forty-year-old separated woman whose flat and life are invaded by the tramp, El Merluza. Gradually he takes over, destroying her belongings, filling her home with ugly paper flowers, attacking her values, while she finds herself less and less able to react and finally, numb, is "married" into his life of squalor, dispossessed of everything she had ever owned and valued. Flores de papel further develops the study of the inherent middle class fear of the intrusion of the masses on their territory that Wolff had explored with

nightmare clarity in Los invasores. In 1970 it was a true expression of the deepest fears of the bourgeoisie.

The group Aleph, the most successful group to grow from student amateur theatre, epitomises many of the features of theatre in the Popular Unity period. Relying on creación colectiva, Aleph created a distinctive style and a strong following, eventually being absorbed by the professional stage. Their work during this period was almost deliberately naive, with an emphasis on social and political comment, presenting what María de la Luz Hurtado has called "una visión del mundo desde la juventud chilena progresista de clase media".⁵² During the Popular Unity years they took on the role of "cultural activists" whose aim was to promote "la lucha y la esperanza".⁵³ Había una vez un rey (1972) is undisguised but humorous propaganda. The protagonists are three rubbish collectors, Watusi, fat and exploitative, the decision-maker, Ñafle, skinny, weak and illiterate, the underdog, Sonajeros, the intellectual, and a rich widow, the capitalist. The play begins as they enter into a business partnership with the widow, who sells them a cart on condition that they share their profits with her. Almost immediately, Watusi invents a new game in which the cart becomes a king's throne. He promises to let Ñafle have a turn as king, but he enjoys power so much that he prolongs his reign, using shabby excuses (such as the need for law and order) to retain power. Sonajeros eventually joins Ñafle in rebellion, but shows his true colours when he uses this as a stepping stone to power, while Ñafle remains at the bottom of the heap until he finally rebels, forcing the others to reflect on the folly of their conduct, the realisation of which prompts them to unite with him in renewed solidarity and hope for the future. It is the widow, the personification of capitalism, who is presented as the source of

their corruption, and the message is that only by possessing their own means of production can the protagonists avoid the temptations of exploitation and domination inherent in the capitalist model. It is the humour of the piece that saves it from the traps of its extremely simplistic and stereotyped vision of the world.

Around 1972 audiences began to fall away, the theatre-going public still did not exceed the 1% margin and part of the traditional middle class audience rejected a theatre of indoctrination. Most of the productions in 1972 and 1973 were of foreign or classical origin or, alternatively, the comic and the musical play. The critics were in general agreement that theatre had, in the words of one, become an "Antídoto contra la tensa situación política" that, he went on, "tiene en ascuas a moros y cristianos".⁵⁴ Some companies saw it as a duty to revindicate non-committed theatre, believing, in the words of Kanda Jaque that "el único compromiso verdadero es con el público para hacer buen teatro".⁵⁵ The old companies of Lúcho Córdoba and Américo Vargas soldiered on, offering the same light comedies and farces, relentlessly and superficially keeping up with the times through low key satire.⁵⁶

In April of 1973, among the many comments on the increasing audience for comedies and musicals, one critic stated, "Curiosamente todos los hombres de teatro coinciden en las causas: se le está dando a la gente lo que ésta pedía a gritos",⁵⁷ that was, entertainment providing escape from the daily drama of a society polarised to an extreme: "It (drama) was found everywhere in daily life: in divided families, in discussion on buses, in union meetings, in factory production committees, at massive street demonstrations pro or against the government."⁵⁸ In Manizales, in the discussion quoted above, Sergio Vodánović talked of the social significance of light

theatre as a fact of life in a society where theatre "está hecho normalmente para la burguesía y ... la burguesía decide en un momento no querer saber más de ese problema que está viviendo - muy serio y duro para ellos - y entonces busca la evasión y ésa es una forma también de representar un aspecto social: indicar hasta donde existe la gravedad del problema chileno que fuerza a evadirse de él en un momento determinado".⁵⁹ Perhaps the middle class did tend to flee dramatic presentations of their hoped for demise, but also, as we have seen, many plays were pitched at the most simplistic level, paternalistically directed at "teaching" the "new" working class audience. I suspect that a comment like, "se dan puras obras para rotos" should not be taken flippantly in the context, and that it reflects a sense of being insulted not by the overt assaults, but by the cultural and intellectual level of many plays.

For a variety of reasons no new dramatists appeared during this period. Those, such as Miguel Littin and Raúl Ruiz, who had shown promise, turned to the rising film industry as a more effective way of reaching a large audience. Others, like Víctor Torres, who was for a time regarded as the up-and-coming dramatist of the left, dedicated their energies to political propaganda (Torres' Los desterrados, dealing with poverty and deprivation in a nitrate mine of the north was presented by DETUCH in 1973. Its propagandistic level confounded hopes in him as a promising new dramatist). And from 1970 onwards the silence of the University dramatists can be explained in political terms as part of the conflict between "old" and "new": the majority of dramatists, by virtue of their social extraction, were "viejos", that is, they were "engendrados en el seno de la sociedad burguesa", while the "new man" was, if not a worker, "liberado material y espiritualmente de la esclavitud capitalista".⁶⁰ Of the

"old" dramatists it is Jorge Díaz who most closely identified with the process of reform (despite having taken up residence in Spain) and it is he who has best expressed the dilemma of the bourgeois playwright:

No cabe duda que el movimiento revolucionario, que se está dando en las fábricas y en el campo, lo está llevando el pueblo y no la gente de teatro, aunque está alineada en la izquierda. Esta clase media a la que yo pertenezco, estos dramaturgos e intelectuales de universidad están siendo rebasados por el fenómeno y se encuentran un poco mudos, simpatizando con el movimiento pero no siendo ellos los voceros autorizados. La denuncia la ha llevado, en todos los gobiernos del mundo, la burguesía de formación universitaria. Esa era una misión para nosotros clarísima ya que el obrero no podía hacerlo por no tener los medios, lenguaje o lo que sea. En el proceso chileno nuestro papel existe y es fundamental, pero cuesta mucho adaptarse y descubrirlo. Los dramaturgos chilenos están mudos en estos momentos porque se encuentran en un período de transición, porque tiene que aparecer gente nueva o porque la gente antigua tiene que tomar conciencia de una serie de fenómenos de clases que son inéditos.⁶¹

In the sixties bourgeois society was under attack, both from those who were of bourgeois extraction (Egon Wolff, Sergio Vodanović, Jorge Díaz), and from artistic sectors politically committed to socialism. There was a proliferation of plays dealing with marginal sectors: the works of Luis Alberto Heiremans, Aguirre's Los

papeleros, Requena's Pan caliente, Díaz's Topografía de un desnudo, among others, reflected the awareness of the changing social and political face of Chile, giving dramatic expression to the sectors who posed the greatest threat to the bourgeois capitalist world, and often openly inciting rebellion. The period 1970-1973 was ostensibly the realisation of the threat of invasion by these sectors, the marginals, metaphorically inhabitants of the other side of the river in Wolff's vivid portrayals of the bourgeois fear of the destruction of their status quo. In theatre it was proletarian expression that flourished in the Popular Unity period, while the middle class dramatist, in general sympathetic to reform, if not aligned with Popular Unity, had nothing to say. But, in society as a whole, substantial sectors of the middle classes feared the consequences of the "invasion" of Communism and were not struck dumb. Neither were they paralysed like Wolff's Eva. They invited and supported the military coup of September 1973.

6. After the coup

The development of theatre since 1973 must be studied in the context of the wider social, economic and political implications of the Pinochet regime's policies. Above all the new regime sought to "stabilise the country", it "sought to impose a new discipline on the social body, one ... supposed to rectify previous trends and disorders".⁶² The sectors that would be worst hit by the measures for political stabilisation and the free market economic policies had to be controlled adequately so as not to provoke a "premature reversal of the policies". The previous trends of increased participation by

the lower sectors recently incorporated in the political process were halted through brutal repression. According to the military discourse the country was in a state of siege with internal war being waged against the Marxist enemy. For the new regime this was a period of purging, of cleansing and healing of society, institutions were to work in function of national security, and "la tranquilidad pública" became the main justification for repression.

Universities were subjected to a process of counter-reform. Rectors, formerly elected by the staff and students, were dismissed and military rectors appointed; University departments were closed down to allow the expulsion of students and staff of dubious loyalties and to eliminate Marxist courses; students' unions and assemblies were banned. All means of communication connected to the previous Government were closed and the "normal expression of dissidence as is necessary in a democracy" was annihilated.⁶³ Suspected left wing books were burnt in an "open, indiscriminate, brutal and often tragi-comic" way.⁶⁴ Actors, directors and dramatists were imprisoned and often later exiled and blacklists were drawn up to prevent subversive elements from appearing on television.⁶⁵ All the above measures were a means of wiping images of the recent past from the collective memory. The journalistic term "apagón cultural" was coined and soon became the most common way of explaining the immediate effects of the coup on the arts.

The University theatres were closed or restructured. The Teatro de la Universidad de Concepción was levelled on the day of the coup and closed in 1976 as a result of its long connections with amateur theatre and political organisations in the area. In Santiago DETUCH was closed for a period of six months, the majority of the staff and students were expelled and when it reopened it was as the Compañía

Nacional de Teatro, with a programme approved by the supreme authorities of the University and not, as before, by the members of the department. Its very name, changed again in 1976 to the Teatro Nacional Chileno, is indicative of the role it was now to play, that of an official organ, producing works with an educational value and providing productions of works on the school curriculum.

In the Catholic University the pattern is similar, if somewhat less marked. Again, there was a move away from the multi-disciplinary approach; EAC was closed in 1976, matriculation for the drama school frozen, and the Escuela de Teatro, Cine y Television took its place. This, in its turn, was eventually divided in 1978, one part becoming the school of drama and the other the department for cinema and television. In both Universities a process of "autofinanciamiento" made a big impact on the way the theatres were run and the plays produced, since they could no longer rely on government subsidies, which had formerly guaranteed runs for even the most unsuccessful productions. Now they began to cater for a captive audience of secondary school pupils whose presence was guaranteed on recommendation from the Education Department. The lack of finance meant, furthermore, that the Universities were unable to carry on with much of the research they had done before and were equally unable to provide support for festivals of amateur theatre. In this way, and with the closure of the majority of provincial University theatres, the role these institutions played in promoting the "ambiente teatral" was sadly diminished.

The University theatres turned to the classics. In 1974 the Catholic University offered two Golden Age dramas, Lope de Vega's El Pastor Lobo and Calderón de la Barca's La vida es sueño. Neither choice was gratuitous. El Pastor Lobo was described by Juan Andrés

Piña as "El encuentro y enfrentamiento del mundo del mal y del bien. El cordero y el lobo. Dios y el Demonio luchando a punta de espada sobre el escenario, en una época o tiempo mítico".⁶⁶ And La vida es sueño was an eloquent call for liberty and justice through Calderón's classic drama of the dilemma of free will and predestination and the illusory qualities of freedom and being.

In the University of Chile the productions included Orfeo y el desodorante by the neglected Chilean dramatist, José R. Morales, Tom Stoppard's Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead, both in 1974, Buenaventura by Luis Alberto Heiremans and Bodas de sangre by García Lorca in 1975. TEKNOS, before its disappearance in 1976, produced mostly classics (Bodas de Fígaro by Beaumarchais, La viuda astuta by Goldoni, The Taming of the Shrew), with the exception of Fernando Cuadra's La familia de Marta Mardones.

This "boom de los clásicos"⁶⁷ began to cause concern when, in 1976, Don Juan Tenorio was presented by the University of Chile and El Burlador de Sevilla was produced by the Catholic University. By this time those who had welcomed the initial proliferation of the classics as a return to the roots of international drama and an attempt to "rescatar los valores permanentes que perviven en ellas"⁶⁸ now saw it as a sign of decadence, arising from the fact that, in the circumstances, the performance of accepted foreign drama was the only sure way of financing University theatres as official enterprises. Obviously Lucho Córdoba could not resist making his views on the matter known, for in the "year of the Don Juans" he produced a simple farce called Don Juan, el Rasca ("The Mangy Don Juan"). Before turning to independent theatre, I want to look briefly at the nature of the two original Chilean works produced in University theatre between 1973 and 1976.

José R. Morales' Orfeo y el desodorante o el último viaje a los infiernos, a modern interpretation of the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, is a fable of the disorientation of modern man, lost in a world of consumer goods, of things that ultimately annihilate the human being, reducing him/her to yet another object. The hell into which Orpheus descends in search of Eurydice, vaporised in an advertisement for a deodorant that would rid the user for ever of the need to bathe, is an immense factory manufacturing consumer goods for man's every need. When he finds Eurydice, Orpheus forfeits the right to take her out of hell, not by looking back at her, but by reciting the love letters he had written her, thus looking back to a prohibited past filled by the senses, not by things. Eurydice, however, proposes the transference of hell to earth where, she realises, a far superior infernal kingdom has been created by man, seemingly intent on destroying earth in the quest for a material paradise. Back on earth, Orpheus finds that his exploits in hell have been marketed into a huge musical hit. The myth is distorted as part of the publicity campaign, and Orpheus is murdered by his fans, becoming another victim of the advance of hell on earth, the consumer society.

Morales creates a vision of a world in which "El consumo es doble ... de objetos y de ideologías".⁶⁹ Human kind is lost in a world where publicity promotes goods, where propaganda promotes ideas as easily digestible ideologies, and where success and efficiency in promoting this double consumerism override concepts of truth and reality. He has created an astute comment on consumerism, one which, written in 1974, anticipated the preoccupation with the consumer boom among other national dramatists of a few years later. But like most of his plays, it received neither popularity nor critical acclaim.

Fernando Cuadra's La familia de Marta Mardones has a curiously dated feel about it, reminiscent as it is of the early work of the University dramatists or the radio serials of the fifties. Marta Mardones is the epitome of the strong Chilean middle class housewife, the benign matriarch, ruling the roost at home, living only for the well-being of her family. Her husband is the extreme of the ineffectual male who generally accompanies such a woman: he is an invalid, racked with resentment and guilt, who ends his useless life at her side by committing suicide. Her children look to the mother for support in all their problems, but nevertheless, they must leave the roost in order to establish their own lives and identities. Through thick and thin Marta Mardones never loses her strength, founded on the force of her female role as the centre of her family. The play was made into a television serial and provoked a certain amount of debate, but essentially it is a return to the living room melodrama, and a forceful reiteration of traditional Chilean middle class values as guarded and transmitted by the mother.

In independent theatre the initial period, between 1973 and 1976, was of disarticulation, the so-called "apagón cultural". While there was a great deal of activity, still little new drama of note was produced. The reorganisation of the University theatres prompted many of those expelled to create new groups, most of which did not survive, but some of which, Imagen, Le Signe, Los Comediantes, achieved some stability by at first performing works from the modern international repertoire. With the exception of Ictus, Chilean drama was represented by the ever-present Córdoba-Leguía and Vargas-Durante companies, and light comedy by such as Miguel Frank, Silvia Piñeiro and Kanda Jaque. There was a surge in the number of children's plays, in the café-concert, which evolved towards a more élitist role, and

in the number of musicals. By the mid seventies, international shows were imported, like consumer goods, lock, stock and barrel from abroad.⁷⁰ They responded to a type of spectacular that involved "consumo sin expresión", and found their audience among the richer sectors of the community. While musicals had begun to come into position during 1973, by the mid seventies, with their identification with the consumer boom, they were seen as a "símbolo masivo, comercial, de la cultura oficial",⁷¹ expensive, foreign and, above all, politically clean.

Censorship worked during this period on the impetus of fear. Two groups, the Teatro del Angel and Aleph, tried to adapt to the new circumstances before their respective exiles. In 1974 Alejandro Sieveking presented Cama de batalla, which he has called "la obra más confusa de mi vida". It revolved around "una pareja capitalista que había creado un monstruo, un hijo imperfecto que había recibido un golpe misterioso".⁷² This crude and somewhat confused allegorical style, relying on the evocation of the accepted source of evil, capitalism, and on miserable puns, is symptomatic of the degree of disorientation experienced by authors who wished to voice their dissent, but who did not have sufficient time to develop an adequate language of opposition. While on a tour of Latin America in 1974 the group decided to go into exile in Costa Rica, where they stayed until 1984.

A more dramatic example of this initial lack of sophistication was the case of the group Aleph who, on returning from a period in France, attempted the first satire on the coup in Y al principio existía la vida (1974), in which one scene depicts the captain of a sinking ship going down with his crew while declaring that the fight will go on. It was impossible to miss the analogy with Allende's last

moments when he broadcast to the nation from the bombarded Moneda palace. The authorities took such violent exception to the play that the theatre was raided and the actors imprisoned and then sent into exile.⁷³ Experiences such as these heightened the degree of self-censorship and warned other groups of the consequences of politically subversive theatre.

The experience of Ictus illustrates the apparent inconsistencies in the methods of repression. While the group was blacklisted from appearing on television, Tres noches de un sábado was the only production to continue uninterrupted throughout the whole period. One reason was their distance from overt political commitment to the "proceso chileno". During the previous period they had been accused in an article in La Quinta Rueda, "¿Dónde está la 'cuestión social'?", as showing "una marginación absoluta de lo que importa alucidar en el Chile de hoy" and were chastised as being among those "simpáticos coloraditos" who serve easy works on a plate to their audience.⁷⁴ This was a predictably partisan comment in the atmosphere of Popular Unity and completely ignored the popularity of the group. But more important contributory factors to the group's continuing activity were, firstly, the prestige that Ictus had won in Chile and Latin America and, secondly, the strong identification with the social and political preoccupations and aspirations of the Chilean middle classes. Herein lies much of the logic of censorship since 1973 : Ictus was banned from television and access to a mass audience with its satirical weekly programme, but the middle class theatre-going audience is a tiny minority and deemed to be less of a risk. Furthermore, their productions are, to a large extent, regarded as exhibition pieces by the regime who can point to them as proof of the freedom of expression in the country.⁷⁵ As we shall see, Ictus, using

the special space they occupy, have played a vital role in pushing the boundaries of critical theatre since 1973.

Given the circumstances of violent repression of political grassroots movements, amateur and workers' theatre, with its strong dependence on these sectors, was silenced immediately after the coup. It began to emerge again, starting in concentration camps⁷⁶ all over the country and around solidarity organisations often linked with the Church which, in the vacuum of political activity, became the mouthpiece of the conscience of the country in the face of the repression. Since 1974 student theatre could boast strong amateur groups in the Faculty of Medicine in Santiago, where one of the best new playwrights, Marco Antonio de la Parra, began his career, moving later to the professional stage. In 1978 the Agrupación Cultural Universitaria of the University of Chile⁷⁷ held the first of five Festivals of University theatre, notably with no connections with other amateur theatre. The winning work was Baño a baño, a collective creation on the subject of power and domination, relying on the grotesque and the absurd to convey an image of decadence and stagnation in an authoritarian society. It was a work that could not have been performed outside the rarefied atmosphere of University theatre. Indeed, the following year there was an unsuccessful attempt to stop the festival.⁷⁸

In 1981 an Encuentro de Teatro Poblacional, organised by CENECA, brought shanty-town groups together. The themes dealt with in the works presented are ones that have also proven magnetic in professional theatre over the last few years: "Los contenidos de sus creaciones teatrales se centran en las conductas y relaciones humanas que son tratadas a través de la presentación de seres marginales, habitantes de un mundo deshumanizado donde las relaciones sociales se

encuentran deterioradas, particularmente aquellas que se refieren al ámbito laboral y familiar como consecuencia de la cesantía, la drogadicción, el machismo y el alcoholismo."⁷⁹

Until 1976 the "cleansing" of the stage was, on the whole, effective. Apart from self-censorship the main impediment to freedom of expression, with only a few exceptions, has been economic in nature. In November 1974, the 1935 theatre law was repealed and in a new law theatre became subject to VAT of 22% on total box office takings. Companies can gain exemption from paying the tax only if a government commission classifies their work as of high cultural value. University theatres, by their very nature as educational institutions, are exempt, and companies that present works included in the school literature curriculum can also be exempted from tax for the duration of the run. Although decisions seem to be arbitrary (some works have been given exemption for a period only to find that it is refused the next season), they do show a certain logic, and complaints fall on deaf ears: "...una obra para ser auspiciada, debe contener 'valores positivos' y no atacar al régimen: 'Que haya crítica está bien, pero no crítica subvencionada...Los teatros no deben creer que la exención del IVA es un derecho; es sólo una concesión de gracia del ministerio para ayudar a financiar espectáculos de calidad'."⁸⁰

The transparent logic of censorship revealed itself again in 1978. The theatre of the Catholic University had turned once more to national dramatists with two works by Egon Wolff, Kindergarten (1977) and Espejismos (1978). In June 1978 it was ready to open with Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido by Marco Antonio de la Parra. The play takes place in a traditional old Santiago café, El Torres, formerly patronised by the ruling élite, but now closed to the public for an

unspecified length of time for lack of customers, reflecting the decline of the role of the old regime. It is a tale of a dying regime governed by a curious sect to which the waiters belong, and informed by values that are more appropriate to the turn of the century than to the present day. Even from this brief outline, the potential for its interpretation as political satire is evident. The play was banned by the University authorities the day before the premiere. In explaining the decision, the acting rector was adamant that the ban was not political in nature. The reasons given were its "vulgarity" (the censors counted the use of fifty "chilenismos", and claimed inaccurately that one of the characters was a prostitute) and "low cultural level", both of which made the work unsuitable for a student audience.⁸¹ Nevertheless, the play was mounted with only minor changes in the cast when it was taken over by the group Imagen and, partly because of the controversy surrounding the play, it was a huge success.⁸²

Around 1976 groups like Imagen, made up of ex-University professionals most of whom had been expelled after the coup, began to turn to original Chilean drama. When the group was formed in 1974 it found financial support from the Chile-France Institute, with whom they made an agreement by which they would perform modern French language drama as a way of introducing it to the Chilean public, and in return they would have the use of the Institute theatre.⁸³ Imagen ran into problems, however, when, in 1977, an international boycott of the Chilean stage meant that playwrights would not give permission for their work to be performed in Chile as a protest against the conditions of dictatorship in the country.⁸⁴ Unexpectedly, the most direct form of censorship had come from dramatists abroad, "sympathetic" to the cause of freedom of expression. Faced with this

obstacle, the group turned to original Chilean plays, the first of which was Te llamabas Rosicler (1976) by Luis Rivano.

Te llamabas Rosicler takes place in 1963 in an old mansion in the formerly aristocratic area of Santiago. The house is now diminished in value due to the exodus of the aristocracy and the Military School to the "barrio alto"; it is now converted into flats, inhabited by tenants who, like the mansion, have seen better days. Through the relations of domination, submissiveness, deceit and pride that unite the protagonists we learn of their past glories and aspirations in contrast with their present demoralised state, which grows as the play continues until each one loses even the possibility of indulging in impossible dreams. The central motifs of nostalgia and decaying ideals are symbolised in the house, and in the tango of the title, each of which represents the hope of renewed purpose in life. Rosicler (a stage name after the tango of the title) dreams of a return to her musical career on the stage, while her partner, Mario, dreams of buying the house, thus saving it from demolition. Both fail and finally each becomes an unbearable mirror of the other's failure. The house, symbol of the old order, will be demolished. The house, thus, can be read as a metaphor for the impossibility of recreating a bygone and obsolete age, and as a comment on the perceived aim of the regime to do just that. After this production Imagen has produced only original Chilean works, which we will study in the remaining chapters.

Sporadic outbursts of violent censorship do occur. One example was the case of Hojas de Parra (1977) by José Manuel Salcedo and Jaime Vadell, with texts by the poet Nicanor Parra, presented by La Feria, a group that had formed after a split with Ictus.⁸⁵ The play, performed in a marquee the group erected in a middle class district

of Santiago, is set in a circus run by an enterprising Empresario who rents it out for different functions. In the course of the play he rents his circus to a man who pays to make "Una declaración relámpago del candidato a la Presidencia de la República", Don Nadie, to the "Sociedad de Mantención del Recuerdo Eterno de los Poetas Muertos y Vivos", and he does business with a "Contrabandista" whose merchandise is Chilean goods, which, he warns his customers, are becoming increasingly difficult to buy. From the beginning of the play the circus is being filled with white crosses as the nearby cemetery encroaches on their space, until audience and performers alike are surrounded by the dead. The Empresario, never allowing a business opportunity to pass, rents himself out to perform the funeral services that also take place in his circus.

The succession of scenes form an easily identifiable parade of the most significant results of military rule: Don Nadie is a creation of the "receso político"; Chilean goods are interpreted as the contraband of the seventies in the full flush of the boom of imported consumer goods; the repression of the arts is seen as a way of wiping clean the collective memory of potentially subversive expressions; and, most blatantly, the crosses are a veritable invasion of symbols of violent political repression. The advance of the cemetery is an ironic contradiction of the meaning of the circus and by extension, of the meaning of the very theatre, La Feria, since it is a negation of the community act of attending a form of entertainment: "'Feria' es sinónimo de bullicio, de intercambio, de movilización de gente, y al mismo tiempo se acerca a lo que es el teatro en lo que tiene de transhumante, efímero, cambiante."⁸⁶

There was an outcry in the press among critics who "deplored" the play as a vehicle for an anti-government message.⁸⁷ Neither did

the military miss the subversive tone of the play, and regarded the massive audiences such a production was attracting as a danger to national security: in the week and a half that the teatro-circo survived there was an audience of over 6000. It was closed twice for health inspection (the old faithful of guises for politically motivated closures), and after ten days the marquee was burned down by an unidentified group during the curfew. The incident is relevant on two counts. Firstly, there seems to have been little effort to disguise the critical commentary on contemporary Chile, a measure of the level of disorientation with regard to the boundaries of freedom of expression. Secondly, it underlines the logic of the regime's attitude to freedom of expression: theatre is not touched as long the audience is small and politically irrelevant. La Feria took this into account with their next play, Bienaventurados los pobres (1977), a chronicle of the long relationships between the state and various élites, ending with a homage to Padre Hurtado⁸⁸ as an obvious comment on the renewed protagonistic role that the Church has played in the protection and succour of the poor. This was mounted under the auspices of two private institutions (CENECA and Fundación Civitas), but the group over-whitewashed their image, publicity was low-key, there was no press coverage, and as a result it was a financial failure. La Feria were still to find a good balance.

Despite these setbacks, and because of the regime's view of theatre as an art for an élite, circumstances have contrived to make theatre a major form of comment on the dictatorship. Its very immediacy makes it more powerful than poetry or the novel, and the only art with comparable qualities is song. Also, censorship is enforced with far greater rigour in the press and the media as a whole. Therefore, for example, in 1985, when there was a prolonged

state of siege, opposition newspapers and magazines were either silenced or had to submit every edition for prior censorship, but in the theatres of Santiago the majority of the successes on stage were of an overtly political nature and attracted fairly large audiences during long runs. There was a definite revitalisation in theatre starting in 1976, and the homogeneity of theme prompted some critics to talk of a movement.⁸⁹ It is always problematic to talk of movements, but it is clear that the major preoccupation was the impact of the regime's policy on the lower sectors. Groups responded to the need to confront their audience with the reality experienced by many people living in the same city, but whose misery was obscured by the continuing prosperity of the middle and upper classes, by propaganda and by the difficulties involved in journalistic reporting of the same issues, which would be censored as subversive and a danger to national security. The success of these productions suggests a degree of maturity in dealing with difficult social problems on stage, and revealed shifts in the nature of censorship. Los payasos de la esperanza, for example, lost a potential audience because it was advertised in terms that made it sound politically suspect and its small audience was gathered in parishes and solidarity organisations. Tres Marías y una Rosa, on the other hand, attracted a far greater audience (over 40,000), for the group went about advertising it in a different way, and for their part the censors did not make the mistake of providing free publicity through repression.⁹⁰

In previous sections I have outlined the main thematic trends in Chilean drama since the advent of the University generation, and have shown the responses of theatre to periods of political and social change. Since 1941 the theatre in Chile has been a constantly

developing art. The spectre of a "crisis" is periodically evoked by critics who complain of the irrelevance to contemporary Chile, the small numbers of dramatists and the small audience. Yet theatre is dynamic and versatile, the proof being that one of the richest periods has been 1976-1980, in years of dictatorship. It would seem that this has a lot to do with the rearticulation of the role of the dramatist. In 1976, when new works began to appear, Ramón Núñez saw it as the awakening from a ten year siesta.⁹¹ Some, using a purely political frame of referene, would call this view reactionary: did the big sleep not begin in 1973 with the overthrow of democracy? The fact remains, however, that, while previous years had yielded a great deal of activity and theorising, no new dramatists came forth. The bourgeois playwright, mostly of the university generation, was on his or her way out, and collective creation was on its way in. If ever there was a "crisis" in Chilean theatre it was during those years: theatre needs the triangle of the author, the actor and the audience to survive, but by the early seventies there were few dramatists and audiences were diminishing, and only actors could be found in abundant supply. In these terms 1973 served to deepen the "crisis", which was exacerbated by the conscientious evasion of all things Chilean. In the plays whose theme is work, the groups worked through a combination of collective creation and in collaboration with a dramatist, and this has proved a profitable way of working.

Another reason for the vitality of the late seventies is the degree of agreement between audience and group about the role theatre should play. This was seen as one of exploiting the relative freedom from censorship and theatre's potential as the most immediate form of communication, in order to unveil the effects, both sociological and psychological, of the dictatorship. New drama responded to what the

public "pedía a gritos", that was, information in the vacuum created by the regime. By 1980, however, groups that had provided this type of theatre began to look for new themes, new approaches and an innovative "lenguaje teatral" that would free them from the impositions of being social commentators. While they do constantly search for new forms of expression, the continuing similarity and transparency of the codes used and of the theatrical language employed suggests a basic sharing of perceptions of the development of society. These are also shared by the audience, and a complicity is evident: the audience is rarely shocked, and it ultimately forms a whole with the group against the antagonist outside, beyond the confines of the theatre.

Constantly we shall see that the meanings of words are turned on their heads, as the manicheistic view represented in many of the plays in the 1968 to 1973 period finds a perfect counterpoint in the regime's interpretation of the enemy within. Black has become white and white has become black. Complicity with a well defined audience (middle class in search of politically dissident views) creates a none too subtle coded language: references to falls ("caídas") alert the audience to the collective hope for the fall of the regime; the seasons rotate as symbols of death and renewal; dialogues are littered with swift allusions to taboo subjects and often to a "war"; doors remain closed; houses fall to rack and ruin; rituals take over from normal social intercourse. And few plays are free from references to the consumer society. Again concepts are turned on their heads: North American goods were, in the sixties, branded by the dominant ideology as symbols of economic and cultural dependency, whereas now, for the new dominant ideology, they are symbols of progress. The colour television, to take the best example, in some

cases represents a vehicle for indoctrination, but in others it represents the desperate need to possess a symbol of belonging to society, and becomes a negation of marginality. Yet the best theatre of the period has transcended simplistic codes; symbols, words, meanings, are constantly shifting, invested as they are with multiple levels of interpretation.

Notes to Chapter One

1. Exhaustive accounts of the birth of the University theatres can be found in Julio Durán Cerda, "El teatro chileno de nuestro días", in Teatro chileno contemporáneo (Selección y prólogo de Julio Durán Cerda) (México: Editorial Aguilar, 1970), 9-57; Elena Castedo Ellerman, El teatro chileno de mediados del siglo XX (Santiago: Editorial Andrés Bello, 1982); Teodosio Fernández, El teatro chileno contemporáneo (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1982); Carlos Ochsenius, Teatros universitarios: 1940-1973 (Santiago: CENECA, 1982); Rebeca Torres Rivera, El teatro chileno desde 1941 hasta 1981, Ph.D thesis, University of California, Riverside, 1983.
2. Jorge Sánchez V., "A cuarenta y un años del teatro experimental", Atenea, 446 (1982), p. 151.
3. Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, "El teatro chileno actual y la influencia de las universidades como sus fuerzas propulsoras", Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía XXII, 1 (1972), 18-29.
4. Ricardo A. Latcham, "Psicología del caballero chileno", in El carácter chileno, Hernán Godoy ed. (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1976), p. 372. The article was originally published in the Revista Índice, 1,4 (1930).
5. Hernán Godoy, La cultura chilena. Ensayo de síntesis y de sociología (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1984). See Chapter X, "La hegemonía mesocrática y las corrientes modernas 1930-1950", pp.491-532.
6. See Mariana Aylwin et. al., Chile en el siglo XX (Santiago: Ediciones Emisión, 1985), p. 213.
7. Hugo Montes and Julio Orlandi, Historia y antología de la literatura chilena (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1965), p. 287.
8. In the first decades of the century, there had been a large amount of drama, often written by people who were journalists, poets, novelists. A few names stand out from the period, however, namely, Eduardo Barrios (1884-1936), Antonio Acevedo Hernández (1886-1962), Armando Moock (1894-1942) and German Luco Cruchaga (1894-1936). Luco Cruchaga was a costumbrist dramatist who, in plays like La viuda de Apablaza provided deeper psychological studies of rural life than the ordinary costumbrist. The other three are best described by Durán Cerda: "Eduardo Barrios nos descubrió la burguesía santiaguina, Acevedo Hernández hace lo propio con los sectores más desposeídos; Armando Moock, con su agilidad de virtuoso de la escena, nos muestra la aldea chilena y luego ambientes más refinados." See Julio Durán Cerda, Panorama del teatro chileno 1841-1959 (Estudio crítico y antología) (Santiago: Editorial del Pacífico, 1959), p.62. For a comprehensive review of theatre in Chile since Independence see Raúl Silva Castro, Panorama literario de Chile (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1961), pp.394-432.

9. Julio Durán Cerda, "Actuales tendencias del teatro chileno", Revista interamericana de bibliografía, XIII, 2, (1963), p.166.
10. Raúl Silva Castro, "Paradoja sobre las clases sociales en la literatura", Atenea, 2 (1930), p. 214.
11. Julio Durán Cerda, "El teatro chileno de nuestros días", p. 14.
12. See Mario Cánepa Guzmán, Historia del teatro chileno (Santiago: Editorial Universidad Técnica del Estado, 1974), p.179.
13. The wars in Europe brought other benefits to the Chilean arts. In 1940 the company Ballet de Kurt Joss visited the country, and by 1946 the Cuerpo de Ballet de la Universidad de Chile had been created with the involvement of some of the members of Ballets Joss. Also in 1940, in the "época brillante" in the Universities, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Chile was founded (1941). See Hernán Godoy, La cultura chilena, pp. 508-514.
14. See Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, p.19.
15. For descriptions of these aims see Julio Durán Cerda, "El teatro chileno de nuestros días", pp. 17-23, and Jorge Sánchez V., "A cuarenta y un años del teatro experimental", p.153.
16. Julio Durán Cerda, "El teatro chileno de nuestros días", p.24.
17. Raúl Silva Castro, Panorama literario de Chile, p.429. Other Chilean works to be mounted were, Como en Santiago (1875) by Daniel Barros Grez, El tribunal de honor (1877) by Daniel Caldera, El jefe de la familia (1858) by Alberto Blest Gana.
18. See Teresa Cajiao Salas, Temas y símbolos en la obra de Luis Alberto Heiremans (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1970), p.173.
19. For information about Lucho Córdoba see María de la Luz Hurtado, "Teatro y sociedad en la mitad del siglo XX: El Sainete", Apuntes, 92 (1984), 39-47. Lucho Córdoba was well regarded as a director. In 1980, at the age of 78, he was asked to direct the vaudeville Hotel Paradiso, by Georges Feydeau, for the Teatro Nacional Chileno (ex-DETUCH). A year later he was called again, this time to direct the classical work Lisistrata, but he died soon after its debut. See Rebeca Torres Ribera, pp.183-84.
20. Willis Knapp Jones, "Chile's Drama Renaissance", Hispania, XLIV (1961), p. 94.
21. In 1961 of 26 plays produced 12 were of national origin, while in 1969 of the 24 produced this was the case of only 6. While some plays attract audiences of up to and over 60,000,

the average is much less than this, about 10,000.

22. Orlando Rodríguez B., "Realidad y perspectivas del teatro chileno", CEREN, Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Nacional, 2 (1970), p. 61.
23. Carlos Ochsenius, Teatros universitarios: 1941-1973 (Santiago: CENECA, 1982), p. 138.
24. "Huaso" is the name given to the rural people of the central valley of Chile and is the adjective used to describe the form of Chilean they speak and all that pertains to them.
25. Hans Ehrmann, "Theatre in Chile: A Middle Class Conundrum", The Drama Review, 14, 2 (1970), p. 83. He reports outrage from the Opus Dei, attack on provincial tours, tear gas and stink bombs in Santiago on the opening night, demonstrations, masses to ask divine forgiveness (pp. 82-3). The play was a great success, with an audience of around 41,500. As the present regime has learned, repression in the theatre is often counterproductive. See also Louis P. Falino, "Theatre Notes from Chile", Latin American Theatre Review, 3, 2 (1970) 67-70.
26. The Christian Democratic government of Eduardo Frei undertook a land reform programme, based on the asentimiento, "the transitory cooperative ownership of an expropriated estate until further transfer of the land to its workers". See Markos J. Mamalakis, The Growth and Structure of the Chilean Economy. From Independence to Allende (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), pp.139-40. For the extreme left wing this was too slow, hence the comparison with 1934. See Mamalakis, pp.236-37.
27. The title and the political moral are taken from Ernesto "Che" Guevara's Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria. This play was intended as the University theatre's contribution to the Popular Unity campaign. See Teodosio Fernández, pp. 115-16.
28. Introduction to Los que van quedando en el camino (Santiago: Ediciones Mueller, 1970).
29. Raquel Cordero in interview with Edmundo Villarroel, "Expediente de jubilación para teatros universitarios", El Mercurio, 13 Nov. 1971.
30. "Un jardín no tan ideal", Ahora, 20 July, 1971.
31. "Primer estreno DETUCH: El jardín de los cerezos," Telecran, 23, July 1971.
32. Domingo Piga T., "El teatro popular: consideraciones históricas e ideológicas", in Popular Theater for Social Change in Latin America, ed. Gerardo Luzuriaga (University of California Los Angeles: UCLA Latin American Publications, 1978), p.9.

33. Sergio Vodanovic, Nos tomamos la universidad, in Teatro (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1972), p.74.
34. Tomas are illegal takeovers of land or factories. These escalated in the Allende years, taking on a dynamic that was outwith the control of the government. Experiences such as that of the Teatro Nuevo Popular were important indications of the way tomas had become autonomous from government control, for Teatro Nuevo Popular belonged to the more moderate Communist Party and tomas were often organised by the Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionario (MIR). Agitprop such as this fell on deaf ears.
35. Virginia Vidal, "Interesante experiencia: El Teatro Nuevo Popular", El Siglo, 18 May 1972.
36. In the Teatro de la Universidad de Concepción a five point programme was organised: touring the region with new works, and reaching new audiences; introducing unknown Latin American drama; inter-disciplinary research; a Taller Experimental to study new ways of representing the reality of workers of the south; and a programme of monitors associated with the already established programme of the Central Unica de Trabajadores (CUT).
37. "Acontecer penquista", Ahora, 13 Oct. 1971.
38. Orlando Rodríguez B., "Caminos nuevos en el Cuarto Festival Nacional del Teatro Aficionado e Independiente," Apuntes, 14 (1961), 1-5.
39. "Festival de Teatro Universitario-Obrero de la Universidad Católica" (ANTACH Document, 1968).
40. 1968: Festival Universitario Obrero. 1969: Primera Convención Nacional de Teatro Aficionado. 1970: Primer Festival Regional de Teatro Popular in Greater Santiago; Primer Festival Nacional de Teatro Aficionado, Temuco; Segundo Festival Nacional de Trabajadores y Universitarios. 1971: Segundo Festival Nacional. 1972: Tercera Jornada Nacional de Teatro Nacional, Coquimbo. May 1973, Asamblea General de Coordinadores; Primer Festival de Sketches.
41. "Informe Evaluativo y Apreciativo. Jornada Nacional de Teatro de Trabajadores y Estudiantes, Provincia de Coquimbo" (ANTACH Document, 1972).
42. Orlando Rodríguez B., "Notas sobre el teatro actual y el teatro popular", Primera Convención de Teatro Aficionado (ANTACH, 1969).
43. See Domingo Piga T., p. 9.
44. Sergio Vodanović, "El teatro que hace falta", Ahora, 10 Aug. 1971.
45. Sergio Vodanović in "10 críticos", Primer Acto, 161 (1973), p.42.

46. See the discussion of the relationship between Jorge Díaz and Ictus in Maneras de hacer y pensar el teatro en el Chile actual: Teatro Ictus, María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius (Santiago: CENECA, 1984), pp. 14-21. Also, José Monléon, "Diálogo con Jorge Díaz", Primer Acto, 69 (1965), 32-37.
47. "La Manivela" was important in the development of Ictus since the rigorous television schedule contributed to the perfection of their method of collective creation, and gave them access to a mass audience, calculated at one and a half million.
48. See Teatro Ictus, p.36.
49. Juan Andrés Piña, "El tema del trabajo humano en siete obras chilenas durante el autoritarismo" (Working paper, CENECA), p. 9.
50. See "Las Criadas", by Cyrano, Ultima Hora, 12 May 1972 and "Las sirvientas escandalizan a Santiago", Puro Chile, 7 May 1972.
51. Alejandro Sieveking, "Teatro chileno antifascista", in Primer coloquio sobre la literatura chilena (de la resistencia y el exilio, ed. Poli Délano (México: Editorial Universitaria Autónoma, 1980), p. 103.
52. María de la Luz Hurtado, La dramaturgia chilena: 1960-1970 (Santiago: CENECA, 1983), p.99.
53. "Aleph: Para atacar la injusticia y la frustración; para promover la lucha y la esperanza", in El teatro latinoamericano de creación colectiva, ed. Francisco Garzón Céspedes (La Habana: Casa de la Américas, 1978), pp.381-87.
54. "Antídoto contra la tensión política", Ercilla, 21 February 1973.
55. Paula, 21 Sept. 1973.
56. A quick glance at the titles gives an indication of the objects of their humour. Lucho Córdoba poked fun at the plight of the right wing, known as momios (mummies), in ¿Qué haremos con los momios? (1969), and at government bureaucracy in No me atropelle soy de la UNCTAD (1972). The UNCTAD is an ugly building in the centre of Santiago built in 1970 for a meeting of the United Nations Committee for Trade and Development. It then became the Gabriela Mistral house of culture and after the coup and the bombing of the presidential palace, La Moneda, it became the Diego Portales, the new seat of government. Américo Vargas conjured up images of comments on state intervention with Cabezas intervenidas by Max Regnier and Andrés Gillois, but although there were puns based on the over use of "intervenir" and "interventor", the play had nothing to do with the Chilean political situation. See "Cabezas Intervenidas", Plan, 31 May 1973.

57. "'Full' de público en el teatro", El Mercurio, 15 April 1973.
58. Hans Ehrmann, "Chilean Theatre 1971-73", Latin American Theatre Review, 7, 2 (1974), p. 43.
59. Sergio Vodanović, in "10 críticos", p.42.
60. La Revolución Chilena y los Problemas de la Cultura, p. 6.
61. "Otra vez con Jorge Díaz", Primer Acto, 153 (1973), p.60.
62. Alejandro Foxley, Latin American Experiments in Neo-Conservative Economics, (Berkeley. Los Angeles. London: University of California Press, 1983), p.1.
63. Ibid, p.15.
64. Jorge Edwards, "Books in Chile", Index on Censorship, No. 2 (1984), pp.20-23. One of the favourite examples of the absurd nature of book burning is the banning of a book on Cubism for fear that it had to do with the Cuban Revolution.
65. "¿Un teatro sin autores?", Las Últimas Noticias, 27 Dec. 1973. According to figures provided by the actors' trade union, SIDARTE, about 25% of actors went into exile and around 90% were unemployed immediately after the coup.
66. Juan Andrés Piña, "La vuelta a los clásicos", Mensaje, 239 (1975), p. 264
67. Juan Andrés Piña, "El boom de los clásicos", Mensaje, 253, (1976), 256-258.
68. Juan Andrés Piña, "La vuelta a los clásicos", p. 263.
69. Orfeo y el desodorante o el último viaje a los infiernos, in No son farsas. Cinco anuncios dramáticos (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1974), p.66.
70. The best examples have been The Fiddler on the Roof, presented by the Casino las Vegas, and Cabaret Bijou by Tomas Vidella, both of which had over 120,000 spectators.
71. María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius, "Transformaciones del teatro chileno en la década del setenta", p.31.
72. "Teatro chileno antifascista", p. 109.
73. See Ariel Dorfman, "El teatro en los campos de concentración: Entrevista a Oscar Castro", Araucaria de Chile, 6 (1979), 115-46.
74. José Rodríguez Elizondo, "¿Dónde está la 'cuestión social'?", La Quinta Rueda, Dec. 1972, pp. 12-13.

75. The members of Ictus voiced this opinion in a programme for the BBC. See Edward Goldwyn, "Chile's Forbidden Dreams: 'Dictatorship is not a political problem but a human problem'", The Listener, 7 June 1984, p. 9.
76. "The Theatre in Chile: Before the Coup and After", Theatre Quarterly, V, 20 (1976), 103-07. See also Sergio Céspedes, "Theatre in the Concentration Camps of Chile", Theatre Quarterly, VI, 24 (1976-77), 13-21.
77. ACU was formed in the University of Chile in 1977, originally with the name, Agrupación Folklórica Universitaria. It aimed to group workshops of different creative arts, and survived until about 1982 when, with the graduation of its founding members, it began to disintegrate. See Beatriz Duque Videla and María Verónica García Huidobro Valdés, El teatro aficionado universitario chileno (1968-1983): Un teatro alternativo, Tesis de Título, Escuela de Teatro, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1983, pp. 37-40.
78. See "ACU: El teatro universitario de hoy", in Seminario del teatro Chileno de la década del 80, eds. María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius (Santiago: CENECA, 1980), pp.176-78.
79. See El teatro aficionado universitario chileno (1968-1983): Un teatro alternativo, p. 9.
80. "Los estragos del IVA", Hoy, 14 Jan. 1981.
81. "Suspensión de obra teatral provoca polémica en la Universidad Católica", La Segunda, 28 June 1978.
82. "Cerrada ovación recibió estreno de Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido, Tercera de la Hora, 30 Oct. 1978.
83. The bilingual institutes played an important role in providing support for theatre and cultural groups after the coup.
84. See Maneras de hacer y pensar el teatro en el Chile actual: Teatro Imagen, María de la Luz Hurtado and José Roman (Santiago: CENECA, 1980), p.24. Chilean theatre was ostracised from the international theatre community until 1980, when it was reintegrated into the International Theatre Institute after five years absence.
85. See Maneras de hacer y pensar el teatro en el Chile actual: Teatro La Feria, María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius (Santiago: CENECA, 1979).
86. "Hojas de Parra: Después del café-teatro el teatro circo-poesía", El Cronista, 20 Feb. 1977.
87. "Temporal desata Hojas de Parra", Las Últimas Noticias 1 March 1977.

88. Padre Alberto Hurtado was well known for his left-wing ideas and for his support of the Popular Front Government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda. He had a great influence among the Catholic Youth of the country and became the Asesor Nacional para los Jóvenes de la Acción Católica. In his book ¿Es Chile un país católico? he exposed the suffering of the poorest sectors of the community and called for true Christian values among those who professed the Catholic faith. One of his most lasting achievements was the founding of the Hogar de Cristo, a charity that runs homes for old folk.
89. See Juan Andrés Piña, "Teatro chileno en la década del ochenta: desarrollo de un movimiento innovador" (Documento de Trabajo, Instituto de Estudios Humanísticos, Santiago 1982); Grinor Rojo, "Muerte y resurrección del teatro chileno: observaciones preliminares", Caravelle, 40 (1983), 67-81.
90. See Raúl Osorio, in Seminario: situación y alternativas del teatro nacional en la década del '80, pp. 105-08.
91. "Los directores ponen nota", El Mercurio, 29 December 1976.

CHAPTER TWO

FACING THE ISSUES: THE THEMES OF WORK AND MARGINALISATION

1. 1976: Socio-Economic Factors

The plays I will be dealing with in this chapter are: Pedro, Juan y Diego (1976), by Ictus and David Benavente; Los payasos de la esperanza (1977), by the group Taller de Investigación Teatral; Tres Mariñas y una Rosa (1979), also by the Taller de Investigación Teatral in conjunction with David Benavente.¹ These plays take place against the background of the effects of the regime's economic policies on the lower sectors of the community. By 1975 the official rate of unemployment had reached 15%.² The most obvious social indicators of the recession were deprivation and the ensuing "estrategias de supervivencia" (such as working in the informal sector, prostitution), high rates of drug abuse and alcoholism, migration, the break-up of families, and the growing number of communal dining rooms and organisations providing for the worst hit, many of these connected with the Church.³ In April 1975 the Government set up a scheme called the Programa de Empleo Mínimo (PEM) whose aim was to absorb 35,460 unemployed workers.⁴ It is in this scheme that the characters in Pedro, Juan y Diego are employed.

Throughout the play, the dialogue echoes the testimonies of people who experience this situation in real life, and insights are provided into the immediate resistance to a scheme that is seen to be an extreme form of exploitation and is known to be a Government ploy to doctor the unemployment figures, into the loss of dignity involved in their eventual recruitment, and into the demoralisation that

affects each character and that they try to numb through alcohol.

Los Payasos de la Esperanza introduces another aspect of the search for the opportunity to work: the role of unofficial aid organisations, especially the Church, to which the clowns of the title turn.⁵ Through the Church organisation, the unemployed clowns gain access to a potential new audience, the most deprived people in society, but this opportunity to display their talents proves to be illusory for the clowns' educational and cultural grounding is inadequate to enable them to provide the type of entertainment they intended: "El proyecto de trabajo que presentaran a la Vicaría tenía como objetivo llevar entretención didáctica a los niños de sus comedores infantiles. En realidad, por su misma trayectoria, los payasos tuvieron dificultades de integración al resto de los talleres."⁶

Tres Marías y una Rosa deals with the experience of arpilleristas, women who support their families by making arpilleras, tapestries made from old bits of cloth and wool, depicting their experience of life in present day Chile. It takes place in a workshop, and as the women discuss their work a whole array of problems they have to deal with is presented to the audience. In many respects it complements the other two plays, by giving a vision of how unemployment has affected the family structure, of how women see the changing role they have to play in families where the traditional head has had to migrate, has disappeared, or can offer no support at all to the household because of the total demoralisation caused by long term unemployment.

Both productions of the Taller de Investigación Teatral are the result of "participant observation". Working in close conjunction with the people who would later be represented on stage, the cast set

about "observing" them, their every move, gesture and unspoken thought, thus creating what some critics refer to as a less literary type of theatre in which the barely articulated impression is the means for communication of the central themes and preoccupations. The text is elaborated at the end, when the actors involved feel they have reached a stage of complete identification with the characters, aware of how they would act within the dramatic situation presented. The style is less verbose and explicative than that of traditional Chilean drama, and the spectator is left to create a personal picture of the lives of the protagonists outside the space on stage by piecing together the almost incidental allusions to the everyday problems they face.

2. Pedro, Juan y Diego: The Loss of the Male Discourse

Pedro, a "Maestro Albañil Primero", Juan, an ex-fruit and vegetable seller and Diego, an ex-civil servant, are all employed on the PEM on an estate, in the construction of a wall. Their work is badly supervised by an inspector who knows little of the trade, and hampered by the scarcity and poverty of the materials with which they have to work. Only Pedro, a builder by trade and proud of the tradition he belongs to, has the ability to carry out the work but, for this very reason, he is frustrated by the blatant bad management of the construction and by his sure knowledge that the wall is being built in the wrong position. They are accompanied by a dumb woman, María, who, they are told, lost her power of speech as a result of a fright she suffered two years previously. The first part sees them digging a hole in preparation for the construction of the wall, which

does not progress. At this stage the characters' communication is based on "pura palabrería",⁷ story-telling, fantasising, an indication of the superficial level of their identification with one another. In the second part, with the construction under way, they begin to grow together as a group, and as the wall nears completion their fantasising gives way to concrete memories of past achievements. But this is ultimately destroyed when, in conclusive proof of the worthlessness of their labour, the wall is demolished.

According to Benavente, the theme of Pedro, Juan y Diego is not work in itself, but "la dignidad del trabajo".⁸ This is brought out in the central metaphor of the wall, a monument both to the absurdity of the task they are given and the pride they take in building it. At the heart of the preoccupations gnawing away in the protagonists' minds is the fear of the loss of their identity in society, an identity lent them by the male role they traditionally play and founded on the ability to care for wife and family as provider and protector. Unemployment has pulled from under their feet the dignity they had found in the male role and the very legitimacy of their claim to it. Throughout the play the men demand to be accorded the recognition they deserve as workers and to be given a chance to regain the dignity, self-respect and respect of others that full-time employment had formerly meant to them, while, in contrast, their bosses remain stubbornly blind to what is essentially a moral and existential problem.

The central theme is developed as part of an ongoing, overtly antagonistic dialogue between the men and the bosses, based on the social truism that a man without a job has forfeited his claim to manhood. On one level this forms part of commonplace macho discourse, whereby every sign of weakness or lack of manliness is scoffed at

through gibes at gender and sexuality. These exchanges often mean very little, set as they are within the accepted code of macho banter, in which the protagonists verbally parade their virility and establish superiority. But on every level this superficial male discourse provides insights into how the characters interpret the male role in society and how they see it threatened.

Juan's present plight is the consequence of the death of his horse and working companion, Arturo, and the subsequent loss of his fruit cart. The horse's death he attributes to the loss of its virility and therefore of its will to live: "Se le jodió una bola y hubo que caparlo. Pa qué le digo lo que sufrió; si era muy hombre en los puros huesos quedó. Claro que me hechó la culpa a mí; por los malos tratos, la falta de mastique y la quiebra, decía. ¡Puras mentiras! Se jodió de puro afligido que estaba donde le cortara las bolas" (p.13). That tragedy was to foreshadow his own and he is constantly asserting himself to protect his threatened manhood. On the one hand, he is always to the fore in man's talk, ever ready to boast of his vast sexual experience and to cap one tall story with another. On the other, it is he who manifests the greatest truculence in his dealings with the bosses, challenging them with open displays of disrespect, demanding proper equipment and accusing them of dishonesty.

For Diego unemployment is a great blow to his self-esteem and he betrays the greatest insecurity with respect to the performance of the male role when he reveals that for the sake of his wife's peace of mind and his own credibility he has not told her about the loss of his job and, instead, has invented an office five-a-side football tournament to explain away his timetable and his aches and pains. For him, the PEM is a way of surviving until he sets up in the booming

importation business. He is an unusual candidate for this scheme, well educated, formerly a white-collar worker and briefly a University student, and for this reason he inspires a certain suspicion in the others who at one point believe he may be a newspaper reporter. In fact, he represents the depths of the recession in so far as he, who has far greater access to the modern job market, also finds himself excluded. Diego displays greater sensitivity to the problems of others and is less equipped to cope with the insults or inconsiderate treatment meted out at every turn. He shows the greatest, perhaps desperate, belief in the possibility of escape from the present situation. His constant companion is a suitcase full of books and Topogigio puppets for sale, evidence of the survival strategies he adopts, and it is he who presents wild but seemingly well-researched projects into the possibilities for informal business.

Because of the ineptitude of the management, it is Pedro who effectively directs the building of the wall. For him, the fact of working on such an ill-managed scheme in a menial job is an insult to his professional pride, since it throws contempt on the tradition he belongs to and completely disregards the value of his trade. However, he puts all his professional pride into the work and as the wall progresses he regains a sense of the dignity of the trade and tradition he belongs to:

DIEGO: ¿Y dónde aprendió el oficio?

PEDRO: Lo heredé de mi padre.

DIEGO: El se lo enseñó, querrá decir.

PEDRO: Lógico; y él lo heredó de su padre. (p.9)

Pedro alone has an idea of the historical significance of the trade they are all employed in and, like his father and grandfather before him, has the ability to pass it on to his unlikely apprentices. For this reason he is the most closely affected by the inconsistent handling of the building of the wall, is in closest harmony with the very idea of the realisation of the project and has the most to lose in terms of dignity and self-respect by the threatened destruction of his work.

Don Carlos, through his total, insulting disregard for the employees' desire to work - he calls them "sacrificados" -, questions the very essence of their identity. In its crudest form, this is made explicit in his attack on Juan's virility, that is, his ability to handle manual labour. On one hand this only reflects a level of the constant macho banter they indulge in (Juan, a few minutes later, returns with a run-of-the-mill taunt at Don Carlos' masculinity and only feels insulted when his mother is mentioned). On a more fundamental level, however, it is a deep insult which, in the final analysis, most affects Pedro, as can be seen towards the end of the play, when it is he who challenges the site Inspector. On this occasion, the latter bribes Pedro with a job on condition that he knock down the wall, and then informs him that the promised job will not materialise for a further two months, thus revealing a cynical disregard for the man's dignity and pride in his work.

PEDRO: ¿Cómo para cuándo sería eso?

INSPECTOR: Dos meses más.

PEDRO: Dos meses.

INSPECTOR: El tiempo se pasa volando.

PEDRO: Dígame una cosa oiga, ¿se me ven las pelotas

por debajo de los pantalones a mí? ¿Ud. cree que lo pueden pasar a llevar a uno, en su trabajo más encima, que es lo único que tiene?

INSPECTOR: Le estoy ofreciendo trabajo a cambio de botar una idiotez y se enoja más encima. (p.42)

It is no idle coincidence that the object of their labour is a wall. It is a metaphor for the great divide between the men's interpretation of their work and that of the employers. Related more widely to Chilean literature, it has connotations of a prison, of enclosure, ultimately of the protection of the rich from the lower classes.⁹ As the wall grows, the men's attachment to it grows accordingly while, in equal measure, their employers' attention to the quality of the work diminishes. The single most important fact about the wall is that it is always destined to be bulldozed down. In this respect, the builders' affinity with the wall is total. The audience is never allowed to doubt the ultimate fate of the wall: from the very first scene when Pedro threatens to leave the site on seeing the unintelligible plans, it is doomed to failure, and as Pedro, Juan y Diego toil on they are made all too aware that the only important thing is the "orden del día", i.e., to build any wall in order to have something to show at a proposed official visit of inspection. That the very idea of the wall is a mockery of the men's time and effort is amply illustrated in the following exchange when Diego, after being challenged about his right to work on the site, threatens to resign and prompts both Pedro's fierce pride in the quality of his skills and Don Carlos' determination that only the

"orden del día" has any validity:

JUAN: Apuesto que este viejo se portó mal con Ud.

DIEGO: No, se portó muy bien. Me refiero a otras personitas que no, que no se dan el lujo de comprender razones. Que les importa poco la dedicación que uno le pone al trabajo, por humilde que éste sea.

PEDRO: Eso está muy bien pero aguántese un segundito! Nosotros nos comprometimos a levantar esta pirca para mañana, ¿sí o no?

DIEGO: La pista se puso demasiado pesada aquí. Ud. vio lo que pasó.

PEDRO: Con mayor razón tenemos que construir la mejor pirca del mundo para demostrarles lo que somos capaces de hacer; pa mandar a los inspectores de espalda el loro cuando la vean.

D. CARLOS: No, no, no. Yo no estoy de acuerdo con eso.

PEDRO: ¿Cómo no va a estar de acuerdo?

D. CARLOS: ¡Qué tanta bolina con la mejor pirca del mundo! Lo único que necesitamos es que haya algo parado pa arriba el día de la inauguración y punto final. (p.34)

This exchange shows both the essence of the great divide the wall represents and how the building of the wall is synonymous with the rebuilding of the men's identity as workers. In the first act, when this identity was feeble and battered, the protagonists were to be seen digging a hole, a blatant symbol of futility and of their

essential invisibility. The hole had no purpose other than filling the time, as Pedro indicates when he reproaches Diego: "Lo dejan sólo y es capaz de hacer un hoyo hasta la China" (p.13). This symbolism is made more explicit later when Diego, proposing one of his money-making schemes, tells the others that "La única solución es inventar algo para ganar más plata y salir de este hoyo" (p.17): the hole, clearly, is both metaphorical and physical. And later, as they act out the adventures of "El Zorro", while Pedro childishly refuses to accept "death", Juan is irredeemably "killed" when he falls into the hole: "¡Este sí que está muerto!" (p. 26). In this light the fine wall they build stands as a true monument to the renewed visibility they have gained as workers. Pedro has made sure that the hole has been transformed into strong foundations so that the wall will stand as high as they can possibly make it:

PEDRO: No, no, no. Sígame edificando pa arriba Ud. no
 más, mientras más altura agarra la pirca, mejor
 D. CARLOS: No se vaya a mandar guardabajo no más.
 PEDRO: Pa eso la construí entrabá. (p.37)

The wall is built into the symbolic and physical structure of the play. When he tells Diego to build it as high as possible, Pedro is determining that its height will be the measure of their achievement and the proof of the impossibility of any dialogue between them and those on the other side, those who are blind to its significance in human terms.

As the object of their labour, the wall means different things for each of the protagonists, for each character relates to the work in different ways. Their individual identities emerge from the

attitude they have to the task and not, as in a typical psychological drama, from the relationships they create with each other. Thus Pedro emerges as an artisan, Diego as the dispossessed lower middle classes and Juan as the uneducated lumpen proletariat. Until a very late stage they remain as three totally different social types who fill the working hours with parallel monologues and very little genuine interest in the others.

By the end of the play the wall has been transformed in the men's imaginations into the Esmeralda, the warship Arturo Prat died defending during the War of the Pacific. This is a result of Pedro's reminiscences about the time people in his town had built a replica of the Esmeralda on the hillside, in competition with the traditional statue of the hero in the town square. The reminiscences hark back to a time of pride in workmanship and in national identity, a sad contrast to the present day. Entering wholeheartedly into the fantasy, they launch the ship, determined, like a real crew, to stay with it until the bitter end. The metaphor of the wall is, thus, doubled in strength for, like the Esmeralda it becomes a symbol of pride in their identity and like the warship, it is doomed to destruction, this time as a result of the ruthless disregard of the system. With the launch the men claim their momentary right to their creation: "Nosotros la levantamos, nosotros la inauguramos. Que la demuelan es cosa de ellos" (p.43). The bosses in this line of thought become as much their enemies as the Peruvians had been Arturo Prat's and the men are united at last in the recognition of their shared common circumstances.

If, on the whole, the relationship between the men is one of evasion, then the relationship with the dumb woman, María, shows some degree of concern and a large degree of interest, the latter dictated

by the fact that it is she who sells them their main means of evasion, wine. Their concern is dictated by curiosity and by the challenge of finding a cure for her dumbness: having found out that she lost her power of speech "por un susto regrande que tuvo", the characters propose remedies, usually of a violent nature - at one point Juan suggests a beating, but this is rejected by Pedro on the grounds that it is unmanly to beat any woman other than the wife -, but these only succeed in making her retreat even further into her protective shell.

Their inability to understand this phenomenon other than as "logical" or "natural" leads Diego to pose the question, "¿Así es que para Ud. es lógico que estemos trabajando los tres aquí en las piedras?" (p.6), thus pointing to the fact that her dumbness is, like their loss of work, a natural function that has been deprived her: her means of expression was through speech, as their's was through work. María, in this sense, is representative of a social type, of those who have been shocked out of their power of self expression. Since she cannot speak for herself, the play provides María with a voice in the shape of La Mujer Evangélica who declares that María will regain her speech only when the wrongs of the world that caused such a fate have been put to rights: "Entonces nosotros aquí reunidos en este escenario te pedimos que le devuelvas la salud porque ella no es culpable. Todos somos culpables porque miramos sin ver, oímos sin escuchar, tocamos sin sentir" (p.18). The message is too obvious to examine any closer. There are signs for hope, however, for María does, in fact, undergo a change in the course of the play. From apprehension at the beginning, when she tries to establish a purely business-like relationship with the workers, she begins to approach them, to feel at ease with them and seek their company, little by

little gaining the confidence and belief in herself that will lead her to utter a few sounds and, finally, to sing. The fear that had paralysed her disintegrates as the wall becomes reality and the men form a team.

This development is captured in two photographs that María takes with an old camera. The first is taken in the first act when the men, after having seen the camera, imagine wild schemes for exploiting it commercially and decide that dressing up as El Zorro would attract most customers. This photograph is blurred and unclear: "Estos no somos nosotros" (p.24), says Juan when he sees it, as if he is looking at a reflection of his present state which he does not associate with the mental image he has of himself. But the second photograph, including Don Carlos this time, is a success: "Esta sí salió clarita, no como la otra que salió toda borrosa" (p.45). The clear photograph is testimony to the rekindled strength of their identity.

3. Los payasos de la esperanza: A Drama of Impasse

Los payasos de la esperanza takes place as three unemployed clowns, or tonis, José, Jorge and Manuel, await the verdict on a project they have proposed to the Church solidarity organisation, La Vicaría de la Solidaridad, entailing entertainment for the children who are fed in the Vicaría's soup kitchens. In a disused room they spend a whole afternoon waiting for the woman who will provide the verdict, but she never turns up. Meanwhile, as they talk and explore the objects in the room, they provide testimony of a life of abject poverty and abandonment, of the mysterious disappearance of a fourth clown, Iván, of the demeaning jobs they have to do to survive, and

which they feel as an attack on their dignity, for the most important thing in their lives is to work once again as professional tonis. In the end, after a long and fruitless wait they are forced to abandon the room, but in the final scene they seem unable to sum up the courage to leave and face the harsh, hopeless reality they will face outside.

The first impression of Los payasos de la esperanza is of isolation: isolation as a result of abandonment in the outside world, reinforced by distance from one another. Each character arrives alone and enters into exchanges in which conversation does not flow, but occurs in fits and bursts, following the soaring and plummeting spirits of the tonis. They are young (all between 19 and 23), but their appearance is of old, weary men, miserably dressed in clothes that add an absurd air to their appearance. Their state and that of the room show an intrinsic affinity from the very beginning: both are abandoned, derelict, products of lost time, lack of care and the redundancy of the role they have played, and the room is, ultimately, an embodiment of their moral state. It is described at the beginning in the following terms:

Una pieza. Vieja. Llena de polvo. Las paredes, de color indefinido. Obra del tiempo y de la falta de cuidado...
La atmósfera es de abandono. Da la impresión de que la pieza no ha sido habitada, ni ocupada para ningún fin práctico, desde hace largo tiempo... La luz es pobre, amarillenta, a tono con el lugar. (p.28)

Nothing happens in the course of the afternoon but the clowns, prompted by the unusual and unfamiliar objects they find in a room

that echoes their dejection, voice opinions and worries that would otherwise remain unsaid, a device for the exploration of the clowns' social and moral condition. The process is an exchange of unused matter, through which their almost unintentional thoughts give life to an unused room. Among the objects are an old trunk, in which they find abandoned prayer books, Bibles, an intimidating life-size statue of a saint with one hand missing, symbols of a religious faith they only obliquely share and understand, but which influences their world view, and a bench.

The saint is introduced in the first notes: "Fondo izquierda espectador, un bulto cubierto por un paño. Luego sabremos que es un santo. De tamaño natural" (p.28). Their attention is drawn to the statue during a rehearsal of the ritual, buttock-slapping routines to which they introduce the novice, Manuel. These routines, however, are old and worn, and the clowns find it difficult to concentrate on them, turning their attention instead to the statue. By means of the saint, a set of intuited religious values are brought to life, shedding light on the clowns' attitude to their place on earth. They imagine themselves as having followed the saints into the circus ring, as latter-day victims of a cruel world, but equally redeemable by virtue of their moral integrity and their belief in their vocation: like the saints, they will endure anything rather than give up their belief.

This form of belief is illustrated when the clowns reflect on injustice in this world and Catholic promises of the salvation of the poor in the next. They consider questions of life and death in the form of an interpretation of religion based on a deep scepticism and the prospect of revenge to be relished in the next life. Jorge, the most articulate of the three, arouses the suspicion and curiosity of

the others in the following exchange when he enjoys the thought of the joke being on the rich, but, nevertheless, falls back on this pseudo-Christian message for confirmation that circumstances are beyond his control:

JORGE: ¿Te cachái conocer la otra vida y que juera súper?
 ¿Andarían toos los güeones matándose. La gallá por la calle azotándose la cabeza contra las murallas. Consiguiéndose revólveres como locos y..."¡mátame, güeón, mátame!"

MANUEL: Tú te vai a ir al infierno.

JORGE: ¿Y por qué?

MANUEL: Porque no creís en ná.

JORGE : No, pus güeón. Yo creo en el Tata. O sea que yo creo en el padre, ¿veís? Yo he pasao por cualquier cantidad de güevás malas, he estao pa la cagá, pior que ahora, queriendo morirme, pero siempre he pensao que es una prueba que nos pone el Padre pa ver hasta ónde llega la fe que le tenemos...O sea que cuando parece que te está haciendo un mal, te está haciendo un bien, pus. Te está probando. Por eso yo creo en el Tata. (p.49)

They zoom in on the promise of the poor being the inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, and in this scheme of things their human role is passive, they are acted upon by circumstances beyond their control and they, themselves, are incapable of changing a predetermined course. In many senses this attitude is an indication of overall social underdevelopment, for it distances the blow of the economic

hardships they suffer by shifting the emphasis away from worldly comforts to heavenly promises. Responsibility for the fate of beings on this earth is ultimately transferred to a heavenly body that may work in mysterious ways but has only their best spiritual interests at heart. This is expressed in its most literal sense as the future recognition of their professional worth:

JORGE: ...Oye, ¿los santos resucitan?

MANUEL: Claro, pus.

JORGE: ¿Y nosotros?

MANUEL: También, pos.

JORGE: (A JOSE) ¿Te cachái, güaso?

JOSE: ¿Qué?

JORGE: Que resucitáramos.

JOSE: (PONIENDOSE UNA PELUCA DE TONI QUE HA SACADO DE SU MALETIN) ¿Y pa qué vamos a resucitar?

JORGE: Pa ser tonis.

JOSE: Si, pero con fama. No toos cagaos.

MANUEL: Tonis con casa. (p.65)

This notion of the hereafter as a brighter version of the here and now is expressed in a clowns' poem that describes the fate of the professional clown in a melodramatically pessimistic way, in terms of the ruthlessly transitory nature of their performing life, and of their fate to be immediately forgotten by an ungrateful public. This is finally an integral part of their identity: "Tal vez cuando el payaso se muera,/de aquel que se han reído/ni siquiera se acordarán./Cual música pasajera que lentamente se va,/ni el recuerdo se quedará./ ¡Oh! ingratitud de la vida,/así como de todos se

olvidan/de estos payasos se olvidarán" (p.71). The poem engages the same suggestion of the essential cruelty of this world revealed in their attitude to religion and adds a dose of sincerely felt self-pity: the archetypal clown in tears behind his painted mask.

The bench is, in all senses, a prop. Like the saint it is always present, but unlike the saint, it serves a useful purpose as the only place to sit. Throughout the long wait they sit on the bench as if in a rota, never sharing it as they each vie for a place and inevitably fall off in typical slapstick routines. The bench becomes finally a symbol of hoping and waiting, when, at the end, it serves as the prop for the relentless religious imagery as they all share Jorge's stolen bread in a scene aping the last supper:

Es la repartición del pan. Jorge parte la hallulla en dos y cada parte en tres y reparte. Manuel corre el baúl hasta ubicarlo entre el santo y el banco. Comen con deleite. Como si fuera un banquete. Tiempo. (p.74)

The sharing of the bread unites them in a grave ceremony in a way they had consciously or unconsciously avoided beforehand:

Manuel mira el techo. Mira a Manuel. Hay algo nuevo en esa relación. José le hace un lugar a Manuel en el banco. Manuel va y se sienta entre Jorge y José. Jorge casi cae del banco. Empuja del otro lado. Hasta que apenas se acomodan los tres en el banco. Muy juntos. (p.79)

At this stage they seem to be at one with each other and with their immediate environment. What is the new element in their relationship?

Only that they have accepted the fact that they are all in the same boat. This may never have been beyond doubt for the audience, but the tonis have made one significant step during the wait by introducing Manuel to the profession, having decided that they must offer some hope to those who have no straw to cling to. Once part of the "army" of waiting or hopeful clowns, Manuel has an equal right to a place on the bench. His "puras ganas de ser toni" (p.54) have been replaced by the wait for the opportunity to work in his new profession.

Jorge dreams of another life in the south where his fears and problems would be washed away: "...La lluvia parece que te lavara por dentro y por fuera" (p.55). Outside it is raining, but the rain of Jorge's imagination has nothing to do with the rain battering against the window panes and only drives home the reality of their isolation from an alien outside. Jorge relates to the positive elements in rain, he makes a big raindrop from a piece of wire he finds, but he is aware that this water symbolism also has a negative side. He likens their wait to that of a castaway who, after an interminable wait and countless SOS signals, is eventually discovered as a heap of bones, still in an attitude of hopeful waiting: "Así vamos a estar nosotros con la esperanza" (p.57). For this reason he convinces himself that the saint (really St. John) is Peter, a double symbol, both doorman to heaven and vigilant fisherman, "ése que siempre está mirando pal mar".

The dynamics of the wait are given their rhythm by the contrasts forced on the protagonists as their dreams and illusions rise up in contrast to the dinginess of the room. Jorge's elated dreams are followed by dives into the depths of despair, as is the case when, for the first time, the abandoned state of the room is explicitly recognised:

JORGE: ...A veces creo que estamos cagaos de aentro. Que no tenemos güelta. Parece que hubiéramos estao siempre así. Que nunca hubiera habfo nadie.

JOSE: ¿Cómo?

JORGE: Así, pus.

Jorge y José recorren con la mirada toda la habitación. Como si la vieran por primera vez. Descubren lo vieja, sucia y polvorienta que es. Jorge mira lentamente a José.

JORGE: Así como too muerto...

JOSE: (Luego de una pausa) Fin de mundo. (p.55)

The geographical end of the world that would mean escape, rain and renewal is far removed from this crude and cruel reality. Almost imperceptibly at first, the room is set up as a metaphor for Chile, a name that means "donde acaba la tierra", the end of the earth.¹⁰ In other passages the tonis are depicted as being lost in the reality of present Chile where a limbo-like state reigns, and where they cannot legitimately hope for an escape. This is brought home again by Jorge in an unusually long and lyrical passage when he relates the essence of being Chilean to the only time he has seen a condor, preying on a flock of sheep:

Y yo miro... y ahí lo veo que viene por el aire.
Chis, las medias garras que tiene. Son así como el brazo de uno. Si es cierto. Y entonces se va tirando en pica... y nosotros dale con esparramar a las ovejas. Y agarra a una y se la lleva volando. A mí me dio susto. Y me dio pena también por la ovejita. (p.77)

It is at moments such as this that the primary symbols of the play come together. The memory of the natural power and energy of the great bird of prey brings him back sharply from what had been "una memoria sensorial y emotiva" to the harshness of daily life in which they, too, are governed by such powerful and indiscriminating forces:

JORGE: Como al Iván.

MANUEL: ¿Ah?

JORGE: Se lo llevó el condor. (p.77)

Iván, thus, is represented as one of the flock unable to defend himself from the clutches of an unfathomable force with the power to eliminate without rhyme or reason. The condor and the sheep are part of the natural struggle for survival, while Iván has become the victim of a new way of life for them where, as the weakest, there can be no certainty against falling prey to circumstances, that is, the arbitrariness of the system. This is reflected in the dramatic structure of the play in which the conflict is provided by an absent power.

In one description of the play it is stated that, along with José, Jorge, Manuel and the absent Iván, "Quizás sí los acompaña un quinto personaje: inmóvil, ciego, mudo, mutilado. Es la figura del santo".¹¹ I would add that there is a sixth character, Señorita Sonia. She is vital to the play, for she is the symbol of the conflict that creates the dramatic situation. She represents the machinery grinding behind the scenes, dealing in names and figures, but not in faces and lives. The fact that they can put a name to this machinery lifts their hopes, sets success within reach, and conditions their willingness to wait. However, this name will become

synonymous with rejection and despair.

This play is a type of creation based on observation, on a kind of manwatching through which every action of the characters speaks for their whole being and for vision of the world. As they work on the material, the actors look for what they call "la columna vertebral" that is, the central preoccupation of the protagonists at that specific moment. This is what the company say about the "situación madre" that required the central idea to be that of the wait, held together by unity of time and space:

...el antagonista estaba fuera del escenario. No pensamos nunca en una situación de conflicto que se dijera entre los personajes, sino que la situación de conflicto era el "impasse" que vivían ellos.¹²

It is for this reason that Señorita Sonia becomes another character, part of the machinery that regulates their experience, that condemns them to wait and condemns them to act in what Rosen describes as the typical manner of those trapped in impasse situations, reduced to making ineffectual moves. One such is the letter about their dilemma they write with great difficulty and that is finally folded up and guarded in José's pocket. This brings us to the crux of the matter: the permanent cultural nature of their predicament. The actual writing of a letter demonstrates their hopeless lack of education (this is also made explicit in the difficulty they have in reading the Bible): apart from the inability to find the correct register of language, they are even uncertain as to whom the finished product should be sent. Although the tonis themselves do not possess the means to escape from their position, it

is not exclusively a result of the new circumstances, but comes from their background that has conditioned their place in society and, in the reigning social and economic atmosphere, leaves them standing at the starting post.

The greatest dilemma of the tonis is that of their complete marginalisation, for they cannot even be fully incorporated into the only organisation that can offer them a possible way out. Before his disappearance, Iván had given up all hope of being a toni in the future; José, on the other hand, clings to the positive side of waiting, of being what Jorge's father had called a "soldadito de la esperanza". They feel that there is certain hierarchy to the level of despair, and that Manuel is most definitely at the bottom of the heap, since he cannot even call himself a toni. Yet his initiation into the group is initiation into a state of permanent waiting. Despite the fact that he remembers his father's words that "lo más bonito es la esperanza", even Jorge must call on all his moral resources: "Es como si me hubieran matado otro soldadito más. Yo no sé si voy a ganar esta guerra, pero yo sigo igual no más" (p.56).

An integral part of this play is the use of moments of suspended action when the tonis' attitudes suggest camera stills. They usually occur when the clowns are looking towards the outside, in the vain hope that someone has eventually arrived to provide a solution (pp. 33, 43, 73, 77, 79). The photos are of three "payasos de la esperanza", looking to where they imagine their hope lies. Only the last photograph, which catches them huddled together on the bench, does not show them looking out, for now they are merely listening to the rain and nervously and reluctantly contemplating departure. The room offers them a certain freedom, for there they can act as they wish, suspended in time and sheltered by their distance from crude

reality. And they are kept hanging on, too, by a desperate hope and a fear that someone might turn up if they abandon the room.

Towards the end of the play the moral disintegration becomes complete. The conversation takes on features of the absurd, as the dialogue breaks down into unfinished sentences, disconnected in composition and only completed through a strained common effort. The whole atmosphere is one of resignation: "Total que no hicimos ná" (p.78). Time is the essence of this play; its passing without event adds a circular quality, brought out in the plays of light that suggest an ever-repeated pattern. At the beginning the light is "Pobre, amarillenta, a tono con el lugar"; by the end, "La luz ha disminuído más todavía. Es la misma o menor que la del comienzo, cuando entró José" (p.79). It is a return to the opening situation, to the long pauses and inarticulate exchanges, suggesting that they lack the energy to make sense of their situation and are united by their total inability to provide any way forward, at one with the fading light and the abandoned room. It is finally not belief in their future as tonis that provides the hint of a hope, but the dream of the impossible cleansing journey south. Meanwhile they are trapped in the room, unwilling to leave and face the real rain outside. They may even take the absurdity of the wait outside with them when they eventually do decide to leave:

JORGE: (A MANUEL) Ponéte los zapatos de toni.

MANUEL: ¿Pa qué?

JORGE: Así llegái más rápido. (p.78)

4. Tres Marías y una Rosa: Female Labour as Testimony

Tres Marias y una Rosa is set in two acts, each divided into three scenes, or cuadros, each one devoted to the presentation and the subsequent resolution of specific problems affecting the protagonists. In the first cuadro a new member, Rosita, is introduced to a workshop where arpilleras are made, causing conflicts for the existing members, Maruja, María Ester and María Luisa; by the second scene she has been accepted, and the members set about teaching her the trade. The first act closes in the third scene at a moment of crisis when they find out that there exists a glut of arpilleras, as a result of which the central controlling body has decided that work must be suspended until further notice. Two of the members, María Luisa and María Ester, decide that survival must come before loyalty and offer their services to a "butic" in the commercial sector where arpilleras are sold as fashionable art to the rich.¹³ The second act sees the resolution of this problem when, after discovering that they cannot accept the restrictions imposed on their compositions by the management of the butic, who object to their portrayal of working class themes, the two wayward members ask to be accepted back. With the workshop re-established, the members then set about the creation of a giant arpillera commissioned by a gringo priest in the nearby parish. The measure of their unity is put to the test in the hurried completion of the giant creation, "La Cueva del Juicio Final".

Tres Marías... is a work that echoes the vivid realism of the arpilleras. The nature of the arpilleras is wholly documentary and over the last decade has taken on a real social and political value; they emerged as the testimonies of the wives of political prisoners, of victims of the repression and of the unemployed.¹⁴ The play acts

as a valuable counterpart to the other works studied here since it provides insights into the broader implications of male unemployment on the family and the changing, more openly antagonistic, role of the women. As the characters evoke the demoralised background against which Tres Marías... is set, they provide verbal and pictorial evidence of the real nature of their present dilemma. At the heart of the play lies the question of dignity and a sense of identity, both severely undermined in the present circumstances. As the family suffers with the demoralisation of the former breadwinner, the destruction of a whole way of living becomes imminent and part of the women's role is to fend off its total disappearance.

The clearest statement of man's present role in the family is his absence from the stage. It points to the marginalisation of the male role in the family, on a wider level to his redundancy in the workforce and, accordingly, to the loss of his traditional male discourse. A recent study into the impact of unemployment on the family sums this up in the following way: "Ha perdido su identidad, y su discurso de hombre trabajador a quien hay que servir y atender después de la jornada, se ve debilitado. Ello se expresa, según la mujer, en el mal genio, intolerancia, agresividad, insomnio, aislamiento, angustia, evasión en el alcohol."¹⁵ All these products of long term unemployment felt at first hand in the home become, as María Luisa bitterly comments, "otra condición 'básica' para entrar al taller" (p.202). The official basic requirements for entrance to the workshop are that the partner is unemployed and that there is no other source of income into the household.

The only man whose existence is physically acknowledged is Negro, Maruja's husband and that only because the workshop is held in his house. His bicycle is alternately present and absent in each

scene, indicating his intermittent outings to look for work. Negro's spoken role is limited to the "voice en off", only ever shouting abuse at the women, angry at the fact of his house being occupied by a bunch of "viejas de mierda" (p.198), and frustrated by his own marginality. It is made explicit through the arpilleristas' interpretation of his shouting and bad humour that this is a direct result of recent circumstances. As a trade union leader, he had a reputation in the shanty town of activeness and involvement, but as a result of his activities lost his job, and was a victim of severe political repression that, according to María Luisa, left him "medio raro". Now his place in Maruja's arpilleras is of a man standing at a window, looking out at a world of which he has ceased to be a useful part. His ability or willingness to support his wife is nil, the only time he does offer encouragement being when he thinks that the taller is on the brink of disintegration.

The marginalisation of the other husbands becomes manifest in different ways. In broad terms each of the three women has been failed in her marriage: María Ester has to live with the humiliating knowledge that her husband's only source of income comes from sleeping with the shopkeeper and her daughter; María Luisa's husband has gone abroad to look for work, but has sent home nothing but postcards; Rosita's husband works in a factory where he is paid in Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse toys, a grotesque mockery of his dignity.

The men have not reconciled the fact of their unemployment with the real circumstances of their lives: Rosita's husband violently forces her to sell the dolls with which he is paid despite her protests that nobody wants the objects. This stubborn and consistent lack of respect is recognised as a common trait in men, another facet

of their resistance to change as they refuse to contribute anything other than recognised paid work to the household: "Ellos exigen no más, son toditos iguales" (p. 202). On the whole, the women's attitude to their husbands is a mixture of pity and disdain. While aware of their shortcomings they recognise their present vulnerability and try to soften the blow of their redundancy by involving them: "O sea, participación, porque si no los huevones se acomplejan donde no tienen pega" (p.208). This is a strategy for making life more bearable, for behind their determination to support their families is the constant awareness that they must not damage the men's pride. Before entering the taller, Rosita has her eyes opened to the fact that she is encroaching on male territory and that she must accept the consequences.

MARUJA: ¿Usted ha hablado esto con su marido?

ROSITA: No he hablado nada.

MARUJA: Tendría que hablarle primero después se molestan donde una trabaja.

ROSITA: ¡Qué tiene que venir a decir! ¡Si no tiene plata no tiene que venir a decir, po!

MARUJA: Se molestan donde es una la que pone la plata pa'la casa, Rosita.

ROSITA: Ah... (p.203)

To some extent, the woman is living a reverse situation to the man. She has always been on the very margins of society, where traditionally her man wanted her to be, doing the job he believes she is cut out for and supporting him in the accomplishment of his role: "Resulta que ya saliendo la mujer a trabajar ya el hombre como que se

ata más a la casa. Yo tengo este concepto, que la mujer lo esté alimentando a uno, le digo sinceramente, no me gusta. Como debe ser: el marido trae plata y la mujer en la casa."¹⁶ The women, fully aware of this unchanging male attitude, know they must tread lightly as they fill the gap left by the inability of the male member of the household to support the family. These absent men are the protagonists in other plays, those who can come to terms neither with the fact that their historic role has been taken out of their hands, nor with the growing suspicion of the permanent nature of their present weakened state. The male attitude is seen to be, then, one of unrelenting machismo, now even harder to deal with since it is being questioned from all sides.

Despite their new role, the women are still caught in the macho mould of their society. Maruja, the head of the taller, is told: "Hay que saber ponerse los pantalones pa'ser Jefa y tomar decisiones" (p.203). Only at certain moments, when they are alone and know that there are no men eavesdropping, do the four arpilleristas openly voice their discontent with the traditional role imposed on them, a role characterised by violent treatment, disregard for the vital part they play in the family and disrespect for their individual needs and rights. It is only among "puras mujeres" that the freedom to assert that "una también es persona" exists. In a mock wedding ceremony Rosita is initiated into the institution of marriage, but with a head start on the partner, in a reverse of the real world, for it is she who dictates the terms of the contract. The ceremony is a rejection of all that being a woman means to them:

M.ESTER: ¿Señora Rosa Martínez acepta usted seguir a
este hombre en el dolor, la adversidad, la

desgracia, la miseria, el hambre y los terremotos?

ROSITA: No.

M. ESTER: ¿Acepta que la cachetee, que le ponga el gorro, que la llene de chiquillos, que no traiga plata pa'la casa, que llegue curao?

ROSITA: No.

M. LUISA: Así me gusta.

M. ESTER: Y usted, don Rafael, ¿promete solemnemente ante este altar sagrado no cachetearla, no ponerle el gorro, no llenarla de chiquillos, no llegar curao y traer plata pa'la casa?

MARUJA: ¡Bravo, señor cura! ¡Otra vez, señor! ¡Otra vez! (De pie.)

M. ESTER: ¿Promete que no le va a dar todas las noches con la cuestión porque aburre también?

M. LUISA: ¡Que prometa! ¡Que prometa!

M. ESTER: ¿Promete pedir el favor solamente cuando ella tenga ganas?

TODAS: ¡Prometido!

M. ESTER: ¿Promete que después de ocurrido el hecho, hacer por lo menos un cariñito? (pp.233-34)

But the mere voice of Negro reduces their fantasies to follies. An ideal world may consist of a life without the various painful conditions of marriage, but the reality of their role as wives and mothers means that they will never abandon the family in which their role, now more than ever, is to provide support, economic as well as moral. This common experience is given expression in the arpilleras.

For, although the women may often talk of their husbands as if they were irresponsible, uncontrollable adolescents whose immature images of themselves - for example María Ester's husband's greatest interest is in cultivating a John Travolta look - are a cause for exasperation, nevertheless, they are usually portrayed with dignity in the tapestries.

The arpilleras provide a very personal view of contemporary Chile and are an insight into the dreams and aspirations of their creators. These dreams may, on one hand, relate to better treatment and more respect from the men, but, on the other, they relate to visions of a better and more just life altogether. María Luisa, for example, does not depict soup kitchens and shanty town life, instead she creates "un mural de vida" (p.213) into which she pours all her anger and hunger for justice. She portrays her need for a promise of salvation which, by definition, must come from another world since this one has proved such a dismal failure in that respect. In her interpretation of the Last Judgement, God is descending from a UFO to judge the rich and pardon the poor, a view of divine retribution born of the ingrained bitterness and disillusion that characterise her arpilleras, all a variation on the search for a spark of hope.

However, as an essential requirement for the market abroad the scenes must be shown to be explicitly Chilean and the most prominent sign of this is the cordillera which, as Marjorie Agosin demonstrates, becomes a symbol both of Chileanness and of a far-off world: "El intenso colorido, los personajes en movimiento, los árboles verdes, el anhelo de agua fresca y la cordillera de los Andes enmarcando todas las arpilleras, transmiten una esperanza de vida distinta. Una arpillera sin la cordillera de los Andes no sería real".¹⁷ Yet, as Rosita points out towards the end of the play, the

value of these symbols is relative, for an image that may be the sign of all things Chilean to a foreigner may not hold any bearing on those Chileans whose experience of their country is limited to their shanty town and who can only dream of access to the picture-postcard style environment that provides the most blatant symbols of the country's identity.

This is borne out by their final interpretation of the Last Judgement, the subject of the giant arpillera commissioned by the gringo priest. Here, heaven is populated by very bored people sitting on clouds, while hell is a caracol¹⁸ where the devils are having a wonderful time around a parrillada. For the priest this is an enigma, for it is a very personal vision of the Day of Judgement, rooted in the image of contemporary Chile as a consumer heaven for those that can have access to the caracoles, and hell for those who do not. The priest's reaction to the giant arpillera shows him to be in search of a simpler, more positive image, less sad and despondent, and more Chilean, for even the presence of the Cordillera de los Andes does not convince him in this case.

Finally, they do as the priest requests and change María Luisa's stern, apocalyptic interpretation of the day of judgement with God as a policeman catching everyone in his net into a happier, folkloric account, in which signs of Chileanness are provided by the cueca and "unas fondas bien endieciochás".¹⁹ The result is a vision of the fulfilment of the promise of the salvation of the good, that is the poor. But even then, María Luisa must be persuaded to take her wayward husband out of the flames of hell, in case he turns up and demands an explanation. This arpillera thus becomes a fusion of María Luisa's great obsession and their interpretation of the essence of being Chilean.

Tres Marias... bears witness to the drastic changes in the hitherto well defined role played by each member of a family unit. It is a play that provides an insight into the multiple role played by the talleres and the work carried out in them. For women who have had to adapt their lifestyles to fast diminishing resources, who often cannot count on the support of a man demoralised by the loss of his traditional identity, who have been absolutely abandoned or who, in many cases, have considered that the only escape is through suicide, the talleres provide a mechanism of moral support as well as of financial subsistence. It is Rosita, the newest member of the taller, who is most dismayed by the possibility of it breaking up because she, at last, has found some indication of solidarity and cannot allow that to be taken away again.

By its very nature Tres Marias... is an eloquent symbol for the marginalisation of those who become the subjects of the arpilleras. The arpilleristas use a formerly unpaid traditional female skill to provide the only source of income in the family, thereby introducing it to the, albeit marginal, labour market. Despite the fact that these women are now the principal support for their families, the income is precarious, and they and the work they produce are still invisible in the wider public sphere. Finally, as the men struggle to retain some vestige of dignity or, alternatively, retreat into anonymous shells, women like the arpilleristas become custodians of an identity and artists of human dignity. Scenes of hope and solidarity allow glimpses of a spirit that still exists, if somewhat cowed by circumstances.

5. Testimonies of Marginalisation

Two areas of marginalisation are examined in these plays: one of concrete marginalisation through lack of access to help and support mechanisms, the other, the growing sense of exclusion from a society that seems to be undergoing many changes but to which the protagonists have no access. From a sense of temporary exclusion this gradually develops into one of permanence and the means of escape gradually diminish, becoming restricted to short term strategies to survive. The long-term future bears no meaning for these characters and the men, especially, fill their limbo with often unrealistic schemes or fantasy escapes based on far-off nostalgic notions of happiness and success. Alternatively, work or its rehearsal becomes an obsessive ritual. Thus, in Los payasos de la esperanza the tonis endlessly use the objects they find in the room to create new numbers and imagine their success in the circus ring. In Pedro, Juan y Diego work is rendered a ritual in which the men do not believe but which allows for a recollection of self-respect. It is only in Yres Marías... that the work the women are involved in is a source of fulfilment; here rituals form another part of their life, that of the unchanging aspects of their marriages, such as beatings.

Each of the plays studied here portrays the deterioration of human relations. Juan complains of the lack of companionship he encounters in his job where the relationship with his workmates is superficial, normally distant, but charged with underlying conflicts that are never faced up to, evaded in childish games, wishful thinking or pure nostalgia; Rosita, like so many other characters, has considered that suicide is an alternative that would demand less

strength than to "apechugar" as it is her role to do; José, on the verge of defeat, explains the lack of solidarity they experience by the fact that they are not the worst off - "... la solidaridad empieza por los más cagaos" (p.48) - and by the far more cynical, "Deben pensar que andamos cagaos de la risa" (p.56). In both Tres Marías ... and Los payasos de la esperanza solidarity has become synonymous with help from abroad (or even farther afield from María Luisa's point of view), it is something they no longer associate with their immediate environment. At the same time, however, the plays are not mere testimonies to disintegration, for scenes of humour, compassion, anger or solidarity add more depth to characters who bring a lifetime of experience to a period of crisis.

Dialogues are littered with nostalgic recollections of these times past, certain never to return. They relate to a time of strength, of a well-established identity, of participation in making decisions that would affect their lives. They take the shape of childhood memories, of times of security in a safe family unit when there was hope in the future. They are evoked now as a way of passing idle moments or as indirect ways of lamenting the present atmosphere, the antithesis of all that is carefree and open. In this atmosphere the characters cannot even provide their own children with an illusion of security, for the family has begun to disintegrate: Negro's belief in himself is so utterly destroyed that he has given up responsibility for his daughter by sending her to live with her grandparents until he can play the role of father again. Time and again characters or relatives alluded to shrink back from the present reality, the men in alcohol, María in her dumbness, and José's mother in a strange condition that stops her from expressing herself fully. All speak for the general growing marginality of their class, their

lack of access to the means of communication, but the arpilleras provide mute testimony to continuing existence and resistance.

There is also evidence of a much more sinister reality which, unlike the physical hardships that cause desperation, causes terror. When the women in Tres Mariñas... describe the constant circling of helicopters over their shanty town, and mention how they must sleep with identification close at hand, these are asides that report their loss of any peace of mind, disturbed by the constant subconscious memory of the Iváns and the Negros of their world, those who have disappeared mysteriously and without trace and those who have been victims of political repression so fierce that it has destroyed their former self. Sudden evidence of this reality terrifies them, as is demonstrated in Los payasos de la esperanza:

Se escucha una sirena. Primero como de un carro de bomberos. Luego se le unen otras. Se van acercando. Sensación de un gran accidente. Se debe crear una atmósfera de estado de emergencia. José y Manuel se paran. Están como paralogizados por el sonido. (pp.58-59)

These indications of the concrete reality against which the plays are set, in the form of unexplained sirens or voices that strike fear into the characters, are a fundamental part of the drama, for without them the picture of the protagonists' lives would be incomplete. Indeed, the drama itself would be void of conflict if they were absent, for they are the voice of the antagonist. On a wider social scale they are constant reminders of the forces which govern them and which consider themselves to be waging a war against

potential insurrection in the shanty towns, creating the awareness that the characters cannot regard themselves a legitimate part of society. As they eat Jorge's stolen bread, the tonis confess different petty crimes they have committed, but their reaction to the signs of power described above indicates that somehow they always feel hunted, guilty of some undefined crime.

These themes are dealt with in other plays where the major effects of unemployment are exposed as a loss of identity, of the means of expression and of a wealth of cultural history founded on common aims and needs. El último tren²⁰ by Gustavo Meza and Imagen, addresses all these themes. It takes place in a small railway station which has been run for generations by the Maragaño family and is now in the hands of Ismael Maragaño. The branch is under threat of closure, a move that is wholeheartedly supported by Marcial Contreras,²¹ the local supervisor, and opposed by Ismael, who is convinced that he can fight it, sure of his good record and convinced that his name and history of good work in the community will ensure the support of the locals. The play begins with the arrival of Ismael's sister, Mercedes, from Venezuela, freshly divorced and looking to start a new life in the heart of the family, but she is horrified when she finds that her niece, Violeta, has turned to prostitution in order to pay off her father's debts, after being forced to sleep with Contreras to save her father his job while Ismael lives under the illusion that it is his good name that has won him time and money. When Ismael finds out the truth, he demands an explanation at the local springs where Violeta works, thus losing her the job. The climax comes when the order for the closure of the station arrives and Violeta decides she must go to work in the city in order to save her family, but it is too late, for Ismael has

already taken refuge in madness and the memory of happier times.

The fate of Ismael and the railway, both representative of the old stable tradition, demonstrates the ruthless disregard for this past. As the railway becomes redundant in the new way of things, it is made clear that they are in the process of losing more than their livelihood, for the railway had also been a place for cultural expression and artistic gatherings. Ismael pre-empts this by retreating into a world of madness, irresponsibility and aimless remembering.

Violeta, on the other hand, responds to the dictates of the fight for survival according to the new rules, realising that the former values of unity, solidarity and care for the weakest are no longer valid. The rules for the fight for survival are dictated by Marcial Contreras, the personification of the economy which he himself describes as "dura, fría ... hasta implacable" (p.131). It is this anonymous force, The Economy, that has been the cause of their incipient exclusion from society. The Economy and its offspring "el milagro económico", which the characters constantly refer to in amazed wonderment, for they can see no evidence of a miracle, is another constant in these testimonial works.

¿Cuántos años tiene un día? (1978) by Ictus and Sergio Vodanović, also deals with the theme of work, this time with characters who are not obviously on the margins of society but who feel their political and intellectual exclusion in the changing circumstances. A team of television journalists are engaged in the making of an anniversary programme hindered by continual harassment from colleagues unsympathetic to their project and critical of their left wing past, and a management that is determined to preserve a politically clean image. The characters are sophisticated, well

educated and highly articulate, but yet again similar themes crop up: the loss of dignity as principles and values are put to the test or ignored, the escape through alcohol, the fight to retain an identity that has been built over many years and that is in threat of destruction because of a new, restrictively defined political and economic order that entails brutish disregard for certain sectors. Marginalisation is shown to be a psychological as well as an economic problem and in plays such as El último tren and ¿Cuántos años tiene un día it becomes a metaphor for a society in the process of alienation from its cultural and historic heritage.

The treatment of these themes on the professional stage serves several purposes. It counterbalances the general silence about these sectors and the repression of their freedom of expression, which is seen to be intrinsically subversive of the new order. By looking beyond the superficial "tranquilidad pública" which the repression of these sectors permits, groups reach the "temática entregada" that the arpilleristas rely on. The Taller de Investigación Teatral has opted for a "teatro de servicio", the aim of which is to prompt reflection on the state of "adormecimiento que se nos ha afectado a todos".²³

By dealing with chronic unemployment and the marginalisation of such great numbers of people from active participation in society, the groups aim to confront the relatively cushioned middle classes with a bitter reality and in this way sow the seeds for reflection by means of the transformation of the public's perception of what they see around them. At the same time they introduce new metaphors for the overall atomised state of society. In the next chapter I will turn to questions of power, seen in terms of stagnation and renewal.

Notes to Chapter Two

1. All references will be made to the following editions: Pedro, Juan y Diego, manuscript; Los payasos de la esperanza, Apuntes, 84 (1978), 27-80; Tres Marías y una Rosa, in María de la Luz Hurtado, Carlos Ochsenius and Hernán Vidal, Teatro Chileno de la Crisis Institucional, pp. 196-248.
2. Chile: Series estadísticas, 1981 (Santiago: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas, INE) p.49. The sectors worst hit were building and manufacturing.
3. See Patricio Frías, "Cesantía y estrategias de supervivencia", Documento de Trabajo, 1977, FLACSO, Santiago.
4. To be eligible for this scheme a person has to be the head of a family or the principal breadwinner, resident in a local authority (comuna), and provide proof of unemployment. The wage is one third of the national minimum. At the time in which Pedro, Juan y Diego is set, the number employed on the scheme in Greater Santiago had risen from 4,748 in April 1975 to 31,572 in April 1976; it had taken on a more permanent nature, was now incorporating more highly qualified people and the beneficiaries now worked a full working week instead of the original fifteen hours. See Series Estadísticas and Patricio Frías, p.30.
5. The Church has played an increasingly important role in the years following the coup. As early as October 1973 the Catholic, Protestant and Jewish communities set up the "Comité para la Paz en Chile", whose aim it was to provide legal and economic support for political prisoners and their families. In 1975, however, Pinochet demanded its dissolution and the work performed was taken over by the "Vicaría de la Solidaridad", a Church organisation that provides "legal and health services, manage(s) between 40 and 50 farm cooperatives in rural areas and support(s) soup kitchens for 113,000 adults and children in major urban areas". See Hernán Rosencrantz, "The Church in Chilean Politics: The Confusing Years", Chile After 1973: Elements for the Analysis of Military Rule, ed. D.E. Hojman, p.79.
6. See María de la Luz Hurtado and Carlos Ochsenius, Taller de Investigación Teatral, (Santiago, CENECA, 1979) p.14.
7. Teatro La Feria, p.38.
8. Teatro Ictus, p.117.
9. In so-called middle class drama of the sixties walls, high partitions, divisions abound as the protagonists try to protect themselves from the perceived imminence of popular revolution. See Wolff, Vodanovic, Díaz.
10. See Benjamín Subercaseaux, Chile o una loca geografía, 16th ed. (Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1973).
11. Taller de Investigación Teatral, p.13.

12. Ibid, p. 15.
13. I refer here specifically to the Centro de Madres, CEMA Chile a government funded scheme run by the Secretaría Nacional de la Mujer under the direction of the president's wife, Lucia de Pinochet. The shops where these interpretations of popular culture are sold have a strict hierarchy and all creations are regulated to comply with the official version of the progress the country is making now that it is out of the hands of Marxist rule. They demand scenes of social equality and picturesque costumbrism.
14. The women work in workshops or talleres, each one part of a centrally organised network and each one developing different themes, defined as religious, "vivenciales" or traditional. After realising that the workshops were becoming a permanent, rather than a temporary, feature of life in certain sectors, "controles de calidad" were created and the commercial market for the work, especially abroad, was exploited more fully. See Cecilia Moreno Aliste, La Artesanía Urbana Marginal (Santiago: Cenecha, 1984).
15. Dagmar Raczynski and Claudia Serrano, "La cesantía: Impacto Sobre la Mujer y Familia Popular", CIEPLAN, 14, (1984), pp.94-5.
16. Ibid, p.71.
17. See Cecilia Moreno Aliste, p.33.
18. Marjorie Agosín, "Agujas que hablan. Las arpilleristas Chilenas", Revista Iberoamericana, 132-3, (1985), p.251.
19. A caracol (literally snail) is a shopping arcade built in a spiral shape, the inner rim of which opens on to a central well while the outer is formed by rings of shops and boutiques.
20. "Fondas bien endieciochás" refers to the fairs set up all over the country by local communities to celebrate the national independence day, 18th September.
21. El último tren by Gustavo Meza and Imagen in Teatro Chileno de la Crisis Institucional, pp. 102-38.
22. Marcial Contreras is deliberately reminiscent of the name of the former head of the secret police, DINA (Dirección Nacional de Inteligencia), Manuel Contreras. Despite the fact that the Christian name is changed his role as personification of the economy is underlined by a name that leaves no doubt as to his military connections.
23. Taller de Investigación Teatral, p.19.

CHAPTER THREE

QUESTIONS OF POWER: STAGNATION AND RENEWAL

1. 1978: Questions of Power

In this chapter I will study three plays first performed in 1978, Una pena y un cariño by Teatro la Feria, Baño a baño, a collective creation by Jorge Vega, Jorge Pardo and Guillermo de la Parra, Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido by Marco Antonio de la Parra, and one from 1983, No + (No más) by Raúl Osorio and the Teatro de la Universidad Católica.¹ Each of these plays has as its subject the relation between an authoritarian hold on power and the society that develops in such an atmosphere. In the first chapter we saw that groups found adjusting to the new circumstances difficult after a highly politicised period. In Chapter Two we studied how, from 1976, a type of costumbrism paved the way for the study of the social costs of monetarist policies, and served as testimony and documentary. Now we will turn to the study of perceptions of the machinery of power.

By 1978 the Pinochet regime was firmly in power, the economy was looking up after a severe recession, the free market economy was in full swing with the ensuing influx of luxury consumer goods. Prosperity was in the air for the better off. Marxist "contamination" was at bay, and while opposition was finding a limited voice, it was nothing that could not be coped with, and repression was more selective. "La tranquilidad pública" was reigning. Pinochet, who seemed to have little to fear, was already making plans for at least sixteen years of military rule.

The plays studied in this chapter explore the realms of the

reality of the image painted above and the grim truth of the way it is achieved and maintained. As we have seen, Baño a baño is a product of student theatre, and it is the strongest and crudest attack on the junta. It uses verbal and physical aggression against an audience that inevitably reproduces the silence that characterises the dominant social response to repression. The audience is doubly important: on one level, its passivity is attacked from the stage, but conversely, the regime has shown that it will not tolerate such a play outside student theatre, where, it is considered, the spectators are a small minority of converts, unlikely to be contaminated by the play. Not so with Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido, which, directed at a wide audience from educational institutions, did, indeed, pose a threat. Hence its banishment from the University to the independent stage.

No + was produced in 1983, when the regime had celebrated ten years in power. It was in 1983, with the deteriorating economic situation, that the first major opposition rallies were held. No +, set in the archetypal dominator-dominated dichotomy, that of the classroom, proposes that liberating actions are natural, but, equally naturally, are responded to by renewed methods of domination.

All of these plays take place in confined spaces, in institutions where rules are strictly made and imposed. In the theatre, the restaurant, the Turkish bath and the school that are their settings, the audience is faced with familiar places that are part of normal experience, but that are still removed from their present everyday lives. In this way an atmosphere of blame or complicity and release from it is created, the audience becomes conspirator and innocent bystander and is integrated into the grey, limbo-like area portrayed on stage, which in turn becomes a grotesque

mirror of its real existence.

Una pena y un cariño by Teatro La Feria is a good starting point for a discussion of the dramatic interpretation of behaviour in repressive conditions. With Hojas de Parra Teatro la Feria had first hand experience of the means by which public order is achieved; with their second, Bienaventurados los pobres, they still could not find a balance, alienating a potential audience and losing financially. With Una pena y un cariño, performed in a disused hall far from the centre of Santiago, they began to achieve some artistic and economic balance. The work had a run of 14 weeks and while it did not make financial gain, neither was it a financial disaster.²

2. Una pena y un cariño: The Roots of Proverbial Chile

Using the device of a play within a play Una pena y un cariño presents a microcosm of society and introduces some of the themes and symbols we will see repeated in other plays. The form is that of a rehearsal for a touristic spectacular called "Raíces de Chile", designed to give an account of "nuestra historia, nuestra gente, nuestra música" and which, we are told will, above all, allow the audience to appreciate "el calor de la hospitalidad que es proverbial en nuestro pueblo" (p.308). The rehearsal takes place in an old hall far removed from the picture-postcard version of Chile, performed by a company composed of struggling actors and desperate extras, enticed by the promise of a tour of North America. This is their only hope of escape from their increasingly hopeless economic situation.

The spectacular is sheer propaganda based on the perpetuation of myths about the Chilean people and relying on an image of Chilean society that corresponds more to the turn of the century than to

contemporary reality. The reality of contemporary Chile is demonstrated by the circumstances of the actors, through intrusions from the outside in the form of other groups who use the hall, through the visit of a social worker, and by the appearance of a destitute woman whose husband has mysteriously disappeared, all of which provides evidence of an environment of repression, fear and violence, echoed at certain points throughout the rehearsal. If the two presenters in charge of the proceedings know intellectually about the proverbial friendliness of their people, they are emotionally or morally incapable of acting according to this paradigm. Even in normal dealings with those around them, violence is never far from the surface.

The atmosphere is one of a strictly maintained hierarchy of interests and power, at the top of which are the absent organisers of the spectacular, with the extras at the other extreme, cynically provided to present a picture of natural and social harmony while often being insulted and treated as "indios de mierda", the undesirable face of the country. This serves to create a constant feeling of tension in which the smallest incident sets all the violent currents moving in the guise of threats and insults, the most serious of which are accusations of sabotage of the enterprise. These, by extension, call the patriotism of the actors and extras into question for sabotage of the spectacular is paramount to treason, since it would betray a dissident view of reality. But, as we shall see, this is not a thought that occupies the protagonists, since their main preoccupation is to earn a living.

The message of the propaganda is of a country growing stronger and stronger in the face of great adversity: "Después de cada desastre este país sale más fortalecido. Eso es muy importante. O sea

el Ave Fénix renace de sus cenizas" (p.328). The presenters know that this image of disasters is wrought with problems of interpretation and they rid it of any dangerous implications by making reference only to natural disasters, such as earthquakes. By contrast, the increasingly demoralising effect of the social disasters faced by the actors every day must be hidden from sight, avoided at all costs in the spectacular, bound as they are to be interpreted as "pura política" and therefore inherently dangerous. The objective is an image of tranquil unity in an atmosphere of quiet progress, created artificially by silencing dissident sectors and superimposing an official cultural and political norm: "En Orden y Paz Chile Avanza".³ We will encounter again and again this ambiguous use of imagery.

The difficulties involved in providing the required image of Chile take the analogy between the creative and political processes one step further. Because materials are scarce and resources limited many scenes must be reduced or scrapped altogether, so inevitably the end result will be imperfect. Those at the top of the hierarchy, while demanding very specific results, do not provide the means by which to achieve them. While making ample use of the carrot and stick process - the promise of a tour, of amounts of money that will solve all immediate problems and that encourage endurance of immediate hardship -, the actual "carrot" is nowhere to be seen and there is the possibility that the employees, unpaid and with no stated rights, may inevitably tend towards an option which will be far more rewarding financially and morally: "...y luego se quejan de que la gallada se cabree y se vaya a meter a esos teatros que hacen pura política" (p.319). If the only reward the promoters offer is monetary and that is not forthcoming, the actors may well be tempted by groups who do not pretend to pay, but who satisfy the need to

express grievances and achieve artistic fulfilment.

What happens in the course of the play? The answer is that there is no real dramatic development. The sequence of scenes serves to reveal the divide between propaganda and reality. This is reminiscent of José Ricardo Morales' idea of "double consumerism": Chile is a product to be sold by means of publicity, and the publicity, in the form of the "Raíces de Chile" spectacular, is propaganda, aimed at an audience eager to consume pretty images of a Chilean paradise. In this sense, all the actors are pawns in the building of the consumer society, but, as in all of these plays, there are signs of hoped-for alternatives to the dominant ideology. The actors do react against blatant injustices, for example when they are accused of being thieves they show the capacity to unite, demand rights, help their colleagues.

Una pena y un cariño gives a clear, if over simplistic, idea of the propagandistic creation of a "decontaminated" society in which real social problems become unclean and untouchable. On stage a tableau of the rural idyll of a benevolent and just management of paternalistic power is consistently intruded upon by the real misery of the marginal urban poor. This image will be repeated in Baño a baño when the quintessential decontaminating agent, the Turkish bath, becomes the backdrop against which those in power parade their grotesque methods of cleansing society.

3. Baño a baño: Baths and Barracks

Baño a baño, in one act, is a crude, unsophisticated, gut criticism of the regime, surprising in its blatant allegorical level and in the grossness of its representation. It uses such unmistakable

signs for a Chilean audience as presenting four characters (the number in the original Pinochet junta) who are totally obsessed with the power they wield and with what they believe is their ingenuity in creating new laws designed to keep them in power and strengthen the divide between them and the evil smelling masses, a cause for which they will stop at nothing.

Into a dark auditorium enter Jorge Juan and Ramón Raúl, "prepotentes y agresivos", dressed in bath robes and rubber sandals, their faces an expressionistic white mask with red lips and carefully combed hair. They are carrying spotlights with which they hunt out a man, El Perseguido, who is hiding among the seats. On being spotted, El Perseguido flees to the stage where Juan Ramón, dressed like the other two, is waiting with the Angel. The latter, "hermoso, saludable", and dressed in white, hands Juan Ramón a revolver with which to execute El Perseguido. As the lights come up the setting on stage is revealed as a Turkish bath, a form of ivory tower where these three guardians of the status quo, watched over by the ambiguous figure of the Angel, preen themselves meticulously and facetiously create new laws regarding "la tranquilidad pública". Their outstanding characteristic is the belief in the inviolability of their state, a belief which is nurtured by total seclusion from the outside, but which is seen to crumble as the perfect surroundings begin to disintegrate. The end, the destruction of the Turkish bath, is heralded on three occasions by the Angel, who sights the masses, approaching the sanctuary, bent on revenge.

Like Una pena y un cariño, Baño a baño provides a reduced image of Chilean society not only by using the space on stage, but by incorporating the audience into the dramatic action. In this way, three states within the same regime are explored: that of the four

protagonists, that of the masses who threaten the sanctuary, and that of the audience. The outcome is a play that juxtaposes a superficial veneer of tranquility with perpetual undercurrents of the imminent violent conflict.

As their overlapping names imply, the three characters - Jorge Juan, Juan Ramón and Ramón Raúl - form three links of a common identity. This common identity constitutes the foundations for the apparent strength of their position. The atmosphere is one of orchestrated serenity and calm in which everything serves the sole function of retaining control of the Turkish bath, but that calm is periodically violated by their shows of megalomaniac aggression:

Miran al público desafiantes. Silencio.

(Al público)

J.R. Este es el lugar donde TODO es siempre tibio.

J.J. Donde no hacen falta las estridencias del sol.

R.R. Aquí no hay posibilidad de muerte.

J.R. Aquí no hay desesperación, NUNCA habrá un desastre.

J.J. ¡Permaneceremos con vida joven, hermosos, inagotables!

R.R. ¡Aquí no hay lugar para ojos hundidos, para pellejos
pálidos ni cuerpos huesosos!

J.R. ¡Nuestro destino es retorcernos en deleites, con
dientes limpios, dedos y sexos aseados!

J.J. ¡Seremos íntimos, inviolables...!

TODOS ¡¡¡Definitivos!!! (p.288)

In this strident, almost hysterical, declaration of principles they assert their right to inhabit their sanctuary, free from intrusion. The declaration is repeated at various points throughout

the play, each time with a different emphasis, but with the same basic function of counteracting incidents of disruption. It is first heard in the opening moments of the play, as the first words uttered by the protagonists after the elimination of the hunted man, El Perseguido, when it is used as a sign of their imperturbability as they execute the forms of repression they regard it their legitimate right to employ. On the next three occasions it is pronounced following the Angel's sightings of the groups of lower-class people making their way to the Turkish bath, and with each pronouncement the conviction with which the protagonists voice the words diminishes. Hints of their dwindling inner tranquility are crudely evoked when the protagonists, after the second sighting, "make an effort" to seem certain and then, after the third sighting, pronounce the declaration "con visible temor" (p.301).

The dominant attitude of the protagonists is one of detachment from anything but their own bodies; their behaviour is that of squabbling children with a new toy, the management of power, which they pick up, play around with by making a few preposterous laws and then put down again, forever squabbling over whose turn it is, for example, to dominate, to be in control of repression or abuse. The constant sexual allusions involved in these games evoke the altogether more sinister spectre of the sexual gratification derived from violent repression. As they make the laws, they emerge as power-crazed imbeciles, forever jockeying for power and favour, forever fearful of being left on the wrong side of the fence.

The laws created by word of mouth alone bear no relation to reality, and words are used detached from their meaning. It is worth examining this more closely. The protagonists' first concern after the execution of El perseguido is "Los poderes y las leyes", which

involve the creating of new laws, the first of which has to do with lunatic asylums. Initially the law seems to be based on bureaucratic considerations about who should be allowed to enter asylums. They easily agree that only those with the due authorisation and medical certificates may do so. Secondly, families with authorisation and medical proof may commit a mad member to an asylum. Again this is easily passed. Thirdly, any destitute madman or one who "con su actitud perjudicare la tranquilidad pública, también deberá colocársele en una casa de locos" (p.289). The fourth point seems to break off at a tangent: "... si el preso enjuiciado *criminalmente* perdiere el juicio, también deberá ser colocado en una casa de locos" (p.289). At this stage the making of new laws enters the murky realms of the definition of "loco" and "preso", now the key words in their "debate": "'Loco' es el que no porta, el que no usa, el que no posee o al que le han quitado las facultades mentales normales", and "... un preso es el que está detrás de una reja" (p.290). Little by little and through an inane association of words and ideas, the two types are merging. A madman is someone who is mad or who has gone mad, for example, a prisoner. Their satisfaction is complete when they finally arrive at the correct conclusion:

J.J. Ramón Raúl, ¿por qué no nos hace un preso?

R.R. (Payasea un preso detrás de las rejas.)

J.J. Eso es un preso, Juan Ramón, dígame, ¿estaría preso?

J.R. Yo, ni loco.

J.J. (A R.R.): Y usted, ¿Estaría loco?

J.R. Yo, ni preso. Diez minutos loco y me vuelvo preso.

Empero, lo que presos y locos tienen en común es

que ambos...

TODOS (Históricos): ¡¡Perjudican-la-tranquilidad!! (p.290)

The value of this scene is the emerging vision of a state in which words and concepts have no value unless they have been contorted and convoluted until they are worthy props of the central aim, the notorious "tranquilidad pública". On this level, the play illustrates the appropriation of language as a propaganda weapon through which no word can be taken to have one definite meaning. In one scene during which the audience is goaded into singing an infantile song, "La mar estaba serena", the word "primavera", the strongest single symbol of resistance and hope for renewal, is appropriated by the protagonists and hurled at the public:

A medida que avanza la canción, J.J., J.R. y R.R. se ponen cada vez más agresivos.

J.J. ¡Eso es, chilenos! ¡Alegría! (Para avanzar a):

¡Alegría, mierda!

R.R. ¡Viva la felicidad de este pueblo! ¡Primavera!

J.R. ¡Viva esta eterna primavera! (p.297)

Words cannot be trusted in this environment, and those that seemingly belong to the vocabulary of freedom are vulgarised and shown to be essentially empty and, therefore, capable of meaning different things according to the context. The most obvious example is the use of "la tranquilidad pública", which really means the creation of a silent mass of conforming individuals by means of massive propaganda and brutal repression.

Ultimately there will be no question in the audience's mind that

the emerging picture is of an environment in which the "beautiful" people are being pandered to unashamedly, at extreme cost to the welfare of the lower sectors and the destitute; where the physical divide between the rich neighbourhoods and the poor ones is more and more manifest, and where, above all, this glorious playground is protected by an institution that finds no contradiction between this tranquil society and the violence used to create and preserve it - amid great hilarity another law is created to control the growing numbers of beggars, who would need authorisation and would have to bear a badge ("una huevadita de lata en el pecho ") denoting the local authority to which they belong. In this context the masked faces, white and red, perfect and anonymous, are functional as the passport into the physically perfect society the protagonists purport to represent.

Throughout, the Angel remains aloof from the events, from which the three main protagonists emerge as boorish individuals who employ physical and verbal abuse as a matter of course. The language of this immaculate figure takes double speak one step further since his pronouncements are delivered in two distinct codes, one to be deciphered by the audience, the other by the protagonists. Accompanied by the cataclysmic music of Karl Orff, which strikes foreboding into the hearts of the other protagonists, the Angel announces the sight of people getting on a bus in a shanty town, an everyday event except that now they are making their way to the Turkish bath; the second and third announcements provoke growing uneasiness with reports of "un movimiento inhabitual", which eventually becomes a huge procession of jubilant masses through the main avenues of Santiago. The audience cannot fail to recognise the allusion to Salvador Allende's last words when he imagined the return

of democracy symbolised by mass popular expression and the return of the masses in procession to the "grandes alamedas".⁴

The message to the other protagonists is couched in the only terms they understand, those of the decay of the Turkish bath and the objects that support their superficial state: the soap has run out, likewise the steam and then the central heating breaks down and the water is cut off. They are, in fact, besieged, helping to engineer their own destruction by their total refusal to act with anything but the worn-out propaganda of perfection. In effect, it is not only the Angel who recognises the signs, for they have all experienced some deterioration in their physical state, suggesting that something is in the process of happening, but they do not have the will or capacity to act effectively. The final scene, "Sangre", follows revelations about murderous crimes they had committed, all as a result of their innate intolerance of anything less than their definition of perfection. It is a scene of retribution for their bloody crimes of repression, the blood on their hands being transformed into the blood raining on them through the walls of the Turkish bath.

The Angel is an ironic figure. He cannot be seen as uncontaminated by the ugliness of obsession with power, for he guards the sanctuary, he provides the revolver for the execution of El Perseguido, and his announcements are made dispassionately. As the Turkish bath is plunged into darkness and chaos, it seems that the Angel escapes untouched, suggesting that he may be distinct from the evil around him. But what are the implications of his detached, cleaner-than-thou nature?

Beneath the surface lurk the true motives of this character, whose aloofness from the dirty deeds of power relieves him from all

blame and allows him to maintain his place. He watches over the boorish squabbling for power between different factions, which strengthens his position, and he allows those who are seen to be employing grotesque methods of repression or enforcement of "la tranquilidad pública" to pay the price. In this respect the Angel is a satire on the figure of Pinochet. He is a leader whose image is founded on illusions of fatherhood, of moral superiority.⁵ He distances himself from the vile crimes of repression executed by his security forces and has managed so far to survive intact the knowledge that he is at the head of the operations. Other members of the junta or heads of the secret police take the blame, they become the scapegoats who face public indignation with the loss of their posts. The Angel produces the revolver that kills El Perseguido, but while someone else is pulling the trigger, he is merely preparing his next moves. Just like Pinochet, the Angel, detached from the brutality, manages to keep a clean image.⁶

But how does he get away with it? Baño a baño suggests one of the more obvious interpretations, that of the value of material enticements to the military as a means of ensuring loyalty. For what is the Turkish bath if it is not a barracks? The characteristics most commonly associated with barracks behaviour, such as crudity, fighting, proofs of manliness, go hand in hand in the Turkish bath with the exquisite surroundings, the superior equipment, the carefully maintained conditions. This adds greater strength to the interpretation of the Angel as a Pinochet figure, for it is he who administers the material comforts of the Turkish bath.

The role played by the audience is of utmost importance in the understanding of the play, for they are called on to act themselves, a set of anonymous individuals. As we have seen, throughout the play

the audience is systematically insulted and subjected to the gross behaviour of the protagonists. The reactions of the audience are scripted into the notes: "J.J, R.R., y J.R. continúan insultando agresivamente al público que antes los seguía bovinamente" (p. 297). The spectators are being asked to play a role that comes naturally, exposing the extent to which they have internalised the behaviour imposed in a violently repressive atmosphere, and their reaction to the play is intended to create an awareness of the complete lack of expression they experience in everyday life.

An atmosphere of guilt, uncertainty and fear is established from the opening scene when the public is included in the search for El Perseguido. Subsequently, it becomes clear that the protagonists are aware of the public's presence but do not feel that it warrants any consideration other than heavy-handed manipulation. The audience will play its role admirably, for the assimilation of responses of silence is complete. This state, however, has its counterpart in the sightings of the uprising crowds, the object of whose role is to demonstrate that the general silence masks serious discontent and the threat of effective opposition. The message is that "la tranquilidad pública" cannot be only for a tiny élite, for the repressed sectors will inevitably demand revenge. It is a distant echo of the fear of the impoverished intruder into bourgeois society that was so prominent in the sixties.

The superficial impression is one of stalemate, of the juxtaposition of two seemingly immutable limbos. Yet the Turkish bath is in a gradual, relentless process of decay as the hold on the instruments of power weakens and fear creeps in. The real state of limbo is in the audience, whose initiative has been numbed through submission and who are paralysed through inactivity, yet, again,

there is a sign of the prospects for change in the advance of the "numerous groups of people, of different ages, sexes and social extraction" (p.304). This image of a limbo precariously balanced on the edge of inevitable disaster is evoked again in Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido.

4. Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido

Aquí transcurren los años,
 Con mucho acudir de gente.
 Ya la Alameda ha cambiado,
 Y el Torres sigue vigente.⁷

In El Restorán de los Inmortales, a typical old restaurant of Santiago, in former days the meeting place for the oligarchy, three waiters (Elías Reyes, Efraín Rojas and Evaristo Romero), members of the mysterious sect la garzonería secreta, and Eliana Riquelme, the daughter of the founder of the sect, await the arrival of Don Estanislao Ossa Moya, the last surviving member of the oligarchy they had formerly served. The length of the wait is unspecified, time is occupied in ritually repeated games and rehearsals through which the waiters strive to retain perfection in serving and to fend off creeping uncertainties. When Estanislao Ossa Moya eventually appears in the doorway, he is an unrecognisable drunken wreck bearing no resemblance to the noble drunkard he may have been before. Like the rest of his class, he has come to die in this, the last bastion of their golden age, and to be placed in one of the niches reserved for him, but the nature of his demise is indicative of fundamental

changes taking place and heralds the end of an era. Nevertheless, while the possibility of perpetuating the old system still exists, Elías, the maître, is bound by duty to go through the ritual of initiating his successor, Efraín, to his new post. But Efraín, aware that their role is now redundant, refuses to accept the name, age and identity he has been destined to inherit as the maître. As Elías drinks the "vino del suicidio" as his master did before him when he, in his turn, saw new codes of behaviour that he regarded as assaults on decency and order, Efraín, in his real identity as Oscar, abandons the restaurant, followed by the bewildered Evaristo.

I want to begin with reference to the nature of the professional world of the waiter, which has been described as one of "rites and rituals, of status passages, of minutely divided hierarchies and secret knowledge that can never be understood from the customers' side of the green baize door".⁸ Here is a "tribe"⁹ of waiters vying in never-ending power games for superiority over their colleagues and control of a particular set of customers. They belong to an international community bearing essentially similar characteristics, all divided into small groups, resistant to change or to ideas of collectivity, each one working within a specific area in an enclosed space, the restaurant. In this way, a closed institution is created, one which, while it is in interaction with the outside world, is separate on account of its internal composition.

The waiters belong to a familiar tradition in Chilean literature, that of the serving classes, be they domestic or military, who protect, manage and emulate their masters; they are examples of the siútico, "a middle-class individual who emulates the aristocracy and its usage", but they do not, as a real siútico would, "hope to be taken for one of its members".¹⁰ The waiters, the members

of la garzonería secreta, have long ago mastered the habits and usages of the upper classes and, furthermore, they create the conditions in which these habits can be practised. With their detailed knowledge of the best kept secrets, they have acquired the ability to make and break any upstarts who threaten to intrude upon the premises of the aristocracy, and this power is guarded by la garzonería secreta to which they adhere with mason-like loyalty. There is an intense snobbery attached to their role, through which they dupe the aristocracy into a sense of complete power. La garzonería secreta is thus a covert institution of control. Behind masks that denote humility, servility, self abnegation lurk experts in the manipulation of power relationships:

ELIAS: ¿Se dan cuenta? Se trata de parecer vulgares...
 nadie debe saber que sabemos.

EVARISTO: Es un disfraz.

ELIAS: Eso, somos máscaras.

EFRAIN: Por eso no debemos mirarnos al espejo.

ELIAS: Por eso. Por eso no tenemos rostros...ni
 nombres... borrosos... solo servimos... No
 podemos aplastar al cliente con una pronunciación
 académica... Debemos darle la oportunidad de
 sentirse rodeado de inferiores... Cierto que a
 algunos clientes los aplastamos
 premeditadamente... A esos arribistas,
 advenedizos, nuevos ricos... Por eso la
 garzonería secreta es secreta... A pesar de
 nuestra influencia.

EVARISTO: ¿Nuestra influencia?

ELIAS: ¿Cuántos crímenes? ¿Cuántos amores? ¿Cuántas glorias y pasiones guñamos en nuestro restorán?... Que ellos se sientan controlándolo todo... pero basta un gesto nuestro y podemos quitar un candidato a la historia. (p.262)

The play works on two levels of power relations. Firstly, on the level of the waiters themselves as they guard the strict hierarchy of the trade and, secondly, on that of the manipulation of the customers, which, in effect, no longer exists but which they keep alive through ritual. The door to the restaurant has been closed for an unspecified length of time but has been noted in Eliana's inventory as open. It is, therefore, a double metaphor, both of the closed nature of the institution and of the ritual nature of the belief in the continuing relevance of their role. It is the recording of facts - that the door is open - not the truth of facts - that the door is closed - that is most important. The inventory, scrupulously kept by Eliana, is a weapon of indoctrination, it is the gospel by which they must abide, regardless of the fact that it is blatantly false.

The opening scene has Efraín and Evaristo playing make-believe, acting out the roles of fictitious customers who praise the commendable work of the waiters. This immediately introduces the nature of the customers, insinuates the role of the waiters and demonstrates that the latter are connoisseurs of the behaviour of their erstwhile clients. As the perfect imitation degenerates into childish insults, however, it is clear that, while they can emulate perfectly the social graces of their superiors, they can never fully shake off the tell-tale signs of their real identity, betrayed here

by their rivalry in inventing the most glowing terms of praise for themselves. In this scene Efraín and Evaristo act out an important part of the daily ritual in which they conjure up the ghosts of the élite and populate the derelict restaurant with such names as Carlos Gardel, Clark Gable, Arturo Alessandri. It is a symbolic act whose purpose is to reproduce the unambiguous nature of the restaurant's élitist orientation. This lack of ambiguity is fundamental to the good management of the restaurant: unity of purpose is the essence of the success of la garzonería secreta. As the waiters' proud mime degenerates into a childish squabble the first cracks in the impeccable façade are revealed: Evaristo as his oligarchic alter ego accuses the waiter Efraín of ill-concealed bad temper, a fatal flaw in the behaviour of any waiter, for it betrays the individual behind the mask. The waiters are thus revealed as part of a transparently flawed regime.

Efraín is the paranoid manifestation of the threat inherent in their present condition. His desire to play his role again prompts him to question the value of waiting; taken a step farther, he is questioning the very foundations of the role waiters play. On one hand his ideal is to serve as he had done before, thereby returning to the only model he knows, but on the other hand he contemplates the seditious idea of opening the doors to the general public. He recognises the need to modernise and adapt to changing circumstances to survive. On that level he represents a serious threat, for he is willing to invite unpredictability and ambiguity into their midst. Efraín deviates from the libretto, he mocks, ridicules and tries to escape the ritual exchanges, but instead of freedom, he finds the role of the "pájaro de mal agüero" pinned on him. Efraín fantasises to Evaristo about a new-look café-bar complete with juke box,

sandwiches, paper glasses, "como en todas partes". Evaristo is horrified:

EVARISTO: ¿Te estás trastornando?... ¿Y la garzonería secreta?... ¿Y el juramento?

EFRAIN: Sí, sí, sí sé... pero ahí volvería la gente... No tendríamos que tener la puerta cerrada... a lo mejor.

EVARISTO: La puerta está cerrada para que no entre nadie.

EFRAIN: ¡No! Está cerrada porque no entra nadie. En serio...Si a lo mejor volviéramos a estar de moda.... otra vez veríamos crímenes políticos. (En su entusiasmo se ha encaramado a una silla)...Esos nobles adulterios de la gente culpable... Esas borracheras de las autoridades... Esos ministros maricas... Esos guardaespaldas vulgares, esos hoyos en el espejo... Volver a recoger esos secretos... Evaristo....Otra vez, como antes... Llenos de secretos. (pp.259-60)

Efraín quite clearly sees that closing the doors bars desirable as well as undesirable, that behind closed doors they can never hope to be real functionaries of "la garzonería secreta", to possess the power they formerly held. While he remembers all too well the past feats of manipulation, recalls the scandals created, and still guards old secrets, he sees that the intrigues and scandals they rehearse are void of meaning when they are no more than a ritual rendering of a by now mythical state. Efraín's desire for change does not imply a

coherent moral acceptance or condemnation of the order to which he belongs - merely a desire to play a role again, to act on his own initiative and to shed the destructive identity of a person who is merely waiting.

Efraín suffers for his doubts and ideas. Not only as a result of mental torture or even physical repression, but as a scapegoat character. In his room things are found: "Esos planos y esas cosas que parecen folletos... Algo así como sandwichera RX650, y la cafetera Express Funikulá 789 Special... *No te entiendo, queridísimo Efraín...* ¡tanto nombre raro!... Evaristo vio esas cosas... y él es algo débil... apenas lleva algo más de una cincuentena en el oficio... Se puede perjudicar y sería por tu culpa..." (p.265). Elías, fully aware of the course things will take, finds Efraín's doubts a useful decoy to distract attention from the blatant signs of decay. The latter is accused of being a bad omen, a contaminating force among the innocent such as Evaristo: "Tú, Efraín, con tus dudas, has traído la mala suerte"; and it is he who is blamed for the death of Adolfo, their pet rat and a favourite of Don Estanislao Ossa Moya: "Por culpa de Efraín se murió, se está haciendo contagiosa tu enfermedad..." (p.273). He is a sickly person in the midst of their supposedly healthy regime, his advocacy of modern machines a sign of foreign contamination, of outside subversive ideas, of rebellion, and his plans and pamphlets seditious propaganda.

Don Estanislao Ossa Moya recognises Efraín instinctively: "(Mira a Efraín.) Tú tenís la culpa... tenís cara de pobre huevón... sindicalista... seguro..." (p.278). Efraín is a symbol of inevitable change, of the coming of democracy that had meant the end of the old regime, a regime that was only kept alive in the time warp of the Restorán de los Inmortales. Efraín offers an alternative existence,

an alternative way of carrying out their role, but any alternative is, for a member of la garzonería secreta, unacceptable, for the illusion that the old regime or chaos are the only alternatives must be maintained at all costs. Efraín is a symbol of the democratic option.

Evaristo, on the other hand, is the equivalent of the "distressed adult citizen"¹¹ who has found certain refuge in regression to an infantile state of mind, to a child-like dependency on a set of imposed patterns of behaviour. He adopts a child's "proclivity for feeling powerless, ashamed, deserted and guilty before the elders who command his submission".¹² He can never pose a threat to the order, for he has not reached the stage of taking decisions and is devoid of personal initiative. His actions throughout bear this out.

Efraín's sacrilegious utterings about serving fast food, "como en todas partes" is a cause of great concern and fear to Evaristo, since they openly take him out of the realms of safe ritual into the realms of thought and subversion. His own deviations from the norm are the mischievous actions of a child - he chews gum and sticks it under a table that is in Efraín's patch, terrified at the thought of being found out; at times he is even given the language of a child: as Efraín mutters a solemn prayer to the great Santo Maestro Riquelme, Evaristo chants a nursery rhyme: "Que venga, que venga, que nadie lo detenga" (p.258). His is the position of one who has assumed the infantile identity provided him in a paternalistic hierarchy and his acceptance of his role makes him the perfect waiter, the perfect non-person.

Despite the glaring imperfections they betray in their behaviour, the waiters are aware that they must still maintain the

precision of the Prussian Guard, the pride of the Chilean army, to whom the "famous" had compared them in the first scene. It is Elías who governs the strict hierarchy and imposes military discipline and behaviour: "Por favor... un garzón no siente... un buen garzón jamás siente ni piensa... no tiene más vida que la que le dé el cliente, su nombre, su apodo, su propina" (p.264). His arrival on stage is that of a general inspecting his troops, looking out for imperfections and signs of dereliction of duty. His role is to keep alive la garzonería secreta until the arrival of Ossa Moya, "el único buen caudillo que ha tenido el país" (p.263), to maintain the image of a society that is unchanging, a continual perpetuation of the past, governed by all-powerful patriarchs.

According to the definition of their role, the waiters, as non-persons, should have little trouble accommodat^{ing} the wait, since all that is asked of them is absolute loyalty and faithfulness to the cause. The language used to evoke this ideal and the model for behaviour is relentlessly evocative of a military establishment: the waiters are drilled in their profession; awful threats hover over the heads of dissidents or, in Elías' words, "desertores". Efraín, beaten in a parody of a torture scene in which Elías takes the typical role of the benevolent partner in a team of two, cajoling and persuading, while Evaristo takes the role of the brute, beating the traitor mercilessly with a napkin, is "persuaded" to abandon all thoughts of mutiny. The united front is re-established as all deviant thoughts flee the potential traitor's mind.

Elías' power over the others arises from his place in the hierarchy and his knowledge of the course things will take. As Number One he defines reality, he decides what does and what does not exist and uses the inventory to legitimise this with the authority of the

written word. The subordinates, by accepting the legitimacy of the inventory, accept that of the wait and, conversely, the inventory, in the hands of the matronly Eliana can have comforting properties for the tormented mind:

EFRAIN: A veces tengo tantas dudas; antes era más fácil,
pero ahora veo las puras telarañas, siento la
humedad, me crujen las tablas del piso...

ELIANA: No existen estas cosas, Efraín. No están anotadas
en mis libros... Así que no existen.

EFRAIN: Tiene razón... Si no están ahí, es que no
existieron nunca. (p.269)

Eliana, cashier and accountant, is the character who has most completely lost her identity, for her existence is nothing more than an obsessive counting of the objects in the restaurant, her inheritance from a father who bequeathed her a petrified identity: "... tu pobre hija ridícula... tu poca cosa... tu accidente de maricón que se mete con la pastelera y me cría entre las mesas... tú me hiciste cajera... tú me hiciste víctima de ilustres agarrones... tú me pegaste la afición a contar y recontar... no sé cómo me llamo ni cuál fue mi nombre si es que lo tuve..." (p.282).¹³ It is her father's memory that she now evokes as a means of making the waiters listen to her narration of an ominous dream: "Es que quiero contarle... No sé cómo anotarlo en mi inventario... Es confuso" (p.269). The dream will only become reality when it has been interpreted by Elías, exorcised of all evil before being registered in the book where everything that is to be believed is written.

Despite the fact that the dream, narrated by Eliana on a chair,

introduced and ended with bows, is given all the trimmings of a charade, its narration is a catalyst to the action. Hers is a premonitory dream of the total destruction of the restaurant, heralded by a number of signs, among which is the death of Adolfo, the pet rat, the breaking of crockery, the wailing of cats, the arrival of Ossa Moya, her own death and the shattering of the mirror into thousands of pieces. The fulfilment of the signs begins immediately and from this point on until the arrival of Ossa Moya an oppressive sense of finality pervades the stage.

Eliana is the essence of ambiguity in their midst. At the beginning of the narration she wonders if it might not be true that it was dreamt by "la otra... la del espejo... la que me mira fijo cuando recorro las grietas del espejo... Esa mujer vieja rodeada de fantasmas" (p.269). This would have a double advantage, since it would release her from the blame for the crime of dreaming unintelligible dreams, and would erase the need to note it down. But on stage Eliana becomes the other, her voice changes, she acquires authority of her own and demonstrates that "la del espejo", the "other", the real identity she has been denied, does indeed exist.

The mirror is a central image in the play. The restaurant has no windows, the door is boarded up, the only relief in this tomb-like atmosphere are the reflections in the mirror. In this context, the mirror becomes a symbol of a totally self-referring institution, reflecting endless images of decay. Finally, however, the shattering of the mirror is a positive sign of the destruction of a self-perpetuating limbo. The mirror had been a tool of the trade, a way of keeping a watchful eye on the customers without their knowledge. The normal purpose of a mirror had been obscured and, like the role of the waiters, had been defined solely by the existence of the clients,

However, the latter's prolonged absence naturally forces a redefinition of both mirror and waiters. The mirror, then, begins to assume its more normal function of reflecting the individual waiters whose real identity, in turn, is pushing to the fore. This new role of the mirror marks the beginning of the end of the regime.

The mirror and the identities of the waiters are inextricably linked, and are gradually transformed into mutually reflecting signs of the decay and demise of an old regime and the birth of a new order. Elías accuses his colleagues of signs of individuality: "Los he visto mirándose al espejo, han empezado a mirarse la cara, sobre todo tú, Efraín; ya ni siquiera te tiñes bien las canas" (p.274). Evaristo may ask for an unambiguously positive interpretation of the dream in terms of the rebirth of the old regime, but the evidence of change can no longer be denied and the illusion of a united group living only to perpetuate the myth of an ideal system is shattered along with the mirror. It is Elías' role as the signs in Eliana's dream come true to expose the general nature of decay, to admit that, indeed, time has been wasted and differences are creeping in. Yet he will never admit to his successor, Efraín, that he knew they were the only ones left, "que sólo gracias a nosotros la civilización se mantuvo de pie" (p.284).

The banquet that follows the arrival of Ossa Moya is a morbid parody of a party to celebrate political victory, perfect in its ritual evocation of the correct menu, the appropriate guests, the standard jokes, the toasting of "el candidato de la decencia y el respeto" (p.277). However, Ossa Moya's "speech" combines the faulty repetition of set campaign phrases with gross language, indecent behaviour, immoral demands. Evaristo, dismayed by the humiliating spectacle of Ossa Moya, constantly asks for reassurance that the

client is really an old tramp who slipped the net, but no such easy solution is at hand: "Quien más voy a ser, Evaristo... quien más... si lo conozco... yo los recuerdo y los distingo... y ustedes me confunden... antes era al revés... pero ahora se les nota... igual que a mí, somos transparentes" (p.281). The growing individuality of the waiters contrasts sharply with the seeming anonymity of the man before them whose former identity is now redundant, a victim of the inevitable process of change. Ossa Moya's vulgar rantings, his promises of "plata para los que pongan plata y palos para los demás", his detestation for democracy, his longing for the scandals and intrigue of campaigning, seen once upon a time as the glorious actions of the great leaders, are no more than vulgarities in the mouth of a tramp. The façade of decency and respect has gone. Ossa Moya becomes incorporated into the reflecting images of decay, the now transparently rotten face of the old order. The waiters reluctantly perform the final ritual burial in the knowledge that they cannot escape the force of predestination. Efraín finds the farce too much to bear and his attitude changes from anger to irony as he challenges Elías, "¿Qué hacemos ahora, Don Elías?", in the full knowledge that the answer was given in the dream through the words of the founder, "no hay nada más".

This is the demise of a whole institution intrinsically linked to the cultural action of eating. Part of the waiters' role is defined by political intrigues elaborated around food and drink; for those of Ossa Moya's tradition, politics without food is unthinkable: "Un partido que come bien merece ser elegido" (p.277). Food forms an integral part of the political ritual, adding ceremony to base dealings. Now the societal conventions that had turned the raw, or natural, into the cooked, or cultural (through its contact

with man), has been transformed into the rotten, here the disintegration of the framework that sustained this form of power relations. Thus, according to Elías in his mock version of the truth, "la decadencia es general, que el mejor signo de esto es la desaparición de los garzones". (p.284)

Their long distancing from playing a real role has rid the waiters of the ability to act other than symbolically. They have become people who are acted on, ordered, provided to react to authority according to strict codes, and who have begun to look to another power, that of Ossa Moya, for a solution to the stalemate that traps them. Elías' comforting interpretation of the dream, that the cries and moans are "de los de afuera, no de los de adentro", is proven to be false when Ossa Moya arrives, bringing with him, not the ingredients for a farewell banquet, but the cries from outside, invading the place with the misery of decadence. And in her dream Eliana sees that hidden behind the mirror are "ladrillos demolidos, la ciudad ensangrentada" (p.271). As the cries from outside become those inside the restaurant power shifts and the waiters, thrust by the evidence of decay into a world of uninvited ambiguity, reassert their protagonistic role. Elías, knowing that an era has ended, rejects Efraín's proposal of survival through adaptation and drinks "el vino del suicidio". The function of Efraín and Evaristo as symbolic of social types is thus reinforced: Evaristo remains the distressed being whose world has been turned upside down, for he had truly associated prosperity with former times, and had accepted that only with the re-establishment of the old order could prosperity return. Efraín, on the other hand represents the democratic option, the person who rejects the myths of past glory and the promise of power for an uncertain future in a changing world.

It is in the last scene, when power relations shift with cataclysmic results, that the real thrust of the play comes to the fore. During the long and frustrating wait the waiters have been kept in line through repression and the constant reinforcing of the fear they already harbour of the outside. Any attempt to look out is branded as treachery and as inviting "foreign contamination", but Efraín has looked outside and Evaristo has peeked timorously through the skylight, petty crimes that symbolise their repressed and perhaps not fully acknowledged desire to be more than servants in waiting.

Lo crudo... is a massive metaphor for a society that is seen to be in an ideal state if it achieves the all-encompassing aim of perpetuating an image of a mythical past, of stopping time at a moment when the most powerful were favoured by specific circumstances of underdevelopment among large sectors of the community. And, as in Baño a baño, those who aim to perpetuate this regime are exposed as boorish louts lusty after power. Yet the final image is one of renewal. The rotten refers to the inevitable rotting away of stagnant matter, but the rotting is not the end of the cycle, for the final scene reasserts the right to take active part in a culture of which the waiters, after all, are founder members, thus they return to the set of social rituals defined by the fundamental act of eating. As Agustín Letelier has indicated, when Efraín leaves in civilian clothes, as Oscar, the audience will breath a sigh of relief: "Su decisión de no aceptar convertirse en el sucesor del gran maestro de la garzonería secreta nos alivia tanto en lo emotivo como en el plano de las ideas."¹⁴

5. No +

At a forum in Concepción in 1985 the opinion was expressed that No+ was the most effective drama of recent years. In the midst of the very verbal tradition in Chilean drama and the volumes of words spoken and written about Chile since 1970, this was regarded as the utmost irony, for No + is a mime based on a play by the German, Peter Handke.¹⁵ Yet this irony is belied by the strength of the two words that form the title of the play. "No +" (No Más) is common graffiti in Chile at the present time and is usually followed by words like death, violence, or even Pinochet.¹⁶ These words are the first sign the audience will see on the stage set, which is a chess board floor with a wall surrounding it on two sides on which is written "No +", "...y, un poco más abajo una palabra un tanto borrosa, donde se puede leer con dificultad, MUERTE" (p.172).

In this way, the play is invested with a specific significance for the audience, a significance that will dictate how they will interpret the sequence of scenes, at times sidestepping the essential teacher-pupil relationship that forms the central conflict, to concentrate on more immediate symbols of the use and abuse of power. The initial impact, then, is all important as the dominant signifier: in everyday life, graffiti may only be registered subconsciously, but the fact that it is used on stage imbues it with a special symbolic quality. It is real in terms of being graffiti and, in its symbolic role, representative of a whole set of more general concerns.

No + revolves around the dominator-dominated antagonism that is built into the very structure of the relationship between the characters, a Tutor and his three pupils. As the chess-board setting

suggests No_+ depicts the power struggles as a game in which participants manoeuvre into positions of advantage and confrontation, and which holds within it the necessity of checkmate for the game to end. The alternative is stalemate. The Pupils, in an inherently weaker position, subordinate by virtue of their identity, seek ways throughout the fifteen scenes of the play of freeing themselves from the master's domination, forever forcing the Tutor to respond with new ways of maintaining his superiority. The title No_+ is in itself an example of an attempt to express the desire for freedom, and at the same time diverts the focus of attention to present day Chile. Each scene is an action in itself, of initial state, confrontation, resolution, punishment or stalemate, and each scene is a response to events that have taken place previously. As the pantomime continues, the images grow increasingly more violent, culminating in a state of war and bloodshed with, first, the disappearance of one pupil and ending with a final scene of four limp bodies strewn on the floor.

The Pupils' every action is dictated by their natural desire for freedom from rigid domination, and although the play consists of very ordinary, everyday actions, each of these is loaded with the preoccupation of whether it is permissible or not. Now I will examine the way in which the central relationship is developed so as to suggest that the most important element lies in the precarious balance of power as the Tutor's acts of domination generate among the Pupils responses that arise from a natural, but ultimately subversive, desire for freedom. This raises questions about the nature of freedom, for which the pupils have only one model, that is the Tutor: freedom of movement and expression are only within the possibilities of the master. The central argument is thus insinuated in the title of the original play: the pupil wants to be master.

One of the recurring symbols is that of food, used to demonstrate the pupils' simple enjoyment of it and fundamental right to it on one hand, and the Tutor's power by his mere presence, to ruin the pleasure in, for example, eating an apple. This is introduced in the first scene, "Comer manzanas es una acción muy simple", in which the three pupils, dressed in black suits, shirt and tie, are purely and simply engaged in the act of eating apples in absolute peace, with only the sound of the munching to be heard. But the appearance of the Tutor, dressed like the pupils only in a more polished way, disturbs the action, imperceptibly at first for the audience who, with their attention most probably on the new figure, will miss the fact that the eating has become slower and more difficult, until each pupil in turn has stopped and the Tutor exercises his implicit right to the last apple. In this initial scene, the central pivot of the tension become clear: the very presence of the Tutor destroys the simplicity of the action, which is repressed for no other motive than submission before the menacing figure.

Eating is again the issue in scene six, ironically entitled "La comida, plato común olla común", in which the Tutor ostentatiously eats in front of the hungry Pupils. The way the Pupils strain to see the spectacle but hold back in fear indicates their hunger and the greater strength of their will to avoid trouble. One pupil dares to approach only when the Tutor has finished. He guzzles the leftovers directly from the bowl. The others follow suit until, degraded and animal-like, they clean the bowl. While they eat "con ganas", the Tutor had eaten "con fruición". What does this say about the relation between them? While the Tutor's position affords him dignity and plenty, that of the Pupils leaves them at the mercy of the Tutor's

whims, and they have no dignity to call upon when they finally have access to the food. While for the Tutor the satisfaction of basic needs is enjoyable, and accompanied by the ritual of good manners ("Se limpia con un pañuelo"), for the Pupils this satisfaction is desperate, and manners are an empty consideration ("Sus caras están llenas de comida"). The unequal access to power is made explicit through the access to basic needs.

The same theme is explored again with reference to access to information in the third scene, "Todo lo que tienes no te pertenece y tampoco puedes rayar cuando se te ocurre". At the end of the previous scene, when the Tutor had dropped off to sleep, the Pupils had marched in Indian file to pick up a newspaper which they then laid on the table next to the Tutor, who is now reading it while the pupils are looking at "libritos pequeños", symbols of their reduced access to information. Given the Tutor's apparent absorption in the paper, the Pupils begin to take liberties of expression, like drawing on their books, on themselves, on the floor and finally one prepares to write on the wall, unaware that the Tutor, who is watching every action, has begun to crumble up his newspaper. In the course of this action, the newspaper becomes transformed into something far more sinister, a ball, a bullet, a noisy, crunching object of repression. When the Pupil finally realises that he is being watched he performs an immediate act of self-censorship, but one that again takes on a far wider significance, for he not only hands over the chalk, but he and the other Pupils give up their pencils, books and all their possessions from their pockets. As they do so they seek anonymity, oblivion, kneeling down until finally they are under the table, invisible to the eyes of the Tutor.

In the wake of these aborted acts of defiance, the Tutor

reasserts his right both to act as he pleases and to impose his discipline. The wall, out of bounds to the pupils for writing and the limit of their freedom of movement, is in all ways, within the access of the Tutor, for writing on the wall is an action the Tutor carries out in broad daylight, while the Pupils' "rayados" are clandestine and subversive. In scene eight, "Rayado de muralla", a tense situation is created as the Tutor begins to paint over "No + muerte" and replaces it with "Viva", evoking the fascist salute, "Viva la muerte". As the Tutor executes the change, one of the Pupils begins a game of throwing little white balls at the Tutor. Since the latter does not acknowledge the fact that his back is slowly being covered with these little white balls, the Pupil becomes more enthusiastic in his game. When the Tutor finishes his writing on the wall, he calmly takes a pair of scissors and begins to back into the Pupil. Just before they bump into each other, the Tutor swings round, still with the threatening scissors in his hand, but the Pupil commits a final, almost comic, act of defiance: "El pupilo pega la pelotita en el sombrero del tutor. Se miran. Se miran profundamente" (p.192). A confrontation is suggested, and the Tutor's right to express his thoughts on the wall is openly, albeit, ineffectively challenged. The following scene is one of punishment, centred on the bloody image of the scissors, which are the only objects moving on a silent stage, and while the scissors whirl around, a new image appears: "Un borbotón de agua. Casi un chorro. Después menos. Hasta convertirse en un delgado hilo de ¿sangre?, ¿agua?" (p.192).

Throughout the play actions that form unexceptional parts of life are displaced so that they take on a shock value. Eating, in other frames of reference a social activity, is performed as a selfish act of indulgence on the part of the Tutor and a fight for

survival on that of the pupils; cutting toe nails, not a social activity, becomes a symbol of the Tutor's domination over the use of the space, his right to define socially acceptable acts, and the scissors he uses to cut his toe nails, bring underlying violent currents to the surface: "Escuchamos el peligroso sonido de las tijeras cortando uñas" (p.189). In the next scene, when the Tutor writes "Viva", he has the scissors to hand as a weapon whose mere presence is threatening, and they eventually take on a life of their own - "... las tijeras dan vueltas vertiginosamente a sus pies"-, gathering momentum in the increasingly violent atmosphere. The scissors embody an image of severing, by implication of blood and death, an image that soon becomes reality.

Scene twelve is "La guerra". The three Pupils are very close, seeking one another's comfort and protection. Their silence is broken by the sound of someone digging a hole in the ground, a sound that causes them to retreat, until they reach the wall. The Tutor comes in, calm and apparently or deliberately unaware of the Pupils, and he then leaves, heading in the direction of a sound of hammering that slowly blends into the sound of machine guns, bombs, fleeing people, war. The hole is, thus, a distant image for the grave, the dead, and the hammering, a sound related to the finishing of coffins, the sounds of war, the cause of death. In scene thirteen, "Recado. La camisa ensangrentada", only two pupils are present. Then a message arrives, a packet containing a bloody shirt, denoting the death of the missing pupil.

The stage is then set for the final scene of confrontation, which takes place in relation to the only space for expression possible, the wall. A barely visible figure is heard spraying paint and in the light between blackouts the wall appears with numbers,

parts of words, signs, the disjointed beginnings of expression. Now the presence of the Tutor implies imminent confrontation, for in the endgame, the Pupils advance towards their master, apparently now without fear. The final scene is one of catastrophe: the stage is divided in two parts, there are four bodies strewn on the floor, each covered by a newspaper, dead as a final consequence of the chess game, the war, the board cut in two halves, symbolising the feuding sides. The wall continues to play a role and to imply resistance: "La pared al fondo, completamente rayada. Por sobre todo lo demás, un enorme manchón en el cual se logra leer: "No +" (p. 204). The graffiti is a faded protest, the final irony. "No more" announces the death of the four protagonists.

No+ as a pantomime relies purely on action, with no words to distract from what is seen on stage or to impose an interpretation. According to the author, interpretations are implied in the execution of the actions, and it is up to the spectator to add the finishing touches that will transform the mime into a recognisable whole:

Esta forma de valorar lo gestual obliga al espectador a mirar la obra de cierta manera, implicando que sus percepciones están en algunos puntos del escenario, que no son los adjetivados comunmente por el actor. El espectador va construyendo una narración propia, en el sentido que es él quien va otorgándole un contenido al gesto al adjetivarlo.¹⁷

But is this really the case? The author is conscious that this design holds within it the seeds of an imposed interpretation, for there is a definite construction of a set of codes (at the heart of

which are the wall and the chess board) insinuating the intended meaning of the actions. Nothing the Tutor does is excessively violent or bad, he is part of a cycle of rebellion and response, and within the context of the pupil-teacher relationship, he has a legitimate, accepted right to authority to which the pupils must respond and bow. The situation is the familiar one of the classroom, one familiar to every spectator, it is even benevolent in many ways, until the end when the war takes over, and the Tutor is undoubtedly on the side of the violent oppressor. In the final scenes the specific roles of master and pupil give way to the symbolic representation of oppressor and oppressed.

Noise, music, sounds, play an important role here as signifiers. As has been said, the characters form part of the set: they manoeuvre and outmanoeuvre one another in calculated moves, in a game in which access to the wall, to the right to expression, is paramount. All the characters are aware of the rules of the game, aware that defiance will inevitably lead to the confrontation necessary as catharsis. There is a feeling of a closed situation, of well defined boundaries and perfectly defined roles. The use of sound reinforces this impression.

Sounds become alternately intrusive and complementary, alienating and shocking. Intrusive sound is associated with the role played by the Tutor, it denotes unease and fear. Disembodied loud breathing invades the scene, it hints at abnormality, at distress; likewise other noises, like a metronome nervously ticking at "prestissimo", the newspaper being crunched up, or the toe nails falling, all suggest unwanted intrusions, violent affronts on the privacy of others.

Music, on the other hand, is complementary - happy at the

beginning as the Pupils simply eat apples, sad when the Pupils grovel in the bowl, bitter and nostalgic at the outbreak of war, childish and sad in the final scene. Both the music and the noises uphold the identity of the respective characters, adding further shades of meaning to their acts, intrusive and oppressive on the part of the Tutor, nostalgic and melancholic on that of the Pupils. Against the otherwise silent background all the noises are heard in isolation, always separated from the action on stage. Where do they originate? They are external signals of the roles played, functions of natural urges for freedom on one hand and ostentatious security of position on the other.

The central question in this play is the freedom to move and act within a certain space and the fight to gain greater freedom of movement. The Pupils, all too aware of the confines of their position, search for new ways of using the space to their advantage, but there is a doubly negative outcome built into this system. Firstly, they will always be punished for signs of individuality and, secondly, the only model of freedom they have is that of the Tutor. Note that there is very little difference between the four, for the notes say of the Tutor: "No hay nada especial que lo identifique. Quizás el terno más nuevo y mejor planchado, y los zapatos lustrados y de mejor calidad" (p.174). In other words, he is a more perfect version of the Pupils. Equally, they are imperfect versions of their master.

He is described as calm, he contemplates situations, momentarily founders and is defeated, but does not hesitate to punish and reimpose his authority, leaving him, "fuerte", "entero". The Pupils are often seen to be imitating him and although in one military style scene the situation is reversed and he imitates them, finally being

defeated on account of their greater agility, this merely serves to prove that they cannot all do the same things in the same space. In the final analysis, only the Tutor has the means to assert his right to do as he pleases. And the pupil wants to be master.

The essential message is that the reaction against domination is natural. It is the fight for the freedom in the space provided that provokes the final confrontation. By the final scenes, the roles are more loosely interpreted, the Pupil-Tutor identities are less marked as the Pupils perfect their methods of resistance. The war is a measure of the threat which they begin to constitute as their ultimate goal, that of emulating the practices of their master, comes within reach. The expression of their freedom becomes as inevitable as the war, but how will it end? In bloody confrontation. Does it always have to end like that? The faded writing on the wall pleads that it will not, that there will be no more cycles of violent oppression. But the fact of the four dead bodies on the floor declares that, for the moment, the cycle continues. Like a game of chess it can be endlessly repeated.

6. Stagnation and Renewal

The most obvious thing that Una pena y un cariño, Baño a baño, Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido and No + have in common is that they are all set in confined spaces, governed by strict hierarchies of power. The vision that emerges from these dramas is one of a society in a state of siege, one where sets of cliques gather together to conspire, manipulate and protect certain rigid values or sets of rules. These are places in which communication has come to a standstill since it is either meaningless or unnecessary.

Una pena y un cariño, where dialogue seems to run normally, gives a poignant example of the deception involved in the manipulation of symbols. Words are used to provoke, to threaten, sometimes, in the mouths of the actors, to explain and even negotiate, but they have no value as a means of communication or resolution of the problems, for it is fear, threats and repression that really do the talking. Language becomes an empty tool of propaganda and the images it evokes are belied by reality.

In Baño a baño we witness language reduced to dissociated noises. The laws the protagonists create by word of mouth have no semblance of connection with reality, they are merely symbols of the arbitrary nature of decisions of power, founded on nothing more than lust for greater power. Their language and actions are vulgar and grotesque, they seem inappropriate for the impeccable environment of the Turkish bath, but their crudity prepares the stage for the final scene in which their masks, their perfect façades, disintegrate. Again, when normality seems to be evident in the use of language, in the appearances of the Angel, his words are so designed as to evoke a whole new register of implications, of warnings, despite which they are ignored. And the protagonists' confessions of crimes do not signify remorse, but are merely pleas for mercy that, again, go unnoticed.

In Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido, communication is actively discouraged, for it would pose a threat to the continuation of the already dubious wait. Even when they are alone Efraín and Evaristo avoid real communication, only once touching on a question of real importance to their lives, that of the door that bars their access to the outside and a revitalised identity. Communication becomes subversive, a threat; words, in their perfect state, are empty

objects, at the service of the perpetuation of the myth, and accountable in Eliana's book: "Llevo contadas 12616 palabras y aún no se repiten los menús..."(p.252), and her dream will only be significant when the words used to narrate it are divorced from their real meaning and given an official interpretation. Yet the real interpretation of the dream inevitably makes its way to the surface.

All these dramas, by making use of various levels of disintegration of communication and the duplicity of language, expose the inherent ambiguity of words. No + takes this one step further and abandons unreliable words, relying on the gesture instead: "Too inadequate to designate anything, words are failures."¹⁸ Yet, as we have said, the only two words, "No more", speak volumes. Silence is the background for sequences of carefully orchestrated actions that, ideally, the spectator should have the scope to interpret. But actions are also wrought with duplicity, and an imposed interpretation is all but inevitable, for the author becomes one more spectator, one more interpreter of the signs he creates. In the action of the Tutor in taking the Pupil's last apple, the question of his right to do so is implicit. In the silence of the play the apple becomes the symbol of the Pupils' subordination to the Tutor's dominance. In No + the context dictates the suggested interpretation of the Tutor-Pupil relationship.

When plays deal with a type of generalised social paralysis of the ability to react or voice dissent, this is often accompanied by the implication that the audience, representative of the public at large, aids and abets the perpetuation of tyranny through timidity and acquiescence. In Baño a baño the protagonists abuse the passivity of the audience, which is juxtaposed with the sighting of activity that poses a potential threat to the status quo which, to all intents

and purposes, is supported by the audience. If those in the auditorium were to react, the central metaphor of the play would be immediately destroyed. This passivity and its abuse is a characteristic of the Brazilian play Apareceu a Margarida by Roberto Athayde, which has been performed on two occasions in Santiago in recent years.¹⁹

Like No +, Apareció la Margarita takes place in the school classroom, in the ideal institution for indoctrination. Señorita Margarita is a preposterous school mistress in charge of a class composed by the audience. Pleasant at the beginning, she soon begins to reveal her hold on her position of authority, which rests on her monopoly of the right to speak, her ability to stop the class from voicing opinions, and on the cynical but realistic assumption that "todos quieren ser la Señorita Margarita", that everyone prefers to be in charge of a class of obedient, complaisant pupils than to be part of it.

Her manipulation of abusive language is central to the atmosphere of tyranny she creates. Her utterings are her actions, her means of being in charge, and the students' silence is mocked: "You do nothing", she tells them, "You do not participate". She demands absolute silence from her class as she insults, threatens, evokes the terror of being sent to the headmaster, never to return. But as one critic has pointed out, "The irony behind her eloquent cries for silence is that there is absolute silence on the part of the students, the entire turmoil being caused by the woman herself".²⁰ This gives her scope for endless verbal invention, for renewed vigour at the least non-verbal sign of opposition, for new evocations of terror. Even at the end of the second class, when she collapses, she is revived by a student, who becomes a willing saviour of the

tyranny, and it is she who has the final word, that Señorita Margarita will always exist, that there will always be a new generation of oppressors in the wings. As Agustín Letelier asked, "¿De qué valdría la autoridad de la Señorita Margarita si no pudiera moldear la mente de sus queridos alumnos?".²¹ Again the pupil wants to be master.

Compare this with the relentless attack on the audience in Baño a bano. As in Apareció la Margarita there is a blatant allegorical level, and linguistic abuse is a key element for the perpetuation of tyranny. The audience is necessarily unresponsive, silent, for it is this very passivity that lends authority to those in the Turkish bath. The contempt of those in power for the silent victims is absolute.

Ictus, in their play La mar estaba serena (1981), covered similar themes of the passivity of the majority.²² The first sketch, "Atención Barra", revolves around the experience of a family at a football match in which the rules of the game are grotesquely distorted. Before the game begins a communal humming noise invades the stadium, replacing the normal shouting and cheering, and as the players come on to the pitch, the spectators are provided with whisky, pompoms and hats. The game is being played with two balls, there is no referee and there are unequal numbers in the two teams, the cynical philosophy behind which is a parody of free market policy: "Todos son buenos jugadores. Tienen derecho a jugar. Así los malos se van eliminando solitos" (p.4). When a penalty is to be taken the spectators are ordered to put on the hats, which cover their eyes, and they are provided a running commentary, according to which the penalty was missed. The father, however, looks, only to find out that a goal was scored. When one of the players protests he is beaten

to death and is later announced as having "recientemente fallecido en digna y leal justa deportiva" (p.7). It is only the indignant father who protests at the outrages: "Esto es una farsa, se están burlando del público" (p.7). But the general public seems willing to accept the mockery. "Todo el mundo parece conforme, papá", his daughter tells him, and she has begun to harbour the doubt that maybe the loudspeaker version is correct, that two balls are used in football, that teams do have unequal numbers. No matter what, it is better not to become involved. Truth is what is officially recorded, not what is witnessed. Compare this with Eliana's comforting assurance, "Lo importante es cómo lo anote yo en mis crónicas, no se preocupen" (p.275).

Throughout we have seen that the language used to instil the correct values into the characters is one of unity of purpose, of loyalty to a mission, of faithfulness to truth sacrificed to efficacy of the image of perfection. It relies on images of undiminishing strength, as in the anthem of the Turkish bath in which the inmates declare they will be "íntimos, inviolables, definitivos", like "espigas". This is echoed in Elías' inspection of the troops when he urges them to be "constantes, incondicionales, dispuestos", and in the description of the Tutor as "entero" when he is truly in command. All these images imply immutability, resistance to change, defensive strength, and it is to this that authors turn once and again to provide allusions to the underlying currents of insecurity or weakness in the various bastions.

But what of those in subordinate positions? The father in "Atención Barra" is really an anomaly, for it is not safe to voice dissident opinions in the environment to which he now belongs, where the way of surviving is through blending in with the background,

seeking anonymity as the pupils in No + do when they have overstepped the bounds of their freedom, and as the waiters are forced to do throughout. This "afán de anonimidad",²³ is in keeping with the limbo-like situations in which characters are imprisoned. Time has lost its meaning, individual development with it; nothing happens. In the most realistic of all the plays, Una pena y un cariño, the actors are willing to conform because of the distant reward, and because there is an army of faceless individuals equally willing to take their place. The rehearsal is frustratingly unproductive, there is a sense that they are playing at being actors, and while the spectacular purports to be about "The Roots of Chile", the roles they are asked to play are of the timeless and effectively fictional products of a dead patriarchy.

These plays share the common perception that the main objective of those in power is to halt the progress of history. There is a common vision of a forced detention of history for the imposition of a model of society advantageous to a tiny minority, important amongst whom are the manipulators of power themselves, who have an ever-increasing interest in maintaining the status quo. This new state can be maintained only through force and repression. Yet here we enter further realms of confusion. For, as in Apareció la Margarita, total conformity is guaranteed on the surface at least, and the repression seems to be directed at individuals who, at best, support the regime, and at worst, bear it. Very few don the woolly hats unwillingly. The images of war, of imminent rebellion, of serious threat evoked as the alternative to the present state would seem to exist in the confines of the dramatic space. Perhaps this is a measure of the efficiency of the halting of time, but such stagnation is interpreted in these plays as artificial and sterile.

A measure of this sterility is the place of ritual existence in these plays, where "to play" becomes the operative verb, where games and reality become suspiciously confused. Cocooned within the protective walls of the Turkish bath, suspended in the illusion of their perfect moment, the protagonists of Baño a baño play. Do they play at making laws, secure in the knowledge that the subjugation of the people is so complete that they need not impose them? Perhaps, but these games are manifestations of a grotesque cynicism, the laws are parodies of the those actually designed to impose public order, to control social pests, like tramps, lunatics. Law-making is a dangerous game when left to the imbecile mentality. The protagonists childishly and narcissistically play games of power that hold within them the seeds of destruction, for while they play, others act. Games in Baño a baño analogise with the vision of the self-indulgent and unproductive pastimes of a repressive ruling élite.

In Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido games have another significance. The games the waiters play tirelessly to fill the time before the arrival of Ossa Moya are doubly important. On one level they are infantile, the pastimes of those who have no contribution to make to society. But, on another level, and deriving from this, games are the last remaining vestige of their role: "Play is order; it creates order. Into an imperfect world it brings a temporary, a limited perfection."²⁴ They are a means of reinventing the order of the restaurant, of reinforcing the hierarchy of power to which the waiters still adhere, and they degenerate into petty violence when they deviate from this function, when the waiters step beyond the closely monitored, superbly organised game of being waiters. Like the set pieces of No + the games in Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido can also be construed as training, training in the first instance, for

the correct delivery of the subordinate role, and secondly for the proper assumption of the dominant role. The pupil is destined to be master, and the waiter is destined to be maitre. Elías is adamant that games are forbidden while rehearsals are mandatory, Evaristo can no longer distinguish which is which and Efraín knows that they ultimately mean the same thing. For the waiters, games are reality.

Games, finally, are signs of expression for those marking time in this limbo of inactivity (remember that the protagonists in the three plays about unemployment also invented games). They belong to a children's world, to the world of those who neither do nor speak. Games are part of a ritual existence, but none of these plays accepts this ritual existence as permanent. For games can also be unreliable, in that, although they can be endlessly repeated, they contain the inherent possibility of a different outcome. In the destruction of the Turkish bath, the sporadic signs of solidarity among the actors, Efraín's exit into an unknown future, the Pupils' growing defiance, each one of these plays has the suggestion of renewal, of the hoped-for alternative. They unveil discontent and they search for optimism.

So, the plays studied in this chapter interpret the power game as one of stopping the process of history, even of turning the clock back. In these plays the illusion of access to the mental machinery of power is created. Somehow, perhaps through the identification with the settings, accessibility to this machinery of power is a feasible illusion. In the next chapter we travel to the other extreme as we explore the world of Juan Radrigán, populated by the dirty, smelly sectors who live on the margins of "decontaminated" society, where the exercise of power is remote and arbitrary and where no illusion of access to its internal machinery can exist.

Notes to Chapter Three

1. All references to plays will be to the following editions: Una pena y un cariño, in Teatro Chileno de la Crisis Institucional: 1973-1980 (Antología Crítica), pp.308 -39; Baño a baño, id., pp.287-305; Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido, id., pp.250-86. No +, Apuntes, Revista de Teatro, 93, (1985), 171-204.
2. See Teatro La Feria, pp. 17-18.
3. "En Orden y Paz Chile Avanza", is one of the most common and most visible of the regime's propaganda posters all over Chile.
4. See Joan E. Garcés, Allende y la experiencia chilena: Las armas de una política (Barcelona-Caracas-México: Editorial Ariel, 1976), pp.391-92. The specific statement to which these images refer is: "Sigan ustedes sabiendo que, mucho más temprano que tarde, se abrirán las grandes alamedas por donde pase el hombre libre para construir una sociedad mejor."
6. Graham Greene has described Pinochet as "the greatest character actor of them all". He describes Pinochet's presence at the signing of the Panama Canal Treaty in 1977: "Like Boris Karloff, he really had attained the status of instant recognition: he was the one who could look down with amused contempt at the highly paid frivolous Hollywood types below him. His chin was so deeply sunk in his collar that he seemed to have no neck at all; he had clever, humourous, falsely good-fellow eyes which seemed to be telling us not to take too seriously all those stories of murder and torture emanating from South America... Like Karloff he didn't have a speaking part - he didn't even have to grunt." See Getting to Know the General. The Story of an Involvement (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), pp. 121-22.
6. All this echoes feelings of frustration and impotence in real life, when new outrages perpetrated by the security forces are denied in full knowledge that the denials of blame are transparently false. This kind of dismay and disbelief was witnessed after the murder of three Communist Party leaders in March 1985, and the subsequent investigations that implicated high ranking members of the carabineros, the military police. In what is a graphic illustration of the distribution of power and the laying of blame, the head of the carabineros General Mendoza, resigned as a result of this incident.
7. El Restorán de los Inmortales is modelled on a famous old traditional restaurant in Santiago called El Torres, from where even the stage props for the play were borrowed. The walls of the restaurant El Torres, which was founded in 1879, bear inscriptions such as that quoted here.
8. Mars and Nicod, The World of Waiters (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p.x

9. Ibid, p.2
10. Frederick B. Pike, "Aspects of Class Relations in Chile", Hispanic American Historical Review, 43 (1963), p. 22. The most recent example of this use of serving classes is to be found in José Donoso's allegorical and, unusually for him, overtly political novel, Casa de campo (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1978). Set in a country mansion belonging to a large aristocratic family, it is an allegory for the Popular Unity period and the breakdown of democracy. An excellent description of the plot and study of the novel's allegorical potential can be found in Pamela Bacarisse, "Donoso and Social Commitment: Casa de campo", Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, LX, 4 (1983), 319-32. It is interesting to quote from her description of the role of the servants, which can also be applied to the waiters: "The great discipline of their lives leads to a loss of individual identity on their part: they seem to be interchangeable. ... They do not constitute an undivided group and ... they are afraid of those above them and impressed by their own clandestine power. They are ultimately proved to be inflexibly conservative and strongly attached to the social hierarchy which exploits them, as well as showing themselves to be dedicated to puritan values... Individuals are forgotten - in fact the mayordomos have no individual personality - but the uniform is eternal" (p.322).
11. See Paul Ilie, "Dictatorship and Literature: The Model of Francoist Spain", Ideologies and Literature, IV, 17 (1983), p. 253.
12. Ibid.
13. It has not gone unnoticed that the character of Eliana is reminiscent of that of La Japonesa in José Donoso's short novel El lugar sin límites (Barcelona: Editorial Euros, 1975). Hernán Vidal has pointed to the fact that they are both the "accidents of homosexual fathers". See Hernán Vidal, "Teatro chileno profesional reciente", in Teatro chileno de la crisis institucional. But more significant is the climate in which each one is brought up. La Japonesa was born as a result of a bet by which her mother, La Japonesa Grande, would win the ownership of her brothel from the local landlord if she could make love with a transvestite dancer. At the time of the novel La Japonesa, born and bred among prostitutes, is the virgin madam of her mother's brothel. The old order associated with the landowning classes who frequented the brothel in former days is dying out, the town is backward, chronically underdeveloped, business is almost non-existent. La Japonesa shares a sterile legacy with Eliana, for the latter, born and bred among waiters, can not belong to la garzonería secreta, she has no useful role to play. Furthermore, they both introduce a strain of ambiguity into the environment to which they belong, both as a result of their origin, and their dubious role. Both are the sad remnants of a past age.
14. Agustín Letelier, "Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido", El

Mercurio, 28 July 1985.

15. Translated into Spanish as El pupilo quiere ser tutor in Primer Acto 131.
16. See Krítica, 17, (1985), "Graffiti", by P. Brodsky, pp. 37-9 and, "Por qué soy un rayado", pp. 21-3. Note that "rayar" is the word used to refer to the painting of graffiti. "Rayado" is, furthermore, slang for mad.
17. See introduction to No +, "Obra No +", Apuntes, 93 (1985), p. 168.
18. See, Pia Teodorescu Brinzeu, "The Verbal Zero Sign in Theatre", Poetics, 13 (1984), p.50.
19. The first performance of the Brazilian play was as a café-concert in the popular café-bar Yellow Pub, with the title, Margarita dicta una clase, in 1982. One of the major attractions of the new performance was that Margarita was played by Bélgica Castro who had just returned from exile. The translation was by Alejandro Sieveking.
20. See Severino Joao Albuquerque, "Verbal Violence and the Pursuit of Power in Apareceu a Margarida", Latin American Theatre Review, (1986), p.25.
21. Agustín Letelier, "Bélgica apareció en la Margarita", El Mercurio, 15 Sept. 1985.
22. References will be to the manuscript of the work. La mar estaba serena was written by Ictus in collaboration with Sergio Vodanovic and Carlos Genovese.
23. See "La obra que nació de una consulta psiquiátrica al revés", "El Mercurio", 27 Oct. 1978.
24. Jacqueline Eyring Bixter, "Games and Reality on the Latin American Stage", Latin American Literary Review, XII (1984), p.26.

CHAPTER FOUR

WORLDS OF MARGINALITY: THE UBIQUITOUS "EL"

1. 1979: A New Dramatist. Juan Radrigán

Juan Radrigán is Chile's most prolific dramatist in the present period. His first play was performed in 1979, since when he has written and produced thirteen,¹ and in 1982 he was awarded the Prize for the Best Dramatist of the Year by the Círculo de Críticos del Arte. By then it was generally agreed that "Radrigán es a los pobres lo que Egon Wolff, Vodanovic, Cuadra, son a la burguesía y clase media chilenas en la dramaturgia nacional. Todos ellos son fieles a sus clases".²

Juan Radrigán's characters are the most extreme examples of the dispossessed, they are down and outs, prostitutes, tramps, they belong to the lumpen proletariat, and they live on the margins of society. The problems that afflict them are those of survival, and they fight fiercely to protect the last vestiges of human dignity that remain. On first sight these protagonists are close relatives of the marginal sectors we saw in the works of sixties in Heiremans, Díaz, Aguirre, and to a lesser extent, Wolff. Yet Radrigán's world is far removed from that one for two reasons. Firstly, one of the most significant contributions to theatre that Radrigán has made is in the realm of the authenticity of his language, for whereas the lumpen of the dramatists mentioned above spoke a form of correct Chilean Spanish, Radrigán's characters speak lumpen Chilean, a closed slang, crude, funny, vivid and often incomprehensible to the outsider. At the same time it is lyrical, poetic, evocative of a whole inner world

of nuances of despair and optimism, cynicism and faith. Agustín Letelier, talking of Radrigán's latest play, Borrachos de luna (1986), underlines the poetic elements in the language: "Pero es una poesía suave o que detenga en imágenes en busca de la belleza. Es una poesía que busca elevar el tono del lenguaje para darle dignidad y para mostrar con mayor fuerza la causa del dolor o de la soledad."³ The coarse and graphic slang is interspersed with at times shocking poetic elements that lead ultimately to the discovery of the innermost fears and worries of the protagonists. It is a language born of belief in people, a language intended to paint the inner landscapes of emotion, "Porque hay gente que es buena. Que adentro tienen paisajes, tienen colores".⁴

Critics in search of conventional Chilean dramatic conflict, development and resolution, are constantly disappointed by their absence in Radrigán's sparse plays. One critic complained that his first play, Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina (1979), had "escasos elementos dramáticos", that the play lacked "caracterización de personajes" and that it was "casi un reportaje periodístico actuado".⁵ As his work has developed these dramatic elements do not appear, the stage remains bare and inhospitable, the dialogues are still reports of the protagonists' lives and are still performed in apparent social voids. Herein lies the second and more significant difference of Radrigán's drama. Other dramas dealing with topics of marginality have been set within an oppressor - oppressed antagonism. In Radrigán's work, however, the marginals are the central and only characters, they inhabit an isolated world, petty recriminations substitute for dramatic conflict, and conflict in the sense of the development of the action towards crisis and resolution is insignificant. Yet there is a tension, an awareness of antagonism

bearing down from beyond the space the protagonists occupy on stage, a bench, a room, a hut, a clearing by the river. The major conflicts are to be found within the protagonists, often in the form of a continual grating of past and present, of the loneliness they experience in the present compared with the memory of a fuller past of by now unfulfilled dreams. They fight against physical and moral disintegration, against the loss of human dignity.

Because of his working class background, and the themes and protagonists of his works, Radrigán has been consistently and mistakenly compared with the only other dramatist of working-class extraction that Chile can boast, Antonio Acevedo Hernández. A number of observations should be made. Firstly, Acevedo Hernández' work was normally set within a tight melodramatic structure, a mixture of tragedy and sure redemption, usually linked with a political solution. His works were part of a drama surging from the workers' movement and the characters belonged to a well-defined social structure. The same can be said of the work of other dramatists with whom Radrigán's work has been compared, for example, that of Aguirre, Requena and the earlier socially committed works of Díaz in which the situation of the protagonists was seen to be hopeful as long as they remained capable of taking up consciousness of their socially and economically deprived state and seeking a way forward through organisation and political struggle against the ruling classes.

In Radrigán we find no such clarity of interpretation and no offering of solutions. There is no political way out, and while his social commentary is always painfully explicit and ultra realistic, it is never linked to the possibility of redemption through political awareness or consciousness-raising: "Yo no creo que sacar a un hombre de la pobreza consista en hacerlo rico... Un tipo es absolutamente

feliz con 20 mil pesos. Porque después empieza a buscar más y buscar más... Y cada uno es culpable de que no seamos felices así. Por eso yo no busco la revolución en masa. No me gusta tirar piedras, sino que cada uno se intranquilece, que cada uno medite."⁶ The essence of Radrigán's work is that he redefines marginality. Here marginality is not economic, it is emotional, physical, human, and the roots of its study are to be found in the question of human dignity, which, the author feels, "en el pobre está más pura y más pristina. Pristina en el sentido de primitivo y claro. Ellos no tienen los problemas de la incomunicación... Ellos todavía no. Ellos tienen el problema del hambre."⁷ This is the world that Radrigán explores, a world of moral marginality, a world where little happens, where theatre does not mean dramatic conflict, but where there is an oppressive tension nevertheless:

Porque el teatro de Juan Radrigán sigue siendo poco teatro. Hay poesía, monólogos, historias intercaladas, conversaciones que casi no integran una acción integral, muchas observaciones y frases que se captan mejor al leerlas que en la apretada exposición teatral. Un teatro muy poco teatro, pero de pronto... un gran golpe al alma y lo dramático se viene encima. Nos demoramos en un andar lento, muy estático, pero cuando aparece lo que estuvo preparando en medio de entrecortados silencios, duele y tendemos a pensar que eso no puede ser, pero sabemos que es.⁸

Radrigán's work has been regarded as one continuous play, for

characters from one play turn up in another in later stages of degeneration, there are references to incidents from other plays, the dramatic community seems to transcend the barriers of the stage. This is a central aspect of Radrigán's theatre, for the characters share life experiences governed by broad social circumstances. These are comparable to the social indicators of deprivation studied in the plays about work, problems of alcoholism, dejection, the loss of dignity, all linked to the effect of economic and political changes in the present period on the protagonists' lives. For Radrigán's characters, with very few exceptions, the events dictating changes in society are far removed from them, and it is this distance that defines their experience. The existence of a remote power, usually referred to as "El" is an integral part of this world.

"El" is as vague as his title suggests, but he is extremely accessible to the imagination of the audience. He is always a male figure, known to represent power or to be all powerful, he is mysterious or remains a mystery to at least one of the characters, or one sector of the dramatic community, he is normally at the root of some evil or at the roots of a definite period of hardship, and as such he is an intimidating figure with, for some, unfathomable powers. One of the major consequences of his existence is a sense of alienation. As we shall see in the final part of this chapter, "El" is not a character exclusive to Radrigán's work. In many of the plays of this period allusions are made to a remote figure with power over the dramatic community or to a figure in whom the characters invest their hope for survival, but who generally remains invisible and unyielding. In the work of Radrigán "El" finds his most complete expression as a symbol of the remoteness of power and the extreme polarisation between social sectors in contemporary Chile.

2. Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina: The Remoteness of Power

I. Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina (1979), Juan Radrigán's first play, the two protagonists, Sabina and Rafael, are old fruit-sellers with a stall in the market. In the first act they recall their life together in what seems like a frequently repeated dialogue, through which we learn about the ups and downs they have suffered over the thirty years they have spent together, and through which we glimpse an enduring, though seldom tender, love. The audience learns that lately things have been going badly for the couple and that they feel as if they are an exception to a general rule of prosperity, since other people seem to be doing well "... ahora tiene dos quioscos en la estación central y este año ya ha cambiado de abrigo tres veces. ... Toos se arreglan y nosotros caa vez vamos más pa'bajo" (p.67). In the final scene of the first act Sabina suddenly remembers that she must tell Rafael that they have been fined for an unexplained offence. The ticket leaves them with a sense of foreboding, which is echoed by the faraway footsteps of someone approaching their room.

In the second act, one month later, they are still trying to make sense of the fine. After being moved around in bureaucratic circles, going from one place to the next, being ignored and badly treated, they are still in the dark, not even aware of what they have done wrong in order to warrant problems with the law. The only advance they have made is to be told the number of the law they have broken, for they were given its number in order to prove it does indeed exist, but nobody knows to which law the number belongs. They find themselves in a Kafkaesque situation with no solution. At the end of the second act, with the imminent loss of the stall, their

fear is growing, and the steps that had been heard to approach before are now nearer and clearly belong to two or three people.

By the beginning of the third act Sabina's worst fears have been confirmed and they have lost the stall. She feels destitute, lost, abandoned, dead. By this time they are both in despair, but are gradually piecing the story together. It is established that their licence was out of date and that a fine should have been paid, but since the ticket was taken from them by one of the bureaucrats, they could never prove that it was issued and could not pay the fine, no matter how much they wanted to, and they lost the stall as a consequence. This brings to the fore the tensions in their relationship, for their quarrels are of mutual recrimination, and Sabina above all, feels that nothing worthwhile is left in her life, the loss of the stall having killed even her ability to create dreams that she knows will never be fulfilled. Someone has destroyed her life for her, but she does not know who, and by the end of the third act the steps that are approaching are loud and menacing.

Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina introduces the idea of the remoteness of power that will pervade the rest of the dramas to be studied in this chapter. Whereas in other Radrigán plays this idea finds personification in a distant and seemingly omnipotent character, "El", the most frightening aspect of the story of Sabina and Rafael is the fact that they are totally in the dark as to who is persecuting them in such a way. The fear they experience is set in perspective when it is made clear that it is perfectly normal to be summoned by the law, but that this time something has changed: "Los han sacao partes por tener la pesa arreglá, por no barrer o por ocupar mucha vereea; pero siempre los han entregao un papel donde dice porqué los sacan el parte y lo vamos a pagar y too quea arreglao,

pero ahora no sabemos qué pasa; no sabemos qué's lo que hicimos" (p. 85). Everything about this most recent encounter with the law is sinister, inexplicable, and Sabina suspects that they are being cruelly mocked.

Rafael is frustrated by the abstract nature of the power that now governs them: "Eso es lo peor, no hay con quien pelear; no sabemos de aonde los están apretando el cogote; no sabemos ni qué hicimos" (pp.81-82). Who can they turn to, who can explain and solve the problem? Rafael suggests a possible supernatural solution as the logical conclusion since the bureaucrats do not seem to have any power to act, each one looking to the person above them in the hierarchy: "¿Con quién vai'hablar?... Si toos dicen que los mandan, tendríai que hablar con Dios nomás: El debe ser el que los manda a toos" (p. 94). Rafael's feeling of powerlessness is rooted in the feeling that they would be in a position to fight if only they knew with whom. When Sabina accuses him of failing her, he repeats the same message, but with greater force:

... No viste como los jueron apretando dia'poco, sin dar nunca la cara. En la comisaría, en la municipalía, en el jugao; toos decían lo mismo, "Es la ley, no poímos hacer na". Y la ley no está por ninguna parte, no tiene cara, no tiene ojos, no tiene cuerpo. ¡Así no se puee pelear! ¿Cómo crestas te vai a agarrar con alguien que no veí, que no'stá en ninguna parte? ¡Entiéndame, po! (p. 97)

The law becomes, in this instance, the instrument of the cowardly, like a bully persecuting the weakest without ever having to explain or face up to the victim. This is the dilemma that affects to

a greater or lesser extent most of Radrigán's characters. They find themselves in dead-end situations, and the only way out seems to be in the hands of a character they cannot see, of whom they have no immediate knowledge, and who is cruelly unjust and uncaring. The constant insinuation that the gravity of the situation is a recent development, that some time in the past, power and its executors were not so remote, so totally faceless, so cowardly, pervades Radrigán's work. Now Sabina feels as if they are treating her like an animal, that she is no longer respected as a human being.

Sabina has lived a poor life, surviving from her stall, which is her economic security for the future and through which she can create some illusion of hope in her life. Although she knows deep down that she will never have all the things that dreams are made of, she needs the illusion of a better future: "Yo sabía que no las iba a tener, que no eran para mí, pero siempre me hacía ilusiones... Ahora si los quitan el puesto nunca más voy a tener esperanzas. ¡No pueen robar eso, no pueen!" (p. 85). She feels desperately alone, next to but unaccompanied by a drunken husband and forgotten by her children, she feels that the foundations of her life, the respect for her work and her modest dreams, are about to be taken away from her. If the stall goes she will face the same fate as the fruit she sells, she will be trodden underfoot.

Sabina is haunted by the prospect of death, but death for her is not a simple notion, it is a constant creeping part of life. The simple awareness of death is an inevitable result of old age, for all around them their friends are dying, generally of alcohol-related diseases. Rafael is struck by the thought that death is closing in, he is shocked by the fact that he will inevitably die and death conjures up notions of loneliness, of losing Sabina. Sabina's fear is

not of death itself, but of an unpeaceful death. She tells Rafael the story of a death she witnessed as a young girl, when a dying woman was tormented by the women who had come to help her to "die well". Yet as she pleads to Rafael that he should never let her suffer the same fate, she is struck by the sure memory of having told him the story many times before. Can it be true that Rafael does not remember having heard it, that she has been talking to herself? Can it be true that he will remember nothing of her worries, her life, her memories when she dies?

RAFAEL: (Perdiendo la paciencia) Güeno vos sabís que siempre he tenío mala memoria, qué querís que liá'ga...

SABINA: Si vos te muriera y alguien me preguntara alguna vez como erai, yo me acordaría de too lo que te gustaba, de lo que hablábai, de lo que queríai; me acordaría hasta de la manera de andar que tenís, pero voh...

RAFAEL: Yo también, po, yo también.

SABINA: ¡No de mí no se va'cordar nadie. Nadie me va'ir a ver o va'hablar de mí; yo me voy a morir más que toda la gente! ¡Yo me voy a morir tanto cuando me muera!

RAFAEL: ¿Cómo te vai a morir tanto? Ya no te pongai lesa. Toos los morimos una vez nomás. (p. 90)

If death for Rafael means loneliness, then for Sabina dying with no trace in the memory of the person who has shared thirty years of her

life is the ultimate sign of the utter futility of her life. A life of talking alone, like a mad woman, followed by a death of incomparable abandonment.

Sabina tries again to make Rafael aware of the meaning of death when, in a graphic example of his inability to respond to her and turn her monologues into dialogues, she tries on two occasions to describe a dream. In it she comes to visit herself: "Vine a verme, era joven... De repente me vi pará ahí. (Señala algún lugar en la pieza) Yo taba ahí (señala), parchándote el chaquetón... Vine y me queé mirando un güen rato. ... Claro, yo misma. Pero mucho más joven. (Pausa) Como era antes de conocerte a voh ... Y de repente los pusimos a llorar las dos ... De lástima, de vergüenza... Si hubiera tenío un revolver me habría matao" (p. 92). Rafael mocks the practical impossibility of the dream: "O sea que tabai en tres partes altiro" (p. 92). Yet in her dream Sabina does divide herself into parts, stages of her disillusion with life,

Death is a constant erosion of life. In her dream Sabina sees the long dead younger self visiting the present dying self and both are tempted to provide the coup de gráce. Rafael cannot comprehend Sabina's attention to a seemingly stupid dream, he does not believe that in a similar dream he would have any reason to cry, but then the very fact that it is Sabina who dreams is indicative of their different experience of life. He has a life outside the home, friends, drinking partners with whom he conscientiously evades thinking about the nature of his existence, and at home he answers Sabina's fears with anger, impatience or jokes. Perhaps he does remember Sabina's childhood experience of death, but has so practised the art of evasion that he need make no effort to erase it from his mind. Sabina, alone, with no means of evasion has discovered that

thoughts and memories are autonomous from her desire to control them. As memories of her optimistic youth intrude even on her sleeping moments, the truth of her eroded life invades her peace of mind, and the prospect of a peaceful end grows dimmer.

So the deaths of Sabina that the audience or readers witness are death through the loss of dreams, the intuition that part of her has long been dead, and moral death through the loss of the stall, which brings with it the fear of not being allowed to die in peace. The loss of the stall is the realisation of all her worst fears. As Sabina finds her bitterness getting the better of her, she questions everything about her life together with Rafael, who is genuinely hurt and perturbed by the violence of her accusations. He cannot accept the blame for Sabina's deaths, he is overwhelmed by her anger at the total insignificance of their life together, by her seeming surrender to death.

The steps that end each scene, growing more and more menacing, are the steps of those who will execute the dictates of the law, they are the steps of those who will finally rob Sabina of her stall and the last illusion of life, they are the steps of death closing in. Radrigán's language leaves no doubt as to the criminal undertones in the imposition of the law, a law that will "rob" the protagonists of their right to earn a living, and will "kill" their reasons for living. At the centre of all these plays is a deep preoccupation with questions of justice, which, in the words of a character from another play, is a form of hunger: "... porque el único pan que cura toas las hambres es la justicia, y esa cuestión anda más perdido que'l teniente Bello" (Hechos Consumados, p.283). In Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina it is the law that embodies the concept of ruthless power. The law is seen to be faceless when the characters have to

fight for justice, but, as the steps indicate, all too real and tangible when it comes to putting the finishing touches to the couple's destruction, their "death".

Radrigán's plays hinge on the study of questions of dignity and respect, the durability of love in poverty, justice and injustice. In all the plays it is continually stated that the period of injustice is in contrast to a past period of respect and care. While it is rarely stated when this period existed and there is always the hint that it is nostalgia for a not-so-perfect past, it is clear from the works and the signs that the period of the remote power of "him" and "them" is the period since the coup. Characters fear the power wielded, but on the other hand, whoever wields it is deemed to have the means to extract them from the death-like limbo they inhabit or, alternatively, to put an end to all hope. This is stated in its most explicit form in El Invitado.

3. El Invitado: He Came to Stay

El Invitado (1981) is the third part of a larger piece called Redoble fúnebre para lobos y corderos, made up of two monologues and a dialogue.⁹ The play takes place in the present period, on a stage decorated only by a black bench. It takes the form of a dialogue between a couple, Sara and Pedro, in which they describe how they live in a room occupied by a mysterious guest, El Invitado, whom neither is aware of having invited. The dialogue is, in effect, a diversion from the main purpose of their presence, which is to challenge the audience to show some sign of life by answering the question that haunts their every living minute: "Querimos que

los digan como se acostumbraron a vivir con el Invitado: queremos ser como ustedes" (p.274). They cannot adequately explain how he arrived, only that he slipped through an open door and is now comfortably settled in their home, where the level of coexistence is claustrophobic in the extreme - "Aquí en este lado tenemos la cama de nosotros, la del invitado allá en esa otra punta" (p.258) - and where their every move is made in the knowledge of his presence. At the end the audience is asked the opening question again. Inevitably there is no answer, but there is a comprehensive vision of the more salient characteristics of the period since the arrival of the guest.

Sara and Pedro have always been poor, but now they live in misery. We learn of the gradual economic and moral deterioration in their lives through flashbacks to the various strategies they have adopted to survive. They walk the streets day after day looking for work, Sara appears in television quiz shows that ridicule the extremely poor and Pedro acts as a sparring partner to up-and-coming boxing stars, who, in their turn, are exploited by unscrupulous managers. Sara indicates the turning point when poverty became misery: "...desde que llegó el Invitado nomá, si ahí empezó too"; and Pedro, who is less convinced that El Invitado is the sole cause of their misery, concedes: "Pero antes no era así: too empezó cuando llegó el Invitado" (p.258). Their reduction to begging and demeaning jobs is, Sara says, the result of a miracle: "...milagro económico he oído que le llaman" (p.257). Their experience of the miracle is sharply contrasted with their view of the tranquil people sitting in the audience, tranquil because they do not share the same misery, and therefore must have experienced another side of the "economic miracle".

The home of Pedro and Sara is a metaphor for the state of the

country, the intruder analogising with the intruder of recent Chilean history and the whole situation analogising with the post-coup period. The invasion of personal territory, therefore, is general, but the plight of Sara and Pedro is the focal point for its study. The most important point about this "El" is the extent of his control over the dramatic community and, by extension, over the community at large. The dialogue raises three important points that all contribute to understanding Radrigán's view of contemporary Chile: firstly, Sara gives an interpretation of how "El" entered; secondly, we learn what effect his presence has had; thirdly, we learn the great importance of the question they put to the public. All this is done with recourse to familiar techniques and supported by familiar political arguments.

On one level, the arrival of El Invitado remains a mystery which is never fully explained but which, taken in the wider context the play is written in, will be all too obvious for an audience avid for signs of political identification. Radrigán clearly exploits the most common interpretation of the arrival of an easily identifiable intruder. It is made clear that the guest was not actually invited, but that his entrance was not foreseen and prevented as it could have been. At various points during their dialogue the question of his arrival is raised, always in strained circumstances:

SARA: Los boches los empiezan ustedes y los perdimos las mujeres y los cabros, siempre ha sido así. Pero no quiero hablar más d'eso; pregunta cómo lo hicieron y los vamos.

PEDRO: Primero tenemos que decirles quiénes somos y too eso, igual que cuando uno va al doctor. (Oteando).

¿Cómo se ven?

SARA: Como siempre: tranquilos.

PEDRO: Entonces tienen qu'estar endeudados hasta las masas, porque la tranquilidad no se paga con na. ¿No habís oído?

SARA: No habléis de masa, mira qu'el horno no'stá pa bollos.

PEDRO: No te preocupís, que siempre los va quear el consuelo del búho: hicimos lo que se púo. (Pausa)
¿Lo hicimos?

SARA: Te dije que no quiero hablar más d'eso. Ya pasó; hablando d'eso las palabras sirven de cuchillos nomá. Lo que tenemos que hacer es olvíar; olvíar pa poder empezar a vivir. (p.255)

In this first, rather obscure exchange, Pedro hides his concern behind a joking façade and, like many of the characters in these plays, relies on a facile refrain either to hide his worry or to explain away the disaster. Behind it, however, there is a feeling of uncertainty. His "¿Lo hicimos?" suggests that he is not even sure of what could have been done, but hopes that the answer will let him off the hook. Sara, however, has decided that they must not waste time in the exercise of laying blame, since it only provides one with a weapon to use against the other. This constant underlying hostility is at odds with the seeming tranquility of the public. From where Sara and Pedro are standing, tranquility means being able to buy a place in capitalist society, the alternative being an existence of silent and tranquil desperation, the life they live at the moment.

The depth of the hostility between Sara and Pedro becomes

clearer when Pedro again mentions El's arrival:

PEDRO: Antes no éramos así: too empezó cuando llegó el
Invitao.

SARA: Invitao no; invitao es cuando uno convía a alguien: y
a ése yo no lo invité.

PEDRO: Yo tampoco: llegó solo.

SARA: Ni el viento llega solo, pero pongámole que sí.

PEDRO: ¿Cómo que pongámole? ¿Vai empezar? ¿M'estái echando
la culpa a mí?

SARA: Ya te dije que no quiero hablar más d'eso. (Contando)
La cuestión es que llegó, y nosotros tenemos too
junto. (p.258)

This time Sara states her position, that she cannot be held responsible for the arrival of their guest. Later, however, when, for the third time, Pedro raises the question, in exasperation she finally blames him:

SARA: ¿Vai a empezar otra vez? Si no te hubiérai pasao
discutiendo con los vecinos, lo podríamos haber visto
llegar y le habríamos cerrado la puerta.

PEDRO: ¿Y aónde 'stabai voh que no se la cerraste?

SARA: Preguntándote a voh por qué discutíai, ¿qué no ti'
acordai? Pero nunca me decíai na. "Voh no te metai,
voh no sabís ná d'estas cuestiones": eso era lo único
que decíai. Ahí tenís ahora lo que los pasó.

PEDRO: ¿Así que yo nomás tengo la culpa? Si veíai que yo
l'estaba embarrando teníai que haberte metío, teníai

que haber apechugao.

SARA: (Airada) ¡No hablís más d'eso, qué sacai! ¡Ya, pregunta di'una vez! (pp.273-74)

This last exchange opens up the whole debate. In effect, neither Sara nor Pedro had been aware of the threat lurking in the background, but in Sara's view the blame lies unequivocally with him as the male and protector of the household. In relation to the wider issues that the play casts up, it does not take a great awareness of the various interpretations of the Popular Unity experiment to recognise the argument Radrigán is advocating. It is generally accepted that one of the major flaws in the Popular Unity coalition was the lack of unity of purpose and the often extreme differences of opinion regarding the methods to be adopted, which caused constant fighting between the factions. So, in the analysis expounded in the play, as the parties indulged in in-fighting they became oblivious to the enemy outside, who finally took advantage of the situation in order to gain power. If El invitado bears a political message it is directed at the left, charging them to reassess their objectives and look seriously at the matter of unity.

The second point the play addresses is that of the effect of El Invitado's presence on the community, which is both emotional and physical. The decay in the speakers' lives is almost complete. Beginning with his inability to ward off their "guest", Pedro's manhood comes more and more into question as the degree of his failure to provide for his wife grows. Sara turns a statement about their desperation into an insult to Pedro's manhood: "Al invitao ya le falta poco pa obligarte a andar a cuatro patas"; but Pedro only reminds her that each one reflects the other's degradation: "A mí

nomá no, a voh también" (p.270). Instead of the togetherness they once felt, and that they now envy in others, Pedro and Sara are torn apart by the degradation they suffer daily. They fight, they blame each other, they try to love, but the presence of El Invitado renders this all but impossible: "... él no sabe eso. El amor viene y se muere di'hambre nomá" (p.262). Sara blames the fact that they have no children on his presence: "Los quitó la casa y la alegría. No los dejó tener un hijo" (p.266). She has decided she cannot bring a child into this world: "Una mujer sin hijos puée ser muy desgraciá, pero una mujer con un hijo muerto o pidiendo comía casa a casa, es cien veces más desgraciá" (p.259). They cannot even make love, for he is constantly present, the diligent voyeur.

The most extreme physical consequence of his arrival is the reduction in their living space. Sara, as we have seen, tells how they have "too junto", and Pedro explains that they now live in "una sola pieza". They nostalgically remember the days when they had a home, friends and a sense of community, when they went to the local theatres and second-hand book shops, but now they are isolated. The move from home to room speaks out as a symbol of their decaying existence and as a symbol of the closing spaces of communication. Communication with other people is seen to be directed through other channels, no longer from person to person. People, it is suggested, live in separate units, ostensibly at peace with each other and the world, rarely involved in community activities that rely on free social interaction. The most prominent channel for communication is the media, whose growing propagandistic power Radrigán demonstrates graphically. We return to Sara's description of their room, in which the symbols of the machinery of propaganda are to the fore:

SARA: (Moviéndose y señalando) ... En la cabecera de la cama d'el hay un poster del Colo Colo, en la de nosotros, uno con tres marraquetas.

PEDRO: O sea en eso tamos a la moda, pan y circo.

SARA: A mí me carga el Colo Colo, la agarré mala porque sirve de pura tapaera. Una no puee saber ninguna de las cuestiones que pasan por culpa d'él.

PEDRO: Claro, es cierto: si no existiera el Colo Colo los diarios tendrían que salir con la mitad de las páginas en blanco. ¡Y son balsúos con ropa y too! Por ser, mi'acuerdo d'esa vez que un terremoto mató a quinientas personas y en toos los diarios salió al otro día en primera página: "Heróica hazaña del Colo Colo ganó con quinientos socios menos!

SARA: Menos mal que hicieron el equipo después de la guerra, sino no hubiéramos sabío na de Arturo Prá tampoco. (pp. 258-59)

The imagery may be contrived, the dialogue forced, but the intention is clear. The poster of Colo Colo, Chile's most popular football team, functions as an Orwellian screen from behind which El Invitado controls the protagonists' existence. All information is under strict censorship. Real social problems are ignored and a semblance of caring is created by the attention given to reporting natural catastrophes, which serves the double purpose of calling on the national spirit to support those affected while creating a crude illusion of the commendable unity of the country.

El Invitado provides "bread and circuses", the classic form of mass culture, the abandonment of "political responsibilities for

doles of food and the lures of the racetrack and the arena".¹⁰ In this case, the psuedo-nationalist emotions raised by Colo Colo numb the desire for action while whetting the appetite for a superficial national pride. Propaganda, such as that surrounding Colo Colo, isolates the people politically while giving the impression of community, it keeps the followers in ignorance and eradicates the need for autonomous memory since all the information is manipulated by "El". In this way the consumers of the information are alienated from the processes in society that directly affect them; changes like the "economic miracle" that destroyed Sara and Pedro become the work of an obscure force that they cannot attribute in certainty to El Invitado, but that definitely coincided with his arrival. This isolation through lack of information becomes frightening, intimidating, hence the need to be sure that they are not the only ones for whom life with El Invitado is intolerable and that the slow but sure erosion of accepted values is either common to all or reversible. So isolated do Pedro and Sara feel and so at the mercy of the obscure forces that control them, that they have come to demand answers from society at large. They are not fully aware who these people in the audience are, but they do seem to be more contented, for they look "tranquilos". This brings us to the third point: the importance of the question they ask.

El Invitado is written in the form of a confrontation. The audience is, in effect, being challenged with the accusation that they are living peacefully with the ubiquitous guest because they invited his presence. The implication is that those who are unchanged by his arrival are either cowed into silence by his presence and so deny that any change has taken place, or alternatively, that it is they who had left the door ajar deliberately. This is not the almost

obligatory gratuitous dig at the morals of the bourgeois audience, but a grave comment on the nature of the enduring strength of the intruder. The audience remains passive as Sara and Pedro describe their banishment from work, from their home and, worst of all, from themselves, from the hope of a better life. The audience chooses refuge in tranquility and silence, just as large sectors of the community will remain passive when confronted by the evidence of the social cost of the "economic miracle". *El Invitado* has come to stay and this is why it is so important for Sara and Pedro to learn to live with him. For it is never in doubt that coexistence is possible: the evidence is before their very eyes.

El Invitado is the play that best corresponds to the criticism that Radrigán's work is "muy poco teatro". It is like a discharge of all his major preoccupations, and gives a lot of space to the accepted left-wing interpretations of the coup and the worst results of the regime. Its strength lies in the language, which is the expression of pain, of disillusion, uncontaminated by the stylised distortions of propaganda. "Tranquilo" is, again, a key concept of the play, subtitled "O la tranquilidad no se paga con nada". This is inevitably evocative of the crude propagandistic "tranquilidad pública", but more importantly this is a picture of the multitude of sins hidden behind the tranquil façade, of which the audience is cast as a part. For Sara and Pedro the evocation of "tranquilidad" does not harbour any false promise of a peaceful society, but means purely and simply the ruthless creation of a consumer society to which they cannot belong. "Felicidad pa' grande ésta / d'estarse muriendo en tranquilidad" ends the poem that introduces the play.

El invitado deals with a closed situation in which "El" is a symbol of repression and in which there is little hope for future

release. El toro por las astas is set in another closed situation, a brothel within whose confines "El" represents a hope of redemption by providing the characters with a promise of a brighter, more meaningful future. "El" becomes a deposit for the characters' already existing but almost forgotten superstitious belief in religion, but this turns out to be a cruel deceit when we learn, along with the protagonists, that the real "El" lurks in the background, omnipotent, invisible and feeding their hopeless illusions.

4. El toro por las astas: A Parable of Moral Redemption

El toro por las astas (1982) takes place in a "prostíbulo de mala muerte". The characters, Lucía, the madam, Víctor, her pimp, Antonio, the campanillero (doorman-cum-lookout), and two decrepit prostitutes, Jaque and Made, live in squalor, surviving from day to day on the pitiful income of the brothel, which has next to no clients. Lucía has heard of the existence of El Milagrero, a man who has become renowned for his miraculous works, and she hopes to bribe him to come to the brothel in order to perform the miracles that will change the course of their lives. While Antonio sets out to find El Milagrero and arrange the meeting, the prostitutes are ordered by Lucía to stop work so as to purify their souls and are set the all but impossible task of cleaning the brothel of years of filth and grime, all in preparation for his arrival. In the course of the first scene, the characters reveal the miracles they want El Milagrero to work: Lucía wants the freedom of her son, a political prisoner whose one wish is to see the light of day; Víctor longs to eat "un tremendo asado", a huge roast, for he is convinced that his years of injustice began when he was ten, when, as a punishment, he was not allowed to

take part in a barbecue party; Jaque, who has lost a breast through cancer, contracted, she believes, as a result of being manhandled by her clients, will ask for a new one; and Made, who was refused a job in a cosmetics factory because she was a prostitute, is making a blue apron in preparation for the miracle of being employed there. Only Antonio has no miracle to ask for since, he says, he has spent his life from the moment he was born simply passing through every door that has been left open for him.

When El Milagrero arrives, sooner than expected and unannounced, he comes only to return Lucía's bribe. There follows a scene of utter confusion in which the characters fail to recognise their saviour in the ordinary man, a potential client, standing before them, and his identity is only revealed when Antonio recognises him. In a long monologue El Milagrero tells how he was employed by a mysterious, never fully-explained, figure called El Hombrón for the job of imparting a pseudo-Christian message of love and resignation to the most desperate sectors of society. Yet, the very fact of being in contact with these sectors had opened his eyes to the depths of their misery and the emptiness of the message he was preaching. Having realised that he wasn't equipped to deal seriously with problems of such magnitude, El Milagrero had confronted El Hombrón and had been freed from his role as El Milagrero, so that, by the time he arrives at the brothel, he is again an ordinary man.

The only message he can impart is the one he has learned as the miracle-worker, that is, that there are no miracles and that people must find within themselves the strength to free themselves from the wretched circumstances in which they live. But for the protagonists this message represents "el desamparo, la desnudez profunda y completa" (p.360), for it means the loss of even the illusion of hope

of miraculous release from fate. In anger and despair El Milagrero breaks down the door of the brothel for them to leave and start a new life outside, but his final actions bring all the wrath of El Hombrón upon him and he is struck down dead. While the rest fall en masse into despair and defeat, Antonio takes the opportunity provided by the newly open door, and leaves.

El Milagrero, then, is a mysterious saviour, and in order to understand his role we must look at the atmosphere in which such a character exists. The key lies in the names of the two prostitutes, Jaque and Made: those in the brothel are in checkmate, a position of complete defeat from which there is no way out. It is stated time and again that there is a war going on outside the brothel and that their lives have become unbearable from the time the war started. Jaque's lover went off to the war and never returned, leaving her alone and with nothing to live for, and Lucía's son is in prison as a traitor. As Jaque and Made try to make sense of the reason for his imprisonment they come to the conclusion that he is an enemy, but not their enemy, "Enemigo de los enemigos, o sea amigo de nosotros..." (p.333), but this conclusion merely completes their confusion. For if they are on the same side, does that not make them traitors as well and if this is so should they not share the same fate? All around them the war reaps and thrives on confusion. Their one certainty is that they are among the defeated, and their one hope is that El Milagrero will save them from this limbo of defeat and isolation.

Jaque and Made have three sources of information: firstly, what are called "las noticias atrasás" of Víctor's old radio, from which all that is heard are the various noises of war, noises that they dread: "Intempestivo ruido de balazos, ayes, carreras; disparos en ráfaga y tiro a tiro. Se paran asustadas, mirando, escuchando,

buscando refugio. El sonido cambia de tono, con algunas variantes, helicópteros, órdenes. Luego, vuelve a cambiar" (p.319); secondly, what they learn from the newspapers the clients leave behind, where they read that "ahora hay paz y tranquilidad" (p.326); and thirdly, from Antonio who, Jaque says, has told her that "por toas partes hay letreros que dicen que vamos flor". Antonio also reports the vast changes in society and the possibilities they could have outside: "No, si las cosas han cambiado mucho ajuera, Jaque: ahora podís ir a patinar a un bulevar o te pueden dar pega en una casa de masajes, después te metís la torta a una AFP y quedai flor" (p.328).¹¹

With such limited and contradictory information, the prostitutes cannot form a coherent idea of society. They are never fully convinced by the second-hand propaganda they receive, nor are they convinced that the war is over. While reporting the propaganda, Antonio contradicts it by telling Jaque that outside there is no longer respect for anything, a state she recognises as characterising the war, her last experience of the outside. And she herself contradicts the news from the clients' newspapers when she remembers how she had suffered before taking refuge in the brothel: "Pero eso dicen los diarios, no la gente; la gente se quea callá cuando una le habla d'eso...Lo único que sé es que allá ajuera hay muchos como yo, o sea que no son viudas, solteras ni casás..." (p.326). Like Pedro and Sara, she knows that the stories of peace are propaganda, but can find no one who will make the truth explicit.¹² The war has engendered a whole new sub-world of poverty and desperation, giving fertile ground for the propagation of miracle workers. For El Milagrero is not unique.

Radrigán demonstrates the state of society by making it clear that there is more than one so-called miracle worker, and that all

have eager audiences. Antonio remembers the tragi-comic fate of El Cristo de Elqui who met a sad end when he fell from a tree from which he had been preaching: "...y parece que la gallá agarró papa y le tuvo fe porque lo seguían como moscas a la miel. Claro que' eran los mismos de siempre, o sea, torrantes, chimbirocas, cesantes, mujeres abandonás, mudos, paralíticos, y too eso" (p.328).¹³ Before going in search of El Milagrero, he warns Lucía: "¿Sabe, señora? Taba pensando... andan hartos vivarachos por allí que se la' stán dando de Milagros..." (p.339). And it is Antonio who demonstrates the relative value of miracle working: "Pero cuando la gente empieza a llamar milagro a comer dos días seguidos, puede llamar milagro a cualquier cosa... Hacer milagros es re fácil: basta con quitar algo a la gente y después entregárselo de repente; la receta no falla" (pp.328-29).

Antonio sees El Milagrero in purely political terms, he interprets him as a phenomenon produced by the age, he refers to his miracle-working as a job, and when they find out at the beginning of the play that El Milagrero has fled to the hills Antonio attributes it to an attempt to escape the repression of what could be interpreted as politically subversive activities: "...junta gente, lo siguen: eso es peligroso... Parece que le dio miedo y se fundió" (p.337). He believes that only the characters themselves can find their escape, and is of the opinion that religion is not a game the poor should play. He is cynical about "la campaña de la decencia y la moralidá" promoted by Lucía and Víctor, and about the sacrifices the prostitutes are being forced to make as proof of their faith. In many ways, Antonio is a counterpart to El Milagrero for, like him, he warns of the futility of believing in a miraculous redemption, aware that they are, in effect, digging the grave for any future hope in

life: "El que cava la fosa cae dentro de ella, y el que rueda una piedra se le viene encima", he tells them, but the moral reaches uncomprehending ears (p.326).

Death is a central motif of this play, as it is in all the work of Radrigán. In the opening scene, only the voices of Jaque and Made can be heard as they enter the unlit salon of the brothel, looking for the place of their "death". Jaque believes that she has been killed, that she cannot look forward to a natural death, that their existence is one of severance from real life: "...los tironiaron hasta que nos separaron de la vía" (p.317). And in the most literal sense they are separated from life as a result of their enclosed existence, never leaving the brothel, kept there by Lucía and Víctor, Los Verdugos, their executioners. According to Made, "La muerte es una sola, Jaque; si la desgracia grande jue que a nosotros los mataron por dentro, no por fuera" (p.317). They believe that all those in their immediate environment have died a spiritual death as a result of their circumstances: "...nadie contó chistes en tu velorio, ni t'echaron tierra encima, pero'stai muerto. ¿Aónde te moriste?" (p. 329).

The immediate impression that the voices in the salon create is of "ánimas en pena", the wandering souls of the dead who have not yet been cleansed of their sins and who, in popular belief, roam between heaven and earth awaiting the moment when their suffering will have made them ready for the entrance into heaven. Jaque and Made do indeed live in a purgatory but, in contrast to the "ánimas", they have a bodily, not a spiritual presence. In the specific context of the play, their purgatory becomes more than metaphorical as they attempt to prepare themselves through sacrifice for the promise of redemption.

Jaque and Made are aware of the desperate state of their lives and suspect that they have no future, but their weakness is such that they can find no alternative other than the miracle solution sponsored by La Verduga. Therefore, they follow her instructions, and in the process of cleansing themselves they assume as their own the struggle to build hope out of this one mysterious, miraculous opportunity. From the beginning, the advent of El Milagrero is shrouded in misplaced respect for his messianic mission: "¿No creís que El nos va salvar?", Made asks (p.319), while Víctor reads the Bible for the first time in his life, and Antonio is branded as a heretic when he refers to El Milagrero's mission as a "pega". But their belief is laced with a fear that Jaque makes explicit: "Puea ser que la cuestión no sea como ir a meterse a un basural más grande nomás... A ratos me da miedo; junté too lo que me quedaba pa poder armar esta esperanza; si la pierdo nunca más voy a poder creer en na" (pp.327-28). Even La Verduga shares the fear: "Creo que el mieu que tengo, es que si El me falla, ¿a quién voy a recurrir? (Alucinada) ¿Pero no me puee fallar, Dios no puee' star contra nosotros!" (p.335). In this respect, Antonio's interpretation of their belief is correct, for they clutch at hope, knowing that, even if the miracles do not materialise, life can have some meaning as long as hope has been kindled again. Seemingly, the greatest mistake of El Milagrero is to arrive.

El Milagrero does confirm some of Antonio's intuitions about his role, but not all, and it is in this juxtaposition of mistaken concepts that the meaning of the roles played by El Milagrero and El Hombrón lies. El Milagrero tells his own story:

Era lindo ir diciéndole a la gente que se quisiera y que

entonces lo demás venía solo, el pan, la pega, la tranquilidad y too eso... ¡Pero pónganse en mi lugar po! La cuestión ta muy espesa, muy podría; el amor se l'escapa a la gente a chorros por los agujeros que les hizo la guerra, tan queando caa día más vacíos; y tienen razón también po, cuando la muerte o la amenaza de la muerte es cosa de toos los días, de que se va asombrar uno. (Pausa)

Yo no digo que no tengan salvación, no vamos a venir a vivir con el corazón encerrao en el pecho como un animal asustado, no po, el corazón tiene qu'estar siempre abierto como una ventana, esa cuestión la sé. Pero lo que pasa es qu'el Hombrón me dio la pega, pero no me dio las herramientas; no tenía na aquí aentro (se golpea el pecho) pa convencerlos, ni aquí en los ojos ni en la garganta ni en las manos: ¡no tenía na aquí en ninguna re crestona parte!... Yo no sé por qué la agarró conmigo; nunca he sido na. Nací, crecí, aprendí la pega de la carpintería con el viejo de mi taita, y cuando apareció La Magdalena los juntamos po. ¿Aónde había algo pa que la agarrara conmigo? En ninguna parte po. ¡Por qué tenía que elegirme a mí!

(p.351)

Although the story El Milagrero tells of his life has abundant Christian overtones - he is a carpenter by trade, following in his father's footsteps, he is called by a supreme being, and he comes to the brothel, ultimately to his death, on a Friday - he denies any Christ-like qualities, calling Víctor and Lucía heretics when they confuse him with the person who cured lepers and walked on water. He confirms Antonio's theory about the fear of repression: "...ni me dio

na con qué peliar contra ese frío que me corría desde los tobillos hasta'l pelo cuando se paraba un auto sin patente a mi lado" (p.351). More importantly, he introduces them to the idea of his miracle-working as a job, again in accordance with Antonio, and names his employer, El Hombrón, a figure whose existence they had not even suspected. His job, as defined by El Hombrón, is to provide the desperate with promises of a better life in return for good behaviour and the rejection of hate and desire for revenge, but it is a message whose false promises are those of propaganda, and it falls on deaf ears. For El Milagrero preaches to people who are the maimed survivors of war, who have seen death and destruction all around and whose driving force is often revenge:

Porque ahora es dos veces el tiempo de la selva; ahora si uno pone la otra mejilla, la gallá llega a tomar güelo pa mandarle el otro aletazo, y el hombre más manso de corazón que he encontrao, suena con abrir a su enemigo de arriba abajo y tirarlo a los canales donde corra el agua más podría. (p.352)

El Milagrero now sees himself as a pawn used by El Hombrón, he sees that the message he was to teach was based on words without depth, feeling or meaning, on mere promises and superstition. Through him El Hombrón used the endlessly malleable parables of the New Testament to preach a message of abject resignation to the spiritually dead, trusting in their inability to react. Here the Christian message is cynically endowed with a politically advantageous creed of resignation. El Milagrero is profoundly and essentially alienated from the words he utters, they are the parrot-

fashion renderings of the Catechism, repeated because they form part of a code of values that loosely governs the spiritual welfare of society. Yet El Milagrero is soon forced to recognise the emptiness of this code. Christ-like, he is met with "burlas y piedras y golpes", for like Jaque people hear the propaganda of peace but find no way to relate it to reality. The message becomes a tragic and transparent hoax.

Instead of the peace promised by his preaching, El Milagrero himself loses all the peace, love and dignity he had known before: "... desde qu'El me puso los ojos encima me desgració" (p.350). And as he begins to recognise this, he sees his own image reflected in those to whom he preaches. This is brought out in the perceptions of life he shares with the characters, for the language he speaks is their language, and the images he uses are their images: "Pucha, claro, yo los caché al tiro; ustedes son los que no tienen velas en ningún entierro; son los cojos del alma, los masacraos a plazo...Claro po, los caché al tiro, así que cómo voy a querer engañarlos, si vamos gritando el mismo grito desde que nacimos" (p.350). More than any other, this common image of "death by instalments" both identifies El Milagrero with the poorest in society, and finally sets him apart. It had been the recognition of this sameness and of his message as one to cow the defeated, and not fear of repression as Antonio suspected, that had sent El Milagrero to the hills, where he sought a meeting with El Hombrón, after which he had been allowed to resign.

Radrigán is explicit in the notes that with the release from El Hombrón, El Milagrero began a new life: "Es un hombre que se ve pleno, como lleno de esa armonía entre tierna y orgullosa que sigue al acto sexual, cuando no ha mediado otro compromiso que el del amor.

(Es un símil que tomo por la tranquila sensación de bienestar que conlleva.)" (p.348). This is an extraordinary vision in the brothel, where sex and love bear no connection; indeed, it is an extraordinary image in Radrigán's work where love dies with poverty and deprivation, where Rafael fears that Sabina's rancour may be motivated by his sexual impotence, where Pedro and Sara cannot make love. Only with freedom from a world ruled by the repressive ethos of "El" can love and sex begin to have some connection.

Freed from the burden of his mission, El Milagrero finds peace and well-being born of a true understanding of the power of faith. His message is one of the belief in the strength of the individual: "Escondíos aquí como ratas no tienen salvación, podrían 'tar llorando y esperando cien años, docientos, pero no sacarían na; porque la via'stá aentro de ustedes, así que si no la viven ustedes, quien puee vivirla" (p.360). And he is keen to prove that he has found spiritual strength in the belief in a true God who promises life to the living: "¡Dios es de los vivos, Señora, de los vivos!" (p.361). What hope, then, can Jaque and Made have?

The divide between the religious and political message is fluid. The religious message is used politically, to calm the most impoverished sector of society. Religion, the classic opium of the people, provides a promise of salvation, used by El Hombrón as the most crude type of propaganda, which the inmates of the brothel further misinterpret as they clutch at the illusion of salvation on earth. The manipulation of the religious and the political, through which religious connotations are artificially imposed by those in power and willingly accepted by the most desperate, comes to a climax in the last scene when El Milagrero's death, wrought with supernatural overtones, is interpreted as divine retribution, and no

one tries to intervene. They cannot, after all, fight against the wrath of God.

It is in the last scene that the seeming confusion of political and religious allegory turns into a parable for redemption. For the dramatic community El Milagrero plays Christ to El Hombrón's God the Father. While denying that he is endowed with divine gifts, he tells how he had begged El Hombrón to free him: "Usted es Dios, no me puee condenar, suélteme, suélteme" (p.352); and at the moment of his death he cries: "Usted es el rey de los reyes, no puee echar su fuerza contra mí, yo soy un pobre gallo" (pp.362-63).

Radrigán further casts El Milagrero as Salvador Allende to El Hombrón's Pinochet. El Hombrón, politically, is the authoritarian leader who represses freedom of expression, and it is precisely for that reason that El Milagrero is employed: to curb the desire for political change by providing the promise of religious redemption. Yet, from the beginning, El Milagrero is a potentially explosive creation. If the rule of El Hombrón is to be ensured by the repression of the masses' political expression, El Milagrero can only be effective while he is void of compassion and autonomous thought, but his contact with misery is the catalyst for an outburst of indignation and anger. As long as the power of "El" is not challenged, the existence and the livelihood of El Milagrero is safe, but as soon as the dividing line between the pseudo-religious and the political is crossed, El Hombrón brings all his power to bear. El Milagrero becomes political in two ways, firstly as the creation of El Hombrón, and secondly when he begins to preach his own message of rebellion. If there were any doubt as to the symbolic value of El Milagrero, then it is dispelled in his dying moments when Radrigán has him echo Allende's vision of democracy: "¡Salgan, salgan! Llevan

la vía por las calles, como lleva el padre al hijo, váyanse por las tremendas, las anchas alamedas! (p.362).

If El Milagrero is the symbol of the reconstruction of society, then El Hombrón is the symbol of its destruction. When El Milagrero knocks down the door, he demonstrates the strength of his anger at the false faith engendered by a being with a pure and simple lust for power, and it is this anger-inspired strength that El Milagrero cries for against "los salvajes mataores, los falsos adivinos que reparten consuelos mentirosos" (p. 362).

Radrigán has pointed to the importance of distinguishing between the perceptions from within the dramatic community and those of the reader or spectator looking on from outside. El Milagrero, in the context of the play, is a failure with nothing to offer and whose greatest disservice to the people in the brothel is to arrive, for he would have saved them from final disillusion if they had been allowed to hold on to their false hope. Yet this character, who merely seems to serve the purpose of paying another instalment on the characters' death, is the symbol of the author's belief in mankind: "La esperanza, o sea el afuerino, no sabe por qué tiene que morir ni se sabe por qué lo tiene que matar. Está muy cansado ya de todo esto. Cree que no sirve para nada ya. Eso piensa él, pero mirando la obra desde fuera, uno se da cuenta que pareciera que sirve".¹⁴

5. Informe para indiferentes: A Drama of the Absurd

Informe para indiferentes (1983) is a drama in one act set in the present period. It takes the form of a dialogue between Andrés, a caretaker in his early fifties, and Polo, a maestro chasquilla, an odd job man, in his late thirties, who meet in the grounds of the

house where Andrés works and where Polo has been employed to do some repairs. Andrés has been associated with this house for thirty years and it is his job to look after the empty garage while his boss and the car are absent. He passes his time reading dates from a history book, but he is vague and forgetful about his own past. We learn that he had been married and had two children, but had been abandoned when he was in trouble through his trade union activities. Since then he has been employed as his former boss's caretaker.

Polo is a straightforward, open, jovial worker. He finds Andrés' job easy, if somewhat ridiculous. Throughout their encounter he tries to establish the conversation on familiar ground, talking about women, drink, work, and on seeing Andrés in a desperate state, separated from an uncaring wife, offers to help him by finding his daughter who, Polo believes, is the only person who did not fully abandon him. But there is no way in which they can communicate, for Polo cannot fathom this strange man who constantly loses his train of thought, and who talks of forgetting the past but obsessively remembers it. Furthermore, Polo instinctively shies away from conversations that are potentially subversive and that may cause trouble with the boss. After an afternoon of misunderstandings including two violent outbursts, Polo leaves, disconcerted by his encounter and by the new thoughts he finds in his head, and Andrés turns back to his history book and returns to his despair and solitude.

The preliminary notes are very important in Informe para indiferentes, for it is from them that the reader learns the basic facts about the circumstances of Andrés' life: "Andrés...aparece sentado leyendo a un costado de un box vacío. Fuera del camino para el vehículo que debe guardarse allí, todo está cubierto por un muy

bien cuidado césped. Este box pertenece a una elegante mansión en donde Andrés ha permanecido durante treinta años. El dormitorio de su patrón queda frente donde él está sentado, en un segundo piso" (p. 364). There is, therefore, a constant awareness of the presence of "El" despite the fact that he is neither seen nor heard and only the house, the empty garage and Andrés' circumstances are evidence of his existence.

Andrés' present position is a result of his experiences with the boss in the past. In the course of the disjointed conversation Andrés tells his story, which, although confused and at times unreliable, gives a basic account of his past and how he came to be so utterly in the power of "El". Andrés began work at the glass factory in 1933 at the age of twelve when, he says, "Comencé a sufrir la brutalidad en carne propia" (p.391). He describes the terrible working conditions and the power of the boss to employ and dismiss at will. He talks of the repression of workers' movements, which meant that men associated with them were refused employment, and explains how that, together with an outbreak of typhus, meant that many children, including Andrés, had to work in order to support their families. Four years later, when it was discovered that he could read and write, the boss began to take an interest in him and soon began to rely on him for information about the trade unions. Crudely, in Polo's words, "...lo tenía de sapo", he was the boss's snoop. Inevitably, this brought with it the distrust of the other workers. Finally his father, who was in prison for trade union activities, found out and disowned mother and son, "... a mí por traidor y a ella por haber parido a un traidor..." (p.393).

Although he was never reconciled with his father, who died in prison, Andrés became a militant trade unionist. He tricked the boss

into thinking that as a trade union member he would be even more use, but subsequently the boss found out. Taking advantage of the first anti-union legislation, which permitted only strikes authorised by the employer, he closed part of the factory and dismissed the trade union members, and Andrés was singled out for special punishment: "A mí me condenó a estar sentado aquí para siempre, por haber formado un sindicato que no era apatronado" (p.394). It was then that the "crisis" happened, that he was violently beaten, that he found it impossible to find work and that he was forced to stay in the same place, abandoned, by this time, by Elisa.

It is worth going into Andrés story at length as a means of clearing up the events of the course of his life, for it is through Andrés that we learn the nature of this "El". Only Andrés has direct knowledge of "El" or has been a direct victim of his ambitions. At the time of the play Andrés has been reduced to the humiliating position of caretaker for an empty garage and remains, as ever, in "his" power. Through Andrés' outbursts and constant allusions to "El", always accompanied by some signal in the direction of his bedroom on the second floor, we are made conscious of the impersonal, domineering and endlessly vigilant tyrant. Explaining his role to Polo, who is naturally confused at seeing him guard a "box vacío", Andrés tells him:

Cuando llega lo guarda ahí, y yo me siento a cuidarlo.

(Se sienta) El duerme ahí, en el segundo piso (señala); a veces me paseo. (Se levanta y lo hace.) Pero no puedo alejarme mucho más allá de este box (siempre paseándose), porque si me paso de este límite se enoja... Yo no sé a qué horas duerme, me parece que

nunca, porque a veces me pongo a leer (se sienta y toma el libro), como desde hace mucho tiempo que tengo este puro libro y no puedo entenderlo, la mayoría de las veces me da sueño y cabeceo (lo hace). Entonces... (Parándose sobresaltado) Entonces siento su tremendo grito desde arriba: (gritando) "¡El auto, hombre, el auto: no lo descuide! (p.389)

Whether or not this godlike reprimand from above is a figment of Andrés' imagination, born of his obsessive zeal in looking after the garage (it may well be, for he goes on to reassure the terrified Polo: "No hay nadie. Ya le dije que no hay nadie: el auto y yo nomás, el auto y yo... Ya no hay hijos, ni mujer, ni casa ni nada... Antes hubo tantas cosas."), it serves to underline the power of "El" over Andrés. A variety of elements converge to make Andrés' condition a metaphor for imprisonment. He has talked to no one apart from the occasional worker for an unspecified length of time; he is never allowed to move beyond the limits of the garage; he talks of himself as himself as having been left to rot in a corner. The whole impression is of an imprisonment, the "box" becomes the symbol of walls that confine him, not the car, and the examples of wealth are the symbols of "El"'s continuing prosperity, hence of his power, in contrast to Andrés' useless, powerless confinement. Andrés is a prisoner and the box is his jail.

Ever on the lookout for odd jobs, Polo is determined to behave well in the domain of his temporary employer so as to make a good impression and attract more work. In the normal course of events Andrés would be his natural ally, but it soon becomes clear that his recommendation is a potential liability. His indignant answers to

Polo's comments about life outside (for example, that people over thirty cannot find work) are a clear indication of his politics and bring the quick reply: "Ah no gancho, no me venga ná con política, mire que la cuestión tá muy pesá" (pp.368-69). When Andrés, in one of his angry outbursts, suddenly shouts up to the second floor: "¡sí, así pasó, hijo de puta!", Polo's reaction is of fear: "¿A quién le dice? ¿Ta el futre ahí, vino p'acá? No la embarre, pos taita, no la embarre: ¿no ve que si s'espanta va cargar conmigo también y no me va pagar ná?" (p.370). Finally, when Andrés begins to talk about strikes, he shies away completely from the conversation: "¿Sae? Lo'stoy cachando que usté es rojelio... ¿Sabía que ahora los poímos ir a dar una güeltecita pa la pampa por tar hablando d'estas cuestiones. O sea, ¿sae que pasa? Hay libertá pa hablar, uste puee hablar de lo que se le antoje, pero tiene que peír permiso primero" (p. 394).

The vital difference between Polo and Andrés is that Polo knows what life "on the outside" is like, he is conscious of the consequences of subversive conversations, especially within earshot of those who guard the newly established order. Andrés has already become a desperate victim of that order, but his isolation divorces him from reality, so much so that he has not absorbed the codes of practice needed to survive outside and understands so little of them that Polo decides that perhaps the old caretaker's safety would be better guarded by continuing in his isolation. He would only suffer more outside in a society where the violence of the past that destroyed Andrés has become fused with the present: "Eso es, taita, eso es: siga con la puerta cerrá; las cosas ya le dolieron una vez, pa qué quiere que le güelvan a doler... Y también que si acuerda bien de lo que le pasó y quiere salir a cobrar, le va a irle re mal allá

ajuera, porque... ¿sae?, taba pensando (mira hacia la calle, con cierta obscura perplejidad)... es como si el tiempo no hubiera pasao... allá ajuera ta el mismo despelote que uste dejó. No, no hay donde perderse, taitita, quédese aquí nomá; total aquí es rey" (p.395). As in El toro por las astas, his confinement is a refuge against the worse fate that would await him outside, in a society where he has no place, and that is governed by a state of war.

Polo's is representative of other relationships with Andrés and, by extension, with "El". Andrés' home help has dissociated herself from him after having discovered the truth about his background: "Hay una señora que me barre la pieza a veces, pero desde que le conté el problema que tenía con él (mira hacia arriba), desde que le pedí consejo, ya no me espera, así que la pieza siempre esta vacía... vacía (...) Por eso no esperó más hasta yo llegara para irse, cuando tiene algo que decirme me deja un papel" (p.375). For both Polo and the woman, who have never been in his employ or sphere of influence, the boss is a faceless figure, a symbol of the social order of which they are on the margins. He is constantly present, but he will not act unless there is adequate provocation. They are determined that it will not be provided.

Like Polo and the cleaner, Elisa, Andrés' wife, regards any involvement in conflict with superiors as irresponsible and unnecessary provocation, but for her the matter is far more concrete, since she has a lot more to lose. Unlike Andrés, Elisa had no clear class consciousness. While he identified himself with the working class, she regarded herself as socially mobile, and she valued her emotional and material security and that of her children above all else. Thus, while Andrés was respectably employed as the boss's right hand man her goals were well on the way to being realised, but as his

militancy began to take over, she became involved in a mini class war with her husband, with her major ally being the boss, whom she regarded in the final instance as their protector and provider of their most basic needs. She does not blame the boss for the sad end they have come to, but she will never forgive her husband for compromising them, for if he had not "acted the revolutionary", their place in the hierarchy would have been safe. In her view Andrés failed her: "Tenías que ser el guña, el hombre; de tus manos tenían que haber brotado paredes, tenían que brotar mesas, sillas, camas, y todas esas cosas que forman un hogar; tenían que haber tenido amor en el corazón para nosotros; pero nos llenaste de miseria, hambre y muerte. Nos vendiste, nos vendiste, Andrés: vendiste a tu mujer, a tu casa, a tus hijos..." (p.373).

Elisa's attitude to "El" is presented as being tinted with a type of religious devotion. When Andrés finds himself condemned, "a la merced de la brutalidad", she thanks God for the mercy shown towards them by the justly angry boss: "¡Llegó a decir que él (señala) era poco menos de un santo, porque nos había permitido seguir viviendo!" (pp.382-83). Both her belief in "El" and her religion are seen to form a kind of insurance policy against the loss of tranquility in this world and the next. Between the mortal and the immortal "El" she searches for a being who can provide security and comfort in an all-encompassing way: "Ella buscaba a Dios con la humillación del miserable que busca al rico, con el temor animal del que va cayendo y no encuentra de qué asirse" (p.379).

As Andrés remembers the past he talks of the "paradise" he had inhabited with Elisa, a paradise that he had shared and loved, but that had been ultimately destroyed:

Porque, ¿sabe? Hubo un tiempo en que yo vivía en una casa donde una mujer barría, limpiaba y preparaba comida; también en esa casa, que era de adobes, con un gran patio en donde había un naranjo, sonaban voces de niños: uno se llamaba Diego, la otra Eugenia. Era mi paraíso, me la había ganado; pero de repente se quebró. Yo lo entendí, porque no se puede ser feliz en un lugar donde no son todos felices; éramos una isla y la desdicha de afuera tenía que terminar por arrasarnos... Lo que no entendí fue lo que sucedió después entre nosotros... ¿Estoy siendo claro, me está entendiendo? (p.384)

There is a clear dichotomy in Andrés' memories. He had created and wanted the paradise that made Elisa happy. He remembers that in detail. As we have seen, when he remembers his working past until the time of the crisis he can create a relatively lucid picture of events, despite the fact that dates do not always make complete historical sense. But his memories about his wife and his two children, Diego and Eugenia, since the crisis are contradictory. He tells Polo that he has practised the art of forgetting: "...es muy fácil: cierre los ojos, apriete los puños (lo hace), y repite con fuerza: "¡No quiero recordar, no quiero recordar!"... Dígalo desde la sangre, dígalo con terror, y verá que de repente, sin darse cuenta, ya no recuerda nada. Al comienzo, claro, cuesta un poco; pero después es tan fácil como cerrar una puerta..." (p.367). He has not, however, perfected the art. It is implied that the forgetting is not totally voluntary, for at one point he calls out, "¡Sí así pasó: hijo de puta; estoy recordando!" (p.370), suggesting that memory and forgetting is controlled at least in part by "El". Furthermore,

memories have an autonomous existence and he cannot control them completely. Above all, this applies to the memory of his family: they are as dead to him, but still they torment him. The memories he tries in vain to suppress are those that deal with the crisis and with the human relations that were subsequently destroyed. He cannot fathom them in all their complexity and this is at the root of the awareness of the absurd in his life: "Si yo pudiera encontrar a alguien, si pudiera encontrar una sola persona que comprendiera esta situación, sabría que el mundo no está loco, podrido y perdido para siempre..." (p. 390).

Condemned to his isolation, Andrés reads his history book in order to try to understand the sequence of events that resulted in such a lost state. But in a parallel to his understanding of life, the book lists events and explains nothing. This inability to piece together the disparate factors in his life is given concrete expression in his attempt to join scraps of rope and string in an expression of his manic need to understand, to reach the point when his life will appear to him as a coherent whole, a meaningful passage of time, as compared to the emptiness of existence. Just as it is impossible to unite the string, it is impossible to bring meaning to his life. The sentence imposed by "El" has deepened both the level of the absurd in his own life and his awareness of the general absurdity of life. The boss has reduced his life to meaninglessness by robbing him of the possibility of doing something useful, and by robbing him of the clear memory of everything he had done: "Morir es trágico, y morir sin haber hecho nada es doblemente trágico; es el colmo del absurdo" (p. 386).

Diego disowns his father on account of his inability to act like a man: "El hombre está al frente - me dijo - delante de todo; usted

es el ejemplo de como no se debe vivir: es una mierda" (p.396). Andrés explains how he brought Diego up: "En un mundo donde sólo estaba permitido obedecer, yo lo obligué a pensar desde los siete" (p.397). He had been educating his son to follow in his footsteps, but Diego had no intention of following where his father was leading, becoming instead what Andrés terms one of the "marionetas voluntarias" (p.378). Likewise Andrés' daughter sees him as a bear in perpetual hibernation: "Mi padre era un hombre, no un oso; pero un día le sucedió algo, y desde entonces duerme, duerme: nadie tiene la culpa de ser lo que ha nacido para ser; pero todos tienen la culpa de ser lo que no han nacido para ser. Mi padre era un hombre, no un oso; por eso no hay primavera que pueda despertarlo" (pp. 373-74). She joins with Elisa and Diego in seeing her father as a man turned into an animal, but is her statement an accusation, or does she understand? This is another question that torments Andrés. Does it mean that she too sees any provocation of authority as futile and believes that he had brought about his own downfall, thereby exonerating "El" as the others do? Whatever the answer, she underlines the fate imposed on Andrés, reduced to an animal-like existence.

The clue to the real message of the play lies in the title, Informe para indiferentes. Here is a play that presents a proud trade union movement reduced to an incoherent wreck in the form of Andrés. All there remains to bear witness to this tradition is in the history books, but even they cannot explain the present shambles, for in the books Andrés reads aloud the facts become confused and empty. The "indiferentes" are those like Andrés' family, above all Elisa, who cannot comprehend the ideals that had motivated him: "... no se trata de elegir entre tú y ellos; estamos pelearnado por tener algo que no

puedan destruir, no tenemos nada, nunca hemos tenido nada que Ellos estén obligados a respetar;... quiero tener una vida sana, digna y normal junto a tí" (p.402); the "indiferentes" are those who have abandoned the notion of fighting the order to which they are subject and who have become indifferent to all but their own individual interests. They are blind to the consequences of the crisis, of which Andrés, the symbol of the disarticulated and destroyed workers' movements, is testimony.

This "El" is firmly in control and, for the main protagonist at least, there is no sign of a solution. While on the one hand the "El" figure here is obviously based on a real historical type, "El" is "ellos", that is the traditional enemy of the working class, the employer, his absence and the intimidating effect of the suggestion of his presence giving the impression of him as an awesome being. The conflict with "El" is never made explicit, for it no longer exists in tangible terms, his omnipotence deriving from the fact that he has already won the battle and silenced those who were the enemy, the traitor. The conflict still exists, however, in the awareness of subjugation to his power. The situation, then, remains a trap from which the protagonist cannot escape.

6. The Ubiquitous "El"

Throughout his dramas Radrigán deals with the theme of marginality as it has never been dealt with before in Chilean theatre. As we have pointed out, there is no political solution suggested, even in plays such as Informe para indiferentes whose main protagonist has a background of political militancy. This world is set apart on all accounts from the mainstream of society, the

characters have a constant awareness of their exclusion from society, an exclusion that finds dramatic expression in the physical setting of the plays, and Radrigán explores this world as it relates to a perpetual spiral of deprivation and worsening social conditions, and in terms of the nature of human relationships in such poverty. Characters find themselves more and more bewildered by life, for they feel that they, for their part, have continued living in the same fashion as before, and yet things still get worse. Why does this happen? Who is to blame? Can they blame anyone apart from an impersonal being they can only refer to as "El" and who, in his most extreme expression, may be God? Characters, like Rafael, in search of a conflict through which to resolve their situation, can find an antagonist nowhere. In this final section I will turn to the nature of the ubiquitous power of "El" as portrayed in Hechos consumados (1981), in which the major symbols come together.

Hechos consumados takes place on the outskirts of town where a tramp, Emilio, has saved a woman, Marta, from a canal where, he presumes, she tried to drown herself. In the distance they can see a continual procession of people who walk endlessly by, and they are visited on two occasions by a mysterious man, who is perhaps mad and is dressed in rags with tins jangling from his body. He has the unreal air of an apparition and speaks in tones that they find hard to follow, but that suggest doom and destruction in an unjust world, and he predicts Emilio's closeness to death. Far more real and threatening is the presence of Miguel, the watchman for the boss of a nearby textile factory on whose land they are seated. The boss, whom Miguel, like Andrés, never sees but who he knows must exist since he is in his pay, demands that Emilio and Marta quit his land by moving a few feet. Emilio refuses to do so, having decided that he must at

last make a stand against his perpetual banishment from society, that moving two steps along signifies moving another two steps towards nothingness. Miguel, terrified at the prospect of the anger of his boss and of losing his job, beats Emilio to death.

Like all Radrigán's dramas, Hechos consumados works on levels of reality as defined by the characters' perceptions of life and death. Emilio and Marta are reminiscent of the prostitutes of El toro por las astas, for they believe themselves to be only partly alive. They seem to have little past other than vague memories of former partners and of children who have died "de muerte entera", that is, who have forgotten their parents. Emilio describes people as "hechos consumados": "... no tuvimos arte ni parte en nosotros mismos; los hicieron y los dijeron: aquí están, vayan p'allá, pero no los dijeron porque los habían hecho ni a qué teníamos que ir a ese lao que no conocíamos... A ese lao aonde lo único seguro que había era que teníamos que morir..." (p.310). People are left invariably to their own sadly inadequate devices in the place called life, and for those such as Emilio and Marta, they will never find the way into the centre of life, but are destined to be "en la vía. Pero no al medio, al lao" (p.279). Emilio sees his life as being a search for the moment when he will be born truly to live, when he will have peace, but he is constantly moved on, constantly deprived of the opportunity to live as a human being. Marta recognises in his eyes the soul of a person dehumanised by society, the soul of a stray animal, "O sea dos veces desgraciao po animal y botao" (p. 279).

Marta, by contrast, says she likes life, but life treats her badly, plays endless cruel jokes on her, repays her love with detestation and spite. Life is a lover that, like all lovers in Radrigán's plays, cannot be relied on, and it is other external

circumstances that dictate the strength and lasting power of the love. Marta has more memory of a past, she has a greater notion of what has been forbidden her in her life, and like Sabina, she has a profound nostalgia for the illusion of a future home and family, which is translated, in her case into the attempt to make the space by the river which she temporarily shares with Emilio into a semblance of a living space.

Hechos consumados develops around a vicious circle of death. Emilio fishes Marta from the water where he thought she had tried to commit suicide, but in fact she had been thrown there after having witnessed the dumping of a dead body. And when she finally recovers consciousness Emilio is not interested in her past, even in why she was in the river, but in what visions had passed before her eyes so close to death, so close to the other side. And as Miguel finally beats Emilio to death, he subjects him to the full force of the power that had thrown Marta in to the river, but that now is the power of "El", of the boss. What cruelly absurd world is it that the characters live in when a man may be brutally murdered for refusing to move two steps along, and when the murderer is such for fear of losing his job?

As in Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina, the characters are acutely aware of a greater power that dictates their every move, they feel that they are being watched, but they know not by whom until the arrival of Miguel, the caretaker of the site. With Emilio, Miguel shares a background of working in the textile industry, but while Emilio is now unemployed, Miguel continues to work in a textile factory, accepting lower wages and twice the amount of work he used to do. He is the boss's pawn, in his complete control and in perpetual fear of putting a foot wrong, for, like Andrés, he knows

that the boss monitors his every move night and day. The greatest difference between Miguel and Emilio is that the latter, regardless of how destitute he may be, has managed to keep a hold on the principles upon which he builds his dignity, whereas Miguel accepts everything the boss throws at him as long as he keeps his job. Miguel has assumed "El's" philosophy of power, his prejudice against anything that suggests subversion of the established order; and he sports a long stick, the material prop of the power he wields in the employ of "El" and with which he will kill Emilio.

Yet, neither does Miguel understand the power of "El": he does not know where he lives, nor can he fathom how the boss can be aware of his movements, he merely knows the limits of his own jurisdiction as "El"'s caretaker. It is through Miguel that Emilio and Marta are introduced to the existence of the boss, but he is a figure with whom they are all too familiar, the person who never appears, who is always represented by his employees, the person who commands their banishment from society.

In the distance there is a constant procession of people walking by. They are walking away from the city, which smells of rotting, but they look too calm to be fleeing. Emilio says that close up they look tired. They are seemingly unaffected by the police sirens that terrify Emilio and Marta and that are a constant reminder of distant persecution, nor do they respond to Miguel's interrogations, despite the stick. These people are threatening in their anonymity, they do not speak, they do not ask for anything, they merely walk. "El" does not like their presence, which is threatening, impinges on his tranquility and ignores the strict social order he has established. Miguel has been ordered to get rid of them.

Their presence is more than physical, for Miguel's wife, bed-

ridden in a room without windows, senses and is scared by their presence. Miguel and Marta feel disturbed by this realisation for it would seem to add to their strength. As in El invitado, when Emilio asks one of them where they are going he is treated as an idiot for not knowing. This exclusion from some secret is sinister, and Emilio feels somehow accused, guilty, unable to understand anything, yet he feels empathy with the wanderers, he likes their refusal to bow to repression, he feels there may be ^A place there for him: "¿Qué cree que son? ¿Muertos? ¿Cesantes? ¿Sin casa? ¿Gente que tiene miedo que le pasa algo? En una d'esas poimos ser nosotros también..." (p. 312).

The most important point is that they are walking away from the city, from society, where, according to the mad man, there exists only "la muerte y la nada". In this sense the procession is of people who have opted out of a rotten society and have set out on the road to achieving an as yet undefined goal. They are symbolic of hope, survivors in the desolate city, the uprooted inhabitants of a society so decayed and putrid they can no longer exist in it. They, too, are finally on the margins, they do not belong to the new society that is being created and from which many must be banished to make a "better world" (p.285). Emilio sees the people as the archetypal exiles, the Jews, who, despite centuries of wandering in the wilderness, survive: "Me gustan los judíos, tienen el secreto de la unión en la sangre. ¿Sabe cuál puede ser ese secreto?" (p.308). Yet Marta's and Emilio's lack of access to their secret further heightens the sensation of total isolation of the two protagonists.

In the course of the play, Emilio and Marta are at the mercy of "El" since they are camped on his land. "El" is both a figure of totalitarian power and, as the owner of the textile factory, is the oppressive employer as represented in Informe para indiferentes. It

is clear that in all the plays studied here "El" is the personification of a remote power, ultimately the symbol of the ruthless nature of the present regime in its mission to create a "better world", a cleaner society. In Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina this remote power is the law, threatening and unjust; in El invitado "El" is a mysterious guest, invisible, but all too familiar to the audience; in El toro por las astas "El" is more complex, and finally finds expression in a mysterious, omnipotent figure who is confused with God; and in Informe para indiferentes "El" is the boss, the archetypal representative of the ruling classes in the class struggle. All of these variations find echoes in other Chilean drama.

The "El" of Informe para indiferentes is a historic figure. In the sixties there were many examples of this antagonist. In plays such as Los papeleros by Isidora Aguirre, "El" is the owner of the rubbish dump where the protagonists live and work. He is the boss in the developing world who leaves his employees behind in their underdeveloped state, whose disregard for their welfare is total, his only ambition being for his own economic rise. As he fulfills his ambition he becomes more mechanical and cold; he becomes alien as his powers, aided by technology, are beyond the comprehension of his employees. There can never be any dialogue since the worlds they inhabit and the language they speak grow farther and farther apart, and communication, based on demands for improvement, never welcomed by "El" in the first place, is made no more than a "noise of words".

This is the "El" Radrigán reproduces in Informe para indiferentes, a boss whose power has grown so much that he is more and more alien, and has in his hands the means of making and breaking people at will. He is paternalistic, allowing the meek to survive, demanding total loyalty and submission. Usually the majority of the

dramatic community can learn to survive, and some even welcome his brand of paternalism, but some, like Andrés, are doomed to failure as "his" power grows.

Shades of this "El" are to be found in ¿Cuántos años tiene un día? by Ictus, although the dramatic community, an educated, middle-class group of journalists, is totally different. "El", in this instance, in the shape of the manager of the television channel producing mostly government propaganda, who seeks to preserve his authority. He must be watchful of the group of potentially dissident journalists, and cultivates an alienating and intimidating presence, backed by the legitimacy of his position and the support of his subordinates, who form a group of vigilantes.

In El toro por las astas Radrigán produces an "El" who is regarded as the salvation of the dramatic community, who stop all work in order to prepare for his arrival. In Lo crudo, lo cocido y lo podrido by Marco Antonio de la Parra there is also ^a character in whom the waiters believe as their redeemer and for whom they wait, endlessly preparing themselves for the moment he will come, reopen the restaurant, and declare the re-establishment of the old order to which they belonged and whose leaders they had served. Ossa Moya represents the oligarchy, a class in irreversible decline and when he arrives he totally destroys any hope in the return of the old order. He is a drunkard, incapable of delivering any message but, unlike the prostitutes, the waiters are able to exit through the door that had been opened for them. The end is more optimistic.

The other category of "El" is in El invitado, and is the figure who relates most blatantly to the authoritarian regime of this period. The play is essentially a treatise on the dire consequences of military rule on the social class to which the protagonists

belong, the greatest victims of the "economic miracle". If, in the sixties, much of the drama was laced with the fear of the revolt of the dispossessed, those metaphorically "on the other side of the river", in the world of the seventies, there is no fear of such a threat, for after the appearance of "El", the uninvited guest, these sectors have been so totally cowed that they have no strength to revolt. El invitado deals with the aftermath of the intrusion of complete power into the protagonists' lives and by extension, into society, characterised now by desolation and complacency. Emilio in Hechos consumados, uses the metaphor of El invitado, that somewhere a door was opened to let in such misery and suffering, and although the connection with the present period is not made in such an explicit fashion as in El invitado, the implication is clear: "... en alguna parte se abrió una puerta y entró de golpe too lo malo que hay. Del hambre, de la soledad y de las patás, ya no te salva ni Cristo" (pp. 289-90).

That the existence of "El" governs all else is undisputable. The characters always behave with a mind to the future reaction of the omnipotent figure in the background, generally invisible and unknown to the dramatic community. This makes his power seem all the greater, eventually being attributed to supernatural qualities as some of the characters strive to determine the nature of the power that governs them. Their progressive loss of dignity and, in the case of the male characters, of manhood, echoes the state of the characters in the plays dealing with work, reinforcing the argument that it is marginalisation from the mainstream of the community and from forming a useful part of society that is the main cause of their demoralisation at the hands of authority.

Radrigán's is a world that is, in itself, absurd. There is no

coherence to the lives of the protagonists, the plays read as mosaics of fragmented conversations, characters speak to each other in fits and bursts, content to leave questions unanswered, following parallel, never connecting lines of thought, each one interpreting the other's words as these fit in to their respective perceptions of life. In this way idle chatter, taken at its most literal level, adds to the impression of the absurd, since simple questions hide a multitude of insinuations, and incessantly evoke the same images of alienation, injustice and death. There is little sense of the passage of time, for characters are suspended in the limbo of a perpetual present, in the moment before something happens. While their lives have no physical boundaries to define them, no home, no walls, no refuge, their's is a symbolic world of closed doors, enclosed spaces, a world hit by a "crisis", a "war", which the protagonists are never sure has ended. In reality, for them it can never end, for they are the eternal losers in the struggle with "El" and the power he represents. Such is the nature of the absurd and grotesque limbo they inhabit. Finally, the protagonists are always acutely aware of their essential character as outcasts and losers. In the next chapter I will turn to further study of people who perceive themselves as losers of the same battle, people who have been banished from from their native country. I will turn to the themes of exile and return.

Notes to Chapter Four

1. As a result of the popularity of Radrigán's work an edition of his eleven plays to 1984 was published. All references will be to Teatro de Juan Radrigan: 11 obras (Santiago: Editorial Universitaria, 1984). In 1984 he presented Las voces de la ira, in 1985, Made in Chile and in 1986, Los borrachos de la luna and Pueblo de mal amor.
2. See Pedro Bravo Elizondo, "El dramaturgo de Los olvidados: Entrevista con Juan Radrigán", Latin American Theatre Review, 17,1 (1983), p.61.
3. Agustín Letelier, "Los borrachos de la luna de Juan Radrigán", El Mercurio, 17 Aug. 1986.
4. Juan Radrigán in interview. See Rosario Guzmán B., "Juan Radrigán, el mejor dramaturgo de 1982", El Mercurio Internacional, 20-26 Jan. 1983, p.7.
5. "Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina", El Mercurio, 2 April 1979.
6. "Juan Radrigán, el mejor dramaturgo de 1982".
7. Ibid.
8. Agustín Letelier, "Los borrachos de luna de Juan Radrigán".
9. Redoble fúnebre para lobos y corderos (1981) consists of Isabel desterrada en Isabel, Sin motivo aparente and El Invitado.
10. See Patrick Brantlinger, Bread and circuses: Theories of Mass Culture as Social Decay (Ithaca and London Cornell University Press, 1983), p.23.
11. AFP, Administradora de Fondos de Provisión. These are firms which administer privately the social security system.
12. This is reminiscent of a piece of graffitti, "Lee la Biblia porque El Mercurio miente".
13. El Cristo de Elqui is a figure of popular folklore of obscure origins. Nicanor Parra has written a short book of poetry, evoking his preachings. See Sermón y prédicas del Cristo de Elqui (Valparaíso: Ediciones Ganymedes, 1977).
14. "Borrachera de luna para quedar limpios", El Mercurio, 1 Aug. 1986. An interview with Juan Radrigán.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXILE AND RETURN

1. The 1970s and Exile: Cultural and Political

In this chapter I will deal with exile in a variety of plays: José (1980) by Egon Wolff; ¿Cuántos años tiene un día? (1978) by Ictus; Primavera con una esquina rota (1984) also by Ictus, based on the novel by Mario Benedetti; Regreso sin causa (1984) by Jaime Miranda; Cinema-Utopia (1985) by Ramón Griffero. Through their study it will become clear that "exile" is not a rigid term, that it applies to a variety of states imposed by political, social and economic circumstances, and that there is an awareness of the whole spectrum of the experience of expulsion, be it voluntary or forced.

Exile, in its most common contemporary Chilean expression, is a form of political repression involving banishment of a citizen from the native land or banishment of a citizen to remote parts of the country, stripped of all civil rights, and has been a major silencer of dissidence under the Pinochet regime. In October 1982 General Pinochet announced that the situation of political exiles would be revised as a "measure for national unity" and that lists of those who could return would be drawn up.¹ The following month, however, the expectations raised by the announcement were dashed when it was made clear that, in the interests of national security, the cases of those exiles considered "políticamente inconvenientes o calificados como activistas o terroristas" would not be considered by the commission that had been set up to deal with the matter.² "Normalisation", as the process was called, was not to be seen as a sign of weakness on

the part of the regime, and the political cleansing campaign that had resulted in the exile of so many Chileans had not been abandoned for the sake of national unity.

Figures for those in exile differ dramatically. It will shed some light on the perceptions of exile we will find in the plays studied in this chapter if we look at the disparity to be found: "The number of exiles is estimated at anything from 10.000 to 10m. La Segunda recently gave the figure, from police sources, of 200.000 people who are expressly banned from entering the country. The problem affects perhaps one family in five, particularly among the upper and middle classes."³ Reports such as these reveal, on one hand, the lack of specific information about the numbers of exiles and, on the other, the awareness of the scale of the problem.

This mixture of vagueness and awareness is reflected in what has been called "las dos mitades del silencio",⁴ the lack of communication between those who stayed in the country and those who left, which is translated into impressionistic and often misleading interpretations of how "the other half" lives. While those in exile thrive on what Enrique Lihn has called "una leyenda más o menos dorada" of the country they had left behind,⁵ relating specifically to the Popular Unity years, and even talk of the "collaboration" with the regime of those who stayed in the country, the latter face official silence about the question of exile, and the legends or myths that are created as a way of explaining a grave social injustice are left to grow unabated. In this atmosphere, what does theatre say about exile?

While the publication of the lists (three in all) did nothing to solve the problem and was seen by many as a "cruel propaganda game",⁶ it did open the question of exile up to a public debate, a fact

reflected in the theatre. Before 1984 exile had been referred to in passing in short sketches that were witness to the awareness of exile as a grave contemporary problem, but their impressionistic nature showed the level of ignorance as to the experiences of those abroad. A la Mary se le vio el Poppins by Teatro La Feria (1981), a collage of the events of the decade 1970-80, is a flight of memory that takes in, superficially, the exodus of part of the bourgeoisie fleeing from the Popular Unity government and the exile of left wingers after the coup. There is one sketch dedicated to a tale of exile in France. A couple, in a cafe, are using their pitiful French to order breakfast, a task made all the more difficult by the waiter's contempt for them. Around this simple sketch is painted the picture of one of the most typical problems of exiles: isolation from the receiving community, complete lack of contact with the new culture, the growing distance from children who now speak a different language and reject all things Chilean, and the exile's inability to adapt, partly a result of the belief in a quick return to democracy in Chile. The sketch is a caricature of the contemporary Chilean political exile, and in its humorous portrayal of this couple reinforces the stereotype built around impressions of the most salient problems of exile.

The same theme is treated to much better effect in La increíble y triste historia de General Peñaloza y el exiliado Mateluna (1976), with which Aleph had their first production in France. Like the rest of their work, this is a collective creation relying on the members' personal experiences, in this case, of exile. Although I do not intend to deal here with groups working in exile, I want to look briefly at this play as an example of the perceptions of the state of exile that are absent from the above sketch written and performed in Chile.

Oscar Castro describes the evolution of the play: "La pièce durait environ deux heures trente et racontait deux histoires qui se mêlaient: celle d'un dictateur et celle d'un exilé latino-américain à Paris. A la fin, le dictateur tombait, abattu sous le poids de sa conscience, ce qui correspondait davantage à notre espoir qu'à la réalité. Nous sentions que le thème du dictateur manquait d'originalité mais que celui de l'exilé était plus riche, plus nouveau... Dans sa version définitive la pièce dure une heure et le Général n'est qu'un personnage dans une pièce jouée par une troupe de comédiens exilés - le théâtre dans le théâtre. Par contre nous avons développé dans divers registres les mésaventures de Mateluna et son histoire."⁷

So, the General's fate is revealed as an invention of the exiles' self deception, an invention of the exile's illusion of returning home once the General has fallen, betrayed by the strength of the guilt on his conscience. The play develops further from those roots. The exile, Mateluna, who has refused to open his suitcase as a demonstration of his belief that the return will come soon and as a symbol of his resistance to integration into the new country, finally, in the last scene, opens his case. Once he has accepted that the regime will last, Mateluna is in a position to start a new life in the receiving country. Mateluna is a symbol of hope, of adjustment and of progress. He belies the image of the perpetually disoriented exile who refuses to accept his present situation. The authors distance themselves from the myth-making tendencies that had initially tempted them, and whose existence they acknowledge in the imaginary play about General Peñaloza.

This experience introduces the major preoccupations of exile, that is, those of rupture and continuity, for in no other area is the

feeling of severance from a past and a culture so great. In the Chilean case this rupture in artistic circles meant the break from a politically committed art and the destruction of the possibility of creating a "new culture". Enrique Lihn, in the letter quoted above, points to an important aspect of the impact of exile on art when he accuses exiles of believing that culture was not "escindida" but "exiliada", to be brought back with the exiled artists, revealing the tensions that exist within the question of political exile and the debate about where real freedom of expression exists. The possibility that it will only exist at some vague moment in the future when the country has been reunited, brings us to the question of return. In order to show how, in one form and another, theatre deals with a complete experience of exile, I will begin by looking at José (1980) by Egon Wolff. Although it is not an explicit testimony of political exile, it deals with the return of a person who had left the country of his own will but who, on return, finds himself subject to exclusion from his immediate community. It is a useful drama to begin with, since it sheds light on what can be called an ethos of expulsion.

2. José: A Drama of Return and Intrusion

José (1980)⁸ is a drama of return from abroad. The central character, José, after living in the United States for seven years, returns to Chile where his mother, Isabel, and his two sisters, Estela and Trini, live dependent upon Raúl, a successful businessman and Estela's husband. His arrival is awaited with high expectations by the family, for whom the United States is synonymous with progress and wealth, but he is a great disappointment to them all, for he is ~~the~~

antithesis of all that North America means to them. He has foregone all worldly possessions and is concerned only with rekindling the values of love and caring that, in his loneliness in the United States, he had seen to be undermined, and that he hopes to find again in the modest family he had left behind. The initial disappointment is mutual, for José finds himself with a family that is no longer satisfied with the simple things in life and has embarked on a relentless socially upwardly mobile course. Part of this is the relegation of the grandfather, of whom they are now ashamed as part of a rejected past, to an old folks' home, and the marriage of Trini to a promising young social climber, with whom, after their marriage, she will emigrate to Sweden. When he finds out that his grandfather has only been let out of the home for one day to greet him, José resolves to bring him back to live in the house against the wishes of the family and, more importantly, of Raúl. As José attempts to re-establish the family he once knew, he only causes problems, and his efforts to make them face up to the lies they are living cause serious conflicts and finally rupture, for he is asked to leave. The grandfather also leaves now that he is no longer welcome in the house, and Isabel thinks it best to join him, but repents after Estela pleads hysterically for her to stay. And Trini, who momentarily rebels against her destiny with Cristián, is advised by José to turn back to him and to love him. Finally, with the grandfather and José gone, the dramatic community returns to the initial order.

In its dramatic format and development, José is the drama of the intruder who upsets the dramatic status quo, who awakens deep fears and inhibitions in the dramatic community and who becomes the personification of a threat they are all aware of, but which they

have pushed to the back of their minds. In this case the threat is of renewed poverty and a return to a life they have all left behind and now reject in its entirety. José is the ethical intruder as defined by Samar Attar: "The purpose of the ethical intruder is to assert himself as a judge of human relationships, and is thus chiefly interested in ethics, that is to say, the rules of conduct which govern human behavior among individuals."⁹

José causes untold conflict within the dramatic community. If Raúl contemptuously refers to him as a "hippie de mierda", then it is likely that a large part of the audience will share this view. Looking at his language and his dress, behaviour and relations with the rest of the family, José is, to all intents and purposes, a hippy style figure, complete with clichés of love, peace and harmony, a figure alien to the Chilean culture and in the environment of the play, an anomaly. The identity of the character, however, serves to expose the codes according to which the family now lives. Finally, the question to be answered in José is one posed in all these plays about exile: who, or what, has changed, and how?

On the whole, we learn very little about José's life either before he went to the United State or while he was there. The only information is that he has undergone a change, a change so marked that he conforms neither to the image his family has retained of him, nor to the fiction they had built around his life abroad. All three women remark on the change in him in the same terms. Trini remembers a brother she had idolised: "Recuerdo al hermano que fui a dejar al aeropuerto. Partiste tan confiado, tan feliz. Abrazaste a todo el mundo. Me tomaste la cara y me diste un beso, que me quemó durante días. Estaba tan orgullosa; hablé tanto de tí a mis compañeras de curso que dijeron que parecía enamorada de tí..." (p.14). Not even

the ritual games that they remember from her childhood and that they repeat as a way of recuperating the past can reinvent the José she remembers. Estela has the same impression: "Cuando partió a los Estados Unidos, no parecía tener problemas. Se fue feliz y tranquilo, lleno de posibilidades. ¿Ahora parece un patán!" (p.20). But it is Isabel who sees José's transformation as a sign of suffering: "Sin embargo, tienes una tristeza en los ojos. ¿Por qué es eso? ¿Pareces un Lázaro" (p.10).

When José remembers his mother from before, it is in terms that suggest that he is in search of a lost paradise that will satisfy his own emptiness, but that cannot offer anything to the others. He remembers her as a "monument", washing clothes, selflessly serving the family, and shows his disillusion on finding out that, not only does she no longer wash the clothes by hand, but that she has a maid to do it for her (p.16). He rejects as a betrayal of all she was anything that may make life easier for his mother, and sees it as a symbol of changing customs imposed on his mother against her will. Nevertheless, he does recognise that she still loves her family and that if she is silent about the treatment of her father it is because she must protect the balance as a duty to Trini and Estela whose future depends on Raúl.

From the little information that the family had received from José, they had imagined him progressing materially as a result of the possibilities open to him through the American dream. But, having lived in the United States, José has rejected all that the "dream" is supposed to represent, for he sees that it signifies, above all, loneliness and the loss of basic humanitarian values. Isabel's perception of José's change is the most accurate, for in his own interpretation, he is a type of Lazarus. But, whereas Isabel refers

to him as poor, thin and emaciated, he sees his present state as a resurrection after the experiences and deceptions he had lived through in Chicago, a city he calls "un cementerio de cemento", a city of the living dead, in which a person can die without anyone else knowing (p.25). His very name is the symbol of his "death" in such a society: "'Joe' es nada, ¿me entiendes? ¡'Joe' no existe! ¡'Joe' es cosa!" (p.24). Joe is anyone who has not succeeded according to the rules of the capitalist game, who is left on the margins of society and is despised by even the most humble of those who are in the process of surviving.

Somehow the female characters share the destiny of a "Joe" of a nobody. They conform for fear of being banished and abandoned to a cruel fate, they act in as insignificant a way as possible, hoping that their behaviour will contribute to the success of Raúl's regime and save them from becoming female "Joes". Estela is in the worst position. Her's is a world bound by commitments and by the need to follow a certain set of rules: she "belongs" to Raúl. When José tells her, "El miedo golpea tus noches, pero te paras ahí como una roca." (p.23), he is trying to make her feel, to question the emotions that govern her relationship with Raúl. The primary emotion is fear, a fear she can persuade herself does not exist if she submits meekly to Raúl's domination and constant humiliation of her. She can only recuperate the illusion of normality that she tries to project as a "rock" with the departure of her brother, for he does not allow her to hide her fear, he robs her of any illusion of tranquility and adds guilt to her destructive emotions. More importantly, however, even though she is on the side of her husband, in his eyes she is contaminated by association with José and by the shame of belonging to the same stock. She has already proved herself to be a failure to

Raúl through her inability to have children. If she proves herself, through contact with José, to be, over and above that, a misfit and a loser, she will suffer the fate of the loser: expulsion.

Trini, who has been brought up in this atmosphere, conforms most closely to what is expected of her in the world of Raúl, and genuinely aspires to the kind of life Cristián can provide. She is thus most shocked by José and by the alternative code of values which he professes and which she had never been exposed to before. Her momentary rebellion is a measure of the strength of the impact of José's arrival on her vision of the world: "¿Por qué hace un tiempo siento como que no estoy viviendo mi vida?" (p.41). She realises that she has never been asked to voice her own opinions, that her thoughts are never taken into account. But she has no escape from the rigid life for which she has been groomed, and José's final advice to her is really that she could create the conditions of a better life through love. Like the other female characters, Trini is cut out for a typical middle class existence. She will be protected from the realities of the world outside her family, she will never have to make decisions and will never be seriously asked her opinion. Her only role is as a support and a suitable companion. Following José's initial advice would mean a certain "exile" for her as the negation of the type of woman she is training to be, one who is wholly dependent, always protected from facing reality or making decisions.

The Chileans who now run the family have accepted unreservedly the materialistic values that accompany the advance into the modern capitalist world. José, at first, sees it as his duty to open Trini's eyes to the trap she is falling into by marrying Cristián, the epitome of the new Chilean, on his way north and thereby up in the world, complying with the well-established rules, never doubting

anything he is taught, never questioning his legitimate right to all his privileges, the perfect package, only awaiting the correct wife in order to compete in the world. José tries to make Trini aware of the pitfalls in her fiancé's "plan for the future":

Cristián tiene un solo problema: ¡Que nació en Chile!
 ¡Que aquí, fastidiosamente, aún se le da cierta importancia a las cosas inútiles; como querer a un amigo, por ejemplo, y eso le hace parecer duro, a veces, e inhumano, y teme que se le note! ¡Pero, para suerte de él, las cosas van cambiando! ¡El chileno de hoy se está volviendo práctico también, y realista! ¡Abrió una ventana a los Estados Unidos, y está recibiendo de allá todas sus fetideces, y le están oliendo a perfume! ¡Hoy el chileno está aprendiendo a parecerse al Americano, y eso le alegra el corazón! (pp.34-35)

This declaration highlights what is generally perceived to be an acute social problem in contemporary Chile, that is the loss of the values of caring and community to a dog-eat-dog environment, based in admiration for American principles. In this sense, José is a classic intruder, for he symbolises a "concrete physical and mental experience which can be fully identified in terms of existing conditions within a given socio-political context".¹⁰ José does not conform as the new citizen, he refuses to accept a new society based on competition and individual betterment, he prefers expulsion from the regime within the house to living in the family a life as the undeclared enemy whose life-style is held in contempt. He refuses to become a Chilean Joe.

Raúl, like Cristián, is the winner and holds sacred the principles of ruthless economic gain. When challenged by José to defend his moral stand he justifies it by referring to his right to personal gain in a hard business world. José's reply highlights the reversal in expected roles that has taken place: "Yo ya había oído discursos parecidos, pero en inglés" (p.42). This is one of a set of melodramatic oppositions, if the most dubious: the dichotomy of English as the language of the inhumane, and Spanish as that of the humane, values, it is set within a well known manicheistic code of interpretation of the capitalist world.

The Grandfather is a fellow in exile to José, and his reintegration into the family unit is equally impossible. With José he forms one side of the melodramatic oppositions that compose the drama. Before his grandson's arrival he tells the rest of the family that there have been too many changes, that they have gone "muy jai", that they have divided the family into rich and poor, the presentable and the misfits. The Grandfather's statement, "Ese niño se va a helar de frío en esta casa" (p.4), completes the melodramatic oppositions, the warmth of the past having been lost to the cold prosperity of the present.

By bringing his grandfather home José is trying to destroy the model that has been imposed, that the Grandfather had attempted to follow and that had been his moral and economic ruin, but in fact, he is submitting him to the ownership of Raúl, an ownership that José hopes to stop by promoting love. But the old man, older, wiser, more cynical, is aware that efforts to change the world are futile and that, furthermore, the changing attitudes in Chile are not exclusive to the upper classes, but that the lower classes aim for capitalist progress as well: "Viste a Orellana. Quiere esas chancheras para

progresar. Que después se vayan metiendo en la mierda es el precio que se paga. Yo mismo. Si no me hubiera dejado enbaucar por ese sinvergüenza (Raúl) tú y tu madre tendrían otra vida. No más feliz, pero otra..." (p.36). The seduction of economic progress is understandably strong and while neither José nor the grandfather can condemn others for aspiring to the symbols of prosperity they see around them, both now know that these must often be paid for with human sacrifice. Despite the Grandfather's initial attempts to enter this world, it was impossible. José speaks resentfully to Trini about the Grandfather's financial ruin: "¡Pero no te preocupes, Trini! ¡El abuelo vendió sus tierras, para comprar acciones, y parecer más civilizado, y se arruinó! ¡Hoy, vive sumergido, y soñando, el pobre, en lo que pudo haber sido, y que se parece al modelo que ustedes le hicieron!" (p.35). The Grandfather's vision of this world is more lucid, born of first hand experience.

José returns with the intention of making his experience "weigh" on the family and, on seeing the way they have developed, he becomes determined to shake them into honesty in their dealings with one another. His role is one with constant Biblical overtones. When his mother reproaches him for not writing to her he answers, "¿Qué querías que te escribiera? ¿Qué le contara que a su hijo lo crucificaban en los Estados Unidos?" (p.24). Yet if we follow José's way of the cross, it seems to have led to a belief that the only true human values can be found in the most destitute of souls. And, in José's own words, good people live marginalised from the rest.

If José, as exile returned, is the traditional intruder, he is also a symbol of purity in the modern world. The dichotomy of "civilización y barbarie" still exists, but which is which? The answer is ever more difficult. Does civilisation mean modernisation?

Does it emerge in the Grandfather's state after he has sold his land? If Egon Wolff presents José as a latter day apostle, preaching a forgotten creed, and points to the fact that the apostles gave up home, family and belongings for a belief and for the saving of mankind, then equally, there are those who will see him as a "un hippie de mierda", incapable of assuming real social responsibilities and only capable of pontificating from the sidelines about matters he does not understand. Is the answer that the complexity of modern society is such that there are multiple worlds that can never meet?

In this dramatic situation this is most certainly true. In the words of Pedro Bravo Elizondo, José deals with "una lucha contra la enajenación del hombre, contra su embrutecimiento".¹¹ Seeing his next of kin alienated from their former values, José, having found peace with himself in Christianity and a world of socially marginalised people, seeks to put his family in touch once more with the loving and caring attitudes that they had once known. But they have slipped into what for José is a form of barbarism, that of the individual fight to acquire more and more economic security and material wealth.

Putting this into the context of modern Chile, Wolff's José does not deviate from the thesis often put forward in contemporary theatre about the degradation of man in the present economic circumstances, which are seen to promote a constant brutal fight for survival in which the weakest always lose. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out in passing that the main protagonist has been abroad for seven years, that is, since 1973 and one of his places of exile was Chicago, the home of the theory of monetarism, the model on which Chile's economic "miracle" was built. In these terms, Chicago is the ultimate symbol of theory at the expense of humane values, and it is significant that José found his belief in God in this city. Taking these parallels

even further, Raúl's language is reminiscent of that we have seen in other plays. When he describes José it is as a disturbance, a public nuisance who avoids responsibility in life and who does not allow others to live or work "tranquilos". He sees his brother-in-law in terms of a communist threat, giving away the goods and property of others, and as a contaminating influence: "... yo quiero una casa limpia. Nada de chascones amargados..." (p. 31). In the final scene, with the fulfilment of the threat to throw him out, Raúl warns the remaining females of the consequences of adopting similar attitudes: "Cuando vuelva al almuerzo, quiero ver mi casa... despejada... y a todo el mundo, sonriendo" (p. 42). He forfeits the real feelings of the family to the important illusion of cleanliness, tranquility and harmony. The ethos of expulsion is clear. And José's self imposed renunciation of all this is an honourable solution.

Ultimately, José is a drama of intrusion and incohesion. If the respective worlds inhabited on one hand by the returned exile and on the other by those he had left behind do not blend, then it is because the latter have been integrated into the new system while the former has lived with an image of a past before drastic economic upheaval. Note that it is to his Grandfather, to a generation brought up on the values of old, that he turns, to a generation that has not been fully incorporated into the new society and that has the strength to retain an individual identity. Meanwhile, the weakest characters, the women, remain in a domain where they will be safe and not be subjected to the fight for survival outside the home, where they would surely lose as the weakest do. This is the role of José: as intruder to reveal the fears and insecurities of the rest of the dramatic community; and as exile in his own country to expose the "desencuentro" of two worlds. It is this double image of "desexilio"

and "desencuentro" that we will find in ¿Cuántos años tiene un día?.

3. ¿Cuántos años tiene un día? Cultural Inner Exile

"Desexilio" is one of a number of expressions coined to describe different experiences within the state of exile. It has been used by Benedetti as a way of describing the new exile encountered on return: "Y menos seguro estoy de poder habituarme, si algún día regreso a ese país distinto que ahora se está gestando en la trastienda de lo prohibido. Sí, es probable que el desexilio sea tan duro que el exilio."¹² For others, the state of "desexilio" is that of inner exile, of marginalisation within the country of those with dissident opinions. As such it refers to the marginality of artists who remained in the country. In ¿Cuántos años tiene un día? (1978)¹³ both forms of "desexilio" are encountered.

¿Cuántos años tiene un día? is set in two acts in a television studio. In the first act the immediate aim of the protagonists, a team of journalists, is to record an anniversary broadcast of the current affairs programme on which they work. For this occasion they are joined by a guest journalist who has worked in Europe for twenty years. Any illusion that the recording may run normally is soon shattered by the absence of one of the group and by constant interruptions from the management. Despite the feeble insistence of Ignacio, the leader of the team, that this type of harassment does not normally happen, it soon becomes clear that it is, in fact, a daily occurrence. A flashback to the late fifties, when Ignacio and Cecilia, the guest journalist, covered the end of dictatorship in Argentina and debated the possibilities of the Chilean people

understanding the nature of a country dominated by authoritarian regimes, provides a contrast to this restrictive environment. Meanwhile, as a response to intimidation by the management and to the uncertain fate of the absent journalist, an extremely insulting and potentially explosive letter of protest is drafted. The first act closes with the recital of Pablo Neruda's "Oda al aire", as Ignacio takes charge of the letter and a seeming reconciliation between the squabbling journalists is contrived.

The second act follows the same pattern. The team sets about seriously recording the programme, but conflict and squabbling continue, and there is another flashback to a more fortunate period, to the early sixties, a time of cultural expansion, of optimism in the possibilities of television, only recently introduced in Chile, which, in University hands, was to mean "una garantía para hacer cultura" (p.184). It is revealed that Ignacio had no intention of presenting the letter to the management who, he knows, would use it as the necessary excuse to sack the whole team and rid the channel of intrusive, potentially subversive forces. When the conflict reaches a climax, Ignacio decides to resign, but the arrival of the absent journalist and Cecilia's reading of a letter in which Ignacio declares his dedication to fighting to provide an intellectual and cultural alternative in modern Chile revitalises the strength of the team.

The main prop of the play is the friendship between Ignacio and Cecilia, which goes back as far as the late fifties. This introduces the perpetual cultural problems faced in a country such as Chile, it suggests how these have developed over the last twenty years, and it shows that the archetypal solutions are always sought: whether to stay in the country or to go abroad, normally to Europe. Even at a

time when the cultural outlook for Chile had seemed positive, as represented in the flashback to 1961 and the First Congress of Latin American Writers, euphorically described by Ignacio, Cecilia had felt stifled by the cultural atmosphere, by the never accomplished projects and by the lack of contact with other cultures. Her response had been that of many others, to leave in search of fulfilment abroad, in Europe, where she saw a promise of greater achievement and better possibilities for her own development. The argument about the ethical correctness of leaving the country in this way has not been exhausted. Then, Ignacio had tempted her with visions of what Chile would be in ten years time, had tried to make her believe that her place was in her own country. But now the environment is radically different, the time of cultural expansion is over, and television has become a thinly disguised medium for Government propaganda, where the journalists are merely struggling to survive with little hope of professional satisfaction.

Ignacio, who best expresses the belief in the cultural strength of television, is also the best expression of how the medium has evolved. He is a man with a deep involvement in one of the most significant social and cultural innovations in Chile in the second half of the twentieth century, the introduction of television. He had defined television as "una garantía para hacer cultura", and in the new circumstances he seeks to hold on to this concept of television. While the more radical members of his team will accuse him of the treasonous act of "adapting" to the new repressive circumstances, Ignacio believes that it is more profitable for the cultural health of his country to provide some means of reflection and expression than to opt out completely. He describes the task he now has as that of filling a basic gap, and not, as he had done before, as a

complement to other media of expression and information: "Hoy sólo puedes intentar usar tus facultades para expresar lo que los otros no pueden expresar, para incitar el pensamiento; cuando unos pretenden eliminarlo no es una tarea fácil..." (p.192). *Ignacio almost becomes a leader without a cause, deserted by the journalists who demand more militant opposition to the management, but his ethos wins over.*

The pressures on the journalists to respond to the new role of television are huge, and are represented here by a group of vigilantes called "El Comité de Saneamiento Interno", whose purpose should be no mystery by now: they denounce, accusing their victims of bad personal hygiene, any behaviour that deviates from their rigid norms, that is politically "unhygienic" and that they believe to belong to "tiempos afortunadamente sobrepasados para siempre" (p.157), that is, the Popular Unity years. The attack is never made wholly explicit, the journalists being accused of wearing their hair too long, of immoral behaviour, etc., accusations designed to provoke the journalists into revealing their true political colours by, for example writing a provocative letter, thus digging their own grave. Cecilia is amused but bewildered by the ridiculous nature of the tactics, which are no longer amusing to the members of the team.

This is a fundamental point of the play. Cecilia's first "exile" had been voluntary, an intellectual option to develop her talents in a more promising environment. To a large extent she will not have considered herself an exile, for her movement to and from the country was not restricted, since her exile was not politically enforced. Yet on return to authoritarian Chile Cecilia begins to feel the sentiments of the real exile. She finds it difficult to break the codes that govern the working lives of the journalists, she finds ridiculous the self-nominated "Comité de Saneamiento Interno", she

does not fully appreciate the level of harassment experienced by the team, and their demoralisation is alien to her. She will stay in Chile for four days, she will understand little and see little other than superficial changes, results of the modernisation of the city, the outward façade of progress. Hers will be the outsider's view of her own country, her experience that of "desexilio", exile encountered on return.

The use of the space on stage is another vital prop for the understanding of the argument. The higher level is the domain of the management, where the director of the channel governs its daily business and guards the interests of politically correct reporting, of decency and morality. The conflict that motivates the action is directed towards this area, where the journalists are called to be reprimanded, where the manager never shows his face and communication with him is through an authoritarian intercom. This is the level that represents the reality of the country, rigid, repressive, impersonal, governed by uninspired projects for the nation's future. The lower level, the television studio, is where their fight against the silencing of dissident cultural expression takes place. Here the spectator is provided with a view of the reality of the difficulties faced in carrying out serious reporting, exacerbated by the success of the campaign to divide the team and provoke them into destructive action. Each time the journalists put their make up on again and resume their positions to begin recording, the inevitable interruption caused by the management or by the impassioned outburst of a journalist, adds to the impression that the initial movements are part of a frustrating ritual of beginnings with no possibility for continuation.

In the working space, too, the flashbacks underline the stark

contrasts between past and present. If we compare Martín, the youngest member of the team, to the younger Ignacio and Cecilia, we will see that the present environment is not conducive to grand projects and hope in the future. Whereas Ignacio was full of optimism, Martín, at twenty-five is bitter and disillusioned, obsessed with the idea of leaving Chile, of going to Europe where cultural roots are more "solid", making everything possible. He echoes Cecilia's need to go abroad, but his is not born of such a strong conviction in the richer possibility of self-development, but of despair and constant intimidation in the only working environment he has known. Like the other members of the team he works in the constant awareness that all his actions are watched, with the perpetual intuition that he is doing something wrong. Martín finds the world he lives in small and mean.

The other journalists are remnants of a past time, they had good careers in the late sixties and early seventies, had subsequently been blacklisted, lost their jobs, and one, demoralised by the battering his career had taken and by the attacks on his self-esteem after a number of years of unemployment, is an alcoholic. They personify the diminishing relevance of their intellectual experience, their careers are pared to nothing and their professional lives dominated by the day to day pettiness of the channel. For Ignacio in 1961, the possibility of creating culture far from his indigenous roots seemed impossible for him to imagine, now he finds this possibility equally remote. The flashbacks, then, are an evocation of a dream image of Chile.

During the recording Ignacio repeats Cecilia's words of twenty years before, "Estoy cansado...Cansado hasta la locura", but the dilemma has moved from the purely personal sphere to a political one,

for the decision to stay in the country is now a decision to fight against a dominant ideology repressive of freedom of expression and which encourages art as a good for consumption and not for reflection. Art as a consumer good governed by the media is interpreted as a way of encouraging intellectual mediocrity in the population, expressed in absolute uniformity of opinion. Ignacio tells Cecilia, "...estoy aterrado frente a la posibilidad de que conviertan a todos en esa tropa de mediocres que han perdido hasta la facultad de soñar" (p.188). Martín echoes this fear, but for him it is a fear of imperceptibly becoming one of the mediocre people.

The working space is also the space where a vision of another Chile, of an alternative reality is created. This is represented on one level through the flashbacks which show the existence of the intellectual potential within the country to provide a strong artistic atmosphere. On another level it is created through the demonstration of the intrinsic strength of the team and their deep commitment to taking advantage of the drastically reduced space for comment. The central question is still whether to go or to stay, to fight with the ideological baggage of previous years or to adapt, which is synonymous for some with a betrayal of ideals, but which, finally, means working within a strict ideological code while defying that very code.

In the end it is Ignacio who, in a letter he had sent to Cecilia, declares that, having weighed all the pros and cons, he still thinks that staying in the country is the correct decision, even if that means "desexilio":

Sé donde estoy... Sé lo que me falta... Sé lo que tengo... Sé lo que me han quitado... Sé lo que tengo. También sé que puedo

parecerse un iluso, o peor, un agachador de moño... Más de alguno ya me lo ha dicho. Pero una cosa es agachar el moño y otra, muy distinta, rendirse. Y yo no quiero rendirme ante lo que siento como un gran desafío: contribuir a que mi gente mantenga viva la facultad de pensar... que nadie piense por nosotros. Es la forma que yo entiendo mi contribución a defender la cultura, que no es otra cosa que la facultad que tiene un pueblo para reflexionar críticamente en torno a su propia realidad. Por muy poco que se pueda hacer, hay que hacerlo y nadie lo puede hacer por tí. (p.192)

This, like other speeches in plays we will study, becomes a direct communication with the real theatre audience. This speech enters into the debate about how best to describe the national reality and also into the ongoing debate of the political position of those who stay and work in the country. With Primavera con una esquina rota (1984), Ictus turned to the theme of political exile, which they dealt with again in terms of the complete experience of living in dictatorship.

4. Primavera con una esquina rota: The Arms of Dictatorship

Primavera con una esquina rota (1984)¹⁴ refers to Uruguay, which also suffered a military coup in 1973, followed by the same patterns of political repression and exile. This is the story of one family, a family from a middle-class left-wing intellectual background. Santiago, who has been involved in the underground terrorist movement, the Tupamaros, was arrested and imprisoned after the coup, as was his friend, Rolando, who was later released. The rest of

Santiago's family, his wife, Graciela, and their daughter, Beatriz, are in exile with his father, Don Rafael, in Mexico, where Rolando also goes on his release. At the beginning of the play, after four years, five months and fourteen days, painfully counted by Santiago, the situation has not changed except for a glimmer of hope for Santiago's release.

The first act deals with the coup and the positions of the characters in exile, and reveals Graciela's growing despair and guilt as she admits that time and the length of separation have distanced her from her husband who, on the other hand, shows in his letters how much he longs to be with her and Beatriz again. The second act concentrates on Graciela's dilemma, her love for Rolando and the news of Santiago's imminent release. They decide to hide the truth from Santiago and it is with the complex emotions of guilt and betrayal, of continuing feelings of loyalty to the past and the awareness of insecurity in the future that they go to the airport to meet him.

Santiago's is the most problematic role to translate to the stage, for in the novel, Mario Benedetti's Primavera con una esquina rota, on which the play is based, he speaks through letters to Graciela and his father. This problem was solved by taking him out of his cell in dramatisations of his letters in which he remembers the times before the coup and relives past experiences in the time "antes de que el futuro se pusiera decididamente malsano" (p.37). This device further heightens the awareness of enclosure when he returns to his cell, losing the remotest possibility of communicating with those closest to him. Furthermore, it is a dramatisation of the prison censorship by which his permission to write and receive letters may be taken away at any time. To this effect a new set of characters, the prison officers, is added to the cast of the play.

The censoring of letters, which denies the prisoners any right to signs of independent thought or individuality, both construed as subversive, is shown in a scene in which the officers sadistically make Santiago read a passage of a letter in which he talks to Graciela of his sexual longing for her. Debasement of human emotions and humiliation are an integral part of this experience of dictatorship.

It is the knowledge of the sadistic nature of the prison officers (by extension the regime) that prompts Graciela to hide, first, her distance from Santiago and, then, her affair with Rolando, for she knows that it can be turned into a weapon against him. Both she and Don Rafael feel that it would be "useless cruelty" (p.132) to add to his isolation and suffering. Yet the implications of both the dying relationship between Graciela and Santiago and the decision to keep it a secret are much wider. The question at the heart of the whole dilemma is one of "normality".

In these circumstances, "normality" cannot be easily defined. Santiago has to fight to remain sane or normal, for the disintegration of his world could have resulted in total mental collapse, but he has fought against that, primarily by looking to the future and to the possibility of beginning again. He knows that the normal course of his life has been interrupted but hopes that, away from the regime, the couple's normal life together may be renewed. While his life revolves around this one hope, those outside begin to aspire to other possibilities from the future, at the same time trying to make sense and a coherent whole out of the experience of exile. Exile becomes, in this sense, a chaos that plagues each life, a chaos that is never quite organised and that can cause havoc at any time. The affair between Graciela and Rolando is one thing that

disturbs the illusion of normality in exile and forces the protagonists into what Rolando calls "un ping-pong de la conciencia", the constant conflict between loyalty and abandonment, normality and its counterparts.

In effect, the break with the past is completed with the affair. As time passes it is only the past that holds the marriage together but, equally, as time passes, this past becomes linked with political identification between the couple and not, on the part of Graciela, with physical or sexual longing. We have to turn to the role played by Rolando in order to appreciate the roots of Graciela's alienation from Santiago. Rolando's role is one of the onlooker, the witness and, finally, the other. It is he who reveals the traditional patterns behind Latin American revolutionary attitudes, he who remembers Graciela as one of "las esposas semimarginadas por el machismo-leninismo de los ilustres varones" (pp.150-51), indicating the already existing contradictions in their relationship. This, in a highly politicised period, was based firmly on values that Graciela makes explicit when she explains her estrangement from Santiago to a friend in the following terms: "Le sigo teniendo mucho afecto, pero como puede tenerlo una compañera de militancia, no como su mujer. El se pasa añorando mi cuerpo (siempre me lo hace entender en sus cartas) y yo en cambio no siento necesidad del suyo" (p.80). When she explains her feelings to Don Rafael, it is clear that she feels tremendous guilt, feels that she has betrayed a man who still loves and longs for her and who has done nothing to deserve her betrayal, and that she has betrayed, also, a time of their life.

From his cell Santiago remembers the holidays together with friends. From an essentially erotic-sensual memory intertwined with the occasional allusion to political arguments in the novel, on stage

it is turned into a long scene in which the characters debate the most significant political issues of the late sixties and early seventies. It is a scene that underlines the intellectual nature of the characters and that shows relationships between couples as an inextricable part of a wider social and political outlook on life. It is a key scene in the understanding of the development of the relationship between Santiago and Graciela.

Their relationship has always functioned on two levels, one intellectual-political and one physical and emotional. It is clear that they both understand it in this way, but this does not mean that they coincide completely. When Santiago confesses to the murder in ambush of his cousin, who worked for the secret police, he does so to his father and not to Graciela who, he believes, will not understand, will see the murder in black and white and will be incapable of grasping the complexity of the emotions and guilt forced on him by the killing of a member of his own family. He writes that she will do one of two things: "Me diría hiciste bien, un verdugo menos. O me diría: cómo pudiste hacerle eso a tu primo" (p.145). Yet this version of Graciela is at odds with the character we see in the play, who is sensitive and intelligent, and who is understood on these levels much better by Rolando. Both she and Santiago had fallen into the chauvinist trap of believing in the superior intelligence of the man. Even now, as we shall see, she has transmitted the impression to Beatriz that, if Santiago is in prison and she is not, it is because of his superior political culture and better ideas. Whereas Santiago looks to her for love and hopes in the strength of their married relationship for the future while looking to his father to understand his political sins, she looks to another for love and still feels closest to him in terms of politics. The roots of the imbalance in

their relationship may be found in "machismo-leninismo", but its actual failure in this particular way is one of the sad results of dictatorship.

Dictatorship with "sus dos brazos más expresivos, la Cárcel y el Exilio"¹⁵ plays havoc with people's lives and undermines the values they had accepted before. Part of Graciela's problem is guilt at the fact that she feels she bears exile too easily, that her life is good and that she has a good future, if only she was let loose from the confines of her past. This complicates the ideas of exile and imprisonment for, if Santiago feels that he is in an inner exile, then Graciela, for her part, feels that she is denied her freedom: "Y eso hace que me sienta como cercada. El está preso allá, pero yo también estoy aprisionada en una situación" (p.130). Freedom, exile and imprisonment are key words in this play, yet they are words whose meaning cannot be taken for granted, as Don Rafael explains, : "... también hubo lindas palabras que ellos torturaron o ajusticiaron o incluyeron en las nóminas de desaparecidos" (p. 104). As in much literature that deals with themes of dictatorship, language is a theme in itself and, in Primavera con una esquina rota, the exploration of the meaning of these key words is a vital way of coming to terms with the circumstances. In this respect, the pivot of the work is the daughter, Beatriz.

Through her child's drawings and essays on life, her family, her status in her new country, and her deliberations on the immensity of words and ideas, the audience is given a very special image of the meaning of exile. Beatriz is a well-developed character and a clever device. As a device she is a way of expressing opinions about the state of exile with humour and, albeit well-orchestrated, innocence. As a child she need bear no responsibility for her thoughts which, in

turn, are a projection of adult bewilderment in the face of changing circumstances.¹⁶

It is Beatriz who opens our eyes to many of the sad ironies of the fate of the adults in her life. "Libertad es una palabra enorme", she tells her audience, that is, her school class of dolls. In her experience it is related to the time she spends out of school, it is an image of countries where people can do as they please, but where they must justify any misdemeanours. But it is more than that: "Libertad quiere decir muchas cosas. Por ejemplo, si una no está presa, se dice que está en libertad. Pero mi papá está preso y sin embargo está en Libertad, porque así se llama la cárcel donde está hace ya muchos años. A eso el tío Rolando lo llama qué sarcasmo" (p.119). Her understanding of the reasons for her father's imprisonment are confused and reflect the explanations given by the adults, who tell her that he is in prison for his ideas. She is proud of this and proud of her own ideas, but has learnt the lesson that it is better to keep them to herself if she is to remain in liberty. Graciela is a concrete example of the immensity Beatriz reveals in words, free but still trapped.

"Amnistía es una palabra difícil," she tells her class in another part: "Amnistía es cuando le perdonan a una la penitencia" (p.191). In order to understand this she relates it to her world, to the punishments and forgiveness her mother shows, to quarrels with her friends and to a bullfight she sees on television. When she tries to relate it to her father's possibilities of freedom, she finds in the dictionary that amnesty is the pardon of political prisoners, more importantly, "el olvido de los delitos políticos", a definition that she finds ominous, for perhaps the general in charge has a good memory and remembers everything.

The play shows Beatriz's first encounters with certain words, and therefore her understanding of them is purer, more innocent, and in some ways more concrete because her world of words is built around visual images, images that she expresses in her drawings. However, her interpretation of these words which she feels to be huge are no more than an opening to the range of meaning they hold.

The representation of the plebiscite in November 1980 in which the Uruguayan people voted against the regime becomes, in the play in Chile, an extremely important scene, given that, in the same year the Chileans voted in favour of the regime.¹⁷ Here again the value of one word is demonstrated, this time by Don Rafael: "...la dictadura decidió abrir no una puerta sino una rendija, y una rendija tan pequeña que sólo pudiera entrar en ella una sólo sílaba, y entonces la gente vio aquella hendedura y, sin pensarlo dos veces, colocó allí la sílaba NO" (p.190). The strength of conviction behind that syllable is what gives it its force and what makes it impossible for the regime to ignore completely. Like Beatriz's pictorial versions of words, this syllable becomes something concrete. Words are enormous and the shades of meaning, that can be easily perverted, are not to be found in the conviction behind a seemingly insignificant syllable.

The incident is doubly important since, in the play, the news of the No vote is received in prison. The prisoners bang their plates in jubilation and shout the slogan of the opposition, "y va a caer", an exact copy of the protests against the regime that are popular in Chile. It is a sign of the prisoners' new spark of hope and of a certain loss of fear. Like Don Rafael, they feel that a door has been left ajar, but that it may be opened completely is still a mad illusion. The very word door is almost an obsession with the prisoners, for it evokes the possibilities of enclosure and freedom,

the attempts to destroy their spirit, which they defy with letters, fantasies and projects for when it is finally open, when they will finally begin to recuperate real life.

The generation gap between grandfather and granddaughter is bridged by their awareness of the world around them and their special relation with words. It is important in this respect that the host country is also Spanish speaking, for it allows greater space to delve into the meaning of the key words that denote dictatorship. One of these is country, that holds within it implications about the right to live freely in the native country and the difficulties of adapting to the host country. The incorporation into the new country means, for Don Rafael, making his exile his own by defying the defeat that the regime wished to impose on him, it means taking over the streets first and foremost by giving up the walking stick he began to use when he arrived, it means appreciating local ways of speech. Is he a stranger in the country? Not even he can answer that. His most vital way of reaching the people of the host country is through his relationship with a woman called Lydia, and through her, with "un país llamado Lydia". Perhaps the answer is that the country became his when he felt part of a unit created in the country and not merely an onlooker in an alien state created and governed by people with whom he has had no previous contact.

For Beatriz, the question poses obvious problems and confusion. As a child she represents the generation that will grow up in exile and that will have only tenuous links with and notions of her parents home. When she talks of "este país", it is of a country that she inhabits but that is not hers: "Este país no es el mío pero me gusta bastante. No sé si me gusta más o menos que mi país. Vine muy chiquita y no me acuerdo de como era" (p.21). She asks Rolando to

clarify the problem for her but he can only confuse the matter, for there is no real answer and if there is one, then Beatriz has already guessed it: she has two countries, one that she knows little of, her mother country, and one that she knows very well but of which she is not a natural citizen. Rolando only adds a new confusion of terms that describe her state but that do not explain it. Her knowledge of her mother country is mixed in her mind with her father, with dreams of going to the zoo with him and seeing the animals behind bars, and her father telling her, "así también viví yo" (p. 92). Her country is synonymous with imprisonment.

Beatriz's greatest contribution to the science of language is her discovery of the word "elotoño". Like many of the words she explores it is a mystery to her. Yet, while other words can be explained, at least partly, through her own life experience and reading the meaning in dictionaries, not so "elotoño". It is a season, she knows, but she cannot relate to the word as a season, for she has never experienced it in the same way as she has spring, summer and winter, therefore, she cannot create a visual picture of it: "Graciela, es decir mi mami, porfía y porfía que hay una cuarta estación llamada elotoño. Yo le digo que puede ser pero nunca la he visto... Elotoño es la más misteriosa de las estaciones porque no hace ni frío ni calor y entonces uno no sabe qué ropa ponerse. Debe ser por eso que yo nunca sé cuando estoy en otoño" (p. 30).

Autumn is, for Beatriz, a time that does not exist, that is far beyond the reach of her experience and even of her imagination. This is where the real meaning of Autumn is to be found, for she goes on to tell us: "Donde está mi papá llegó justo ahora elotoño y él me escribió que está muy contento porque las hojas secas pasan entre los barrotes y él se imagina que son cartitas mías" (pp.30-31). Autumn,

then, is a season that she does not recognise, it is a season characterised by its lack of identifying factors, by its nothingness. We must turn to the other characters' interpretations of the seasons to find why autumn is nothing.

The seasons are symbols of specific states. Spring, for Graciela, according to Beatriz, is the time of year she hates because it was then that Santiago was taken prisoner. But Spring for Santiago, in the words of Don Rafael, is the time when he finds "su termómetro, su patrón, su norma". Despite the changing seasons perceived from behind bars, he will only regain this measure of Spring in his life when he is free: "Aunque no lo mencione sino rarísimas veces, sé que para él los acontecimientos del mundo en general y de su mundo en particular se dividen en primaverales, poco primaverales y nada primaverales" (p.209). Autumn, then, is a state that Beatriz's father recognises from behind his bars and that for him is abnormal. On his release Santiago thinks of his return to normality as the coming of spring after five years of winter. He imagines that "la primavera es como un espejo", a mirror of his life, but just as the normal course of his life has been broken, so will the mirror: "...todo recomenzará normalmente naturalmente aunque el espejo tenga una esquina rota eso sí la tendrá seguro la tendrá" (p.217). Spring was the mirror of his life, it is now a shattered mirror, a shattered spring, a shattered life, broken by the two arms of dictatorship, exile and imprisonment.

5. Regreso sin causa: The Black, the White and the Grey

Regreso sin causa (1984), by Jaime Miranda,¹⁸ takes place in two parts, the first in Sweden, the second in Chile. In the first act the

author reveals the life of a couple, Mario and Chela, who are in exile in Sweden with his bedridden father, Don Octavio, and their two children, Rody and Carla. With great attention to detail this act shows a life in exile that seems to revolve around political and solidarity activities: in the first scene they are preparing for a farewell dinner for an exile who has appeared on one of the regime's lists of those who can return, and in the second Mario is on his way to a congress of exiles and Swedish Human Rights and Government representatives that is meeting in protest at the Chilean regime's decision to suspend the lists and set up a commission in their place. This scene introduces his dilemma of conscience about whether to attend the congress or not when he finds out that he has been given permission to return. In the third scene, as they are packing, they find out that Don Octavio has been suspended from the list. The reason given is his participation in the congress, but he had not been present, which means that a mistake had been made and that, in fact, it is Mario who should not be allowed to return. Mario and Chela then have to decide whether to return, leaving Don Octavio behind in a nursing home or in the care of Mario's brother. For Chela there is no choice, for now that the possibility exists, she must go back to Chile, and the final decision is insinuated when the act closes with a phone call from the brother.

Back in Santiago in the second act, the material quality of their life has fallen drastically in comparison to the standard of living they had in Sweden. They rent a poor flat, it is winter, there is no work, there are numerous blackouts, and the only communication they have with other people, it seems, is when they are warned of the times of the pot-banging protests. On the day that Don Octavio's permission to return is refused again, they hear of his death in

Sweden. In the second scene, the emotional climax of the play, the couple are invited to talk of their experiences in exile in a "Velada por el Gran Reencuentro" when, instead of talking of the joy of being back in Chile compared to the agony of living away, Mario talks of the disillusion of return to a country where they feel like strangers, and of the belated recognition of the worth of their host country. He talks of the tragic irony of Don Octavio's fate, for he had received permission to return after his remains had been brought back to be buried. Yet, there is some hope, for their son has written to say he is coming to Chile, and Mario has found a job.

Even within the same family, exiled for the sake of one of its members, experiences of exile differ greatly. The difference between Mario's experience of exile and Chela's is that of the gulf between the traditional male and female experience of the immediate environment, whereby the male experience is primarily outside the home and that of the female confined to the home and family. Mario's character is loud and domineering. He always addresses Chela as "usted" (she addresses him as "tú") and "mijita", a sign of his paternalistic affection for her. In some ways he comes across as a tragi-comic figure, a blend of chauvinism and grandiloquence, always aware of the impression his words and actions will make on other people and painfully aware of the ridiculous.

In the first scene we see him rehearsing his speech for the farewell of a departing refugee. Despite Chela's protests, he will not tone down the clichéd pomposity of the language: "Allá, en tanto, la versacuta administración de una década, instrumenta un sistema de listas mensuales para permitir nuestro regreso. Pretenden alimentarnos el germen de la desesperación, en esta tortuosa espera del retorno" (p.6). Chela sums this up as a "Monstruosa lotería...

cuyo único premio... el gordo de los gordos... es el permiso para volver" (p.8). Whereas Mario aims to make a stylish speech, Chela aims to achieve a simple way of expressing her real feelings about their fate: more than once she will refer to the lists as a lottery, a lottery in which the prizes can be won and taken back again (p.18 and p.27). The scene demonstrates, in a very humorous way, that both are deeply sincere about what they are trying to say, but that Mario's means of expression respond to ideas of impact and theatricality. For while Chela's ideas are her own and shared with no one, Mario has the duty to air them in public.

Mario's incentive to act as a political militant is that it is a way of proving himself, of showing that he belongs to the exiled community and that he truly hopes for both the return of the exiles and the return to democracy. His participation is a matter of loyalty to principles. When the permission to return is given, Chela's first reaction is to dissuade Mario from attending the congress, recalling the circumstances of his brother, Negro:

CHELA: (PAUSA) ¿Quieres seguirle los pasos a tu hermano?

MARIO: (VOLVIENDO) ¿Ah?

CHELA: ¡El Negro! Por idiota se quedó con las maletas hechas después de haber tenido el permiso.

MARIO: (DRAMATICO) ¡Ah, por idiota! El Negro es un idiota porque sabiendo que tenía el permiso, reclamó en un acto público, el legítimo derecho del resto de sus compatriotas, para vivir en Chile. ¡Es un idiota! Tener una actitud

solidaria con los compatriotas, para usted, es ser idiota!

CHELA: (TONO DE DISCULPA) No quise decir eso.

MARIO: Eso dijo-: ¡por idiota!

CHELA: Fue una forma de decir. Está bien... por héroe.

MARIO: ¡Ahí está... por héroe! Para usted, como para tantos otros, casi no hay diferencia entre un idiota y un héroe. (pp.28-29)

Not for the first time, he accuses Chela of being superficial, of trivialising the worth of such moral integrity. And when he accuses her of following the opinions of the herd, both know that he is alluding to the attitude of such as Negro's wife who returned to Chile without him after his heroic or stupid action. The conflict is defined, ultimately, in terms of the tension between the female concept of what is best for the family, that is return at any cost, and the male concept of personal self-respect, that is return in the right circumstances. Yet, what are Mario's real reasons for going to the congress, knowing as well as Chela that it is a threat to their possibility of return? On one level he sees a refusal to go as an open declaration of his effeminacy. This frame of mind is made explicit when he phones another exile in the same predicament to suggest the possibility of missing the congress. Only Mario's part of the conversation is witnessed, but it soon becomes clear that he is being accused of unmanly behaviour when he is heard to reply: "Cómo va ser igual que yo le pregunte si usted es maricón" (p.31). In the last scene of the third act, when Don Octavio's permission has been suspended, Mario concedes that his decision to attend the congress proved him to be an idiot rather than a hero, but justifies it in

terms of his macho ethos:

MARIO: Reconozco, Chelita... soy un idiota. ¡Pero, por favor, entienda... (LE RUEGA)... entiéndame! (SE SIENTE EN LA CAMA)... Hay cosas... hay momentos... Un momento donde se define todo en una sola pregunta: ¡tengo las bolas bien puestas o no las tengo!... Y la pregunta se siente aquí, en la nuca... entra como una aguja y se va clavando... clavando... ¡Ese momento, Chelita, donde no se puede dar un paso atrás! Más todavía cuando es uno... uno, el que tiene la razón... el derecho! (PAUSITA) ¿Es así o no es así? (p.37)

Not surprisingly, Chela does not share his point of view.

Finally, Mario's actions must be understood in the context of his loss of identity, of his feeling of anonymity in a country where he does a menial job far below his intellectual capabilities, in which he misses the human contact he had formerly as "el profe del maletín", in Sweden he has become, he says, "vulgar y gritón". He strives to retain his sense of identity through these links with the remnants of his past, which are also a hope for the future.

Chela's life in Sweden is built into the structure of the play. While we see Mario come and go, while he has contact with the community and has a place in the group of exiles, Chela never leaves the main set. She says she lives frozen, "numb", isolated from her friends and family, with no social support and no new social contact that would provide warmth or affection in her life. Physically, her vision of the world is partial, through a window: her world is

reduced to visions of things to which she has little or no access. Because her domain is the home, she has a greater awareness of the differences that separate their experiences of Sweden:

CHELA: Nada me quita de la cabeza que para tí es distinto. ¡Tiene que ser distinto! (PAUSITA) Mario, ven acá. Dime qué se puede ver a través de esta ventana. (PAUSITA) ¡Blanco! ¡Todo blanco! ¿Y a lo lejos?... ¡Sombras! ¡Yo no quiero pasar mi vida en blanco! ¡Tampoco a oscuras como un ciego! ¡Ni me conformo en blanco y negro porque voy a terminar viendo un tablero de ajedrez! (p. 41)

The way Chela's role is defined reduces her possibilities of integration into the new society. Her ability to express herself is limited, not because of ignorance of Swedish, but because she has little opportunity to speak. More than once she says that she might as well cut her tongue off. When Mario is making translations of "testimonial voices" of exiled Chileans, he omits to ask Chela to record her experience, because these are "entrevistas serias" to which her meagre contribution would add nothing. Her life, as far as Mario can see, is inactive and passive, and she is called "egoísta" when she actually voices her own opinions and desires. She conforms to the stereotype of the "mujer-madre": "...resignada a ver crecer sus hijos en un mundo extraño y extranjero que ella no puede penetrar ni siquiera a nivel de la palabra... Siempre al servicio de su familia, jamás se plantea, ni planteará a los otros, el menor cuestionamiento. Es decir, un ser pasivo, objeto de las acciones de los otros, incapaz de aprehender la realidad que la rodea, víctima propiciatoria por excelencia."¹⁹

But circumstances in Sweden are different, for the family is developing in an environment that has nothing to do with that in Chile, and in Mario's eyes she has failed with her children, has failed to instil in them the proper values, to inspire them with love for their homeland and to keep the family united. It is she, however, who faces up to the fact that they have lost their children to a new way of life. Their son has become a dope-smoking drop-out, fully preoccupied with evading reality. And their daughter has demonstrated her extreme distaste for the exiled community.

The children are victims of the exile imposed on their parents, but they are also proof of the severance from the Chilean past, a past with which Mario had tried to inspire them. For, instead of describing reality, he had created an idealised image of the country, of "un país donde todo era bello, perfecto y bueno y en el cual la historia de Chile se reduce al período de la U.P., al vino tinto, a la cordillera y a las empanadas, repitiendo hoy en el exilio los clichés que antaño hacían reír".²⁰ But demonstrations of a violently macho culture and false values of morality have alienated Carla who, having been beaten by her father for sleeping with her boyfriend, denounced him to the police, as a result of which he spent a month and a half in jail, and she is now moving to study in Denmark. Mario avoids confrontation with his failure with the children, a failure born of his inability to develop a new set of social responses, for which he compensates by reinforcing traditional patterns of behaviour which are unacceptable or, in the case of the beating, illegal in the receiving country.

The bedridden Don Octavio embodies the most extreme case of exclusion from the host society. While Mario and Chela find themselves in constant conflict between loyalty to links with the

native country and the need to integrate somehow into the receiving community, Don Octavio has eliminated from his mind all that has to do with the time after leaving Chile. In his senility he imagines himself travelling in a train through Chile. When Mario tells his father that he is to be present at the congress where, in a symbolic gesture, a place will be kept empty for him, he wants his son to tell the driver to let him off the train in Talca (a town in central Chile). His voicelessness in Sweden is a token of the withdrawal of his right to express his, now subversive, opinions in his own language. His only means of expression in the play is a little bell, but this is the weapon of a sick, incontinent old man, with which he communicates his most basic needs. The bell ties Chela to him, and it is thus an instrument of alienation, not of communication. When she hides it, in a fit of rebellion against the constant "torture" of answering his every beck and call, she momentarily declares her autonomy from him, severing his links with everything outside his bedroom and completing the voicelessness imposed on him as a prolonged punishment for his political beliefs. Outside Chile Don Octavio is nothing. Not even bringing him to Mendoza in Argentina, only six hours journey from Santiago, would be a suitable solution, for the most important thing is the psychological effects of the condition of exile, in which distance plays only a minor part. Nearness to Chile would be an added punishment: "Terminaría siendo una tortura para el viejo... y para nosotros. (PAUSITA) ¡Es igual que arrimarlo a esta mesa y prohibirle comer! ¡Después de diez años de hambre!" (p.55). As in all the plays studied here, exile is seen as an extreme form of moral and physical deprivation.

Don Octavio's death in exile, after spending the last years of his life isolated, is shown to be a measure of the arbitrary nature

of the decision-making process. This is reiterated in the second act when Chela describes to Mario what she means by saying that Don Octavio's legal papers are in Mount Olympus: "El Olimpo. Así se llama don Julito la oficina de los mandamases del Interior. ¿Viste que ahí los Dioses se reúnen pa'deliberar si Don Octavio puede entrar o no?" (p.49). This imagery is used again towards the end of the play when, while lighting candles at the beginning of a blackout, the thought occurs to Chela: "¡Quién te dice que no son ellos mismos!... ¿Cómo son Dioses?... ¡Así obligan a prenderles velas!" (p.59). But, immediately after, when they receive news of Don Octavio's death, the candles are transformed from ironic monuments to the power of the "gods" into symbols of mourning, the candles that will sit on his coffin. Ultimately, they are symbols of mourning and of his fate imposed by the regime, the "gods".

On their return, the black and white areas that had symbolised Mario and Chela's rejection of the host country and their adherence to the idealised past, now become shades of grey, like the Chilean winter, not white with snow, but grey and bleak with rain. The same preoccupations, those of the children, the fate and the health of Don Octavio and the experience of exile, still fill their life. Chela is a housewife in a poorly-furnished rented flat, but now her role is more in tune with the expectations of the society she is part of. Although her isolation is still marked, she is near her family, she is recuperating her world and her identity. In Sweden she had seen her only possibility as that of "una vida inútil realmente" (p. 44). Now in Santiago Mario uses the same words. For him, the humiliating, mechanical work he had done in exile now seems a vast improvement on the degradation of tramping the streets in search of work, and meeting only with constant refusals.

This last act is a testimony to inner exile in modern Chile where Mario and Chela cannot fit in. Mario does not dismiss the possibility of returning to Sweden: "¡Este es otro país, mihijita! ¡Hasta cuándo nos seguimos mintiendo! ¡Nos cambiaron todo!" (p.56). Mario's fate is that of so many other unemployed men who tramp the streets in search of work. However, Chela remains determinedly optimistic against the background of a black image of Chile, and she refuses to give in to the idea that it has been "un regreso sin causa".

The "Velada del Gran Reencuentro" is a programme in which returned exiles recount anecdotes about life abroad, giving the impression that life away from Chile is reduced to a succession of disconnected, unhappy, incidents. The testimonies are supposed to show "lo terrible que es vivir afuera" (p.62), to demonstrate the suspension of life until the return. But Mario has realised that they had lived a "ghost reality", "a personal past which prevents them (exiles) from realising and accepting the present dynamic Chilean reality as well as their actual present reality in their new society".²¹ Now, after two weeks of "la locura del regreso", consisting of "empanadas y vino", followed by three months of loneliness and despair, of coming to terms with yet another new country, he can tell the audience that "Se produce al volver un nuevo exilio" (p.63).

In the last scene the tables are turned on the audience. They may have agreed with most of the sentiments expressed and may have been in sympathy with the characters, and many may even have lived the same experience, but the message of the play is that it is the audience as real people, outside the cosy bounds of the dramatic fiction, who creates the atmosphere of "la locura del regreso". In a

speech that betrays none of the pomposity of the first scene, Mario tries to break the silence between the two parts of the broken country, to be the first in a "clamour of voices" that will provide the truth that so much silence had hidden and that had left a gap filled by myths of false paradises.

Mario and Chela, who had come to the "Velada del Gran Reencuentro" to provide the black and white story of exile and return, show the audience, both fictitious and real, the grey area lived by those who return to a type of inner exile. It is the meeting of two mistaken visions, the paradise the exiles paint of home and the paradise those in the country paint of the "exilio dorado" (p.63). In this sense the last scene does indeed call for, as Mario says, "un clamor de voces" to bear witness to the problem and to solve it. The play finally moves from theatre to melodramatic reality. The last scene is, in effect, a political speech.

6. Two Silent Parts or a Mutual Deafness?

Cinema-Utopia (1985) by Ramón Griffiero is the most imaginative play about the theme of exile. The absence of a manuscript makes it impossible to comment closely on the text, but in this section I want to look at the major points of the play and the way it relates to the other plays I have studied here.

Cinema-Utopia is set in a cinema, El Valencia, in the age before television, when it was common to attend performances of a serialised soap opera every week. The regulars at this cinema, a mongol woman, a Señora, an alcoholic, a lonely spinster and a man who is always accompanied by his rabbit, are all solitary people looking for fantasy, escape, company. The other character, the usher, has

lived there all his life and is totally absorbed in the world of the cinema and his fantasy companions are the figures from the films with whom he dances and converses.

The film the characters are watching is a serial about exile in Paris, the tragic existence of a lonely, isolated young man, Sebastián, an anti-hero with no future, and only remembrance of a past love, which never loses its vividness, despite separation, loss, death. He lives in a squalid apartment in Paris, for which he cannot pay and which he can keep as long as he indulges the landlord's sado-masochist fantasies. He has become a drug addict as his only escape from reality, and as a means of moral survival, just as a friend has become a drug dealer and a male prostitute as a means of economic survival. His best friend, Esteban, with whom he has a homosexual relationship, is repelled by most of the underlife he sees around him, and it is he who survives while Sebastián destroys himself. The serial evolves around Sebastián's growing dependence on drugs and on his attempts to resist the alienation from his past, but these are futile, for the past, primarily in the shape of the dream image of his past lover, now lost in a distant and irretrievable time, returns to haunt him in an endless torment. In each episode his despair is deeper, his attachment to this life weaker, and finally the only solution is through self-destruction.

At the moment Sebastián's suicide becomes inevitable, the fates of the two dramatic communities become intertwined. A sailor, who had entered the cinema hoping to watch pornography, leaves when he finds the serial does not provide the scenes he had been looking for, and different aspects of the spectators' worlds begin to disintegrate: the rabbit dies; it becomes clear that a relationship between two of the characters was no more than a fling; the usher leaves his fantasy

world briefly when he breaks down, wondering why it is always the good and the simple who suffer most. But, this time at least, he is saved from his insight by the appearance of a dancing couple from his fantasy world. In the final scene, it is only Mariana, the mongol woman, and the usher who are left in the innocence of the cinema watching the last episode of the serial. Meanwhile, the other characters have become voyeurs at the death of Sebastián. The fiction of the serial is thus finally turned into non-fiction, and somehow that fiction had influenced the destruction of their world in the cinema. But can the characters in the cinema audience distinguish between reality and irreality?

Cinema-Utopia helps us to understand the dramatic treatment of exile by adding a new perspective to the main themes addressed in other plays. Firstly, there is the question of the existence of two distinct worlds, portrayed in some plays in terms of melodramatic oppositions that duplicate common real-life manicheistic interpretations of the period since 1970. These interpretations are no more than a reversal of the regime's equivalent oppositions: thus, good is the past between 1970 and 1973, good is in Chile at that period, bad is anything after 1973 and bad is in Chile after 1973. Good is a future, often seen as a return to the past. In each one of the plays we find a nostalgia for this past, the severance from which has had great psychological repercussions. At the most common level, integration into the new society brings with it feelings of guilt and the fear of losing all contact with the past.

But if we look at different visions of the past it soon becomes clear that they have long been subjected to a process of myth-making. Mario in Regreso sin causa accuses Chela of having failed with the children by not building a positive identification with their country

and cultural heritage, while she accuses him of alienating them with tales of the paradise left behind. The adults, nevertheless, share a common view of the country, if not a common interpretation of how to transmit it to their children. This common view of Chile is shaped by the image of a country totally destroyed by the new regime; it is moulded over the years by the exiles' political activity, which provides a sense of purpose and community in relation to the society they left behind. As they pack Chela hides cassettes of Chilean protest song among the underwear in case it should be discovered and confiscated, but the audience will find this a laughably naive precaution since, by this stage in the regime, the music is widely available even if the artists are not allowed to perform in the country. The protagonists' frozen image of Chile is further demonstrated through the huge talking doll they take as a present for Chela's niece in the understanding that such a toy will be a novelty. Again the irony will be all too evident for the audience after the huge boom of imported consumer goods, and it is heightened by the fact that the doll is sold in order to buy the girl her school uniform. In the exterior images of the country had rested on vague notions of underdevelopment, but had not been developed into concrete ideas of poverty. On another level, however, the episode of the doll is a comment on the impoverishment of some middle sectors in the course of the regime, for it is to be supposed that Chela's family had not previously suffered such economic hardship as to have been forced to sell a toy.

For the exiles portrayed in these plays the past becomes summed up in certain symbols and images, smells, tastes and sounds. For Graciela in Primavera con una esquina rota the past is her relationship with Santiago. Her sense of betrayal as she adapts to

the present and begins a new relationship is mixed with her inevitable distancing from another time and another country. This is somehow transferred to Beatriz, the child, the person with little first-hand knowledge of the country left behind. Autumn for the adults around her means Uruguay, it evokes smells, colours of a season that does not exist in their present home. Beatriz, with no experience of autumn, cannot relate it to her senses, but she relates it in pictorial images of leaves falling through the bars of her father's cell, the bars that she, in turn, relates to a zoo in Montevideo. Hers is an image of the home country that is in some instances visually vivid, related to the symbols of imprisonment and confinement, but essentially vague since she has no conscious recollection of experiencing her country. As her mother rediscovers her sensuality through her relationship with Rolando, Beatriz clings more to the past, perceiving the imminent destruction of the suspended world she inhabits with her mother as they await her father's release from jail. While Graciela's sense of self is returning, Beatriz is threatened with the loss of a sense of identity.

At times these symbols of home are apparently superficial. When the characters talk of, for example, the dreamt-of great madness of weeks of "empanadas y vino", they evoke, in effect, a sensual memory through which they seek to find a link with their own history. Chela looks forward to satisfying her husband's stomach with Chilean delicacies, yet on their return these lose the strength they held as remembrances, for the wine and empanadas do not compensate for the disillusion experienced as the mythical image of the country is exploded. The protagonist in José, on return, is tempted by the new delicate fare the family now eats as befitting their higher position

in society, but he had fed his image of the family on the earthiness now to be found only in the grandfather. And in Regreso sin causa, the old father, Don Octavio, excluded for so many years from living a worthwhile life, begins to sense things again when he is in possession of the air tickets, regaining the experiences of the senses with the illusion of return.

The revelation on return of the emptiness of these symbols is shown to be one of the principle causes of "desexilio". As the characters rediscover that the country cannot solely be defined in terms of clichés, this becomes the final proof that history and the essence of the country had not been moved abroad to be brought back with the end of exile. Both parts of the country have evolved, the future cannot be built on the foundations of the regression to the mythical version of the democratic past.

Cinema-Utopia introduces to better effect than any of the other plays the question of the impact of exile on the younger generation. The protagonists of the serial are young people, probably in their mid to late twenties, who went into exile in their teens. They are alienated from the experience that brought them to Europe, distanced from the ideological principles of the period and, thus, from the country painted by the older generation. This is a problem of generations, of the inability of the younger generation to assimilate completely their situation and identity as exiles. Like the older generation they feel betrayed, but betrayed by their own, by those who adhere to the belief in an absurdly obscure and, for them, irrelevant past, identified by what José Donoso has described as the "cifras de un código emocionalmente inerte para ellos".²² Their assimilation into the new country is shown to be into a subculture: marginal, sometimes criminal, and ultimately destructive. Unlike Rody

in Regreso sin causa, supported by his family in a country (Sweden) that is renowned for its advanced welfare state and its welcome of Latin American exiles, they do not have any family structure to fall back on, and feel rejected by the receiving culture (France). So whereas Rody is a drop-out, he is provided the option of returning to Chile, tempted back under the pretext of his family's desire for him to remain Chilean, which is ultimately their own inability to live away from their homeland. The characters of the serial in Cinema Utoppia have no such option, no such pretext. Their access to the receiving culture has been into a subworld; they can aspire to no more, nor can they realistically aspire to renewed access to their expelling country. Notably, they have very little contact with the political groups of exile and view their activities with more than a touch of cynicism.

Finally, Cinema-Utoppia offers the greatest metaphor for the "desencuentro" of the two parts of the country. The audience goes to the cinema to escape and fantasise, to be transported to another exciting, romantic and satisfying life. Instead they are transported to a harsh futuristic reality. The clash of past and present, of reality and fantasy is doubly important, for it is the juxtaposition of a past age of innocence - the audience belongs to a bygone age - with a contemporary age of cruelty and destruction. The function of cinema-going is reversed, for the utopian image, albeit tainted, is to be found in the stalls and, ultimately, in its purest expression, in the ghosts that populate the usher's fantasy world.

Cinema-Utoppia provides a vision of two parts of the country that are so alienated there is virtually no possibility of welding them together. Even when the audience become voyeurs the characters are looking through a window, and thus the illusion of cinema still

exists. Above all, the actors and the audience belong to ages, two periods of which the respective protagonists have different experiences and different fantasies to fill their lives. Sebastián, at the beginning of the serial was, for the cinema audience, a fantasy. As the hero of the serial he should have had a bright future, with problems along the way but the inevitability of long life, success, love. But they are distanced from him as the hero when his imperfections, the effects of exile and the disintegration of his world become clear. The final scene may be one of the nearness of the encounter of the two worlds, but it is one of the impossibility of this encounter and one of destruction as Sebastián's death is witnessed as yet another spectacle that hardly affects their lives. Cinema-Utoppia can be interpreted as a metaphor for the inability to study in depth the circumstances of exile imposed as a consequence of dictatorship. The story of the protagonists in Paris is told, but not understood; it is related as another, slightly disturbing aspect of life and is not internalised by the spectators who, after all, have no means of understanding the problem, just as the experience of exile cannot be fully understood by those who have not left the country.

Cinema-Utoppia is unlike the other plays that deal with exile. These are testimonies, they deal with the survivors in a political confrontation and they hope to fulfil the purpose of replacing with images of the real experience the misconceptions about exile caused by the suppression of the truth. In one way or another the plays dealing with political exile, Primavera con una esquina rota, Regreso sin causa, ¿Cuántos años tiene un día?, search for ways of exploring experiences of exile and breaking down the myths created in the vacuum of information. They seek to provide testimony untainted by

political interest peppered with the inevitable accusations of betrayal, collaboration, adaptation. The theatre of exile is a theatre of the expression of the defeated, of those who have suffered prolonged ostracism. The authors ultimately hope to recuperate the strength and vitality of expression they feel existed before, and finally they hope to end the silence between the two parts of the country.

Notes to Chapter Five

1. "Como medida de unidad: Gobierno revisará la situación de exiliados", El Mercurio Internacional, 21-27 Oct. 1982.
2. El Mercurio Internacional, 13-19 Jan. 1983.
3. "Pinochet opens doors for some exiles", Latin American Regional Report, 19 Nov. 1982, p.4.
4. Carlos Cerda in interview, "Carlos Cerda, narrador: Chile y el exilio: dos mitades de silencio", Apsi, 3-9 April 1984, pp.34-35.
5. Enrique Lihn, letter addressed to the Primer Encuentro de Poesía Chilena en Rotterdam 1983 in, LAR: Revista de Literatura, 2-3 (1984), p.6.
6. See "El retorno de los exiliados: un cruel juego propagandístico de Pinochet", Chile-América, 84-85 (1983), pp. 84-85.
7. Jacqueline Baldran, "Entretien avec Oscar Castro (Grupo Aleph)", Caravelle, 40 (1983), p.171.
8. All references will be to the manuscript of José, 1980.
9. See Samar Attar, The Intruder in Modern Drama (Frankfurt am Main-Bern-Cirencester U.K.: Peter D. Laing, 1981), p.20.
10. Samar Attar, p. 18.
11. Pedro Bravo Elizondo, "Reflexiones de Egon Wolff en torno al estreno de José", Latin American Theatre Review, 14,2 (1981), p.68.
12. Mario Benedetti, Primavera con una esquina rota (México: Nueva Imagen, 1982), p.104.
13. ¿Cuántos años tiene un día?, in Teatro Chileno de la crisis institucional, pp.139-195.
14. References to Primavera con una esquina rota will be to the edition of the novel quoted above. This is because the complete manuscript of the work was not available, but the study here refers to the play, since it deals only with those scenes from the novel that were translated to the stage.
15. This is taken from the programme of the production.
16. The effect of the double deceit of an adult actress playing a child in whose mouth the evils of dictatorship, imprisonment and exile were expressed, was a major success of this production.
17. This is all the more significant, for, while there were fears of massive electoral fraud in both cases, the Uruguayans still had a No vote and the Yes vote in Chile was seen as a

major propaganda coup for Pinochet.

18. All references will be to the manuscript of the play, dated 1984.
19. Myre Silva Labarca, "Mujeres Chilenas exiliadas: procesos de transformación ideológica y de comportamiento", Chile-America, 74-75 (1981), pp.46-47.
20. "Mujeres Chilenas exiliadas...", p.45.
21. Liliana Muñoz, "Exile as bereavement: Socio-psychological manifestations of Chilean exiles in Great Britain", British Journal of Medical Psychology, 53 (1980), p.231.
22. José Donoso, El jardín de al lado (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1981), p.52.

CHAPTER SIX

RUPTURE AND CONTINUITY. MEMORY AND FORGETTING

1. The Question of Space

In this final chapter I want to look at the questions of the creative space and of rupture and continuity and the themes that have been most important during the period since 1973. I will do this by first looking at the theme of memory and forgetting, using the play Toda una vida (1979) by Marco Antonio de la Parra. Then, as a means of studying some aspects of continuity in society I will examine the way in which the bourgeoisie is portrayed in Egon Wolff's La balsa de la Medusa (1984), and in the final section I will return to the question of the search for the dramatic conflict and the prolonged state of impasse that has been portrayed in theatre.

It is, perhaps, paradoxical that theatre, with its long commitment to portraying Chilean reality, is allowed such freedom of expression, and has used it in such a way as to express overt dissent with regard to the regime's policies. Chapter One described the way in which the immediate political objective of the regime was to destroy all political organisations and cultural and artistic expression that had been connected with the Popular Unity period. The space for freedom of expression was severely reduced. The relative freedom from repression of the theatre has been explained in terms of the perception of its impact on society, which is deemed to be minimal and this leniency is propped up by the awareness that the middle sectors that make up the audience are politically important. Theatre, it is recognised, can be dangerous and can have a wide

impact on society, especially when theatre and outside events somehow become entangled, but there are effective mechanisms to deal with the few cases when this happens.

This may explain the actual freedom of expression but it does not explain why theatre has been so dynamic. The answer lies in the nature of the impact of the reduction of the space for community activity and the perceived retreat of individuals into isolated shells. While political gatherings have not been allowed until recently, and even now are subject to strict rules and monitoring, it is in the nature of the Pinochet regime that sectors that do not pose any serious threat are generally left alone. This is vitally important, for it means that while the collective political sphere disintegrates, the individual may be left in peace, and the inner self of thoughts, ideas, creation, remains private.

The special importance of theatre lies in the union of the expression of the private thought with the freedom to express this to a relatively small audience. This is why theatre has been so vital in the last years. I do not mean this as a defence for the Pinochet regime, but as another way of explaining how the dramatists have used the space of inner life that is his/her creative space to its best advantage in an otherwise severely restrictive atmosphere. This is all the more important because the value of this inner life has in itself been expressed as a constant sub-theme throughout the period, in the game-playing, the dreaming and fantasising, in, for example, Efraim's almost heroic gesture as he leaves the restaurant. It is an expression of the power of the individual within the collective, and that it is not translated to the collective is a measure of the wider social impasse. This inner self is often best expressed in the realms of memory and forgetting, where the past is recalled as a better

age and as an alternative for the present and the future, as in Toda una vida.

2. Memory and Forgetting

Sí, si sé,... pero igual son leseras... si el doctor me dijo... yo le pregunté ¿oiga qué tiene don Eustaquio? y me dijo... así... clarito "tiene la memoria destrozada por una atrofia de la corteza cerebral y vive clavado, anclado en sus mejores recuerdos, como encerrado para siempre en un álbum de fotografías que el viento hubiera deshojado de un sólo manotazo... "¡qué lindo que habla!... ¡qué amor sus ojitos de cielo. ¹

This quotation holds the essence of the picture of contemporary Chile painted in Marco Antonio de la Parra's Toda una vida (1979). The speaker (Marilin) is a nurse in a sanatorium where the subject of her concern, an old man named Don Eustaquio, is an inmate. In this speech we encounter the essential frivolity of the nurse, suggested by her susceptibility to the attractive appearance and pretty words of the doctor, which prompts her clear memory of the description of Don Eustaquio's state. In the juxtaposition and play between the nurse's frivolity and the continual remembering of Don Eustaquio, we find the parallel juxtaposition and play between the essential characteristics of two starkly contrasting periods of Chilean history, the democratic years of the thirties and the election of the Popular Front government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda and the authoritarian years of the seventies. It is a framework within which the perceptions of rupture and stagnation are studied.

Toda una vida takes place in a sanatorium at the change of shift between Marilyn and another nurse, Leontina. The inmates are primarily geriatrics whom it is easy to control with drugs and tranquilisers. Not so Don Eustaquio, for he lives continually re-enacting his favourite memories, which refer to the fall of the dictator General Carlos Ibáñez in 1931, the short-lived Socialist Republic of 1932 led by Marmaduke Grove and the election in 1938 of the Popular Front government of Pedro Aguirre Cerda. Don Eustaquio, we are informed, is perfectly healthy apart from the tricks his memory plays on him. He is an affectionate old man (Marilyn finds him "choro", "buena onda"), left in the asylum by his family because he represents a danger: "Se asustan ... no ve que se les arranca y después se larga a hablar esto del presidente y lo toman por qué sé yo" (p.24). His favourite position is on top of a ladder where he is discovered at the beginning of the play shouting, "¡Cayó, cayó!... ¡cayó el general Ibáñez! ¡abajo el general!" (p.1). At a certain point in his memory he inevitably becomes stuck, "clavado, mirando al vacío", as in a trance, only to begin again with the same story later.

At first these "transmissions", as Marilyn calls his shouting, annoy the nurse intensely, for they wake up the other patients, meaning more work for her and less time gossiping about her latest acquisitions, the doctors, her love life. Initially it would seem that Leontina is more patient and understanding; she, apparently, is older, she has worked as a nurse for twenty years, she is a spinster with a matronly attitude towards the patients in her care and has no interest in discussing sex. Marilyn, on the other hand, calls herself "joven de alma y cuerpo", she is coquettish, determined to remain attractive, and detests the testimony the patients provide of the

ugliness of growing old.

The two nurses are in constant conflict. Leontina finds Marilyn an enigma, immersed as she is in the Chile of the late seventies, in love with consumer goods, with Americanised fast food, and with imported soap operas. This is a world to which Leontina has no access, which is alien to her, and even the language Marilyn uses, often based on Americanisms, is incomprehensible; but above all this world is synonymous with falling standards, for Marilyn shares it with men who are not her husband (the husband, Nelson, travels a lot) and she seems obsessed by material acquisition and with sex. Apparently, Marilyn is a woman of the world in tune with the times. She torments Leontina with visions of how the clinic is to be modernised, how the old, time-served but unattractive nurses are to be replaced by young attractive women, Dallas-clones. But this cruelty is countered and surpassed by Leontina, for she accuses Marilyn of sharing Don Eustaquio's problem, of being "pegada en la edad". In reality Marilyn is forty, not twenty-eight as she had claimed, Nelson has abandoned her, and in the new order of things she will suffer the same fate as Leontina. As the façade crumbles, Don Eustaquio begins to represent an alternative companion for Marilyn, his world a new fantasy for her to take refuge in. Finally, she enters his world, painting the clinic with Don Eustaquio's beloved seagulls that remind him of Valparaíso. And it is he who must be convinced that the seagulls are real, that Marilyn has not gone mad, and it is only when he hears along with her the sound of singing that he joins her at the top of the ladder.

Toda una vida develops around the absorption of Marilyn into Don Eustaquio's world of perpetual remembering. For her it is the replacement of one fantasy world - that of her youth, her continuing

sexual attractiveness, her place in the new society - for another that implies an escape from the trap of her former world into one of joy, tenderness and belief in the promise of democracy. It is important that for Marilyn this is a fantasy, while for Don Eustaquio it is a memory, a dream and an evocation of a possible alternative. Locked in this one prolonged memory, Don Eustaquio is awaiting its return in reality, and when Marilyn enters his world, Toda una vida begins to suggest the possibility of its realisation. But how does his "dangerous" memory work?

The essential point is that it is akin to a dream that can be re-enacted until a certain point and then is lost and cannot be remembered, no matter how much of an effort the dreamer makes to continue, even to invent a continuation. We do not learn at which point the dream becomes frozen until a certain level of communication and trust has been built between Marilyn and Don Eustaquio. His is an exclusive memory that spans the decade of the thirties, at times recalling the fall of Ibáñez, at other times the Socialist Republic, then the great earthquake of Chillán in 1939, the presidency and death of Pedro Aguirre Cerda. "Oiga mi reina", he asks Marilyn, "¿por qué será que yo siempre sueño el mismo sueño?" (p.23). What these memories have in common is an intrinsic sense of optimism in the promise of socialist government as represented in the advances of the thirties. Each time he becomes stuck, it is a token of how his dream, the dream of his generation became stuck, suffered the same atrophy as his memory, relegated to the photograph album that "el viento hubiera deshojado de un solo manotazo" (p.11).

Marilyn knows nothing of Pedro Aguirre Cerda, of Marmaduke Grove, of Ibáñez. When Don Eustaquio shouts that the General has fallen, she warns that his big mouth could land him in prison, but

she feels attracted by his descriptions of people rejoicing, of the processions, of the daring with which he participated in opposition to unpopular measures. Like Leontina she treats him like a child, tries to cajole him into sleeping and resting, but he constantly dupes them. When she enters his game as a way of indulging him he accuses her of being mad - how can a bed be a "lancha" (the small boats that are used in the port of Valparaíso)? She tries to follow his line of thought by recalling the political slogans that have become part of the linguistic heritage of the country, but when she answers his question, "¿No sabe quién mandó el buque?", with "Don Marmaduke", he tells her, "¡No me haga enredos con la historia mi reina, por favor!" (pp.20-21). At this level, by trying to intervene with the popular refrain, she fails because she has not assumed the internal logic of the memory, ordered as it is around real happenings of which she knows nothing. But she is on the verge of sharing Don Eustaquio's vision of the world. No longer does she want him to share the pleasures the seventies can provide; now she wants to learn about the old, dead things that had depressed her previously. The ship was not Don Marmaduke's, as the old man explains, but was one sent by the Mexicans to celebrate democratic victory, it brought gifts, acrobats, Mexican singers and, above all, angels:

EUSTAQUIO: ¡Sí, pero, sobre todo traía ángeles!

MARILIN: ¡No esté leseando! (Muy impactada).

EUSTAQUIO: Y bajaban por los cerros de Valparaíso, por los funiculares ... por las escaleras ... todos tomados de la mano y cantando ... Y yo estaba en medio de todo ... Y los ángeles gritaban ... ¡Viva don Pedro, abajo el

demonio! Y pintaban las murallas. ¡Gobernar es educar; Pan, Techo y Abrigo! Y después organizaban un desfile por las calles de Santiago. ¡Por Carrascal, por Mapocho, por Quinta Normal, por Dieciocho!

MARILIN: ¿Y también por aquí, frente al hospital?

EUSTAQUIO: Sí. ¡Por todas partes! Y la gente que los seguía, cientos de miles de personas, les gritaban: "Angel, amigo, el pueblo está contigo". Y los ángeles les contestaban: "El que no salta es el demonio". Y de repente aparecía en el balcón don Pedro. Y yo como un loco me sacaba el jockey y gritaba: "Viva don Pedro, abajo el demonio pelado". Y de repente me quedaba solo.

MARILIN: ¿O sea, que la gallá se iba?

EUSTAQUIO: La multitud desaparecía. Y quedaba sólo un auto grande y coludo con un demonio gordo y calvo que lo manejaba y se me venía, se me venía...

MARILIN: ¿A atropellarlo a usted...?

EUSTAQUIO: Sí... yo estaba como trancado en la tierra y transpiraba y transpiraba ... Y de repente se me aparece un angelito vestido de obrero y me dice: "No se asuste compadre; que el miedo es la escopeta del demonio. Mientras usted no se asuste, estaremos siempre juntos. Nosotros bajaremos de la historia, cada vez que sea necesario... Bajaremos como un sueño de su

memoria...

MARILIN: ¿De la memoria suya? (pp.21-22)

If we examine the dream more closely, it becomes clear that it is Don Eustaquio himself who muddles history. The boat referred to was sent for the victory of Popular Unity in 1970, not for that of the Popular Front; the slogans evoke those of the Popular Unity period; "demonio" obviously implies "momio", the name given to the right wingers; and the angels are both the angels of salvation, evoking the name of Salvador Allende, and symbols of popular rule. The imagery of Allende's evocation of the return of democracy, of the "grandes Alamedas" (hence the switch from Valparaíso to the streets of Santiago), is to the fore again, and the violent end to the processions, with the appearance of the "demonio", unequivocally sets the date for the violent end to Don Eustaquio's distant dream of democracy. By superimposing the imagery of Popular Unity upon the memory of the Popular Front, De la Parra creates an impression of former progress and continuity in history, which adds greater emphasis to the impression of later rupture and stagnation that is created through the dream "stuck" in the old man's memory.

Don Eustaquio is locked in a cyclical memory that will eternally be renewed and frozen. Not so Marilyn. For her the dream becomes a beautiful fantasy of another world, a free, hopeful world where people like herself will not be kicked aside for being too old or too ugly. She enters Don Eustaquio's world as a rejection of the cold restrictive, hopeless environment to which she belongs. For her, then, the image is not cyclical, it is a progression towards the freedom she paints in the last scene when she covers the walls with seagulls, and when she begins to see the angels. Yet Don Eustaquio

knows the angels cannot have arrived, he worries about Marilyn's sudden madness and does not recognise his dream in Marilyn's words, for coming from someone else they represent only a sad reminder of failed democracy. He knows that the angels can thrive only in an atmosphere of freedom: "para que bajen los ángeles, la gente tiene que cantar"; but Marilyn's new hope allows him to hear the song of joy being sung. "¡Están cantando ...entonces es cierto ... bajaron de la historia ... después de tanto ... tanto tiempo esperándoles ... Y ahí están todos ... Marmaduque ... Don Pedro ... y tanto resucitado glorioso! ¡Qué lindo día de septiembre, mi reina! ¡Como para inventarlo de nuevo! ¡Como para inventarlo de nuevo!" (p.33).

Once he is back on his steps Don Eustaquio enters his memory once again. Perhaps he re-enters the memory's essential circular quality. Perhaps Marilyn has assumed his memory, and will also remain "clavada" in the moment before the coming of fear. And perhaps she has gone mad as the only way of escaping the reality of present day Chile with its false values and its perverted codes of behaviour. But the message of the play is clear: the singing is the end of fear, the voice of the angels will ward off the demons. Only the loss of fear will open the way for a return to democracy.

The strength of Toda una vida lies in the play off between fantasy and memory. To all intents and purposes Marilyn, before her "conversion", lives in a fantasy world, for she longs to belong completely to the new world, she lives locked in a distorted mirror image of herself which reflects the film-star appearance and fatal sexual attraction her name suggests should be hers (her mother named her Marilyn for this very reason, as if as a means of cheating fate). Her boldness hides her deep insecurity, it camouflages the torment of the awareness that her future is basically the same as

Leontina's, it hides the absolute emptiness of her life. Don Eustaquio, on the other hand, is not part of the new order, he holds no affection for material wealth, his is a world of sensitivity and concern for the state of democracy, it is a world that was halted when history stopped and his interest for what was happening, for example in the Congress, became irrelevant.

Despite his age, his weakness, his being locked in the past, it is Don Eustaquio's personality and his sensitivity to the state of his country that begin to invade the stage and take over, so much so that Marilyn's music, the music of "el chileno medio" (p.12), seems intrusive, extraneous, crass. Marilyn escapes from her world that, by the end of the play, is revealed as ugly and vacuous, into a beautiful fantasy, but this fantasy is really a vision of an alternative reality, one that did exist but that somehow became "clavada en la historia", it is a vision of a day that should be invented again, the 4th of September, election day.

Don Eustaquio is a personification of the perceived wasting away of Chilean society, of its stunted development. This idea is also embodied in characters such as Don Octavio in Regreso sin causa and Ismael in El último tren, both of whom belong to a democratic past and who have been silenced and ostracised. The symbolic similarities go further than this creation of a stereotype of democracy, for the symbol of the train is present in all three of these plays. This is coherent on one level as a metaphor for the march of history, and on another it is a reminder of a strong tradition of political organisation, one that, through the railway, is explicitly linked to the central valley and the south of the country. In Toda una vida the train is used in a joking fashion as part of the imaginary journey of Don Eustaquio when Marilyn, trying to enter his fantasy, tells the

old man that he will travel on the ultra-modern "tren japonés", but he reacts violently to this foreign intrusion into the respected world of the Chilean railway and demands to travel on a "tren democrático". Likewise, Don Octavio of Regreso sin causa in his senility in Sweden travels Chile "en un tren imaginario". In these two instances the train is a peripheral symbol, part of the old men's memories of a past Chile, it speaks of their present immobility, as a result of which the only movement they can make is through their imagination. To this extent the ladder and the bed in Toda una vida are indications of Don Eustaquio's limited scope for physical movement in contrast to the journeys he embarks on in his imagination at all hours of the day.

But in El último tren the train is the central symbol of rupture, of change, marginality and submission to a new and cruel reality. Ismael's whole life has revolved around the culture attached to railway society, he remembers the rivalry between different branches in the cultural activities they organised. This was a time of a strong family and a well ordered hierarchy within it. As long as Ismael can carry on the tradition established by his forefathers he remains the embodiment of family tradition. But from the beginning of the dramatic action small incidents show that the atmosphere has changed and the cosy structure of before has disappeared. The most significant of these is that Ismael is bitten for the first time in his life. It is an incident that he brushes aside when it happens but that he will remember when he finally takes the last train away from reality: "¿Sabes por qué muerden los perros, Rafael?... ¡Por el miedo! Los perros huelen el miedo y por eso muerden... Así es que no hay que tener miedo, porque ahí es cuando los perros muerden" (p.138). Yet in his "madness" he refers to the time when his daughter

Violeta was bitten, not himself, for he has taken refuge in a lost past where his role and that of the railway were secure. And he has subconsciously sought a flicker of hope in the awareness that children forget and adapt with greater facility than adults. But for Ismael the future has been well and truly killed and he opts for a frozen past into which is built a false illusion of continuity.

The overwhelming preoccupation of Toda un vida and El último tren is the sense of rupture and of an existence severed from the roots that define the characters' identity. The past is saved in memories, and these form the foundations for the building of an image of the future. These memories refer primarily to a period before a defeat, in the period of great projects for society. The characters in almost all the plays studied throughout this thesis are the victims of the failure of this project. There has been little theatre that looks at the role and the situation of the "victors", that is, those whose life has not undergone a massive change, who have still a deep sense of continuity and whose role in society is safeguarded. Egon Wolff's La balsa de la Medusa is the only play to study the victor instead of the underdog, and it reveals this sector of society as continuing in the same comfortable, if psychologically stifling role. It is another play that studies a state of impasse, but by virtue of their position in society the protagonists may have an exit.

3. La balsa de la Medusa Out of the Impasse?

Egon Wolff's La balsa de la Medusa (1984)² along with Los invasores (1964) and Flores de papel (1971), forms a trilogy about the bourgeoisie. Once again Wolff enters the realms of nightmarish

reality in which the subconscious fears, uncertainties and guilt of the bourgeoisie are explored in a play that oscillates between the surreal and the real.

La balsa de la Medusa takes place in three acts. In the first, a group arrives amid much commotion at the palatial home of their host, Leonardo, to which they have been invited from another party. On arrival they are greeted by the butler, Conrado, who announces that, lamentably, the host has been called away but that they may use the house, apart from certain areas whose safety cannot be guaranteed. The guests are initially only mildly annoyed by the absence of the host, but gradually a feeling of unease sets in. One of the women wonders why they had to be taken through the most squalid parts of the city to arrive; there are sounds of explosions and bombs outside; Conrado explains that "la región está sometida a una gran agitación últimamente. En los bosques se mueve gente" (p.108), they find clothes they recognise as belonging to friends and relatives that seem to have been left there as if the owners had fled in a hurry. And it is unclear if any of them really knows their host. At the end of the first act Conrado announces that, unfortunately, the only bridge connecting them to the city has been blown up and that, therefore, they must wait until help arrives.

The second act takes place at dawn on the fourth day. There is an atmosphere of disorder "propio de gente que ha debido improvisar sus lugares de sueño" (p.129), and although there has been a certain accommodation to the circumstances, there is a growing sense of unease and imprisonment. One of the group, Javier, has been bitten by the guard dogs as he wandered, in an attempt to escape into prohibited territory; tensions are apparent among the group, especially in relation to the Jew, Goldberg, who awakens the deepest

prejudices of some of the number. The position seems hopeless. But these are rich people who have made their fortunes through business and enterprise, the men believe themselves to be "hombres de acción" (p.166) and the industrialist (Serrano-Soler) proposes that they bribe their way out, a solution that is scorned by the others, who realise that if indeed they are being trapped then money is not the escape. Neither is the use of an ancient pistol that another character has found. This act ends as one of the women tries to drown herself in the swimming pool and Javier's drug addiction is discovered.

The third act takes place on the tenth day and the set is even more disordered: "El ámbito muestra ahora un desorden propio de aquellos lugares donde está obligado a convivir un conglomerado humano, que realiza ahí su humanidad menesterosa, frágil, precaria" (p.171). Again there is a sense in which they have adapted to the circumstances, and communication has been established between people who, otherwise, would find little in common. But the threats from outside seem to be nearer, the dead can be seen from the terraces, and a note saying "Sálvense mientras puedan" is discovered. Another plan is devised by the "men of action", who decide to use the ancient pistols to shoot their way out, but this is an unadulterated failure and they return blaming the businessman, García, for surrendering the weapons to a group of assailants. The fear and isolation are deepened by the news that "they" have taken the city. As the captives become utterly desperate, finally laying the blame on the Jew, they are overcome by the sensation of floating, as if the house were drifting away from the land. Emilia begins to pray and, in their desperation, the others join in. At that point Leonardo appears. He is jovial and welcoming, claiming that he has never left the house and that their

experience has been an "alucinación colectiva" (p.207). Despite vague doubts that the experience was real, the guests flee, leaving articles of clothing behind as the next group of guests arrives.

La balsa de la Medusa is introduced by a reference to the event and the painting in which the play is inspired: "A fines del siglo XVIII, un grupo de individuos fueron encontrados solitarios y abandonados navegando en una balsa. Eran los naufragos del bergantín hundido hacía algún tiempo, llamado "Medusa". El pintor romántico francés, Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) pintó un cuadro basado en ese hecho, que se conserva hasta hoy en el museo del Louvre en París" (p.81). What is it in this painting that caught the interest of Wolff? And why should the same picture be cited as the source of inspiration for Luis Buñuel's film, The Exterminating Angel, with which La balsa de la Medusa shares profound similarities?³ Here I do not want to study the points of contact between these two works, or indeed with Sartre's No Exit, only to suggest that "The Raft of Medusa" evoked similar possibilities in both artists for the study of the bourgeoisie stripped of all the social graces and symbols that make up the edifice of their powerful and respected place in society. Michel Estève says that the connection between the elegant guests and the castaways "prisoners of the sea, tormented by hunger and thirst", is that, as their condition deteriorates in their captivity, during which they are deprived of even the most basic needs, they become "recognisable companions in distress".⁴ Wolff takes the image one step further, however, for his guests are transformed into real shipwreck victims when they feel the house float away. They too have been abandoned and have little hope of survival, but they too are discovered and rescued.

There are two contrasting elements to this examination of the

bourgeoisie. One is the timeless, paralysed psyche of the individual born into or entering this world: "En el fondo la burguesía es parálisis. Inmovilizada por la misma repetición majadera e incesante de sus magras justificaciones. La parálisis de lo inevitable y su culpa".⁵ This is evoked through dreams, nightmares, the awful, relentless awareness of an imminent day of reckoning. In La balsa de la Medusa the protagonists are absolutely isolated from the world outside, and they experience a final departure from reality as they feel the house float away. The other level is that of the real role of the bourgeoisie in society, a role from which the captives are detached in the play. This role is not paralysed: the characters are rich and prospering, and though they may be impressed by the sumptuous display of wealth in Leonardo's mansion, Luisa reminds them that "todos somos ricos aquí" (p.187), and they see themselves as "hombres de acción", thereby trying to transpose the strength of their position in the outside to their immediate situation by using the resources that had helped to create their power in society. I will return to this and its interpretation in present circumstances later. Firstly, I want to study the nature of the fears portrayed.

The first two acts begin with the intrusion of three beggars into the mansion and with an appearance by Leonardo. In the first act three beggars, a man (El), a woman (Ella) and El Militar, announce the arrival of the guests, mocking and tormenting Conrado, the diligent butler, caterer to the needs of the wealthy and emulator of their moral codes and habits. At the beginning of the second act they return to look over the state of the captives, wondering if they really know what is in store for them. El Militar is aloof and educated, articulate in his detest of the rich and their hedonistic games; he holds in the utmost contempt their idolatry of material

wealth; and he is determined that they will meet a just end. He is the personification of the real, organised threat of vengeance and is reminiscent of China in Los invasores or El Merluza in Flores de papel. At the end of the third act the beggars appear again announcing the new arrivals, guessing about how they will cope, and defying Conrado.

Leonardo is always seen before or after the intrusion of the beggars. In the first act, Leonardo speaks as if forced by fate to continue to submit the bourgeoisie to this ritual torture, but he fails to grasp the full sense of what he is doing: "Obedezco los designios, pero se me escapa el sentido de todo esto, Conrado ... No soy más que un peón en el proyecto de lo desconocido" (pp. 85-86). In the second act he wanders around the sleeping bodies, watching, wondering at their seeming tranquility, and he kisses Luisa, despairing at his distance from human contact, at his imprisonment in the role of the host. He tells Conrado, "¡Dales duro, Conrado! ¡Inventa tus torturas! Yo estaré en mi pieza, reprochándotelo ... y sin embargo ... gozando intensamente ..." (p.132), and his anguish at the inevitable predictability of their actions leads him to reveal his greatest illusion: "¡Quisiera ver alguna vez, que alguno de ellos rompiera su predestinación y se pusiera a hacer cosas heroicas ... Ser valiente por ejemplo, arrojado... generoso! Salirse de su piel, y hacer cosas imprevistas ... lo redimiría ante mis ojos ... y los de Dios" (p.133). When he presents himself to his guests at the end of the third act, he is the man of the world: "Es ahora un majestuoso y espléndido hombre de mundo. La representación de la mundanidad más esplendorosa" (p.207). On being left by the fleeing guests the cycle continues for him.

Héctor Noguera, who directed La balsa de la Medusa, sees the

beggars and Leonardo as the constants of wealth and poverty in the world: "Son los dos extremos, testigos de la historia. Los que siempre están aguardando".⁶ The barking of the guard dogs always accompanies the appearance of the host and the beggars; on one hand this represents the persistent awareness of the threat of invasion, but the dogs are also the guardians to the entrance to hell in which the guests will be trapped. The role of the beggars is easy to interpret: they are the personification of the fears of the bourgeoisie. The fact that they are not seen by the protagonists suggests that they represent the most subconscious level of this fear. While the characters do not see or guess at the existence of the beggars, they are all too aware of the nearness of the guerrilleros. These may not exist either, but their presence is acknowledged by the guests, for they are the projection of the most conscious fear, that of organised vengeance through revolution.

Leonardo is less easy to decipher than the beggars and the terrorists. It is through Leonardo that the characters relate to each other, but this communication has an air of ritual and the absurd. The noise and fuss of their arrival is a ritual enacted at the arrival at any party, and while the conversation at first is more or less normal and joking, it revolves around the attempt to decipher Leonardo's character through the signs in the house and around the interpretation of the journey there through pine forests, abandoned beaches, poverty: "¿Quién se construiría su casa en un sitio tan inhóspito?" (p.97). But why should they have to decipher the personality of someone they already know? It is up to the mundane and pragmatic Emilia to point out that no one knew him before he arrived at the party. By the end of the first act he has faded as a known figure, they are sure they never knew him, and they begin to feel

like prisoners in his house. The characters can only intuit that they are being deliberately trapped, a feeling articulated by the more intelligent of them: "Tengo la sospecha que alguien nos está poniendo a una especie de prueba, y que no nos estamos pasando el examen" (p.185). These are the words of the homosexual designer Mario who, along with Lucía and Goldberg, responds to the ludic promise of their entrapment, expressed by Lucía: "Siempre me ha fascinado expediciones por mansiones abandonadas... ¿Quizás qué monstruos nos asalten desde viejos baúles polvorientos" (p.102). Still, none of them takes the step of blaming Leonardo for the hell they are in, and instead they search in their store of historical conventions and blame the Jew, the archetypal scapegoat. The bourgeoisie may feel threatened by invasion from the dark figures and shadows that wander around outside, from the lower classes, but they do not feel the threat from their own, from Leonardo.

So who is Leonardo, what does he represent? Leonardo, it must be recognised, is one of them, and he too finds the beggars frightful. In the first act, when he enters as they leave, he tells Conrado that railings must be put up to keep them at bay so as to preserve the peace of his home, but Conrado explains that they will always find a way to slip by him, for they are the perpetual, inventive, persistent torment. When Leonardo appears to his guests in the final scene he is familiar, they address him as "tú", they think he has played a sick practical joke, he is attractive to the women. Egon Wolff wonders about Leonardo's identity in the following terms: "¿Leonardo, quién es? ... ¿La fatalidad de la historia? ... ¿el incesante ir y venir, llegar e irse, de la culpa? El que está destinado a atraer a los hombres al placer de vivir. El que presencia lo incesante".⁷

Leonardo is, in fact, the author's alter ego, for like the

author he devises ways of testing the characters, searches for situations that will "force circumstances", that will extract unexpected and saving actions from the people lost in the hell he has created for them. In the first act Leonardo seems tired by the predictability of his guests and he longs for them to break out of the mould in which they are set. As they leave it is an open question whether they have learned from their experience, but the implication is that inevitably they will exit directly into a world of bourgeois ritual, as Leonardo predicts: "Vendrán forzando los motores de sus coches, ansiosos, como éstos, por la parcela de placer ... Cargados, como éstos, con sus extravíos y sus debilidades, vendrán a que les demos techo y los deleitemos ... pero partirán tan desorientados, tan vulnerables, como llegaron" (p.212). Hope can only be insinuated, in the prayer they utter in desperation towards the end, for example, but is it merely another illusion: "Estos al menos rezaron. ¿Los oíste? Recurrieron a esa solución; otros, hasta se olvidan de eso ... Me dio cierta esperanza, ¿sabes? Algunos lo hicieron muy sinceramente ... ¿Seré ingenuo?" (p.212).

Leonardo declares that despite putting his characters through torment he does, in fact, love them, and it is this love that compels him to continue. This is the nature of the trap in which he finds himself: "Lo peor es que los amo, Conrado ... No sabría qué hacer sin ellos ... pero sufro de no poder evitar sus sufrimientos" (p.212). Like the author, he belongs to them, he understands them, he puts the characters in situations in which the conflict and development will be carried by their inner conflicts and he hopes for an end to the paralysis: "¿Amo yo como autor a esos seres? Sí, creo que sí ... Si no, no podría haber escrito una historia en torno a la condenación irredemiable, porque, ¿para qué hacerlo?".⁸

La balsa de la Medusa does not differ greatly in its aims from Wolff's earliest writing, in which he sought to bring out "el rumor interior" that would be the impetus for the characters to exit from the conflictive and seemingly inescapable trap they were in: "Debe habitar en ellos un germen de búsqueda y anhelo que cunda a pesar del infortunio aparente. Esa fuerza de voluntad no debe partir, sin embargo de un reconocimiento intuitivo y ciego de sus posibilidades de vida, sino que debe provenir de una concepción casi racional de vida, de que se es hijo de los actos que se cometen. Quiero personajes que estén a la altura del conflicto".⁹ By La balsa de la Medusa, the characters are not equal to the conflict. By 1984 Leonardo would seem to be a projection of Wolff's wearied disillusion at the possibility of the characters ever making the step by which they would exit from the paralysis of the human condition. The answer is in the words of one of the characters, Mario, who intuits the sense of the trap: "Lo único que sé es que hay que esperar a que el tiempo pase y que alguien haga algo que nunca hará" (p.185). But they are locked in mediocrity, hidden behind the façade of the constant race for new erotic pleasures, for excitement, for new experiences which are not, in fact, new but a perpetual evasion of inner unease. Without Leonardo's act of pity, by which he frees them from the mansion he has set up as an externalisation of these fears, they would most certainly sink.

Why turn to Wolff at this late stage? The reason lies in the importance of concepts of rupture and continuity, in the replacement of the old by the new, and in the long-term insight into the development of the bourgeoisie at different points in history. In the notes published by the director, Héctor Noguera, he points to the fact that these plays form a trilogy:

Es interesante anotar las fechas en que fueron estrenadas las dos obras anteriores y escrita La balsa. Los invasores 1964. Flores de papel 1971. La balsa de la Medusa 1982. Tres fechas claves de la historia de Chile. Los invasores se presentan como pesadilla del industrial Meyer, una pesadilla con serios visos de realidad cuando al final de la obra vemos nuevamente la mano de China romper el cristal de la puerta para penetrar en la casa del rico Lucas Meyer cuando éste ya estaba convencido que todo había sido un sueño. Era 1964. Flores de papel. El departamento de Eva está cubierta y ella misma en su traje de novia de flores de papel de diario como signo y símbolo de una nueva belleza, de una estética del mundo cambiado, distinto. Era 1971. La balsa de la Medusa. Es el caos y la destrucción inevitable del extremo más poderoso, tal como quedara anunciado con la aparición de la mano de China. Era 1982.¹⁰

Certain years are cited as being key dates but their importance is not elaborated on, since they need no further explanation to the Chilean reader. 1964 saw the election of the Christian Democrat government, so the threat, insinuated in the presence of more extreme parties, was relieved, there was a way out for the bourgeoisie; 1971 was the second year of the Popular Unity's "pacific road to socialism", the government's most successful year, when the threat against the bourgeoisie looked as if it was nearing realisation. But what is so important about 1982 and why should it represent the "inevitable destruction of the most powerful extremes"? 1982 was nine

years into the Pinochet regime and the economic policies which had meant continuing prosperity for a large part of the middle and upper sectors, were beginning to fail, there was an economic crisis and political opposition was finding a stronger voice and greater support among some sectors who had previously supported the regime. The threat, quashed for so long, looked as if it might return.

Turning to the second point, Noguera's interpretation of history is clear: it is supposed that in the last play of the trilogy the bourgeoisie has finally sunk, that it can have no redemption. It is thus implied that the bourgeoisie, having survived the onslaught of radical policies and socialism, is finally put at greatest risk by those who are supposed to be protecting them, and who ultimately only prolong the indifference and complacency that will finally be the downfall of their class. Noguera does not address the question of why the bourgeoisie is saved and Wolff's interpretation of the role of the bourgeoisie is best explained by Margaret S. Peden, who sees a progression between La mansión de lechuzas (1966), Los invasores and Flores de papel:

In Mansión... the entrance of that outside into the world of the play is seen as a healthy thing. What is dead is within; life enters with the world. The message of Los invasores is somewhat different. Life is without. What is within may be only illusion. If one chooses illusion over truth, he is choosing his own destruction. The established world may have been invaded against choice, but the implication is that if one then chooses truth over illusion there may still be time for a satisfactory accommodation between the two worlds. The

resolution hinges upon the choice. In Flores de papel, however, the possibility of choice has been removed. One has waited too long. Along with the possibility of choice, logic and order have also disappeared. Eva does not really choose to invite "El Merluza" to stay - she is powerless to do otherwise. The deck is stacked against her. She does not will her own destruction, but neither can she prevent it. The invader, once inside, destroys what he has won and all that is left are two invaders where there had only been one.¹¹

La balsa de la Medusa is closer to Los invasores with which it shares the quality of the circular dream. There is an element of choice involved, or rather, the characters are given the opportunity to free themselves, but they do not, they cannot. The threat of the invader is no longer there, or if it exists it is well guarded against, as Leonardo tells them: "No teman, amigos ... Disparos en la noche ... Hace tiempo que asolan la región, pero sólo asustan a los niños ... La policía da buena cuenta de ellos" (p.210). That they are being threatened from outside is merely an illusion, for their real threat comes from their own complacency and from the forces that protect them in society: that is what keeps them captive in the mansion. With La balsa de la Medusa Wolff returns to the cyclical nightmare of Los invasores. All that is within the mansion is illusion and stagnation, and the major difference is the retreat of the invader. The three plays demonstrate the cyclical threat to the bourgeoisie which rears its ugly head periodically, but it shows a bourgeoisie that has been, in essence, immune to the threat until the present day.

This must inevitably be linked with reality. The message, according to Héctor Noguera, is that the bourgeoisie is doomed. For him the play is about: "el caos y la destrucción inevitable del extremo más poderoso", he links this to the date of the play, 1982, and insinuates links with effective opposition to the regime. The bourgeoisie, he says, are effectively sunk, destroyed by indifference and disregard for the poverty and suffering of others, which will inevitably open the way to revolution. But revolution is well under control in this play, which suggests the "enormous capacity (of the bourgeoisie) to protect and preserve itself".¹² For the characters do survive.

Wolff implies that the characters, and Leonardo himself, are all captive parts of an ultimately unchanging world order. Leonardo finds an unlimited number of victims, they are all rich, they are attracted by the lure of the house, by the scent of adventure, by new sensual experiences, they can afford to indulge in fantasy worlds and, alternatively, fantasy worlds are a necessary part of their escape from reality. That this turns into a nightmare is an integral part of their spiritually trapped condition. But Leonardo's world is a world in isolation. In it they created chaos, they turned his home into a "gypsy camp", others have vomited on his best rugs, destroyed his furniture in their complete abandonment of their decent façade, but inevitably they leave to re-enter the society in which they can once again hide away the absurdity and ritual of their lives, and adopt the mask of respectability and social relevance. So while the bourgeoisie may live a spiritually sterile existence, the social reality is that the bourgeoisie is not doomed, that its existence is guaranteed by its own will to survive at all costs and by the desire of their allies to see them survive.

4. Conclusions: Rupture, Continuity, Change

In the first chapter we saw that the impulse to create the University theatres was based primarily on the growing strength of a middle class and on the rejection of the old, tired and irrelevant theatre of the early years of this century. 1941 was regarded as a key year, as the beginning of modern theatre in Chile and, by some, as a definite break with the past. In some senses it was since there was a concentrated effort to shake off old negative influences. So, the theatre empresario was scorned as forsaking art for financial gain, improvised drama was abhorred as an insult to the art, the social élite was snubbed as the sole consumers of theatre. Yet still theatre remained an art for an élite, now newly defined, now middle-class, and only sporadic efforts succeeded in bringing theatre to the lower classes. The empresarios, still scorned, lived on. For the first time, however, theatre was regarded as a genuine art and literary form, it was seen as a worthy part of the intellectual community and the protagonists of the University theatres consciously mapped out a future for theatre in the country, a future that would include new dramatists, new plays, a cultivated audience, wider appeal.

By the sixties this was being challenged again, theatre was seen to be an integral part of an old society based on bourgeois models, the major impulse was again one of rupture with this past, of the creation of a "new" theatre, one that spoke of the people to the people and was written by the people. The bourgeois dramatist became somehow linked to the forces of imperialism, the middle-class audience likewise, and the latter was seen anew as a narrow élite. Collective creation was regarded as the mode of democratic

expression, and new audiences were sought among the lower and working classes. The "crisis", to use a much abused word, went on, the problems remained the same, the answers barely changed, and the pattern that emerges is one of repeated cycles of superficial breaks with the past, of the "old" being replaced by the "new". This is reflected in the themes of the plays, in the changing procession of protagonists on the stage, in the mode of creation best favoured at any given time. It was expressed in the disillusion of the students in Vodanović's Nos tomamos la universidad in which their final "Vendrá el día" is a call of despair at the power of old institutionalised forms of domination over the new idealism. It is echoed in the political propaganda of both left and right: the boundaries of change and progress would seem to be defined by notions of rejection of the most salient symbols and characteristics of the previous period.

The military coup of 1973 was another point of rupture. The essential difference is, obviously, that this was imposed by political circumstances, not by a natural artistic process of questioning methods of production, of creation, or of the role of theatre in society. One impact of this in terms of the theme and the preferred methods of creation has been to sharpen a sense of rupture with the past, while at the same time strengthening the desire to look for some sort of continuity. So, whereas the perception of a break is more acute since it was imposed by political upheaval, there is no effort to break with the past as in the forties and the sixties, rather there is a strong tendency to create symbolic, artistic and formal links with a past that can be identified in general terms as a democratic past and, in more specific terms, as the Popular Unity years. This in itself puts the playwrights and

groups who have been studied on the side of the losers, for the victors of 1973 have concentrated on defiling the image of the Popular Unity years that may persist in the collective memory. The "new" is imposed, it is the invention of an authoritarian regime, it is alien to the community, and it is the new, not the old, that is generally rejected in artistic creation. The building of links with the past, the forging of a perception of continuity has become a central symbol of what is deemed to be a counter-culture, that is, anything that does not conform to the cultural expression promoted by the regime through subsidised art, the media and television. In the following pages I will summarise the themes that have continued to preoccupy dramatists and groups, those that have disappeared or been transformed and those new themes whose appearance suggests that they reflect deep changes in society.

Marginality has been a constant theme since the early sixties. This was treated in a folkloric vein in the work of *Luis Alberto Heiremans*, with regard to rural and peasant communities, as in *Isidora Aguirre's Los que van quedando en el camino*, set in shanty towns, as in *María Asunción Requena's Pan caliente*, and among the lumpen proletariat, usually in the form of those living in the rubbish tips as in *Jorge Díaz's Topografía de un desnudo* and *Isidora Aguirre's Los papeleros*. These were all expressions by the university dramatists of the awareness of the lower classes, part of a wider social preoccupation with change, and most of the plays suggested that political consciousness-raising and organisation would be the necessary first step in the ascent of the lower classes to a position of power.

The characters from these plays were the people literally and metaphorically on the other side of the river, the fear of whose

organisation and subsequent power haunted the protagonists of Wolff's Los invasores and destroyed the female protagonist in Flores de papel. Within the context of the socio-political reality of the sixties, this threat was well on the way to being realised by the Popular Unity government, and some of the middle and upper sectors were genuinely afraid that the "revolution" and the consolidation in power of the Marxists would be carried out with the malevolence of such as El Merluza. Taken as a whole, these plays provide an insight into the political and social preoccupations of the middle sectors in the sixties and early seventies.

Linked to this is the rise of "popular" theatre after 1968. This was as a manifestation of the growing strength of the left, and organised "popular culture" became an aim of those artists committed to the Popular Unity programme. More and more, this type of expression of workers, peasants, students and youth groups was asked to conform to the "new" ideology and, although the strength of the popular theatre organisation, ANTACH, cannot be denied, the majority of the plays produced were along the lines of agit-prop. This form of popular expression disappeared after the coup as a result of the eradication of all organisations linked to Popular Unity. But, as we have seen, through the plays about work and in the work of Juan Radrigán, the working class and the marginal sectors did not disappear from the stage.

In Chapter Two this was explained as a way of revealing the poverty and deprivation that lay beneath the decontaminated upper crust of society. The predominance of popular characters on stage, furthermore, speaks of the traumatic impact of the economic recession of the mid-seventies. Pedro, Juan y Diego, Los payasos de la esperanza and Tres Marías y una Rosa highlighted a major change in

the structure of the lower classes as a result of massive unemployment. If, before, there were plays that concerned the unemployed, they did not deal with the impact of the loss of employment on the family life, the cultural expression, the sense of identity of the working classes. This was a new theme to deal with a new, important social problem. The characters were people relegated to a position of extreme marginality, who had no access to the "new" society being built by the regime, symbolised for them by the caracoles and the consumer boom. These plays spoke of disintegration, the break-up of the family, the adherence to small and demeaning plans for everyday survival. These now marginal sectors were the first theatrical expression of the prolonged period of impasse: no longer was political organisation a credible solution, and the characters were left to struggle against a powerful but *invisible* antagonist. These protagonists analogise with the shadowy figures who lurk around Leonardo's house in La balsa de la Medusa: they no longer pose a serious threat, for no longer are they symbols of rebellion, but of defeat.

Hand in hand with these changes in the male world of work, go changes in the family structure. In the dramas of the fifties and sixties, in Wolff, Cuadra, Debesa, Vodanović, the family was the most important single unit in society, essentially closed and hostile to outside influence. The household was a place into which the outside inevitably intruded in the form of new values, questioning attitudes, rejection of the old for the new, and this was the source of the most common dramatic conflict. The strength in this world was the mother who, constantly aware of the precarious position of the family, usually middle- or lower-middle-class, and always fearful of losing the family's relative security and comfort, would urge her children

on in an upward social struggle.

Fernando Cuadra's La familia de Marta Mardones (1976), saw the continuation of this type of portrayal of the family unit, guarded by the overpowering, ultimately stifling, mother from whom the characters, in variously drastic moves, escape, while she fights to save the solidity of the home for the time when they will, inevitably it is implied, return to the nest. There is no other play in this period that presents such a strong family unit, which, although it breaks up, does so for reasons extraneous to the immediate socio-political environment. Marta Mardones, the mother, is a unique figure in this period. By contrast, Egon Wolff's José, set within a family that is seemingly strong and well-established in the contemporary framework, gradually reveals it to be wrought with problems, doubts, tensions and nostalgia for simpler days, and in this context the women are, more than ever, trapped in the prison of their dependent condition. When José leaves, the family ostensibly returns to the same "tranquility" as at the beginning, but nothing will ever be the same, for the unity of the family has disintegrated although the cracks are hidden behind the perfect façade of the men's making.

In El último tren, the family unit has broken down completely in the context of the new society in which the adults cannot cope, and the daughter has to give up her dependent position in order to save the family from total destitution. Violeta finds a temporary release in the evocation of the idyllic childhood she had known, but this is a calculated, at times cynical, act. She takes refuge in this past identity in order to please her father and her aunt, and she enters into its spirit as a release from the true circumstances of her life. These rituals from her childhood act as a contrast to the terrible failure of the family to protect her and guarantee a better future,

and the contrast reveals the measure of the total destruction of the illusion of a new role for her as an emancipated woman in society. Mercedes, her aunt, had taken refuge in this idyllic past as an escape from the failure of her own life, she had sought refuge in the past before the all important point of rupture, she had divorced her husband and abandoned her secure life in the certainty of finding new realisation through Violeta, but in the end, she had only looked to a world that existed in her imagination. The family unit must be reconstructed in fantasy to exist at all.

In Tres Marías y una Rosa, the arpilleristas have moved from the traditional place in society out of the home. But this, in itself, is a result of the deep changes in their immediate community, for their partners must be unemployed for them to join the workshop: the male world must be in process of decay before the female world is set in motion. Tres Marías y una Rosa is thus a testimony to the profound and perhaps irreversible changes in society. Work now defines the women's lives, it is the means by which they attempt to retain the last remnants of the family together. Yet, they have found a new strength in work and a community of women that had not existed before, they have found an alternative and a future. But, to the extent that their lives are still defined in accordance with that of their male partners, there is a strong element of suspension and stagnation.

The theatre of Juan Radrigán encompasses all of these themes. The family has totally disintegrated, characters wander the streets, or live in rooms and shacks in squalor by themselves, they remember lost partners, they have been forgotten by children, who, they say, have died of "muerte entera", they choose not to have children because the circumstances are too difficult. Work is a thing of the

past, nobody works, except the prostitutes when there are clients, or Andrés, imprisoned beside his garage, or Polo surviving from odd jobs. One play, Cuestión de ubicación (1980), gives a graphic example of this disintegration. In it a girl dies of malnutrition while the rest of the family debate where they should put their new colour television. Although this play uses the references to consumerism in a very superficial way, it does provoke reflection on the use of consumer goods to deny marginalisation. For the family it is more important to conceal their poverty from the old meat-eating lady next door who, they believe, only eats to torment them, than it is to do something about bettering their standard of living, and thus save the daughter. It is a symptom of the perverse nature of society that the only access the protagonists have to the community is through material goods, the most prominent expression of the new. And it is indicative of the grotesque nature of modern society that the shiny symbols of belonging exist in such close proximity to squalor and unnecessary death.

Another aspect of this reflection of the changes in society is the absence of young people from the independent stage, in sharp contrast to the proliferation of children's theatre in the first years after the coup and the more recent shanty town theatre. The adult world is, on the whole, empty of children, and the generational conflict has all but disappeared. The sixties saw a number of important plays about youth - La niña en la palomera, El Wurlitzer, Nos tomamos la universidad and the more abstract, El velero en la botella - and there was a large amount of student theatre. This was part of the expansion of general organisation in different movements, of the awareness of the changes in society and of the fundamental role the young and student population was playing in the sixties. The

absence of young people from the stage in the seventies speaks of the exclusion of youth from any role in society. No plays deal with youth, although in 1985 and 1986 there has been more theatre for young people and about children's rights, and no new dramatists appeared until about 1978 and the resurgence of the University theatres. There literally was a generation gap.

It is a cruel irony that in El último tren Ismael, as he retreats into madness, looks to Violeta's childhood as a sign of hope, in the belief that children adapt more quickly to new circumstances. In fact her young, dependent role has been robbed her and she does adapt, but in a much more brutal way than Ismael can imagine. It is significant also that when young people do appear, these are primarily female. Young males do not figure, and their absence from the stage speaks again of their reduction in society. The one exception are the young clowns of Los payasos de la esperanza: their experience of life is desperate, they speak of their sisters' prostitution, of drug addiction, of unemployment in the shanty towns, their future is desolate.

Young females appear in traditional roles. In José Trini, after a momentary rebellion against her unrewarding future, accepts the role of wife of the prosperous, sound Cristián. She is representative of a young, conformist, middle-class woman with no social conscience, no concept of values in life other than of comfort and security. She finds the alternative beliefs José reveals to her attractive, but cannot make the break with her world, with the woman she has been conditioned to be. Marilyn in Toda una vida, feels excluded from the world of the young. She pretends to belong, knowing that she is too old, that she has the wrong background, that she will never be attractive enough, and that the only access to the world about which

she fantasises is through the consumer goods she buys, just like those who really do belong. Unlike Trini, her imminent total exclusion from this new society prompts her to look for a real alternative, even if that is, essentially, madness. The truth is more complex and perverse than she imagines, for while beauty and youth may be one means of acceptance, many of the young people she envies are equally excluded. That young people belong purely by virtue of their age and attractiveness is an illusion, for underneath there is further marginalisation.

With the return from exile of Jaime Miranda and Ramón Griffero, there was a reintroduction of youth into the theatre. With Jaime Miranda's Regreso sin causa, the generational conflict is presented again, now in the context of the friction between exiled parents and their children, who reject the tales of the golden past, are disillusioned by the failure of their parents to provide an unconflictive future for them and are alienated from their native land. In his Por la razón o la fuerza, one of the protagonists is a young man who cannot find his roots either in Chile or in Venezuela, where he has been in exile. Ramón Griffero's Cinema Utopia is concerned with the aimlessness of the life of a young man in exile. Here there is no illusion of the ability of the young to adapt easily to new circumstances, instead there is disillusion, drug addiction, total incomprehension, the impossibility of communication, and death. Along with these joint themes of youth and exile, a new theme, that of homosexuality, came to the stage. This had been present in El Túnel's interpretation of Jean Genet's Las sirvientas in 1972, repeated in 1985, a play that was successful, but condemned by some as having only snob value, and again in Manuel Puig's El beso de la mujer araña, adapted for stage by Gustavo Meza and Imagen. In

1986 another group took over the Teatro Fin de Siglo's theatre, El Trolley, and performed a play whose theme was homosexuality, Crónica de un sueño by Enrique Giordano, a Chilean playwright who lives in New York. He said that the audience would need "courage" to see the play,¹³ a statement that seems a bit exaggerated and more like a gratuitous challenge to the public, but the fact is that homosexuality is still a difficult theme. A sub-theme, it has generally been introduced along with exile, effectively imported into national theatre by way of contact with other societies. And it has only been treated explicitly in El Trolley, with its young audience in search of an alternative cultural expression.

While youth has been absent from the stage until recently, it is a characteristic of the period that old people are more and more prominent - Ismael, Andrés, Don Octavio, Don Eustaquio, Aurelio in Antes del fin, the aging and ageless waiters, Radrigán's characters. On the whole this highlights a preoccupation with those people who had once played a role in society but who are now redundant. The fate that affects these old people is translated as a steady progression into ritual existence, obsessive remembering, madness. They are isolated from society as a deliberate means of diminishing the possibility of their contaminating other minds with their subversive ideas. This is an echo of the grotesque reasoning by which, in Baño a baño, "preso" becomes synonymous with "loco" because both social misfits "Perjudican la tranquilidad pública".

What is missing from these old characters' lives is the element of choice; there is no acceptable alternative to the state they are in, choices and movement are limited. The acts of Ismael and the man who commits suicide in exile signify the acceptance of defeat, and Andrés is in a position of defeat from which he can never escape, for

it is linked intrinsically to the absurdity of human existence, taken to its worst extremes in his fate. And Don Rafael in Primavera con una esquina rota temporarily accepts defeat in exile when he starts to use a walking stick. He reasserts his strength when he falls in love with a younger woman, and lays his hope for the future in his granddaughter, Beatriz. Don Eustaquio, meanwhile, shows a certain lucidity about the fact that his memory is only a dream, that it cannot become reality until fear has gone from society. The old men portrayed in the plays are ostracised by the dominant ideology as part of a sickness in society, but the evidence provided otherwise reveals that it is society that is in fact sick.

Egon Wolff looks at old people in Alamos en la azotea (1981) and Kindergarten (1977). Kindergarten revolves around the rivalry between two aging brothers of an old family "de estirpe de la sociedad santiaguina" who now live from the takings of an umbrella shop. Their's is a life of constant mutual torment, of game-playing and ritual. Into this world enters their long lost sister, returned home after many years in search of the family, her youth and the daughter that she had either abandoned or had taken from her. She threatens to upset the fragile balance of the ritual abuse between the two brothers, but, in effect, her arrival really means the closing of the family circle, decaying and isolated from the world.

This decaying family has been seen as an allegory for the demise of the old aristocracy and the social stagnation that afflicts the country. Undoubtedly, there is something of this in the play, but, as Frank Dauster says of Kindergarten, "Toño, Mico and Meche, por podridos que se les vea, rebosan voluntad de sobrevivir. Por eso, y a pesar de la chatura y la ordinariez de su vida, tienen una fuerte nota de humanidad, y se alzan más arriba de cualquier significado

alegórico. Serán muy poca cosa, pero son seres humanos, como todos nosotros, y tienen que importarnos".¹⁴ This was written in response to Juan Andrés Piña's affirmation in the introduction to the printed edition of the play that, "Ya no hay aquí tránsito ni evolución, lucha de distintas posiciones vitales, sino mostración dramática de sólo una de ellas: la aniquilosa, decrepita, falta de vitalidad, condenada ya irremisiblemente".¹⁵ The characters may be trapped in a, to all appearances, sordid ritual rooted in the decay of the society to which their family belonged, but they are surviving, they have seen through the ritual nature of their life and turned it to their benefit, for they play the games in full knowledge of all the rules. They need the games, they need each other, and game-playing is the space for invention and renewal: the assuming of the ludic quality of life is their saving grace. As in the case of all these old characters, redundancy in life is counteracted by a strong inner life that simultaneously provides optimism and anguish.

Looking at the overall picture of Chile painted in the plays, one of the outstanding impressions is of massive marginalisation. There is no work, therefore the male role is under attack, the young people are silent, old people who belong to a subversive past are ostracised and silenced, many are exiled, the family disintegrates, and only women seem to be assuming a more protagonistic role, albeit in sad circumstances. Only La balsa de la Medusa presents a picture of prosperity, but that prosperity is gained at a high price in terms of social development and the affects on the inner life of the protagonists, for it is a prosperity propped up by moral stagnation and decay. Even in La balsa de la Medusa nothing happens. The conflict has gone from the stage, and in this prolonged suspension it is the inner life of the protagonists that is most important, the

space in which they remember, plan, fantasise, create alternatives. The stage is populated by the losers in a society in which the dominant social preoccupation of the winners is to keep the losers in their place.

In the plays about power and, to a lesser extent, throughout the rest of the drama, we have seen that language is infinitely malleable, and as such is a weak weapon of dissent when used by itself. If the regime talks of the old and the new, the opposition talks of the new and the old, if the regime talks of war and peace, of freedom and enslavement, so does the opposition. Isolated words can be manipulated, violated, and so the power of theatre lies in its use of visual and contextual imagery as well as words.

The lower sectors on stage play an important role in this context. The use of Chilean slang is one of the best expressions of dissent through language, it is a language of its own, inventive, ever-changing, beyond the comprehension of many people, it is the antithesis of the clinical language of political propaganda with its clear cut images and adherence to worn out key words, freedom, peace, prosperity, modernisation. The Chilean slang on stage in the seventies and eighties is far richer and far more representative of colloquial speech than any slang of the sixties, it is full of almost impenetrable images, of cruel humour (for example, Radrigán's prostitute who is called Dos en Una because she has lost a breast through cancer), it is a language expressive of a different approach to life, one that transcends the barrier of 1973. This, of course, is best expressed in Radrigán's work where it is a transcription of the language of the people he best knows and writes about. But in the plays about work, for example, the election of working class people, of shanty town dwellers, and of the lumpen is a conscious attempt to

subvert the dominant social order through visual and linguistic means.

The other overwhelming characteristic of Chilean theatre in this period is the impression of stagnation. Characters can do nothing, on the whole, to change their immediate circumstances, and in some cases they may do nothing at all. The present and the future are no longer a simple continuation of the past: the present is empty and the future looms as a worthless repetition of the present. This suspension of time is filled with "palabrería", with story-telling, games, remembering. The memories form a touchstone for a sense of identity, they contrast with the image of a period of depression and disintegration, and they invariably act as a sign of an alternative to the contemporary state of society. If the reasons for the characters' immobility, their lack of purpose and the senselessness of their existence not explained, it is because, generally, that is not necessary, for the other codes and references to contemporary circumstances inevitably place the drama in the present period and indicate the cause of the protagonists' state.

This lack of conflict can be interpreted, in the initial period, as a safeguard against censorship, since it would have been impossible on stage to give the oppressive antagonist his true identity. On one level this would seem to be an idle preoccupation, for in the context of the recent history of the country and, more specifically, with a knowledge of the history and therefore the broad political allegiances of groups with a longer history (Ictus, Imagen, La Feria), the identity of the off-stage antagonist is blatantly obvious. Furthermore, naming the protagonist would add an artistically unwelcome political note to plays that, while being testimony, did aim at a greater understanding of the deeper

preoccupations of the protagonists, at examining and creating visions and perceptions of the effects of authoritarianism. Even when censorship became more selective, the off-stage antagonist was still "anonymous".

If the antagonist is absent from the stage, his presence is constantly evoked in terms of the codes, of the sirens, sounds of helicopters, of bombs, that shatter the protagonists' peace and intrude into the make-believe world of the theatre. The lack of conflict on stage is thus countered by references to the real, suspended, conflict in society, the conflict of the winners against the losers. The sirens, bombs and intrusions are the voice of the unnamed antagonist whose society is essentially unjust, violent and, in its continued stagnation, increasingly absurd.

When Toda una vida begins Don Eustaquio's words are heard in the dark, divorced from the environment in which he lives, and from his identity as a deranged old man. They are received as a part of the audience's general experience of real life: when they hear, "cayó el general" those in the theatre will feel uneasy, Don Eustaquio will be perceived as an intruder into the façade of conformity. Thus an atmosphere of tension is created, temporarily the illusion of theatre is broken down, but this is relieved as the lights come up on the stage and the "madness" is revealed. This is repeated throughout. Don Eustaquio is gifted with seemingly unbounded energy: he may seem to be asleep, or "clavado", but he awakes shouting, and the respite and lapse into present-day normality is shortlived. These lapses are interspersed with what are the most common images of contemporary Chile, the images of rampant consumerism, the loss of human values of community, the importance of appearances. These are the codes that speak on a superficial level of the group's distaste for the society

that is emerging. They create a complicity between audience and actors against those that have created this state in real life, that is, the regime.

Yet, while this may provide an illusion of opposition, of the lost community of political thought, it is rendered less meaningful by the knowledge that the actor on stage is allowed to shout "cayó el general" so that the regime may point to the group, in this case Ictus, and ask, "So there is no freedom of expression in Chile?". Without another level of meaning this would be a futile exercise, it would be a way of conforming to the regime's image of the clean and free paradise they have created, it would become part of the façade so many plays have sought to uncover. So, the allusions to the consumer society that are present in all the plays studied, the noises of war that can be heard beyond the confines of the enclosed and isolated spaces where the characters live out their "insignificant" existences, become part of a clichéd system of codes that, in a perverted way, conform to the false image of the construction of a free and democratic society. While this weakens the strength of overtly political phrases as opposition pure and simple, the fact remains that it is part of a script that still stands as an expression of the wish of both actors and audience that the General will fall. For like language, whose words are finally the only words available, the signs, symbols and codes are employed as an integral part of the portrayal of society, and they are part and parcel of the complicity between group and audience.

In conclusion, it is evident that there is a great diversity in theatre, and that its capacity to adapt and its resilience as an art of immediate communication with a public hungry for a means, even only symbolic, of expressing some form of dissent, is great. If the

fact that the role of the theatre in Chile has been socially defined for a long period meant that it was subject to the dictates of the social and political environment, this has not seriously restricted the range of expression experienced, for Chilean theatre since the forties, with its ups and downs, has been a diverse and revealing reflection of society. It is its applicability to the age and the timeliness of some of its best plays that have made it an important form of artistic and cultural expression. Over the whole period studied the major preoccupation has been to reflect on society, so there have been plays about unemployment, plays about power, about marginalisation, about exile. The most important theme running through all these plays has been that of the suspension of action, of marginality and of stagnation in the face of a conflict that cannot be fought against an invisible antagonist. But transcending this there has been a constant study of the inner self of the individual, where hope and renewal may lie, where the regime cannot penetrate, and in which theatre finds its strength as *an art form*.

Notes to Chapter Six

1. See Toda una vida by Marco Antonio de la Parra, a sketch from the Ictus production Lindo país esquina con vista al mar (1979), p.11. All references will be to the manuscript.
2. All references will be to La balsa de la Medusa, Apuntes, Número especial (1984), 81-215. The characters are described as follows: "Aparece el grupo de invitados, de etiqueta, como viniendo de un cocktail elegante. Ellas, rutilantes. Ellos, convencionales, desenfadados. Son: Julián García, el comerciante (48) y su mujer, Emilia (43); Serrano-Soler, el industrial (50) y su amante Luisa (35); El Dr. Italo Sergetii (43) y su mujer Cintia (36); Carla, diseñadora de modas (34) y su amigo Mario Cruz, decorador y anticuario (36); Moshe Goldberg, joyero (46); Teresa, cellista (26); Javier, rentista (24)" (p.88).
3. In The Exterminating Angel (1962) a group of bourgeois guests at a dinner after a night at the opera, find themselves inexplicably unable to leave the dining room although the door is open, and while they are trapped they find themselves left to their own resources to survive.
4. Michel Esteve, "The Exterminating Angel: No Exit from the Human Condition", in The World of Luis Buñuel: Essays in Criticism, ed. Joan Mellen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.245.
5. Egon Wolff, "Ideas dispersas sobre La balsa de la Medusa", Apuntes, Número Especial (1985), p.61.
6. Héctor Noguera, "En torno a La balsa de la Medusa", Apuntes, Número Especial (1985), p.76.
7. "Ideas dispersas sobre La balsa de la Medusa", p.60.
8. "Ideas dispersas sobre La balsa de la Medusa", p.64.
9. Egon Wolff, "Sobre mi teatro" in Teatro chileno actual (Santiago: Empresa Editora Zig-Zag, 1966), p.164.
10. "En torno a La balsa de la Medusa", pp.70-71. The play was written in 1982 and had its first performance in 1984.
11. Margaret Sayers Peden, "Three Plays of Egon Wolff", Latin American Theatre Review, 3, 1 (1969), pp.34-35.
12. See Gwynne Edwards, The Discreet Art of Luis Buñuel. A Reading of his Films (London. Boston: Marion Boyars, 1983), p. 188.
13. "Crónica de un sueño: Musical que requiere el coraje del espectador", El Mercurio, 15. 8. 86. It should be noted that 1986 saw a number of productions by and about young people. And there is another young author, Gregory Cohen, who has produced a number of plays both in student and independent theatre, but it was impossible to get the manuscripts of his

works since none of them are complete.

14. Frank Dauster, "Concierto para tres: Kindergarten y el teatro ritual", Caravelle, 40 (1983), p. 14.
15. See Juan Andrés Piña, "Egon Wolff: El teatro de la destrucción y la esperanza", in Egon Wolff: Teatro. Niñamadre. Flores de Papel. Kindergarten (Santiago: Editorial Nascimento, 1978), p. 30.

GLOSSARY

The aim of this glossary is to provide a comprehensive listing of those terms and colloquialisms encountered in the plays studied in the thesis that may be unfamiliar to readers. Invariably spelling imitates pronunciation, so the variety of versions of the same word is huge. I have tried to provide as many variations as is possible. In the case of general variations and distortions of vowels, consonants and verb endings, the most common fall into the following categories: consonant changes, such as f>j (fuerte > juerte), h>g (huaso > güaso), b>gü (buenas > güenas), n>l (nos > los); the loss of the final d, as in usté, the loss of the intervocalic consonant as in todos>toos, sabe>sae, para>pa; vowel changes such as e>i, (cabrear > cabriar), and commonly the distortion of the diphthong ue, which becomes u as in cuestión > custión. In some cases the voseo is used (often vos becomes voh) and the second person singular of the verb is distorted, for example, tienes > tenís, sabes > sabís.

Many of the "chileanisms", especially in the theatre of Juan Radrigán, belong to a closed lumpen slang and can often only be understood with reference to the context in which the term or word is used. In these cases I have repeated the relevant quotation and, when there is more than one meaning, I have given examples of the different usages.

A

AGACHAR EL MOÑO: Literally, to bow one's head, to defer or yield to authority.

"También sé que puedo parecerte un iluso, o peor, un agachador de moño... Pero una cosa es agachar el moño y otra, muy distinta, rendirse." (¿Cuántos años tiene un día?, p.192).

AGARRAR PAPA: To fall for something hook, line and sinker.

"Y parece que la gallá agarró papa y le tuvo fe porque lo seguían como moscas a la miel" (El toro por las astas, p.328).

ALLEGADO/A: A person who has come to live with relatives as a result of homelessness, economic problems and destitution. It is most commonly used in shanty towns, where people are worst hit by sudden homelessness and is supposed to be a temporary arrangement. The expression used then is "vivir allegado".

"De que la fábrica quedó en estado de crisis económica vivimos allegados donde mi cuñada." (Tres Marías y una Rosa, p.202).

AL TIRO: At once, immediately.

B

BALSUDO: A distortion of bolsudo, meaning stupid. In El Invitado balsúo is substituted for tonto in the popular expression, "tonto con ropa y todo", meaning ridiculous through and through. "Claro, eso es cierto: si no existiera el Colo Colo los diarios tendrían que salir con la mitá de las páginas en blanco. ¡Y son balsúos con ropa y too!" (El Invitado, p.258).

BOCHE: Noise, a row.

C

CABEZAS DE PESCADO, HABLAR CABEZAS DE PESCADO: Absolute nonsense.

"Sabina: ... Soñé que me venía a ver.

Rafael: ¿Qué te venían a ver? Pucha tiene que ser otra cuestión rara. Voh too el tiempo andái soñando puras cabezas de pescao. Unas veces ti'andan siguiendo y no podís correr, otras veces que te caí a un hoyo y no llegái nunca abajo. ¿Por qué no soñái que te sacái la polla gol mejor?" (Testimonio de las muertes de Sabina, p.78).

CABREARSE, ESTAR CABREADO: To get angry, to be angry. The 'e' is often distorted to become 'i', cabriar, cabriado.

CACHAR: To catch the meaning of something.

"Me gustaría recitarles el poema del payaso...¡entero! Pa que cacharan la movía de lo que cuesta ser toni." (Los payasos de la esperanza, p.56).

2) To catch someone out.

"Me sirve pa que no cache que la pega era fácil." (Informe para indiferentes, p.370).

CACHETEAR: To hit, beat.

"¿Y usted don Rafael ¿promete solemnemente ante este altar sagrado no cachetearla...?" (Tres Marías y una Rosa, p.233).

CAMPANILLERO: Doorman-cum-lookout in a brothel. Antonio in El toro por las astas.

CURADO, CURAO: Drunk, drunkard.

CURARSE: To get drunk.

CH

CHAMULLO: Waffle.

CHASCON: Long-haired, by extension left-wing.

"¡Porque me cargan estos chascones intelectuales, que se creen tan inteligentes y tan buenos!" (José, p.31).

D

DAR BOLA: To play along with somebody's game in order to humour them.

E

EMBARRAR: To mess something up.

"¿Así que yo nomás tengo la culpa? Si veíai que yo l'estaba embarrando teníai que haberte metío, teníai que haber apechugao." (El invitado, p. 274).

ENCACHADO/A: Dressed smartly and of general good appearance.

ENTREBADO/A: Deep, well set.

"DON CARLOS: No se vaya a mandar guardabajo no más.

PEDRO: Pa eso la construí entrebá." (Pedro, Juan y Diego, p.37).

F

FALLOS AL CALDO: Skin and bone.

G

GALLADA: Crowd.

"MARILIN: ¿O sea, que la gallá se iba?

EUSTAQUIO: La multitud desaparecía." (Toda una vida, p.22).

GORRO/PONERLE EL GORRO A ALGUIEN: To cuckold.

"¿Y usted, Don Rafael... promete solemnemente ante este altar sagrado... no ponerle el gorro?" (Tres Marías y una Rosa, p.233).

H

HALLULLA: A bread bun, in the shape of a halo.

HUASO, GÚASO: A rural person from the central valley of Chile, the form of Castilian they use, and as an adjective it applies to all that belongs to them. It also has connotations of vulgar, stupid, a simpleton.

HUEVADA Usually pronounced and written either güevá or huevá. A stupid statement; a piece of nonsense. It also means a bad time, as in, "Yo he pasao por cualquier cantidá de güevás malas, he estao pa la cagá, pior que ahora, queriendo morirme..." (Los payasos de la esperanza, p.49).

HUEVAS, GÜEVAS, COMO LAS GÜEVAS: Like shit.

"¿Cómo le voy a poner que estoy bien si estoy como las huevas?" (Pedro, Juan y Diego, p. 15).

HUEVEAR: Variously güevear, güeviar. To fool around; to act or talk stupid.

HUEVON: Variously güevón, güeón, ón, or just, ó. Can mean fool, idiot, bastard, sod. Also used in familiar terms of address as an expletive.

I

IÑOR/A: Señor/a.

J

JUERA / AJUERA: Fuera / afuera.

JUERTE: Fuerte.

L

LESERA: A piece of nonsense.

LESO, SER LESO: To be stupid; HACERSE EL LESO: To act as if unaware of what is going on around you.

LOS: Nos.

LOTE: A whole bunch of, as in "un lote de payasos" (Los payasos de la esperanza).

LUQUIADA, LUQUILA: A look. From the English.

"¿Te cachái subir al cielo y pegarse una luquiá p'abajo" (Los payasos de la esperanza, p. 68). Also luqui and luquiar.

M

MAESTRO CHASQUILLA: A jack of all trades. The typical one is Polo in Radrigán's Informe para indiferentes.

MANDAR A ALGUIEN ESPALDA DE LORO, MANDAR CAER ESPALDA EL LORO: To make someone step back in amazement; to step back in amazement.

MANDAR GUARDABAJO: To fall to pieces. See entry for "entrebá".

MARRAQUETA: The most common type of bread, a type of batch.

MEJORA: Literally improvement. A house in a shanty town that has gradually been enlarged over the years.

MOMIO: The name given to people of right-wing tendencies.

P

PAGAR EL PATO: To pay the consequences, usually of someone else's mistakes or bad humour, to take the stick.
"Llegas maniático y soy yo la que tiene que pagar el pato.
¡Soy yo la que tiene que aguantar!" (Regreso sin causa, p.17).

PEGA: A job, work.

PIRCA: A wall.

R

ROJELIO: A pejorative term for a Communist, a Commie.

ROTO: A person of lower class origins.

T

TAITA/ TATA: Father. God when with capital. Affectionate way of addressing a more senior man, whether a relative or not.

TORRANTE, ATORRANTE: Down and out.

TORTA: Money, dough.

U

UPELIENIO: A pejorative way of referring to someone who supported the Popular Unity government. It comes from the initials, U.P. (Unidad Popular).

"Estuve a punto de tomarlo por upeliento y echarlo cagando"
(El último tren, p.111).

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