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LUIS RAFAEL SANCHEZ

AND THE

NEW LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE

by

GLORIA FEIMAN WALDMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Spanish in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1978

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Spanish in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Nov. 30, 1978
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INTRODUCTION

José Juan Arrom insists that "el teatro es el perfecto barómetro de la sociedad en que existe."[1] Over the centuries we have seen that the first media to be censored, prohibited and otherwise repressed in times of national stress is the theatre. Its very nature necessitates vigilance. It is alive; it requires a vital interaction between the public and the actors, to name only two of the complex ingredients which constitute the theatre experience. So too is it considered threatening because, "La escena descubre el subconsciente de la mayoría de los hombres, que al vivir en perpetua ficción se creen aludidos desde el palco escénico."[2] We have chosen to examine the theatre genre because of its dynamic nature as well as its startling proliferation in Latin America today.

Our intention in this study is to explore the directions that the contemporary Latin American theatre is taking, to pose "las cuestiones palpitantes," the vital questions that dramatists, theatre people and scholars are asking. Our intention is to illuminate the creative process in writing

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drama as well as to indicate differences in conception and execution of an idea. We seek to clarify the use of the words "new Latin American theatre" in our title. We propose that something new is happening and our task is to describe precisely what that means. Just as the Latin American novel is very much a part of the mainstream of twentieth century literature, so is the theatre, to the degree that it shares a common artistic heritage with the Western theatre, including modern twentieth century techniques of staging and variety in conceptual approaches to a work.

Included in the body of this study will be a critical examination of actual presentations of Luis Rafael Sánchez's plays attended by this writer. In addition to having his plays presented at various university centers in the United States, at the Pasadena Playhouse in Los Angeles, in Madrid, Mexico City and Venezuela, it is significant to note that all of Sánchez's plays have been presented in New York over the last ten years, some of them by more than one theatre group.[3]

The inclusion of this material corresponds to our view of the theatre genre as literature as well as dramatic representation. The representation of a play is its actualization; its transformation from the private relationship between

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reader and author into the public ritual that can only occur with the enactment of the dramatic situation.

We have chosen to focus on the Puerto Rican author, Luis Rafael Sánchez, because he belongs to a rich theatrical tradition which has flourished most significantly in this century providing substantial qualitative gains in the Puerto Rican literary scene. Notes the literary historian Francisco Manrique Cabrera: "Con todo ello, importa aquí indicar que a partir de los treintas hacia los días presentes, el teatro puertorriqueño ha registrado logros y ademanes de incuestionable avance y crecimiento si se compara con las décadas que en lo inmediato le preceden."[4] In this author's opinion it is through this genre that Puerto Rican literature is making its most original contribution to the Latin American literary world.

Sánchez is one of Puerto Rico's most significant links with Latin American literature. Just as Harss and Dohmann document Latin America's literary plunge "into the mainstream", so does Sánchez figure along with René Marqués, José Luis González, Pedro Juan Soto, Emilio Díaz Valcárcel and Myrna Casas, in embodying the major thematic and stylistic trends of that Latin American mainstream. He is at once the Latin American man of letters whose search for adequate

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forms to express his many concerns have led him to diverse literary genres: the short story, theatre, essays and the novel form. He also shares the tradition of the Puerto Rican writer of conscience, treating particularly indigenous themes. Both stances are revealed in his opus. It will be our task to situate him within the context of Puerto Rican letters as well as within the broader panorama of Latin American theatre.

For our investigation we have chosen to focus on Sánchez's theatre. In our opinion it is through this genre that he best reveals his Weltanschauung. It is easier to define Sánchez's theories about drama then it is to capture the full implications of his dramatic production. The American playwright David Vos has said, "Luis Rafael Sánchez escribe mariposas." We accept the aptness of this metaphor: Sánchez's words often hang suspended in the air in their own space, revealing known truths to us in strikingly original ways. It is his theatre which ultimately reveals the writer to us, theatre which is at once national in character as well as universal.

Sánchez's uniqueness is his ability to transform artistically the Puerto Rican experience into literature. That professionalism and talent distinguishes him from the

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numerous Latin American writers who, as Cabrera Infante wrote in Tres tristes tigres, try to make culture out of maté.[5] Sánchez universalizes the Puerto Rican experience in his literature. In La pasión según Antígona Pérez he depicts the quest for integrity in the face of corruption; in Los ángeles se han fatigado, the need for identity and self worth in the face of political and economic exigencies; in La hiel nuestra de cada día, the poignant struggle of an old couple to survive, and their turning to the "spirits" and la bolita for help; in . . .O casi el alma, the conflict between faith and hypocrisy revealed through the persons of a prostitute and a con man. His control of dramatic technique and language establish his work in a categroy separate from the facile costumbrismo of café puya, pavas, jíbaros, nacionalistas and los números. The national symbols vary from country to country, but the criteria for judging a work is constant; only through the able manipulation of language can a work be saved from existing as mere propaganda, lists of picturesque customs and behavior, as sociology or anthropology in disguise. Sánchez's impact on the contemporary Puerto Rican theatre can be evaluated by considering the various factors, including his seriousness, innovative language and poetic rendering of traditional themes, all of which contribute to a high level

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of artistic achievement.

Because of the dearth of critical material that situates our author within a literary context, our task is to relate his artistic contribution to the broader tradition of contemporary Latin American drama. Critical consideration of Sánchez's work falls into the following categories: monographic studies, critical mention in general anthologies and manuals on Latin American drama, as well as drama reviews in the media. The most in depth monographic study on Sánchez to date was done by Angelina Morfi, professor at the University of Puerto Rico. Jordan B. Phillips in Contemporary Trends in the Puerto Rican Theatre, devotes a substantial section to Sánchez's work. Critical mention of Sánchez's work appears in Latin American and Puerto Rican anthologies as well as in articles in scholarly journals.[6]

Thus the intention of this exploration is to provide an in depth, synthetic study of the drama of Luis Rafael Sánchez, who is both a significant representative of the contemporary Puerto Rican theatre as well as an exponent of the new Latin American theatre. It is our hope that such an examination will be a significant contribution to the study of the Latin American theatre in general.

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[1]José Juan Arrom, "Generaciones y estilos en el teatro hispanoamericano," address delivered at "Theatre in Latin America: A Symposium," Pennsylvania State University, 29 Oct. 1976.

[2]Edmundo Barbero, "Importancia social del teatro," Cultura (San Salvador), No. 37 (1965), p. 177.

[3]The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre presented La farsa del amor compradito (1968), La pasión según Antígona Pérez (1972), Los ángeles se han fatigado (1974). The Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theatre presented both pieces, in Sol 13, Interior: La hiel nuestra de cada día and Los ángeles se han fatigado (1973). The Spanish Theatre Repertory Company presented . . .O casi el alma (1974). Teatro de Orilla presented La hiel nuestra de cada día (1976).

[4]Francisco Manrique Cabrera, Historia de la literatura puertorriqueña (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Editorial Cultural, 1969), p. 327.

[5]Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Three Trapped Tigers, trans. Donald Gardner & Suzanne Jill Levine (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 351.

[6]Bibliographical sources on Sánchez's theatre include: Francisco Arrivé, Teatro puertorriqueño. Cuarto Festival. Introducción (San Juan, Puerto Rico: ICP, 1962); Francisco Arriví, Areyto mayor (San Juan, Puerto Rico: ICP, 1966); María Teresa Babín, "Veinte años de teatro puertorriqueño (1945-1964)," Asomante, XX, No. 4(1964); Emilio S. Belaval, "Luis Rafael Sánchez," El mundo (23 May 1961); Ivan Cardona "La pasión del teatro puertorriqueño según Luis Rafael Sánchez", La hora (2 Aug. 1973); Frank Dauster, "La pasión según Antígona Pérez,", Sin Nombre, No. 4 (1971); Piri Fernández, "Temas del teatro puertorriqueño de hoy," in El autor dramático, Primer Seminario de Dramaturgia (San Juan, Puerto Rico: ICP, 1963); José Emilio González, "Sol 13, Interior," in the program of the Cuarto Festival de Teatro (San Juan, Puerto Rico: ICP), 1962); José Emilio González, " O casi el alma de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El mundo (1 June 1964); Juan Guerrero Zamora, "El autor dramático y el teatro de Vanguardia," in El autor dramático, Primer Seminario de Dramaturgia (San Juan, Puerto Rico: ICP, 1963); Robert Lewis, "Theatre Review: The Farce

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of Love," The San Juan Star, (24 Oct. 1961) René Marqués, Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy. Prólogo (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial Cultural, 1971); Concha Meléndez "La literatura de ficción en Puerto Rico (1955-1963)," Asomante, XX, No. 3 (1964); Angelina Morfi, Temas del teatro (Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1969); Angelina Morfi, "El teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," Revista del ICP, No. 52 (July - Sept. 1971); Jordan B. Phillips, Contemporary Trends in the Puerto Rican Theatre (Madrid: Plaza Mayor, 1972); James W. Ward III, "A Tentative Inventory of Young Puerto Rican Writers," Hispania, LIV (Dec. 1971)

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PART ONE: CONTEMPORARY THEATRE IN LATIN AMERICA

In Part One we will provide an overview of the Latin American theatre, a description of the nature of theatre in Latin America and significant directions, attitudes and major concerns. The postwar theatre, which is the main focus of this study, shares a series of philosophical and technical concerns with contemporary Latin American poetry and especially the narrative:

> La verdad multifacética, el sueño y su consecuencia--la libre asociación de imágenes--el desdoblamiento de la personalidad, el nuevo concepto del tiempo y del espacio, obligaron a una revalorización de los medios expresivos a disposición del dramaturgo. Sumóse a eso una visión más universal de los problemas del hombre en contraposición a los exclusivamente regional de costumbrismo.[1]

The problems that the theatre movement faces in Latin America will be described, including the technical and financial difficulties of actually staging a work, government censorship and its attendant self-censorship, the need to create one's own public, as well as the impossibility of earning one's living solely from the theatre.

I will examine the essence of the drama form as different from the written text, emphasizing the importance of the

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theatre as dramatic presentation. Questions which have contributed to a spirited examination of the theatre phenomenon in Latin America as well as have significance for an understanding of Latin American theatre will be posed: What should theatre do? Be? Who is the Latin American public? What role have critics and criticism traditionally played in fomenting--or thwarting--an authentic theatre movement in Latin America? Why does theatre develop in one country and not in another? Is there a conscious theatre movement which integrates poetry into drama? Does Latin America have a common language of scenography? Who does commercial theatre? Who does the independent theatre? The components that constitute the theatre experience will be explained: the importance of the mise en scène, the role of the dramatist, of the director, of the public. The impact of foreign influences on the Latin American theatre scene will be examined: Brecht, Artaud, the Absurdists, Peter Brook, Peter Weiss, Albee, Pinter, Arrabal. To what degree have Latin American playwrights assimilated these influences into their own work?

Can we even use the term "Latin American theatre"? Among the provocative questions that Torres-Varela poses in her article," Hacia una conjetura en el porvenir del teatro," is this one, Does there actually exist "una pintura, una

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una filosofía, una raza, una literatura, o una música capaces de representar a esta parte del continente?"[2] Our own author posed a similar question in a conference delivered at the Graduate Center of theCity University on November 21, 1974 "El teatro latinoamericano contemporáneo," where he examined the concept of successful "transferability" of a play from one Latin American country to another.[3] My concern in this chapter is precisely that: to name the major trends and directions of the Latin American theatre, in order to determine if there is a continental sensibility, that is, if there are sufficient shared elements to warrant such integrative nomenclature. I propose that not only can we generalize vis-à-vis major direction in Latin American theatre, but also that our author, Luis Rafael Sánchez shares these stylistic and thematic concerns with his fellow Latin American dramatists and reflects them in his own work.

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I. TRENDS AND DIRECTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE

A. Critical Approaches to Latin American Theatre

This first section, Trends and Directions in the Contemporary Latin American Theatre, is the most extensive section in Part One. It is concerned with the following issues: critical attitudes towards the Latin American theatre: the meaning of the term "new theatre"; the dual commitment to social conscience as well as artistic expression; the eternal dilemma between universal and national thematic directions; between the commercial and independent theatres; the importance of political and social theatre; the artistic manifestation of a critical attitude toward the United States; new directions in the contemporary Latin American theatre, including the phenomenon of the theatre festival, the collective creation, the popular theatre; and finally who is the public who attends theatre in Latin America?

It is significant to note an evolution in Latin American theatre criticism within as short a time as the last fifteen years. We move from a posture adopted by Torres-Varela, among other critics, of questioning whether one can really even talk about a Latin American theatre, to a concerted effort to define the "new" Latin American theatre. Frank Dauster,

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pioneer in Latin American drama criticism, astutely observes in 1969, "no es ésta la hora de escribir una historia del teatro contemporáneo en Hispanoamérica, porque lo mejor está todavía por venir."[4] In 1971, George Woodyard substantiates his optimistic attitude toward the Latin American theatre with the following affirmation: "Marked by a long frequently arduous process of formation, [the Latin American theatre] has been constantly in the ascendant in spite of the many factors that have conspired to keep it in a position of secondary importance within the arts."[5]

There are disparate images that come to mind when we speak of the Latin American theatre. The vantage point of the speaker clearly determines his or her perspective. The vision of the dramatist, director, actor, producer, vis-a-vis the Latin American drama experience is necessarily different. Likewise, the public seeks out the theatre experience that reflects its actual or imagined reality. Thus, there is Latin American theatre that presents dogmatic statements with which we agree, and which make us feel comfortable. As José Monleón suggests there is " teatro de cuestionamiento y teatro de confirmación,"[6] the later, the less challenging and less valuable in his critical estimation. In effect one

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finds theatre, the eternal game of content and structure, which embraces tendencies as divergent as absurdist and existential, Brechtian and grotesque. Monleón has observed however, that "todo el teatro latinoamericano es la misma obra"[7] that is, a presentation of a generalized abstract concept, rather than a singular, focused point of view. Until recently the Latin American theatre has imitated the predominant currents from Europe. The only constant for Latin American within that susceptibility to Europe was the long-standing search for its own identity. More than ever, since the 1960's the major directions in theatre have begun to be authentically integrated into the work of Latin American playwrights. The result is the body of material we are examining today, which is the expression of a new and vital Latin American theatre. Both as witness and participant, Luis Rafael Sánchez is an exponent of this new theatre.

This author affirms Frank Dauster's conclusion, after examining the Latin American theatre's historical trajectory, that "what has happened in the intervening half-century is a theater revolution, a vital, organic process of change and development."[8] I suggest a broad interpretation of the word nuevo in the term nuevo teatro latinoamericano. This coincides with Carlos Solórzano's use of the term in his critique of the

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"Primer Festival de Teatro Nuevo de Latinoamérica." He defends its usage. "aunque el adjetivo 'nuevo' no significara estrictamente la necesidad de que las obras abordaran temas o estilos de 'vanguardia'."[9] Lyday and Woodyard in the Introduction to their valuable collection of theatre criticism, Dramatists in Revolt: the New Latin American Theatre employ both terms, "new Latin American theatre" and "spirit of revolt" to convey their intrepretation of the essence of drama today:

> While contemporary drama in Latin America is perhaps best characterized by its diversity--in type and in theme--the playwrights who have created this drama are united by a spirit of revolution, both in terms of aesthetics and often of sociopolitical values as well. Out of this revolutionary spirit has come a new order of message plays incorporating such major European trends as existentialism, the theatre of the absurd and the theater of cruelty and of ritual. Surrealistic drama and the farce also continue to be found, but even here a new level of artistry is discernible."[10]

William I. Oliver, editor and translator of Voices of Change in the Spanish American Theatre provides a more restrained assessment of the Spanish American theatre. He elaborates upon his criticism that few of the Spanish American plays reflected the revolutionary changes or political upheaval of the continent. He notes that the playwrights smothered the boldness of their thematic statement in sentimentality; he also found a proliferation of

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conventional dramas that continued in the old traditions of folkloric realism, sentimental melodrama and facile comedy. Many plays, however, would actually demonstrate a spirit of rebellion and intelligent criticism only to surrender in their final acts to the clichés of the established order. This coincides with the assertion made by the theatre critic José Monleón at the "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano" in New York in 1976 that there was grave dissonance between Latin American reality and Latin American theatre, and that the theatre has not been an instrument for examining reality, but rather a consolation to the people for that reality. When applying this theory to the case of Puerto Rico, we find an abundance of dramas which particularly respond to Monleón's first precept; they describe, while they don't dramatically examine Puerto Rican reality. They do fit within the traditional framework of theatre that documents social realities without actually incorporating the possibility of broad social change into the genre and without actively approaching a wider audience than the expected middle and upper class one. We will further respond to this question in relation to the work of Luis Rafael Sánchez in Part Two.

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Drama

Drama critic Richard Schechner takes a provocative stance in response to Joanne Pottlitzer's question "Are you saying that to be relevant the theatre must take on avant-garde forms?"--he answers--"Insofar as avant-garde means revelant to today's ideas and structures. I don't mean avant-garde forms only. I mean work that is relevant to what is going on in your society, structurally. Latin American theatre doesn't reflect the terrific changes their society is going through. Their styles are basically nineteenth century."[12] Nevertheless, Gerald Rabkin, reviewing a series of Latin American plays cautiously, but optimistically concludes "and if the claims of Oliver and Woodyard may be a little premature, Latin American drama clearly deserves more attention than it has received."[13]

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B. The Dual Commitment: Art and Conscience

In a strangely ambiguous statement, Suárez Radillo seems to justify a certain lack of technical maturity in the Latin American theatre by implying that the message is more important than the form. He says:

> Ha de reconocerse que a la intensa carga de preocupación social, de denuncia valiente, de expresión auténtica--no vernácula--corresponde, frecuentemente en el teatro hispanoamericano considerado como una entidad total, una falta más o menos acentuada de madurez técnica. Hay tanto que decir, tanto de qué protestar, que los personajes se convierten muchas veces en voceros del autor, perdiendo su condición de tales. Cabe preguntarse, sin embargo, si lo que importa realmente no es lo que se dice y que sea dicho con valentía. . .ya que lo otro les será dado por añadidura a través del tiempo.[14]

What is lo otro in Suárez Radillo's statement? Is it polished style or quality writing? We agree with the statement made by Alfonso Sastre concerning ideology and art in Drama y Sociedad where he urges "equilibrio entre trama e ideología"--and insists that--"la ideología no puede ser el principio de una trama, sino lo contrario, una consecuencia natural."[15]

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Contrary to Suárez Radillo's emphasis on fondo rather than forma, Dauster's thesis is that the best Latin American playwrights nowadays share and fulfill a double commitment to social conscience and artistic excellence.[16] Whatever form their work takes, it asks the same question: What does it mean to be a Latin American in this troubled century? From the old, cliched definition of social awareness he postulates that "'social awareness' refers simply to the awareness of the social phenomena of our time and the willingness to examine these phenomena critically to assess their impact on the individual.[17] We agree with Dauster's contention that the contemporary Latin American theatre demonstrates an awareness of social realities while showing an equally strong commitment to artistic integrity and experimental techniques.

In charting certain seemingly antagonistic directions in this theatre, Gerardo Luzuriaga notes the tendency "por dar expresión en la escena a la realidad nacional, a la realidad latinoamericana, en especial en lo que tiene que ver con su lucha por liberarse de las ataduras de la dependencia cultural, económica y política, y por otra parte, por buscar nuevas formas de expresión teatral, por investigar, por experimentar."[18] We contend that these

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are not mutually exclusive tendencies and that they can be reconciled, as evidenced by the technically sophisticated as well as socially committed work of Osvaldo Dragún in La peste viene de Melos, and Y nos dijeron que éramos inmortales, Agustín Cuzzani, Sempronio, Una libra de carne, El centro forward murió al amanecer, and our own Luis Rafael Sánchez, La pasión según Antígona Pérez to name only a few. Thus, although most of these writers would subscribe to the Sartrian dictum that the act of writing is a revolutionary act and that writing actually effectuates change, their work clearly demonstrates the fusion of a highly artistic expression with a strongly political one.

Some essential problems in confronting this theatre are typified by the dichotomy in the analises of Joanne Pottlitzer and Richard Schechner as a result of their six week trip with a Ford Foundation grant through seven Latin American countries in the Fall, 1968. Pottlitzer views Latin American theatre as able to be approached and understood in the same ways as United States and European theatre. Despite the difficulties created by imperialism and repression, the theatre she describes is growing; it is relevant to its society and aesthetically worth our attention. "In the Latin American Richard Schechner visited, there is no theatre.

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There are some dead shapes moving about on proscenium stages, but all we North Americans need to know about Latin America is what we have done to it, and all they need to know is who they are and how to get rid of us."[19] A perceptive analyses of art in a repressive society can be found in René Marqués's essay, "Pesimismo literario y optimismo político; su coexistencia en el Puerto Rico actual"[20] where he criticizes the facile practice of the middle class to go to the theatre, identify with the portrayal of its own impotence as a political group, in effect exorcize its conscience and its responsibility, and then leave the theatre purged, having experienced a catharsis which has led to complacency, rather than to action. In a similar vein, Erika Munk, editor of The Drama Review, talks about the "actively repressive theatre" that functions in Latin America: "Its occasionally revolutionary messages give people a false sense of having done something which saps the real energies they might otherwise use more vigorously. Its role in the struggle for national identity is perverted by its intellectual and aesthetic subservience to the very culture which denies it identity."[21]

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C.

C. A Dilemma: Universal and/or National Themes

Another major question posed by Torres-Varela is whether there actually exists un lenguaje americano. She asserts that "la intención 'continental" y la intención 'latinoamericana' en el autor dramático sería nuestro primer síntoma de madurez creativa: desprendidos de las limitaciones localistas que surgen de un sentido primario de defensa que no es más que conciencia inconfesada de pequeñez podríamos esperar una creación proyectada hacia lo universal."[22]

The following statement by René Marqués responds to this issue: "Si entendiéramos la pregunta como referencia al lenguaje propiamente dicho, aun creo honrado contestar en la negativa. . .Resabios es costumbrisimo, diversas expresiones localistas o nacionales dificultan la difusión y aceptación de la obra dentro del ámbito total hispanoparlante." He further suggests that "el autor dramático hispanoamericano, sin perder en modo alguno se esencial raíz nacional, deberá proyectar su obra hacia lo universal, no sólo en temática, sino también 'universalizando' su lenguaje, de modo que éste sea inteligible para todos los pueblos de habla hispana y susceptible de ser vertido con naturalidad y justeza a otros idiomas del mundo occidental."[23]

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Torres-Varela, as well as Suárez Radillo, refer to the falla común in much Latin American theatre, that is, the "débil manejo del idioma y en la falta de transformación de la materia argumental en una obra de creación que supere la insipidez fotográfica."[24] She does however single out various dramatists, among them, Egon Wolff from Chile, Luisa Josefina Hernández, and Emilio Carballido from México, Ida Gramcko from Venezuela, and from Argentina, Atilio Betti, Juan Carlos Gené, Omar de Carlo who "eluden lo exterior y reflejan una intuición de síntesis y de creación que atañe tan sólo al teatro. Que escapan al compromiso anticipado, para conseguir en fin ese lenguaje expresivo unificado, nacional o continental, que por ser procedencia dramática creativa se proyecta hacia lo universal."[25] She insists that an integrated theatre movement still does not exist, but rather "lo que existe es una de sus partes. Es necesario que el todo se integre sobre la escena enfrente a un público; que se conjuguen la técnica, la recreación de director y actores que podamos hablar de teatro latinoamericano."[26] Lyday and Woodyard however, implicitly refute Torres-Varela's criticism of the quality of Latin American theatre writing in the Introduction to Dramatists in Revolt where they point to "new levels of sophistication in playwrighting and in

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production."[27] as a sign of growth and optimism in the theatre development.

In a round table discussion about Latin American theatre attended by the playwrights Silva Valdés, Figueiredo, Marqués, Genta and Gorostiza, the question "¿Tiene Hispanoamérica un lenguaje escénico común?"[28] received a unanimously negative response. The respondents explained their positions pointing to various factors, among them, the size of the continent which in its vastness creates a diffuseness in cultural trends. The question arose as to whether one could reach this common language regionally, that is, if the countries of the Caribbean, or the Pacific or the Río de la Plata region shared common artistic approaches.[29] The only point of tentative agreement postulated that there might be common thematic concerns, such as "la lucha por la libertad y la justicia social."[30] Rene Marqués comments: "Si por lenguaje escénico entendemos un modo técnico y estético de hacer teatro que nos caracterice, creo honradamente que no contamos con tal expresión peculiar."[31] As we have seen in this overview there is a common vision shared by contemporary Latin American playwrights; there are tendencies and trends which characterize their production

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and if we cannot say that they share a lenguaje escénico común, yes, we can say that there is a common concern for realizing the technical and artistic possibilities of the mise en scène, for incorporating into their own productions the major innovations and directions that twentieth century theatre movements have to offer, as well as a deep commitment to an examination of their social milieu.

A significant question remains, What constitutes national theatre? For this writer the criteria established by Willis Knapp Jones in Behind Spanish American Footlights is narrow and anachronistic. He says "a theatre to be national, must reflect the country's conditions."--More specifically, in reference to Nicaragua, he asserts that--"the hope for a permanent and vital Nicaragua (sic) theatre seems to be in the hands of those who can produce plays of reality based on the nation's folklore."[32] Dauster responds with the following observation with which this author concurs, "Hoy en día con el éxito de Borges o Cortázar, García Márquez o Vargas Llosa en la prosa, ¿para qué este empeño [de Willis Knapp Jones] en teatro 'nacional'?"[33] Teresinka Alves Pereira commenting upon the Cuban choice of Virgilio Piñera's Dos viejos pánicos for the "Segundo Festival de Teatro Latino Americano" in 1972,

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points out the emphasis in that work on human rather than political problems. She says: "A escôlha de tal obra para representar um país comunista no festival serve para demostrar que o teatro latino-americano já ultrapassou a temática social e política e, caminha junto às correntes internacionais com um teatro intelectualmente avançado e com tendências metafísicas."[34] We see this tendency manifested in Sanchez's work, particularly ...O casi el alma, which will be explored at length in Part Two. Luis Leal affirms Alves Pereira's observation and adds: "El teatro contemporáneo ha seguido la misma trayectoria que hemos apuntado al hablar de la narrativa. Durante la postguerra, como consecuencia de la aparición del teatro del absurdo, se da menos énfasis en Hispanoamérica, al teatro de protesta social."[35]

As George Woodyard notes: "The conflicts of reality and illusion and the concepts of aberration and absurdity have found a Latin American expression through young playwrights eager to show themselves as valid interpreters of the human condition."[36] The trend, consistent with the international postwar theatre, corresponds to a distinct willingness in Latin American theatre to explore universal as well as metaphysical themes. Notes Erminio Neglia in his critical work Aspectos del teatro moderno hispanoamericano: "El

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teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo refleja las angustias del hombre en un mundo sin brújula y deshumanizado. Se cala en lo más íntimo del hombre para escudriñar su alma o con subjetividad poética descubre lo misterioso y lo ambiguo de la vida humana."[37] René Marqués, although profoundly involved in criticizing Puerto Rican reality, also emphasized the necessity to "superar la temática provincialista en el teatro para enfocar la atención en la problemática universal del Hombre."[38] It is Woodyard however, who succinctly links these trends and comments on the general tone of disillusionment in their works where "Man is seen to be incapable of adjusting to a changing environment and to the corrosive effects of time; he is a victim of an insensitive society, or simply of his own imperfect nature. His identity crisis reveals the multiple implications of the eternal question, 'Who am I?'"[39] Suárez Radillo also points out that some of the most notable tendencies in the contemporary Latin American theatre are precisely "su preocupación por el hombre y su anhelo de contribuir a mejorar la sociedad que él integra."[40]

Kierkegaard, by no means the first, has observed that we reach universality by first examining our own selves. Likewise, this writer does not believe that the two tendencies

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necessarily must be in opposition, nor mutually exclusive, but rather that one can extrapolate universal values from a national context. Ernesto Sábato, in a revealing comment from El escritor y sus fantasmas dismisses the entire debate on that omnipresent theme in Latin American letters, the dichotomy between universal and national concerns, when he observes that the real dilemma is not about psychological versus social literature, nor cosmopolitan versus nationalistic literature, but rather "literatura profunda y literatura superficial."[41] We wonder if this assertion isn't equally true for the theatre.

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D. Polarities: Commercial Theatre, Independent Theatre

When describing contemporary theatre in Latin America one must indicate the two prevalent directions, commercial and non-commercial. Although occasionally, a non-commercial effort will run in a commercial house, the different philosophy as well as problems inherent to both forms preclude an overlapping of endeavors. It is the second type of theatre which interests us, this post World War II phenomenon which marks the advent, in almost the whole continent, of non-commercial or independent theatre as it is most often referred to in Latin America; groups who conceive of the possibility of realizing theatre as an experiment; authors who exercize their dramatic craft from new perspectives, be they experimental or ideological; actors who reject the instinctive school of interpretation and prefer a more systematic approach to acting.[42] Essential differences between commercial and independent theatre include the amount of money available for a production, the type of public who attends, and the type of plays presented. As Carlos Solórzano observes about the new direction of the post World War II theatre: "El teatro intenta, a partir de esas fechas el trazo de un círculo

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vital más amplio, y renuncia a los 'caracteres' para adpotar personajes genéricos, o para mover ante nuestros ojos las presencias interiores que enfrentan al ser humano con sus más íntimas contradicciones."[43] Dauster, however, does not discount the important artistic possibilities of the so-called commercial theatre. He says that "los dos movimientos fundamentales que preparan el campo para un teatro comercial no exento de valores artísticos, son el teatro experimental y el teatro universitario."[44]

Castagnino offers the following concise scheme which captures the essential directions that each national theatre follows to a greater or lesser extent:

> Un ti Un tipo de teatro comercial; 2) una corriente de expresiones estimuladas por propósitos de renovación estructural, que refleja, casi sincrónicamente, idénticos lineamientos en casi todas las dramaturgias hispanoamericanas y de otros continentes; lineamientos confrontables en sucesión de experimentos en teatro de laboratorio, y, muy recientemente, en el auge del psicodrama y de los happenings; 3) una dramaturgia neorrealista, en busca de acentos locales; 4) una serie de intentos de 'teatro comprometido' e ideológico; 5) un reencuentro con primitivas fuentes temáticas del teatro occidental que pretende adecuar los grandes mitos clásicos y asuntos locales; 6) la afirmación de un teatro para los niños."[45]

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E. Social and Political Theatre

Theatre with political and social overtones has been a major direction in the modern Latin American theatre. Dauster refers to a general leftwing orientation and a certain amount of stock Marxism.[46] There is, however, a rejection of facile solutions to social problems. Castagnino, referring to the nature of many of the new theatre groups, observes that "casi siempre, de ellos surge una actividad escénica cuyos espectáculos asumen el desconformismo y la rebeldía; no son amables, ni sentimentales, ni digestivos; no buscan castigar malas costumbres, sino exhibir males congénitos de América; nacionalizar las plagas que sufre, desde el imperialismo a la hipocresía social."[47] In a critique of the "Quinto Festival Latinoamericano de Teatro y Primera Muestra Internacional" in 1973, Susana D. Castillo and María Elena Sánchez Montalvo conclude from their observations that theatre in Latin America "está en la etapa de madurez caracterizada por una general preocupación de proyectar un teatro político, didáctico pero alejado de la pancarta y el panfletismo fácil. Un teatro de verdadera 'confluencia poética y política' como lo ha definido el

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dramaturgo venezolano Rodolfo Santana."[48]

Luis Rafael Sánchez responds to the often heard criticism that the Puerto Rican theatre is excessively nationalistic in its orientation:

> El teatro puertorriqueño ha sido escencialmente nacionalista, y por otro lado, tiene que serlo; porque en Puerto Rico hay un problema político que no se acaba de resolver, y como una parte fundamental de la intelectualidad es separatista, es independentista, el tema que siempre examina escénicamente es el de la desaparición de nuestra personalidad como pueblo, es decir la transculturación, el problema de los puertorriqueños en Nueva York como minoría oprimida, la participación de los puertorriqueños en los conflictos que les atan a los EEUU. Entonces nuestro teatro realmente se lo acusan en varias ocasiones de ser un teatro excesivamente local, pese a que algunas obras puertorriqueñas, como La carreta, como Los soles truncos, como Vejigantes, como La pasión según Antígona Pérez, como La hiel nuestra de cada día se han hecho en distintos sitios fuera de aquí.[49]

Woodyard also addresses himself to this point noting that "The young generation of writers often subscribes to a liberal policy, which serves as a useful point of departure in criticizing real or potential evils. To obviate governmental censorship, it is frequently expedient to adopt a classical theme or a historical figure to disguise the contemporary issue at fault. . .The Caribbean lands have felt the strong hand of dictatorship or the vested interest of North American

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enterprises. René Marqués's La muerte no entrará en palacio (1957) criticizes the Puerto Rican commonwealth arrangement, Abelardo Estorino's El robo del cochino (1961) deals with pre-Castro Cuba, and Luis Rafael Sánchez in La pasión según Antígona Pérez (1968) attacks a military dictatorship."[50] Other plays with socio-political content include: La res, Francisco Tobar García (Ecuador); Tiempo muerto and La encrucijada, Manuel Méndez Ballester (Puerto Rico); Vejigantes, Francisco Arriví (Puerto Rico); El color de nuestra piel, Celestino Gorostiza (México); El gesticulador, Rodolfo Usigli (México); Americaliente, Jorge Díaz (Chile); Los perros, Elena Garro (México); Lo que dejó la tempestad, César Rengifo (Venezuela); and selected works of Agustín Cuzzani, Enrique Buenaventura, Abelardo Estorino, Egon Wolff and Osvaldo Dragún which we have previously mentioned.

There is no question though that the theatre should concern itself with social questions. Or is there? The multi-talented Miriam Colón, actress, producer, director and founder of El Teatro Rodante Puertorriqueño/The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, was recently asked this question. She answered: "Definitivamente que sí. Debe enfocar la sociedad, el sistema, la condición del hombre. Si no cumple con esa misión pierde parte de su razón de ser."[51]

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Addressing himself to the same issue, Isaac Chocrón remarks that "All good theatre is political. But that is different from using theatre as a platform, or the theatre of demagogy. I believe theatre can make political statements but should not be a political poster."[52] Perhaps one of the most direct expressions however, of the political direction of Latin American theatre is this one by Jorge Díaz: "Personally, great works do not interest me. The important thing is the present, to communicate with the community where I live, to clarify and illuminate zones of human behavior. . .What seems critical to me now is to make a theatre of urgency, of immediate testimony, as a commentary on reality. A functional and direct theatre, which is tied to well-determined local events. To do this I use living material related to Latin America."[53]

Woodyard sounds a familiar note of caution however, when he warns that "the unfortunate tendency of this trend of committed theatre is that the playwright's political ambitions tend to override aesthetic considerations to the extent that the play is in danger of becoming a political diatribe and only an extremely skillful dramatist can handle the two elements successfully."[54] Neglia reiterates these words of warning: "Este teatro comprometido, sin embargo, puede

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resultar perjudicial cuando se convierte sólo en un instrumento de propaganda política; puede, en cambio, estremecer la sensibilidad del espectador con su actualidad inquietante y su actitud polémica cuando se le entiende como conjunto compuesto también de los ingredientes imprescindibles a todo buen teatro, o sea el entretenimiento y el fin estético que permite apreciarlo como creación artística."[55]

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F. Image of the United States in the Theatre

The theme of the depiction of the North American either as an imperialist intruder upon Latin soil, or as a model of corruption in his own territory[56] has particular relevance to the Puerto Rican political situation. Woodyard singles out the Puerto Rican situation where "several plays by René Marqués, Manual Méndez Ballester and others, have dealt with the adulterating effect of North American political and economic policies upon the Hispanic tradition of the island, as well as problems created by the mass migrations of Puerto Ricans to the barrios of New York."[57] Although Dauster notes a shift in attitude toward the United States and comments: "In fact, Americans rarely appear, and the bulk of the political attack is in the form of satire on governmental interference, political corruption and bureaucratic obstructionism."[58]

Pottlitzer, in my opinion, is more accurate in designating an "ambivalent attitude toward the U.S. and it cultural forms, at once protest and imitation.[59] Enrique Buenaventura, dramatist and director, one of the Latin American theatre's most respected talents, as well as flamboyant personalities, has pointed out the excessive adoption of what he terms

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"capitalist techniques", that is, elaborate systems of amplification, lighting, slick ultra-sophisticated sets, all incorporated into a theatre presentation which more than likely has as its purpose a scathing attack on the United States.[60]

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G. New Directions: Theatre Festivals, Collective Creations, Popular Theatre Movement

At first glance a major advance towards continental communication between dramatists and all kinds of theatre people are the national and international theatre festivals which take place in numerous cities throughout Latin America. Most of the works viewed are written by Latin American playwrights and presented by professional and non professional theatre groups from all over the continent. Solórzano notes that the goal of the "Primer Festival de Teatro Nuevo en Latinoamérica" which he organized in 1969 "era mostrar las diferentes maneras en que el teatro latinoamericano ha captado la evolución del género dramático en todo el mundo."[61] Gerardo Luzuriaga, writing about the "Tercer Festival de Manizales" in 1971, reports that the goals were "la creación de mecanismos estables de difusión teatral, la promoción sistematizada de estudios y trabajos prácticos permanentes."[62]

The implications of the political nature of the festivals is a significant point for speculation. Gerardo Luzuriaga's report on both the "Tercer Festival de Manizales" and the " "Cuarto Festival de Manizales" indicates intense emotional

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and political overtones. He indicates, "Por lo demás reinó en el festival un clima polémico politizado, con acusaciones y declaraciones acaloradas."[63] What does the political ferment say about the kind of people doing "new" theatre in Latin America? What are their backgrounds? Are they the most radical sector of the population? Or is this a question of traditional, bourgeois dramatists and drama versus experimental dramatists? Or political conservatives versus radicals? Or is it a classic Marxist confrontation emphasizing economic and class differences? What was the tension at the Festival indicative of? What did it mean? The actual value of these festivals for the participants is reflected in the recommendations adopted by the "Cuarto Festival de Manizales" where they reaffirmed the importance of the festival for the development and integration of the Latin American theatre into the political process for the liberation of the continent.[64] Projecting into that post-liberation future, Richard Schechner responds to the question "Do you think theatre has a role in a post-war post-revolutionary situation?" with a controversial evaluation of the drama and dramatists he experienced in Latin America: "Sure, it could express the feelings and interrelations of

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the people and the tensions and the social situation. But it [the theatre] must develop its own forms, and the people we met were wandering in the wilderness because they were attached to bourgeois forms and, therefore, they are irrelevant. They are still using proscenium theatres and plays; it's like trying to build rockets on an automobile assembly line; they're not equipped."[65]

The proliferation of theatre festivals and symposiums provide a forum for people involved in all facets of Latin American theatre to break their isolation, to interchange impressions, methodology concerning their work and mutual problems they share. These theatre festivals are particularly helpful to those groups involved in creaciones colectivas, another new direction in the theatre, which considers the play "un objeto debatible" rather than an untouchable, entity. Luzuriaga explains the importance of these creaciones colectivas in the following statement: "Una consecuencia lógica de este deseo de hacer teatro popular es la proliferación de 'creaciones colectivas,' hecho que no debe interpretarse como simple cosa de moda, sino como una respuesta práctica a la visión burguesa de la gran mayoría de nuestros escasos dramaturgos."[67]

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The creación colectiva, directly related to the teatro popular movement, merits a study in its own right. Ranging in experience and artistry from the oldest, most respected TEC (Teatro Experimental de Cali) of Colombia, to the numerous young groups springing up all over the continent, it is a movement whose goals are to create a theatre community with different options: in some groups the actors are also the technicians: in other groups the work is researched and written among the whole elenco. Their method of working often includes exhaustive interdisciplinary investigations in as many fields as possible (sociology, history, political science, literature, anthropology, art and music) in order to amass a body of information around a particular idea.[68] The group then engages in improvisations, in constant interchange of ideas and impressions in order to arrive at the collectively conceived final version that it will present. It then solicits reactions and criticism from its various audiences, ranging from factory workers, to students, to townspeople, and these changes are considered by the group for possible incorporation into the presentation. The play is thus conceived of as a dynamic creation rather than a static object, with intra-group evaluation as well as

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public response solicited as an integral part of the creative process. The Guatemalan playwright, Manuel José Arce, reinforces the generally political nature of the popular theatre movement when he explains that in a collective creation the critic is integrated into the theatre community: "No es el crítico tradicional que sirve el sistema económico-político."[69] For this writer, the philosophy of the movement embraces the essence of Humberto Eco's literary theory of the "obra cerrada" and the "obra abierta."[70]

In response to the question, Do 'collective works' mean there are no good dramatists?, Chocrón answered: "I think collective works are interesting but I think they are interesting as experiments, as spectacles, as "theatre theatre". I think it is better when you have a good text and you are disciplined by the intentions of that text."[71] Similarly, Sánchez says that "a mí me parece, y lo ha hecho Grotowski con su Teatro Pobre que el dramaturgo sigue siendo una figura fundamental, incluso en los grupos llamados "colectivos". . .Yo creo más en un dramaturgo trabajando para un grupo, como Bertoldt Brecht con el Berliner Ensemble, y Pirandello con su compañía, o sea, tener una serie de gente para quien escribe el dramaturgo."[72]

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H. Who is the Latin American Theatre Public?

Different from the European theatre, the Latin American theatre has to create the product--the play--as well as create the consumers of that product--the public. One of the most serious problems facing the Latin American theatre is that of transforming an essentially passive cultural clientele into an active one. Since drama is imaginative literature and depends on the collaborative use of the imagination by the playwright and his audience,[73] it is necessary for us to examine the nature of that audience. Who *is* the Latin American public? Who goes to the commercial theatre? Do these same people attend independent theatre productions? Is it a public that is influenced and conditioned by the critics? Is it a public with eclectic taste or is its taste determined by the expectations of its social class? By and large theatre is still a product, still an experience for the middle class, for the upper classes with money, for those people self-consciously interested in culture. As Buenaventura notes, "Our urban theatre-goers are those who, having more time between work and sleep, become interested in 'culture'."[74] However, the desire to create a public in the face of the competition from the cinema and television, has

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led to the proliferation of young theatre groups in some countries, and in other countries, to the development of a national theatre, also to programs including teatro infantil, and to decentralization of the theatre experience, that is, taking theatre out of the traditional urban theatre houses and to the people. The establishment of national and regional theatre competitions also serves to encourage the development of an interested public.

As we have previously alluded to, there are different kinds of public who attend different types of theatre. The public which could not read and the poor in almost all of Latin America were traditionally excluded from the theatre until very recently. The teatro popular movement, much like our own Popular Theatre Movement in the United States, (the Bread and Puppet Theatre, the San Francisco Mime Troup, the Teatro Campesino) has as an essential goal the politicization of the masses, hence the presentation of plays, skits and improvisations in rural and urban barrios, in schools and in factories. Buenaventura, however, is vehemently against what is usually called "popular theatre" or "theatre of the masses", a theatre for a fixed audience and about a specific set of problems. He considers that phenomenon another "trick

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of the system" where the people are given a lesser product since they are considered by the establishment as incapable of grasping the larger message. Buenaventura rejects the polarities of commercialism, or that of agit prop since it "only leads to eliminating any possibility of true artistic subversion, or undermining the system in its essentials: the consciences and conduct of its victims."[75] Thus, he stresses the importance of a communicative interaction between the play and the audience.

Clearly in his case it is important that their theatre work not be directed solely to workers or peasants, but also to the bourgeoisie and to students. Buenaventura emphasizes the fact that "colonial deformation concerns us all in different ways. By making different classes aware of their role we can divide the public, confront it with a demystified, unroutinized reality."[76] Thus, as he views the creative dilemma, the only possibility is to become owners of their own means of production, to develop their product and communicate among themselves directly.

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II. Problems in Realizing Theatre in Latin America

There are numerous reasons why the theatre genre has been slow to develop in Latin America in recent years. They include financial and technical difficulties in getting works staged; the impossibility of making a living in the theatre and as we have just discussed, the need to create a public. As if these concrete preoccupations were not enough, the theoretical and sociological considerations remain, whether or not the Latin American theatre has social and literary transcendence, and whether it reaches a significantly representative portion of the population. In this section we shall examine these problems more closely.

In this author's opinion, a crucial point is the one made by Lyday and Woodyard that:

> One cannot, of course, speak solely in terms of playwrights and literary movements, for the production on stage, involving interpreters and directors, is the essence of theatre. And herein lies the major problem for most Latin American dramatists, past and present. Only a relatively few major cities--Rio, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Santiago, Lima, Mexico City, and possibly two or three others--have legitimate theatrical seasons, and even in these it is and has been commercially expedient to present a fare weighted with European and American hits. Thus, even playwrights from countries represented by these few cities have difficulty in getting their works staged, while those from other countries only

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> rarely see true commercialproductions of their plays. Additionally, dramatists and entrepreneurs in several countries are faced with severe political censorship. Many playwrights also find it difficult to encounter publishers for their works, and almost nowhere does there appear to be ample market to warrant large printings of plays that do manage to reach press.[77]

Suárez Radillo offers a similar explanation for the immaturity of the Latin American theatre: "Por otra parte, la madruez de los autores teatrales sólo se consigue cuando éstos logran estrenar sus obras, verlas cobrar vida en la escena haciéndoles patentes así sus defectos de construcción, de ritmo, de diálogo. Es por esto que la 'forma' falla frecuentemente en las obras de autores hispanoamericanos sobre todo en las obras de autores de países pequeños donde la vida teatral es necesariamente reducida."[78]

One reason for a limited theatre life is that most theatre groups have acute financial problems. They are forced to perform in small theatres or improvised quarters, before intellectual minorities, since they lack the facilities to bring the theatre to the masses. In certain cases, the state directly or indirectly intervenes to give financial support to certain theatre groups. In those cases we must ask ourselves how offical sponsorship effects creativity? Does a government supported theatre movement always reflect an "offical line"?

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Governmental repression too, constitutes a formidable obstacle for theatre groups as Gerardo Lazuriaga documents: "La presidenta del elenco de Monterrey explicó en uno de los foros, que en México no pueden todavía los grupos teatrales ser explícitos en sus mensajes, sino que tienen que velarlos de alguna manera."[79] As in all countries where direct or indirect censorship exists, the arts, particularly the theatre genre relys on the complicity and the sophistication of the public to read between the lines. This is particularly true in Puerto Rico and Manuel José Arce notes it too in Guatemala. Of course, there is no way to measure how widespread self-imposed censorship is, as Juan Goytisolo wrote in Señas de identidad:

> . . .tu patria se había convertido en un torvo y somnoliento país de treinta y pico millones de policías no uniformados. . .dentro de poco los funcionarios ya no serían precisos puesto que, en mayor o menor medida, el vigilante, el censor, el espía se habían infiltrado veladamente en el el alma de tus paisanos. . .(Y cuántas veces tú . . .no habías pactado con el conformismo ambiente, censurándote en público y en privado, ocultando a los demás tu verdad irreductible: policía asimismo bien que te pese ahora.)80

Joanne Pottlitzer refers to the self-censorship issue in relation to Argentina and México where the choice for many dramatists is either to leave the country or to practice

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self-censorship. As we have noted though, this "choice" is not limited to Argentina and Mexico, but tragically includes almost all of Latin America. Argentina, Chile, Paraguay, Brasil, Puerto Rico.[81]

What does it mean for the development of the Latin American theatre that few people can make a living from it without the necessity to supplement their income by taking other work, often not related to the arts? Both Luis Rafael Sánchez and Isaac Chocrón among others, comment on the lack of professionalism that results when actors, technicians, in fact, everyone connected with a production, is holding down more than one job and barely has time to rehearse. A related problem for the theatre is the lack of adequate preparation for its actors and actresses. Although not universally true, Manuel José Arce blames the schools of dramatic art for not providing any training that might be "verídico, del pueblo," but rather teaching them "como hablar sin faltas de ortografía."[82]

A situation which has hampered the development of an autoctonous Latin American theatre is that of imitating European and American themes and movements at the expense of exploring their own reality. Richard Schechner offers an illuminating example of this phenomenon: "The preoccupation with North American forms at the expense of their own was

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most bizarrely illustrated in Buenos Aires, where one company was doing American Hurrah and another Viet Rock, at the same time that the government was being very repressive."[83] We will treat this point more extensively when discussing foreign influences on the Latin American theatre.

The impact of the cinema, foreign as well as national, is a significant factor in theatre development and production in Latin America. Albeit initially it did draw on theatre audiences and diminish them, it also fomented a mutual expanding and incorporation of new technical element which eventually allowd the theatre to recognize its limitations as well as technical possibilities. As Neglia observes, the theatre "aprovechó algunos elementos anemáticos, y, a la progresiva aminoración de la ilusión óptica causada por la competencia de la cámara fotográfica, opuso una mayor unión emocional entre la platea y el esencario y creó nuevos recursos dramáticos para expresar la fantasía."[89] Thus the mise en scene had to adapt and change, in part because it was evident that the cinema could better do what theatre was trying to do, but also because of the exigencies of the new treatment of time and space that the rhythm of life itself imposed. A combination of these factors stimulated the theatre to develop and emphasize other strengths.

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III. The Play as Different From the Written Text: Theatre as Dramatic Presentation

An elaboration of the fundamental differences between the dramatic text and the dramatic presentation is crucial for an appreciation of the theatre genre. Castagnino attempts to clarify the confusion around this issue: "A menudo, aun en altos niveles, culturales, se advierte una suerte de confusión entre teatro, género dramático, texto dramático y arte dramático. Es probable que tal confusión sea de origen escolar pues se estúdian en clases de literatura, autores dramáticos, obras teatrales y estructuras dramáticas y se piensa que se estudia teatro."[85]

In this section we will establish the seminal concept of theatre as dramatic presentation. As Elmer Rice asserts in The Living Theatre: "The playwright who understands his craft never loses sight of the fact that in order to communicate what he has created he is dependent upon an elaborate apparatus which comprises not only physical, mechanical and organizational elements but artistic interpretative assistance. This apparatus is called the theatre, and without it there could be not art of the drama."[86] Nor can we ignote the essèntial complexity of the theatrical

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experience. As John Gassner warns:

> One does not undertake to discuss form in any art without qualms; and when the art under consideration is theatre there is the added complication that we are concerned with two arts, dramatic literature and stage production. Nor is stage production at all a simple matter, for it involves all the arts of the theatre--acting, music, the dance, scenic design, stage lighting, costume design, and architecture--that is, the kind of playhouse occupied by the actors and their audience and the kind of stage upon which the performance takes place."[87]

In answer to the theoretical dilemma, "When can we legitimately talk about a theatre experience," Castagnino responds, "aunque tradicionalmente, desde el campo de la teoría literaria clasifique la obra teatral en la categoría 'género dramático,' el teatro no depende de la literatura. Si decir 'género dramático' es pensar la obra desde la literatura, una obra dramática es teatro sólo cuando se traslada a la semiosis del escenario, cuando se la representa."[88] Thus the importance of the literary text as theatre *in posse* cannot be stressed enough. Hilda Torres Varela supports the different nature of the dramatic text and the actual representation in her observation:

> De un lado del 'hecho teatral' (realidad compleja y dinámica perecedera, pues existe únicamente en el instante del tablado) está el Hombre: el grupo humano que se expresa a través de una individualidad, el autor dramático. Pero su texto no es aún teatro, sino sólo letra. Para serlo debe llegar al Hombre, al grupo humano público o espectador."[89]

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Once again we are confronted with the phenomenon of the public, a dynamic element in the dramatic equation, "el que le descubre al autor y a los actores defectos o cualidades que ellos mismos no han visto; ironías que no han sido captadas, al escribirse o al ser interpretadas, así como pasajes de un interés que no habían sido valorizados ni aun por el director."[90]

Castagnino refers to the absurd polarization regarding the much disputed conflict, "Qué es más importante en el arte dramático, el texto dramático como presencia literaria o la puesta en escena como existencialidad teatral y razón de vida del texto?" His accurate differentiation between the two genres helps to clarify the issue: "La literatura se realiza con medios expresivos, resortes operantes y finalidad distintos a los del teatro. Este, para ser y existir, reclama la integración de tres factores: público, actor, texto. Cada uno de ellos aisladamente no cuenta como hecho teatral".[91] Solózano too, refers to the essentially interdependent nature of the theatre experience when he asserts that "los textos deben ser sometidos a la luz del escenario para determinar su vida interior definitiva, pero también ha comprobado que el acto vivo del teatro no puede consumarse sin el apoyo eficaz de un texto compuesto con sabiduría."[92] And once again

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Castagnino indicates a process of mutual enrichment that results from the necessary interrelationship between text and dramatization, when he notes: 'Los signos del texto, además, se enriquecen con los signos de una actuación: pausas, silencios, aceleraciones, subrayados gestuales, prosódicos."[93] Thus we come to see the text as one more element rather than the primary one, among the various elements that contribute to the unity of the theatrical experience.[94] And so Elmer Rice's observation has even more validity: "The greatest mistake that the student or teacher of drama can make is to approach it as primarily a literary art."[95]

Even on the printed page, a play looks different from another genre. We who read the play must actively thrust our imagination on to the written text to realize its dramatic impact. And there is always the ambiguity of reading stage directions rather than seeing them incorporated into the actual stage production. The complexity of our critical task includes a careful reading of silences, of the unspoken words, of actually waiting out the written pauses to achieve dramatic impact. Both John Kronik and Frank Dauster refer to these same skills in the art of

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reading a play, necessary for the drama student and critic alike.[96]

The fact that we ask different questions when we read a play and when we see a play, reinforces the fact that the text and the dramatization belong to different spheres. The immutable nature of the written text determines its connection to literature; while the various nature of the independent disciplines involved in the dramatic enactment necesitates a wider range of criteria and sensitivities to the techniques of the actors as well as to the hermeneutics of the director who effectuates the transformation of the text into dramatic representation. Using the linguistic principles of semiotics, the science of signs, Castagnino explores the different languages of the theatre experience and the dramatic text:

> Teatro y texto dramático cumplen función comunicativa y apelan a dicho mecanismo trascendente, pero los signos de uno y otro difieren. El texto radica en el signo escrito, fijado. En el teatro los lenguajes son múltiples y diversos: acción, voz, gesto, movimiento, silencios, luces, escenografía, maquillaje, vestuario, etc. Los signos del texto, en parte, son comunes con los de la literatura general; sus códigos se corresponden con los de ella, con los de todo lo escrito. Los signos del teatro, además, se proyectan hacia otros lenguajes y códigos: sociales, quinésicos, proxémicos, de identidad, prosódicos, etc.[97]

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The element of time assumes a different nature in both the written and the performed drama. With reference to the temporal element, drama can be described as something that "happened" on the written page at one point in time--in the past--but that is being actualized at another point in time--in the present. Castagnino comments on this point: "Si la literatura es tiempo, arte temporal, el teatro es arte espacio-temporal. Pero un espacio es limitado: el escenario; sus elementos, los signos escénicos. De ahí que al leer un texto dramático se parte del signo linguístico (temporal), se aprecia en ellos el carácter literario; pero el secreto de la buena lectura, en este caso, reside en advertir cómo están propuestos los signos escénicos: o sea, apreciar los valores teatrales, su 'dramaticidad'"[98] Dürrenmatt emphasizes the immediate nature of a dramatic presentation in the following statement:

> El teatro transforma una obra, por el hecho de la representación, en algo visible, audible, tangible, pero, por ello mismo, en algo inmediato. Esa condición de inmediatez es una de sus determinaciones más importantes. . .Una obra de teatro acontece. . .La condición de inmediatez que toda obra de teatro aspira, la visibilidad en que se quiere transformar, presupone la existencia del público del teatro y del escenario."[99]

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Sánchez also describes the temporal element from the point of view of the dramatist:

> El dramaturgo es un hombre que trabaja contra el tiempo. No puede perder una sola línea porque en cada línea hay una nueva revelación de la persona, de la anécdota dramática, del ambiente, de la atmósfera, de la tensión. Tiene que trabajar a la vez con todos los elementos. De manera que como creación, el teatro realmente es un género de una exigencia capital, monstruosa. Además hay más limitación de tiempo y de espacio, independiente de lo que hace O'Neill en Strange Interlude, una obra de nueve actos, pero por eso es una locura. Pero en una obra tradicional de dos o tres actos, tú sólo tienes hora y media, dos horas, tres horas como mucho, para levantar el mundo, para caracterizar a una gente, para darle crecimiento, "dramatic growth"--un concepto fundamental en la dramaturgia--para que esos seres se iluminen, para que cambien su vida o no la cambien, pero todo eso en un espacio de dos horas.[100]

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IV. What Should Theatre Do? Be?

In order to come to terms with the basic question, What should theatre do? Be?, we must continue our examination of the nature of the theatre experience and once again name those essential qualities which are theatre. If it is true, as José Juan Arrom has vigorously asserted, that theatre is the barometer of the society in which it exists, and as Elmer Rice in The Living Theatre similarly concludes, that the theatre is fluid, and assumes the form of the society that contains it, then we must recognize the fundamental nature of drama as a staged public event. Oscar Büdel aptly states that "the audience is to be made part and parcel of the whole performance. . .With this we move toward the concept of theatre as a rite, as the liturgical celebration of a community."[101] All the dramatic theories which we have examined until now have stressed this essentially interractive nature of theatre, text-public-actors, along with a view of theatre as a synthesis of the arts:

> El arte de teatro. . .no es ni el juego de los actores, ni la pieza, ni la puesta en escena, ni la danza; está formado con los elementos que lo integran: el gesto, que es el alma del juego de las palabras, que son el cuerpo de la pieza; las líneas y los colores que son la existencia misma del decorado; el ritmo que es la esencia de la danza.[102]

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An illuminating response to the question "Why a play?" comes from the novelist Elie Wiesel, author of the play, Zalmen or the Madness of God. He provides an affirmation of the purpose and importance of theatre, what it has done, and what it can do:

> Why a play? I was not a playwright and had no ambition to become one. I loved theatre--and still do--as a spectator, and never dreamed of changing sides. I chose this form out of despair; I had tried everything else. Newspaper and magazine articles, television and radio appearances, even a book--with no tangible results. The only medium I had not tested was the stage. And yet, I knew its impact. Since the end of World War II, the most important and meaningful words have been said on the stage: Brecht and Beckett, Sartre and Camus, Hochhuth and Ionesco influenced this generation as much as novels influenced the previous one, and perhaps more.[104]

Buenaventura gives his opinion concerning what theatre should do:

> In this period of 'impersonal,' mechanized power of neo-capitalism without proprietors, theatres should create plays not about machines but about dehumanized beings with concrete privileges and interests, with ridiculous little stories and also about the hands which operate that gigantic backdrop, the mass media. That is why communication in the theatre is for us not a problem only of emoting, of creativeness, of empathy. It is not a problem of objective research, not a demonstration of ideology. It is an action which is taken apart, piece by piece, impinging on all our means of perception, touching the experiences of the actor and the spectator, and finally, is put back together for us to criticize.[104]

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In his usual striking style, he insists that the theatre must produce something so irritating-or so pure--that it cannot easily and harmlessly be digested by the consumer.

Buenaventura reflects and incorporates many of Grotowski's theories such as the via negativa, that is, eliminating whatever proves superfluous; the necessity for an actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, "live" communion; the breaking through personal barriers and the actors revealing themselves, which makes it possible for the spectator to undertake a similar process of self-penetration.[105] Buenaventura insists on that same concept of exchange, of giving of oneself in the theatre experience. He says that "it is necessary to understand that creating is not inventing. We and the audience are re-creating a model reality, and only through that reality, in active proof of it, are we revealing ourselves to ourselves and to the public, just as we reveal the public to ourselves and itself."[106]

The following statements about the nature of theatre are representative of the broad range of opinions held by many Latin American dramatists. Clearly theatre definitions are as various and disputable in Latin America as they are universally. It will be interesting to see

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how our author, Luis Rafael Sánchez, manifests facets of these definitions and expectations into his own work. These demands for the theatre offer a spectrum ranging from mystical and metaphorical concerns to socio-political and revolutionary themes. Says Buenaventura: "El teatro tiene que descubrir los motivos de la sociedad; hacerlos visibles a través de imagénes útiles. Hay que buscar imágines vitales y no imitar lo que se sabe todo el mundo."[107] Says Osvaldo Dragún, in a similar vein, the theatre experience must bring wonderment, not confirmation of what we already know: "Yo necesito que me haga sentir mejor de lo que soy."[108] The Spanish critic of Latin American theatre, José Monleón demands "que el teatro no me califique con la etiqueta que ya acepto, digamos radical sino que me descubra las cuestiones, las dudas, la dialéctica."[109] Manuel José Arce has said that drama is "el desarrollo escénico de una metáfora."[110] Alexandro Jodorowsky in a much more controversial vein has said: "I ask of art what the North American asks of marijuana. . .I want to reach a mystical theatre; characterized by the search for self, a kind of alchemist theatre where man changes and progresses."[111] As Chocrón observes about the people who write theatre:

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"They have taken a voyage to the theatre and that is a voyage to Hell. There are not many people who stay. Like novelists who write plays or poets who write plays. They write one, or maybe two plays and they go away scared from the theatre. The theatre is awful; it's very difficult. As I said before, it's like a hell. It's such a mystery whether the thing is going to come off or not. . ."[112]

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V. Critics and Criticism

"No other art and its participants are so fully criticized by the inexperienced and the inept as the theatre and those who create it."[113] This is especially true in Latin America where the hermeneutics of literature, especially of drama, are practically unknown; where a tradition of glibness in criticism of the arts, as well as favoritism and personalism, is only recently becoming a more rigorous profession. Luis Rafael Sánchez defines two different types of theatre criticism in an interview with this author:

> La crítica periodística lo que realmente debe interesarse, es en el hecho dramático que ocurre en la escena, sin siquiera pensar en qué es lo que el autor escribió y qué suprimieron en el texto, etc.; eso a él no le importa. A él lo que le debe de importar. . .es el producto que allí se le ofrece. Entonces como parte de la crítica literaria puede objetar al planteamiento que haya hecho el director del texto, la manera como los actores hayan iluminado ese texto, las limitaciones de la obra, si las tiene, hasta qué punto lo que el autor ha propuesto en el texto está recogido en la puesta en escena, y sobre todo--y a mí me parece que es la pregunta fundamental de toda crítica--ver si el montaje escénico tiene una propuesta.
> Ahora, la crítica que hacen los especialistas es una que es más rigurosa en el sentido de bregar con el texto. Así como el crítico periodístico brega con aquello que es de paso, una puesta en escena, quien se enfrenta a un texto para hacer una crítica profunda, en primer lugar tiene que ubicar al escritor en un momento; tiene

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> que conocer realmente cuál es la sensibilidad epocal que el escritor comparte. . .Aquel crítico tiene que saber de qué manera el escritor elude o se enfrenta a la problemática del mundo de nuestros días. Si lo elude, ¿por qué? Es decir, no es gratuito. Tiene que tener una razón real. Si lo enfrenta, ¿por qué lo enfrenta? ¿Hasta qué punto es este teatro efectivo?114

Castagnino too, addresses himself to this problem:

> Indispensablemente la crítica teatral tiene dos campos de acción para integrarse en la totalidad de un teatro nacional: una, anterior a la creación, exploratorio, de sondeo del medio, de los gustos, de las apetencias, de las necesidades; de información y educación de los receptores del fenómeno teatral; de apertura de instancias comparativas con analogías o divergencias exteriores. En un segundo campo coadyuba, orienta, analiza lo creado para la escena; es en esta segunda actividad donde la crítica teatral hispanoamericana renegó de las metas científicas y, en muchos casos, apareció como factor conflictivo. Por otra parte, su origen periodístico, del que muy excepcionalmente se aparta, la ha derivado, en casi todos los lugares del continente, a la crónica de espectáculo, con pautas mundanas, antes que a las problemáticas expecíficas. 115

Different from the novel form where we are ever conscious of the fictions involved in the telling of the story, of narrative distance which is inherent in the reader-text relationship, even of the critical necessity for such distance, the drama as we have previously established, precisely because it has goals of a different communicative and interactive nature, necessitates extra-literary criteria. Theatre does not render itself effectively to literary criticism, but rather more appropriately, to drama criticism. A play can read well as literary text, but does it function coherently as a dramatic production? Does it work on the stage? Is it a dramatic success? A drama critic's metier is to be familiar with the criteria that allow him or her to

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anwser these questions. Likewise, a necessary requirement of a drama critic is the ability to conjure the theatricality of works seldom if ever seen in stage performances.[116] As Jack Richardson, drama critic for Commentary, points out in the following statement, a theatre reviewer must possess a broad range of critical faculties and sensitivities:

> The most interesting theatre criticism is that which is based not on discrete moments of isolated experience but on cultural foundations that provide a continuity of attitude and a reference for judgment that the ordinary theatre reviewer generally lacks. To possess an intelectual background more varied and extensive than the memory of a dozen or so theatre seasons means, at the very least that one is fortified against the assaults of spurious novelty that, in our time, have been the most frequent threat to critical sanity."[117]

The Mexican playwright Maruxa Vilalta adds: "Su función [del crítico teatral] es muy importante y debe estar para ello perfectamente preparado. Una crítica no debe ser una hilación de adjetivos en pro o en contra de la obra, sino un análisis."[118] Sánchez recapitualtes:

> Yo creo que el crítico literario tiene realmente un trabajo más extenso, porque es un trabajo más definitivo. La crítica periodístico tiene que tener una extraordinaria sensibilidad porque tiene realmente sólo una puesta en escena para su impresión, entonces tiene que tener la sensibilidad para entender si en aquella puesta en escena, aquello, el texto dramático, ha sido traicionado, o si ha sido iluminado, mientras que un crítico literario realmente puede reflexionar continuamente sobre su texto.[119]

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Unfortunately until recently the majority of Latin American theatre critics came from the ranks of journalists whose criticism was anything but memorable. Serious scholars either didn't consider the theatre worthy of their concern, or relegated the field to a few declared specialists, or participated in the traditional self-congratulatory, superficial criticism typical of Latin America at its worst.[120] Now, however, we can discern new and welcome directions in Latin American criticism. One such direction is a serious commitment to self-criticism. As Buenaventura asserts, "Apenas hemos empezado a elaborar nuestro teatro; por eso hay que ser profundamente autocríticos.[121] Another direction is the commitment of these contemporary Latin American drama critics, as well as the growing number of North American scholars who are seriously examining Latin American theatre, to apply the most provocative and modern critical approaches in their examination of the theatre world. Their critical studies can be found in a number of journals some of them dedicated exclusively to the drama. Among these excellent theatre sources are: Casa de las Américas, Conjunto, Imagen, La palabra y el hombre, Latin American Theatre Review, Mapocho, Modern Drama, Primer Acto, Revista de Estudios de Teatro and World Drama. A recently published volume of critical

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significance is Dramatists in Revolt: The New Latin American Theatre, which contains monographs about some of the most important Latin American dramatists writing today. Scholarly endeavors of this kind admirably serve to situate contemporary Latin American drama in its rightful place among Latin American letters.

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VI. The Mise en Scène

Crucial for an understanding of modern theatre in general, is the basic precept that: "la representación es exteriorización y para exteriorizar los sentimientos poéticos en el escenario es preciso ser experto también en la técnica y saber que no se puede hacer teatro de palabras únicamente."[122] Although I would include other dramatists in the following statement by Erminio Neglia, it nevertheless coincides with my concept of the new Latin American theatre: "Los 'modernos' del teatro hispanoamericano son los Usigli, los Cuzzani, los Dragún, los Solórzano, los Arriví, los Hieremans; son éstos y otros los que entendieron que para hacer poesía en el tablado hay que conocer bien los efectos luminísticos y los sonoros, el concertado movimiento de los actores y la complicada escenografía y que no basta inventar una fábula, por más bello que sea el hábito poético que la insufle."[123] Among the other dramatists who indeed share this sensibility to the theatrical techniques involved in the dramatization of a play, are our own author, Luis Rafael Sánchez, as well as René Marqués, Elena Garro, Abelardo Estorino, Egon Wolff, José Triana, José de Jesús Martínez, and Myrna Casas. George Woodyard accurately appraises the advances that the modern

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Latin American theatre has made in dramatic structure and technique in the following evaluation:

> Regardless of theme, the serious contemporary plays exhibit a better control of technique than at any previous period in the history of the Latin American theatre. These playwrights with a poetic vision of their material correlate structure, character, and dialogue with the thematic importance of the work. Symbolic lighting and sound effects enhance the total experience, and the new dimensions provided through the inventive use of stage space and the manipulation of time elements create a vital and complex theatre."[124]

The theatre in our century has been characterized by a search for antinaturalistic form. This is no less so in Latin America than in otherparts of the world where various techniques have been adopted to revitalize the theatre. Accordingly, and in particular with relation to the Latin American theatre, the problem is no longer one of inventing theatricalist, or any other methods for that matter, but of using them organically and meaningfully; that is, being assured that the method intrinsically responds to the work and is not a gratuitous device imposed upon the play. John Gassner points out theproblems that have resulted in the theatre from poor use of the artistic device of the theatricalism: "By and large, the theatre has been divided

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between commercial-professional sterility and noncommercial or commercial experimental-futility; and surely an important reason is that theatricalism has been so often misused or used only frivolously, as a rule, when used well."[125]

It is my contention that in a real sense theatricalism is an aesthetic style in its own right, just as realism, romanticism and absurdism are aesthetic styles. However, threatricalism, that art of magnification, of "exaggeration under control"[126] is a device so common to all theatre, that it is most often used along with each of the other styles. Latin American dramatists, to a lesser or greater degree, do in fact seek theatrical effects wherever they can attain them without sacrificing truth of environment and truth of character. Erminio Neglia further elaborates upon this trend in the following attempt to define precisely those dramatic and technical devices that make up the modern Latin American theatre:

> El concepto básico de los recursos en boga es el rechazo del ilusionismo escénico del realismo--naturalismo. Sea el resultado un mayor acercamiento, entre los espectadores y los actores, sea una distanciación de la manera Brechtiana, no cabe duda de que el teatro moderno ha logrado destruir el concepto de que es realidad lo que se va desplegando en el escenario. Se propone, en cambio, una aceptación del juego escénico como tal.[127]

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These new dramatists have precise ideas about the mise en scène they envision for their own works, particularly since many of them have done directing as well as writing. Along with Brecht and their contemporaries, Albee and Pinter, they share the tradition of the playwright as director.[128] Considerations as disparate as aesthetics and finances have influenced Latin American dramatists so that they no longer write plays that require elaborate and expensive sets whose high production costs do not realistically correspond to the possibilities of Latin American theatre. Sánchez talks about the early days of the theatre festivals in Puerto Rico (late 50's and early '60's) and the unfortunate artistic results caused by excessive spending on elaborate sets and costumes:

> Muchas obras que pudieron destacarse más, dándole un valor fundamental al texto, se ahogaron en el montaje, hasta el punto que uno pensaba que aquel montaje era realmente excesivo para la obra que se representaba. Es decir, que pudo haberse resuelto por la vía de la imaginación contando con el texto, que es lo fundamental en el teatro, pero se falsificó en favor de un montaje deslumbrante, con grandes luces, con grandes escenografías.129

A widespread political and social response to this situation is typified by TEC's essentially Grotowskian stance vis-à-vis escenography. Buenaventura directly refers to Growstowski's original concept of "Poor Theatre" in the following statement:

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> In TEC's work we have prepared for a profound attack on our basic situation. We have dispensed almost entirely with scenery, lighting effects and other purely technical resources, for two reasons. First, we live in an underdeveloped environment and are, in the true meaning of the word, a poor theatre. Second, we think that the theatre should be a means of avoiding enslavement by the mechanical and to mass media. [This necessitates] setting down a clear boundary line between the direct oral and gestural communication of man to man, and propaganda. The forms of direct communication, man to man, exist among our people and they must be studied and used.130

The Swiss dramatist Dürenmatt summarizes a prevalent Latin American attitude in this way: "El decorado quiere insinuar, significar, condensar, no describir. Se ha vuelto transparente, se ha desmaterializado. Pero puede quedar desmaterializado también el lugar del drama que la escena debe representar. . . Lo decisivo es que se escriben obras con el escenario y también involucrando el escenario."[131] Thus the contemporary Latin American mise en scène can be characterized by greater austerity in the escenography, in the clothing, as well as greater moderation in the acting. As Gerardo Luzuriaga notes, "No excederse parecía ser la norma en todo."[132]

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VII. The Playwright

We have examined the nature of the theatre public as well as the nature of Latin American critics and criticism. We have described the techniques being incorporated into the mise en scène and we will now explore the dimensions of two crucial elements in the drama, the playwright and the director.

The following statement by the Uruguayan playwright Hernán Silva Valdés once again brings to the fore the now familiar polemic concerning the actual and theoretical perameters of theatre and literature. He states his position in unequivocable terms: "Creo que un autor teatral debe hacer más teatro que literatura; esto es fundamental." [133] He clearly emphasizes the representational and interpretive aspects of drama and provides a controversial point of departure for further debate. Isaac Chocrón responds to this point in the following statement: "When you write for theatre you have to know that it is going to be performed by actors and it has to have a certain rhythm and a certain style of language; if you are going to write your plays with metaphors, it might be poetry, but it will not be very effective theatre--and even more to the point, he insists--One vital truth about the theatre is that once the play is written, that is when it begins.[134] Raúl Castagnino, espousing a

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a position consistent with earlier statements of his cited in this study, also comments on the dramatist's role. Notice the similarities in intent between both Castagnino and Silva Valdés's statements: "El autor dramático escribe para el público, no para el lector y se comunica con aquél a través del actor, del escenario, las luces, los efectos acústicos, el vestuario, el movimiento, etc., que agregan sus propios signos."[135]

In a searching, articulate and perceptive examination of his role as director-actor-playwright in Latin America today, Buenaventura convincingly communicates the oneness that so many "trabajadores de teatro" feel with their profession. They are in the daily struggle for dignity, for personal and artistic freedom, living it, dramatizing it and contending with the difficulties in sharing a particular vision with the world at large. Buenaventura invokes the Orteguian precept that he cannot separate himself from his circumstance, and by analogy implies that neither can other dramatists. His trenchant remarks emphasize the value of having a playwright also act as critic and evaluate Latin American dramatic production. Among the points Buenaventura sheds light on is the nature of the role of

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the teatrero (the theatre person) in Latin America today: "A director-actor-playwright, a 'comedian' as one says too aptly in Spanish, does his job with his whole organism, and transmits experience through a form that is direct, alive-ephermal. He cannot pack up his way of life and memories and go off to set them down in a tranquil place without soldiers, without guerrillas, without starving proletariat masses, without students."[136] Solórzano, as opposed to Buenaventura, who says theatre cannot ultimately make change, views the role of the dramatist as witness, as revealer of life's rhythm and problems, and even as a mediating factor in finally resolving those problems. He suggests that: "Por este medio [del teatro] es factible plantear y aun resolver cuestiones comunes sentidas como indispensables, porque el autor, si responde a las instancias que lo determinan, es un expositor de problemas que atañen por igual si no a la totalidad de sus coetáneos, sí al sector del cual él resulta el representativo."[137] Similarly, Carlos Gorostiza writes that the dramatist should: "señalar y aclarar los conflictos que nos hieren."[138]

As we have seen and will continue to see in this study there are innumerable "vital questions" concerning theatre

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in Latin America that are open to discussion, and as yet, quite unresolved. The particular question concerning the nature of theatre, "Is it an intellectual exercise or not", is an ever present one and important to explore in regard to the role of the dramatist. It is thought provoking to compare Richard Schechner's observation, essentially in contradiction to those opinions already examined here by Solórzano, Buenaventura, Arróm, Chocrón, and Sánchez. Says Schechner: "The intellectuals form a separate and rather reactionary class, not reactionary in their ideas so much, but in the structures of their thoughts. . .Theatre people always, again, took an intellectual approach. They were revolutionaries in the mouth but really conformists in the heart."[139]

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VIII. The Director

If, if fact, there is controversy regarding the role of the dramatist, so there is controversy regarding the role of the director. How important is the director? Who is actually more important, the playwright or the director? Solórzano talks about the role of the director who should be capable "de revelar y aun de enriquecer el contenido total de los textos"--as well as--"de recrear las obras para mostrar sus perfiles ocultos, o para explorar en los motivos que habían pasado inadvertidos a los mismos dramaturgos."[140] Sánchez expressed himself at length to this writer on that subject: "La labor del director es una labor fundamental, es importantísima; que realmente el director, lo que tiene que hacer es replantear todo el mundo dramático que propone el dramaturgo. No es traicionarlo, es enriquecerlo, es iluminarlo."[141] Sánchez expressed a desire to direct one of his own plays. However, he wondered if there really wasn't a terrible risk involved:

> y es que un director si es bueno, se convierte realmente en crítico. Pienso que el director cumple una función extraordinaria en su relación con el autor porque el director, si es un director inteligente y penetrante, puede pasar juicio crítico frente al autor. Yo siempre digo que llega un momento en que de alguna manera el autor se envuelve emocionalmente con lo que está haciendo. Tiene siempre que dejar una buena grieta en la que tiene que colocar su espíritu crítico no puede realmente hacer nada. Tiene que tener un rigor para enjuiciarse. Pero el director puede incluso ayudarle a valorar lo

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> que sirve escénicamente. No es que el escritor no lo sepa, si no, no sería dramaturgo, pero incluso con su ventaja de distancia de la obra, el director puede sugerir interpretaciones originales, novedosas, a insistir, enfatizar, en algún momento.142

Torres-Varela refers to "los hombres de teatro, a directores. . .a los coordinadores de las partes del hecho teatral" and describes their role in this way:

> Quien debe conciliar y 'armar' la expresión de arte teatro, plural, dinámica, perecedera, momentánea o pública, reconstruyendo la realidad inicial, su imagen y sensación, su expresión en el texto dramático, su exteriorización a través de la escena y su contacto definitivo con el público, posee con más claridad que ningún otro : La medida de lo que es el lenguaje escénico, en que participan el contenido de la palabra, sus grados de expresividad a través de la voz humana, la mímica, lo técnico, y tiene además la adhesión de los medios expresivos de otras artes--música, arquitectura, pintura--tanto como de esa corriente recíproca entre escenario y espectador que se vitaliza y se cumple en la conjunción del teatro: en el instante de la escena."143

Joanne Pottlitzer, originally referring to the Mexican theatre, asserts that "today the innovative and imaginative theatre. . .is generally in the hands of directors rather than writers."[144] Chocrón responds to this issue in the following statement:

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> In Brazil, for example, the real luminaries, the real stars of the theatre are the directors. In Latin America we don't have that many professional actors and actresses and no performer, even in Buenos Aires or Mexico, can earn a living exclusively from the theatre. He or she has to do television and radio or other things. This means then that there are quite a number of theatre groups where the director is really head of the group and they often prefer to take young actors or people without any theatrical training and rehearse them for a production. Of course that means the director is of crucial importance. But I think in the last four or five years, not only in Latin America, but all over the world, the theatre of text is coming back. In the next few years we are going to witness a renaissance of the playwright.[145]

In this vein it is clear to me that the majority of the dramatists in Latin America today would prefer a director who creatively allows their own texts to come alive. They would seem to be in agreement with Simon Gray's comment on Harold Pinter's direction of Gray's recent play, Otherwise Engaged: "His gift is to realize the text. . .I don't want a magnificently inventive director magnificently inventing for my play."[146]

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IX. Foreign Influences

I have chosen to mention representative names and movements from the international theatre world who have had significant impact on the Latin American drama. Within this context the North American theatre functions as a significant influence. In recent years more and more Latin American playwrights have come to the United States to study drama, to give lectures, to be writers in residence at university centers all over the country, from the University of California, to Yale, Columbia, New York University and the prestigious Iowa Writers Workshop.[147] I am constantly struck by the up to the minute familiarity that these Latin American dramatists have with the contemporary North American theatre scene. The older, more familiar and established names certainly come up: Edward Albee, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, Langston Hughs, Lillian Hellman, but so do the younger playwrights, the post-Albee generation: Arthur Kopit, Israel Horovitz, David Rabe, Jason Miller, Joe Orton and the new Black writers, Charles Gordone and Ed Bullins.[148] As was mentioned earlier, many contemporary American plays are presented in Latin America. Many, like Hair and Viet Rock, are political in nature and representative of the American counter-culture movement.

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In Puerto Rico, more so than in any other Latin American country, the American reality has the greatest possibility of being understood or misunderstood. However, this facile familiarity can lead to mistakes in artistic judgment, as in the recent situation where the prison play, Short Eyes, written by Miguel Piñero, the first Puerto Rican playwright from New York, was presented on the Island. In New York it had immediate impact on the audience as it succeeded in confronting them with their own fears and hostilities towards Hispanics, as well as the violence and anger ever on the surface of their own lives. It didn't work theatrically in Puerto Rico, though; the island sensibility, different from the Nuyorikan sensibility, was offended and angered by the portrayal of Puerto Ricans.

We have often asked ourself what it means for Latin American theatre to have always been available to foreign trends and influences. As we will shortly see, this openness to foreign influences is as true for the contemporary theatre, our main concern, as it was in the past.[149] In the past one could measure a particularly dry period in the European theatre by the corresponding dearth of memorable works in the Latin American theatre. Foreign authors,

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actors and actresses, and theatre groups have left their mark on the Latin American scene, from playwrights as diverse as Ibsen, Benavente, Pirandello, Shaw, O'Neill or T.S. Eliot, Tennesse Williams, Ionesco and Dürrenmatt, to the renowned actors and actresses, Sarah Bernhardt, María Guerrero, Ermite Zacconi, Marcel Marceau and Jean Louis Barrault, to the well traveled theatre companies of Margarita Xirgu, Louis Jouvet, the Teatro Nacional Popular de Paris, and the Piccolo Teatro de Milano, among others. As Torres-Varela observes: "Todo contribuye a moldear, aportar, transformar el sentido de un teatro en formación, el 'teatro latino-americano,' que así decanta tendencias, modifica realidades, adquiere sentidos diversos o intensifica sus naturales inclinaciones."[150]

Addressing herself to the problem of foreign influence, Erika Munk, writes about the risks of imitation for a Latin American theatre which often "savors too much of a humble effort to please, to be as good as."[151] As Chocrón notes: "The colonial condition is expressed in all Latin American theatre, not only in the theatre that is openly political and that used theatre as a political platform. . . .I believe that now there might be a new wave of American cultural aggression in Venezuela, due to the latest developments in the oil situation."[152] As we have indicated earlier, the

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long range effect of imitation might very well be to cut off one's capacity to protest. In a similar vein Maruxa Vilalta responds to the following question about foreign influences: "¿Crees que el aporte de Grotowski, Peter Brook, el Living Theatre, el Open Theatre y el Teatro Campesino ha sido en verdad rejuvenecedor para la escena?--Claro, que lo ha sido. Ha resultado una especie de descarga eléctrica que ha despertado a muchos que vegetaban y ha provocado una toma de conciencia general. No es que se haya descubierto nada nuevo ni excepcional, pero la influencia, ha sido benéfica para la evolución de todas las técnicas, aún las convencionales."[153] In effect we are referring to the successful assimilation of influences, rather than mimesis. Dauster refers to this idea in his article: "Social Awareness in Contemporary Spanish American Theatre," while Woodyard further elaborates upon it in the following statement: "The reality-illusion conflicts of Pirandello, the alienation techniques of Brecht, the existentialist preoccupations of Camus and Sartre, and more recently, the absurdists inclinations of Beckett and Ionesco provided models which have been incorporated within a Spanish American context."[154]

In attempting an exploration of the idea of mutual influence, we must consider the ramifications of applying

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existing theories to the Latin American context. Whether these theories are Brechtian or Artaudian, whether they come from Peter Brook or Peter Weiss, it is not in and of itself meaningful merely to relate that theory to a particular Latin American work. Rather, it is significant to discern patterns and references in a particular theory to wider reality. Therefore we can conclude that Artaud or Brecht's theories were significant in creating a milieu for Latin American dramatists to write in, to act in, to create in. For me, that is of greater significance than saying in such and such a work, on page 4,,we see Brechtian overtones, an observation more narrow and picayune, than illuminating.

Much has been written in recent years about the influence of Artaud on Latin American drama. In addition to exercising direct influence on certain dramatists, such as Isaac Chocrón and Griselda Gambaro, his theoires, especially his relationship with the collective-imporvisation movement, have had pervasive acceptance in the Latin American theatre scene.[156] Artaud emphasizes the singularity of the theatrical spectacle and its independence from literature. He asserts in his first manifesto, El teatro y la crueldad: "Importa ante todo romper la sujeción del

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teatro al texto y recobrar la noción de una especie de lenguaje único a medio camino entre el gesto y el pensamiento. Este lenguaje no puede difundirse, sino como posible expresión dinámica y en el espacio, opuesta a las posibilidades expresivas del lenguaje hablado. Se trata, para el teatro, de crear una metafísica de la palabra, del gesto, de la expresión. . .No se trata. . .de poner directamente en escena ideas metafísicas, sino de crear algo así como tentaciones, ecuaciones de aire en torno de estas ideas. . .Se trata de hacer del teatro una función. . ."[157]

Another figure who has received enthusiastic acceptance in Latin America is Bertoldt Brecht. Specifically, however, the didactic function of Brecht's theatre has been accepted by those young dramatists writing combative theatre, that attacks the evils in this society with the intention of provoking social change. The incorporation of specific Brechtian, or epic elements will be discussed in relation to Sánchez's work in Part II.

Along with the influence of individual dramatists such as Pirandello, Brecht, Artaud and Ionesco on the Latin American theatre, the influence or Valle-Inclán on the modern theatre cannot be ignored. His technical experimentation, including

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the use of impressionism, has been adapted and assimilated within the new currents of Latin American theatre. Sánchez himself has expressed a predilection for Valle-Inclán. Castagnino notes: "Cabe también consignar que en la dramaturgia de Valle-Inclán. . .radican bases de la problemática del lenguaje que replantearán, posterior y alternativamente, el teatro épico y el poético, la anti-novela y el antiteatro; bases anticipadas de los efectos de distanciamiento y del tremendismo, de la demesura y la iracundia."[158]

Among the critics who have tried to classify modern trends in Latin American theatre, Solórzano and Neglia coincide in viewing two trends, the theatre that introduced Greek themes and the theatre of suggestion that made use of "lo irracional, de lo intemporal y de lo inespacial." Neglia maintains that it is this second type of theatre that had more impact on the Latin American scene and that created a more poetic art and a more intuitive, rather than photographic reality. He notes, however, that the realistic theatre was profoundly influenced by the other and "aprovechó el lenguaje antirretórico y funcional. . .Sin alterar la intención original de presentar una realidad objetiva, algunos autores realistas empezaron a emplear frecuentes

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desplazamientos de tiempo y de espacio o ciertos elementos expresionistas.[159]

The incorporation of techniques originally employed in the school of German expressionism, played a major role in the new Latin American theatre. Neglia observes: "El expresionismo escénico que tuvo como precursores a Wedeking y Strindberg entró a formar parte integrante del renacimiento teatral. Los recursos técnicos expresionistas tomaron un sinfín de formas y se incorporó lo intangible por medio de voces evocativas, gritos, luminotécnica variada, música estridente y deformación del decorado."[160] Castagnino also notes the rejection of photographic realism in favor of dramas which "se manejan por sugestiones de toda índole: plásticas (aproximación de mimos y del ballet), sonoras (trucos auditivos y musicales), visuales (atmósferas crómáticas y luminicás)."[161] So many of these innovative techniques, especially regarding the role of the director, resulted from the teachings of such widely known theorists and practitioners as Stanislavsky, Appia, Reinhardt, Gordon Craig, Jouvet, Pittoëf and Dullin. Ilse T.M. Brugger in Teatro alemán expresionista provides us with a useful description of that school, whose manifestations in our own author's work will be examined in Part Two. She says:

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> En su enmarcación, las cosas así como los hombres no son, significan. Los personajes tienen nombres genéricos, se explayan en el monólogo, en la introspección. La representación tiende a la desrealización, a lo idealístico; el lenguaje presenta carácter hímnico. Rompe con el ilusionismo y procura un tratamiento abstracto del espacio, la forma geométrica, la línea y la luz como factores aptos para enmarcar y subrayar puntos esenciales de un proceso o desarrollo espiritual. Hay propensión a anular la separación entre escenario y platea, a derrumbar la cuarta pared.[162]

Although Woodyard states that the sophistication of the contemporary Latin American theatre links it seriously with the world avant-garde movement,[163] the question remains, What does la vanguardia mean for the Latin American theatre? George Schanzer points out the great variety in the vanguard, from the expression of a common theme; protest, to the use of a common technique; paradox. He suggests that the vanguard responds to the need that the new Latin American playwrights share, to find an original idiom within which to express their national reality. Accordingly, he insists that a dramatist doesn't have to write within the vanguard theatre movement, per se, but rather can be eclectic and share certain techniques and preoccupations of that school.[164] Gerard Luzuriaga responds to this question in an optimistic way, while Ulises Gómez is more sceptical about the contribution of the vanguard to Latin American drama. Says Luzuriaga,

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referring to the "Cuarto Festival de Manizales" in 1971:

> La tendencia experimentalista que logró en este festival realizaciones magníficas y muy originales, no es privativa del teatro latinoamericano, como bien sabemos, pero me parece que la corriente caracterizada por el uso de técnicas vanguardistas para la entrega de un contenido revolucionario, si lo es, especialmente si tenemos en cuenta la manera tan vigorosa e insistente como se manifestó en este festival, y que es buen indicio de lo que está ocurriendo a diario en diversas latitudes del continente.[165]

Ulises Gómez obviously adhering to a more restrictive definition of the vanguard, is not at all convinced of the value of presenting what he refers to as "difficult" works, like those of Ionesco, for a small Latin American public. Says he: "Lo grave está en que aun los que la entienden lo hacen encerrados en esquemas mentales cuyos valores son diferentes a los que motivaron a Ionesco a escribir la obra. No tan solo digamos diferentes sino cuyas escalas de valores estéticos son 'de otro mundo'."[166] We find that criteria rather narrow and wonder, along that line, why the work cannot be valid if it speaks to another audience on that new audience's terms? Must it be Ionesco's "message" or can it be a Latin American interpretation of Ionesco's message, which very well might be different because of Latin America's different cultural heritage. Also, aren't national adaptations of "classics" or even successful international

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plays, valid? Doesn't the fact that one develops a version of another country's play personalize the message; make it speak to a particular audience; in effect, make it relevant and immediate, rather than removed and representative of one specific society?

Woodyard poses another thought-provoking question about the school of absurdist theatre when he asks why so little theatre of the absurd has been written in Latin America. Esslin has said that the movement of the theatre of the absurd comes from a feeling of deep disillusionment, the draining away of the sense of meaning and purpose in life.[167] Woodyard contends that this attitude does not exist in the United States and Latin America, which share a "generally optimistic attitude about progress and the chances for success,"[168] in other words, a strong sense of values, tradition, religion. He hypothesizes that now that the overall living situation is worse in Latin America, its dramatists will probably respond differently to the problems that this cultural evolution brings. I disagree with Woodyard's premise on the basis that the political, as well as socio-economic situation in Latin America has always been difficult, and the sensitive artist, has always responded to that fact. However, part of this dramatist's cultural response, indeed a very twentieth

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century, Western response, was not to look towards the "absurd," but rather to try rationally to sort out his or her circumstance. Thus they recurred to other dramatic schools, most notably to that of social protest. Another factor working against a Latin American absurdist tradition is the lack of writers artistically equipped to respond in the absurdist idiom, which precludes a particular attitude toward language and its usage.

In Part One then, we have described the cultural milieu of the contemporary Latin American theatre: its major creative directions and problems; the theoretical nature of the theatre experience; as well as its dynamic components. We will now proceed to Part Two, a critical examination of the dramatic contribution of Luis Rafael Sánchez, in the context of the contemporary Puerto Rican theatre, and in the broader context of the Latin American theatre.

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NOTES

Part One: Contemporary Theatre in Latin America

[1]Erminio Neglia, Aspectos del teatro moderno hispanoamericano (Bogotá, Colombia: Editorial Stella, 1975) p.31.

2Hilda Torres-Varela, "Hacia una conjetura en el porvenir del teatro," CCLC, No. 53 (Oct. 1961) p.129.

3The concept of "transferability" of a play from one Latin American country to another is discussed by the following writers: Isaac Chocrón in a personal interview with this author, 26 Jan. 1975, included in Appendix 2, p.4, affirms the concept when he says "I believe that what cannot work are idiomatic things. But that can be arranged. . .when new plays are done in Buenos Aires. . .I encourage the director to change things; not change the meanings, but to change words and to introduce Argentine idiomatic expressions which give the play an immediacy that is very favorable"; René Marqués, on the other hand, in Julio Imbert, "El teatro Latinoamerica. Mesa redonda: Silva Valdés, Figueiredo, Marqués, Genta, Gorostiza," CBA, VI, No.22 (1959), p. 24 says "resabios de costumbrismo, diversas expresiones localistas o nacionales. . .dificultan la difusión y aceptación de la obra dentro del ámbito total hispano-parlante"; Margaret S. Peden makes the same point in "The Theatre of Egon Wolff," in Dramatists in Revolt: The New Latin American Theatre (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), p.191 where she refers to works translated from the Spanish into the English and asserts "of the six plays in this study, the first three--Mansión de lechuzas (1966, "Owl Mansion") Discípulos del miedo (1957, "Disciples of fear"), and Niñamadre (1960, "Child Mother"--are less 'transferable' than Wolff's more recent plays."

4Frank N. Dauster, "Cinco años de teatro hispanoamericano," Asomante, XV, No. 1 (1959), p.63.

5George W. Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America: Six Plays, Introduction (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1971), p. IX-X.

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[6]José Monleón, "Experiencia con el movimiento teatral Latinoamericano," Address delivered at the "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano" New York City, 10 Aug. 1976.

[7]Ibid., Address delivered at "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano."

[8]Frank N. Dauster, "An Overview of Spanish American Theatre," Hispania, L, No.4 (Dec. 1967), p997.

[9]Carlos Solórzano, "Primer Festival de Teatro Nuevo de Latinoamérica," LATR 2, ii (1969), p.61.

[10]Lyday & Woodyard, p. XIII.

[11]William I. Oliver, ed, & trans., Voices of Change in the Spanish American Theatre, Introduction (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1971) p.XII.

[12]Joanne Pottlitzer, "Conformists in the Heart, An Interview with Richard Schechner by Joanne Pottlitzer," TDR 14, ii(1970), p.40.

[13]Gerald Rabkin, "Rehearsing Latin American Drama," Review (Winter 1974), p.71.

[14]Carlos Miguel Suárez Radillo, "Tema y problema en el teatro hispanoamericano," Cultura (San Salvador), No. 37 (1965), p.100.

[15]Alfonso Sastre, Drama y Sociedad (Madrid: Taurus), p.48

[16]Frank Dauster, "Social Awareness in Contemporary Spanish American Theater," KRQ 14, ii (1967), p.125.

[17]Dauster, p.120.

[18]Gerardo Luzuriaga, "El IV Festival de Manizales," LATR 5, i (1971), p.13.

[19]Erika Munk, "A Repressive Theatre," TDR 14, ii (1970), p.33.

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[20]René Marqués, Ensayos (1953-1966) (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial Antillana, 1966), pp.43-80.

[21]Munk, p.34.

[22]Torres-Varela, p.131.

[23]Imbert, p.24.

[24]Torres-Varela, p.131.

[25]Torres-Varela, p.131.

[26]Torres-Varela, p.131.

[27]Lyday & Woodyard, p.XVI.

[28]Imbert, p.22.

[29]This particular point was discussed by Frank Dauster in 'Points of Contact in the Drama of the Caribbean," a paper presented at the MLA Annual Convention, Dec. 1976.

[30]Imbert, p.24.

[31]Imbert, P.26.

[32]Willis Knapp Jones, Behind Spanish American Footlights (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p.431.

[33]Frank Dauster, rev. of Behind Spanish American Footlights, by Willis Knapp Jones, Rev IB, XXXII, No. 62 (1966), p.323.

[34]Teresinka Alves Pereira, "II Festival de Teatro Latinoamericano, 1972: Despoimento," LATR 5, ii(1972), p.65.

[35]Luis Leal, Breve historia de la literatura hispanoamericana (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1971), p.313.

[36]Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p.XV.

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[37]Neglia, p.80.

[38]Imbert, p.24.

[39]Woodyard, The-Modern Stage in Latin America, p.XV.

[40]Suárez, Radillo, p.94.

[41]Ernesto Sábato, El escritor y sus fantasmas (Buenos Aires, 1963), p.38.

[42]Raúl Castagnino, Semiótica, Ideología y teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nova, 1974), p.84.

[43]Carlos Solórzano, Teatro breve hispanoamericano contemporáneo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1969), p.10.

[44]Dauster, "Cinco años de teatro hispanoamericano," p.55.

[45]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.148.

[46]Dauster, "Social Awareness in Contemporary Spanish American Theatre," p.120.

[47]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.87.

[48]Susana D. Castillo & María Elena Sandoz Montalvo, "V Festival Latinoamericano de Teatro y Iª Muestra Internacional," LATR 7, i (1973), p.51.

[49]Personal Interview with LRS, See Appendix 1, p.6.

[50]Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p.XV-XVI.

[51]Manolo García Oliva, "Minuto y Medio con Miriam Colón," ABC de las Américas, 3, No. 82 (26 Apr-2 May 1974), p.61.

[52]Personal Interview with Isaac Chocrón, see Appendix 2, p.8.

[53]María Luz Mellon, interviewer, "Jorge Díaz regresa a Chile," Madrid (29 Sept. 1971), p.12.

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[54]Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p.XVI.

[55]Neglia, p.48.

[56]Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p. XVI.

[57]Ibid., p.XVII

[58]Dauster, "Social Awareness in Contemporary Spanish American Theatre," p.121.

[59]Pottlitzer, p.40.

[60]Enrique Buenaventura, Remarks made at "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano," New York City, 10 Aug. 1976.

[61]Carlos Solórzano, "Primer Festival de Teatro Nuevo de Latinoamérica," LATR 2, ii (1969), p.61.

[62]Gerardo Luzuriaga, "Tercer Festival de Manizales," LATR 4, ii (1971), p.72.

[63]Ibid., p.72.

[64]Luzuriaga, "El IV Festival de Manizales," p.12.

[65]Pottlitzer, p.41.

[66]Enrique Buenaventura, "Evaluación de los trabajos presentados," "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano" 13 Aug. 1976 .

[67]Luzuriaga, "El IV Festival de Manizales," p.13.

[68]For further elaboration on this method of work, see Nicolás Buenaventura, "Guadalupe, años sin cuenta," and Pablo Azcárate, "El nuevo teatro y la CCT(Corporación Colombiana de Teatro)," in Separata de Estudios Marxistas (Colombia n.d.).

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[69]Manuel José Arce, Lecture presented at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, 4 Dec. 1974.

[70]Umberto Eco, Obra abierta (Barcelona: Editorial Seix Barral, 1965).

[71] See Appendix 2, p.7.

[72]See Appendix 1, p. 17.

[73]This concept is further explored by Bruce Wardropper, "The Implicit Craft of the Spanish Comedia," in Studies in Spanish literature of the Golden Age Presented to Edward M. Wilson, ed. R.O. Jones (London: Tameses, 1973), pp.339-356.

[74]Enrique Buenaventura, "Theatre & Culture," TDR 14, ii(1970), p.151-2.

[75]Ibid., p. 153.

[76]Ibid., p.155.

[77]Lyday & Woodyard, p.XIV.

[78]Suárez Radillo, "Tema y problema en el teatro hispanoamericano," p.95.

[79]Luzuriaga, "El IV Festival de Manizales," p.10.

[80]Juan Goytisolo, Señas de identidad (México: Editorial Joaquin Mortiz, 1966) p.235.

[81]Joanne Pottlitzer, "Theatre of a Forgotten Continent," TDR 14, ii (1970), p.35.

[82]Manual José Arce, Lecture, 4 Dec. 1974.

[83]Pottlitzer, "Conformists in the Heart. . .," p.40.

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[84]Neglia, p.26.

[85]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.18.

[86]Elmer Rice, The Living Theatre, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959), p.23.

[87]John Gassner, Directions in Modern Theatre & Drama (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966), p.3.

[88]Castagnino, Semiótica . . ., p.33.

[89]Torres-Varela, p.128.

[90]Barbero, p.177.

[91]Raúl Castagnino, Teatro: teorías sobre el arte dramático II (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1969), p.76.

[92]Solórzano, Teatro breve hispanoamericano contemporáneo, p.79.

[93]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.42.

[94]The French theatre practitioner Jean Doat, has expressed this belief in the following works about dramatic theory: Teatro y público (Buenos Aires: Fabril Editora,1962); La expresión corporal del comediante (Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 1959).

[95]Rice, p.14.

[96]Frank Dauster, "The Text as Theatre," and John Kronik, "On the Road to Schizophrenia: The Dramatic Text and the Teachings of Drama," Papers delivered at "Theatre in Latin America: A Symposium," Pennsylvania State University, 29 Oct. 1976.

[97]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.21.

[98]Ibid., pp.35-6.

[99]Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Problemas teatrales (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1961) p.58.

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[100]See Appendix 1, p.25.

[101]Oscar Büdel, "Contemporary Theatre & Aesthetic Distance," Brecht. A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Peter Demetz (New Jersey: Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1962), p. 72.

[102]Gordon Craig, The Art of Theatre (1905) quoted in R. Castagnino, Teatro: teorías sobre el arte dramático II (Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1969), p.27.

[103]Elie Wiesel, "I Wrote This Play Out of Despair," New York Times, Sun. 14 March 1976, p.48.

[104]Buenaventura, "Theatre & Culture," p.155.

[105]Jerzy Grotowski, Towards a Poor Theatre (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968), p.19.

[106]Buenaventura, "Theatre & Culture," p. 156.

[107]Buenaventura, "Método Colectivo," "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano," New York City, 9 Aug. 1976.

[108]Osvaldo Dragún, "El teatro argentino contemporáneo," Address delivered at "Theatre in Latin America: A Symposium," Pennsylvania State University, 28 Oct. 1976.

[109]Monleón, "Experiencia con el movimento teatral latinoamericano," Address delivered at "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano," New York City, 10 Aug. 1976.

[110]Manuel José Arce, Lecture presented at the graduate center of the City University of New York, 4 Dec. 1974.

[111]Joanne Pottlitzer, "Alejandro Jodorowsky Festival," LATR 4, ii (1971), p.73.

[112]See Appendix 2, p.12-13.

[113]Edward A. Wright, Understanding Today's Theatre, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972), p.11.

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[114]See Appendix 1, pp.9-10.

[115]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.88.

[116]Jack Richardson, rev. of Theater Criticism & Comment, by Stanley Kauffman, New York Times, Sun. 20 June 1976, p.69.

[117]Anna Balakian, Introduction to The Theater of the Marvelous, Gloria Orenstein (New York: New York University Press, 1975), p.XIV.

[118]Manolo García Oliva, "Minuto y medio con Maruxa Vilalta," ABC de las Américas, 3, No. 77 (22-28 March 1974), p.57.

[119]See Appendix 1, p.11.

[120]María Teresa Babín in "La Crítica literaria (en Puerto Rico)," in 21 Conferencias (San Juan, Puerto Rico: ICP, 1969) pp.555-580 refers to some of the above mentioned defects in literary criticism; her concept of the critic's role coincides with Eric Bentley's belief, expressed in "The Universality of the Comedia," HR, No. 38 (1970), p.160 that "the correct attitude to a work of art is not to withhold oneself in the name of objectivity but to give oneself as completely as possible."

[121]Buenaventura, "Evaluación de los trabajos presentados," "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano," New York City, 13 Aug. 1976.

[122]Neglia, p.31.

[123]Ibid., p.31.

[124]Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p. XVIII.

[125]Gassner, p. 138.

[126]For a discussion of these concepts see Wright, pp.1-35.

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[127]Neglia, p.52.

[128]Among the Latin American playwrights who have also directed are L.R. Sánchez, Manual José Arce, Francisco Arriví, Enrique Buenaventura, Emilio Carballido, Myrna Casas, Jorge Díaz, Osvaldo Dragún, Luisa Josefina Hernández, Alejandro Jodorowsky, Carlos Solórzano.

[129]See Appendix 1, p.1.

[130]Buenaventura, "Theatre & Culture," p.56.

[131]Dürrenmatt, p.128.

[132]Luzuriaga, "El IV Festival de Manizales," p.13.

[133]Imbert, p.22.

[134]See Appendix 2, p.9.

[135]Castagnino, Semiotica. . ., p.35.

[136]Buenaventura, "Theatre & Culture," p.153.

[137]Raúl Villaseñor, rev. of El teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo, by Carlos Solórzano, VUM (Feb. 1965), p.61.

[138]Imbert, p.28.

[139]Pottlitzer, "Conformists in the Heart. ., p.41.

[140]Solórzano, "Primer Festival de Teatro Nuevo de Latinoamérica," p.65.

[141]See Appendix 1, p. 12.

[142]See Appendix 1, pp.19-20

[143]Torres-Varela, p.133.

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[144]Pottlitzer, "Theatre of a Forgotten Continent," p.36.

[145]See Appendix 2, p.6.

[146]Mel Gussow, "Teaching is My Bloody Life," New York Times, 9 Feb. 1977, p.C 17.

[147]Among the Latin American dramatists who have lived, studied or worked in the United States are: Enrique Buenaventura, Emilio Carballido, Jaime Carrero (Puerto Rican playwright who studies at Yale & has written Noo Yall, Wings), Myrna Casas, Isaac Chocrón, Osvaldo Dragún, Luis Alberto Heiremans, L.R.S. Carlos Solórzano.

[148]This post-Albee generation includes: Ed Bullins, The Taking of Miss Janie, Clara's Old Man; Charles Gordone, No Place To Be Somebody; Israel Horovitz, The Indian Wants the Bronx, It's Called Sugarplum, Morning, Rats, Line, Shooting Gallery; Arthur Kopit, Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mother's Put You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad, The Conquest of Everest, Sing to me Through Open Windows, Chamber Music, The Hero, The Questioning of Nick, The Day the Whores Came Out to Play Tennis; Jason Miller, That Championship Season; Joe Orton, What the Butler Saw; David Rabe, Sticks and Bones, the Basic Training of Pavlo Hummel.

[149]For further information on the history of theatre in Latin America, see: José Juan Arrom, Historia del teatro hispanoamericano (época colonial)(Mexico: Ediciones De Andrea); Frank N. Dauster, Historia del teatro hispanoamericano (Siglos XIX y XX)(Mexico: Ediciones De Andrea, 1973); E. Lewis Hoffman, "Growing Pains in the Spanish American Theater," Hisp W XL No. 2 (1957), pp.192-195; Ruth S. Lamb, ed. Introduction to Three Contemporary Latin-American Plays (Waltham, Mass: Xerox College Publishing, 1971).

[150]Torres-Varela, p.128.

[151]Munk, p.34.

[152]See Appendix 2, p.14.

[153]García Oliva, "Maruxa Vilalta," p.57.

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[154]George W. Woodyard, "The Theatre of the Absurd in Spanish America," CD, III, No. 3 (1969), p.183.

[155]See Gloria F. Waldman, "Three Female Playwrights Explore Contemporary Latin American Reality: Luisa Josefina Hernández, Myrna Casas, Griselda Gambaro" in Latin American Women Writers: Yesterday & Today. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Latin American Literary Review, 1977, pp. 75-84.

[156]Examples of collective, collaborations include: Manuel José Arce & his work in Guatemala; José Ignacio Cabrujas, Roman Chalbaud & Isaac Chocrón in Venezuela; Roberto Cossa, Germán Rozenmacher, Carlos Somigliana & Ricardo Talesnik on the play El avión negro, Argentina.

[157]Antonin Artaud, El teatro y su doble (Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1964), p.41.

[158]Castagnino, Teatro: teorías sobre el arte dramático, p.39.

[159]E. Neglia, "Una recapitulación de la renovación teatral hispanoaméricana," in Aspectos del teatro moderno hispanoamericano, pp.22-23. Also see the following articles by Carlos Solórzano: "Teatro de tendencias universales: in Teatro latinoamericano en el siglo XX (Mexico, 1964), pp.53-98; "Algunas ideas sobresalientes de América Hispanica expresadas en el teatro del siglo XX," in El teatro en Iberoamérica (Mexico, 1966), pp. 27-36.

[160]Neglia, p.25.

[161]Castagnino, Semiótica. . ., p.156.

[162]Ilse T.M. de Brugger, Teatro alemán expresionista (Buenos Aires: La Mandrágora, 1959 , p.50.

[163]Woodyard, "Theatre of the Absurd in Spanish America," p.183.

[164]George Schanzer, "¿La vanguardia varada? (Argentina), "Address delivered at "Theatre in Latin America: A Symposium," Pennsylvania State University, 29 Oct. 1976.

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[165]Luzuriaga, "El IV Festival de Manizales," p. 13.

[166]Ulises Gómez, "En búsqueda del teatro latinoamericano," Boletín Bibliográfico y Cultural X, No.11 (1967), p.214.

[167]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday, 1969).

[168]Woodyard, "Theatre of the Absurd in Spanish America," p.184.

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PART TWO: SANCHEZ'S THEATRE AND DRAMATIC VISION

I. PERSPECTIVES ON THE PUERTO RICAN THEATRE

As will be evident through the following examination, theatre has been an important element in Puerto Rican cultural life in this century. Whether manifested in the enthusiastic acceptance of the Spanish companies that periodically made their way throughout Latin America, or in the tentative efforts of an incipient national theatre nurtured by such prolific defenders of culture as Emilio S. Belaval, Francisco Arriví, Manuel Méndez Ballester, Fernando Sierra Berdecía, and later by René Marqués, there has always been a receptive sector in the Puerto Rican population which has supported these efforts. Just as there have been, since the 1930's various institutions which have persevered in their desire to present theatre productions, regardless of the disillusionment they might have experienced. We share Dauster's appreciation of the aptness of the description of the Puerto Rican theatre phenomenon as a "teatro delfín que aparece, se sumerge y reaparece, visto a ratos solamente, pero siempre vivo."[1] María Teresa Babín offers another series of images that attest to the significance of the theatre genre in the life of the arts:

> El teatro como actividad preferente; el teatro como espectáculo popular; el teatro como expresión de refinamiento intelectual; el teatro como vehículo poético para cons-

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> truir el tinglado imaginario de la historia que ha sido y de la que pudo haber sido; el teatro, en suma, como fuente inagotable de educación estética con un fondo moral social, encaminado a desentrañar los conflictos del drama humano y del drama puertorriqueño, ha incorporado definitivamente un fillón de buena casta a la marejada de nuestra cultura. 2

The following historical panorama provides a context for the emergence of our author as a central figure in the actual theatre movement on the Island. He has been recognized as its most promising playwright since the appearance of his early work La espera, by the Teatro Universitario in 1958. He is part of a generation of playwrights, of which he, Myrna Casas and Gerard Paul Marín, are considered the most important exponents. His roots are firmly planted in the Areyto traiditon of socio-political theatre focused on Puerto Rico, however, as can be seen in La hiel, Sol 13, Interior, Antígona Pérez, he, more than any other contemporary Puerto Rican writer, has consciously integrated the most modern stylistic devices as well as universal concerns into the Island's literature. That he is an integral part of a Puerto Rican theatre tradition can be seen by the fact that many of his plays fall into recognizable categories within the Puerto Rican theatre movement. For example, Antígona Pérez is both a social and poetic work; La hiel nuestra is social in nature; Los ángeles, thematically social, and technically a dramatic monologue; O casi el alma

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shares its concern about religion with other contemporary plays; just as Farsa del amor compradito employs humor and farce, two central elements in Puerto Rican drama. In summary, he has been able to fuse national as well as universal concerns into the contemporary idiom with artistic success. He shares these thematic and stylistic concerns not only with his own theatre generation in Puerto Rico, but also with his contemporaries who write theatre throughout Latin America.

Different from examining the history of the novel or poetry movements, the history of the theatre is a vital indagation which compels the investigator by its very immediacy. At first, an amalgam of dates and places, and then, an impressive array of names are soon differentiated by details and anecdotes that have actually occured in the course of staging a work. What comes to mind are the personal testimonies of numerous theatre people, among them Francisco Arriví,[3] and Nilda González,[4] who use their own experiences to reveal insights into the history of Puerto Rican stage. More so than the novel, a solitary act of creativity, the drama is a group experience and as such comes to life for the observer, as well as the student of theatre, to the degree that the struggle and frustration involved in its development are grasped. It has become clear to this writer that as we examine the development of theatre in Puerto Rico, we are witness to a passion, a suffering and struggle for excellence and meaning, on the part of a dedicated minority.

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We have similarly observed this degree of single mindedness and determination in theatre people throughout Latin America.[5] Thus, we conclude that it is in the nature of the theatre experience to bring together artists with various skills and means of expression in a creatively explosive environment to enact, time and again, their individual passion.

In writing about the Puerto Rican theatre in the 70s, we have the particular advantage of being able to look back at predictions and analyses about its direction, and measure the progress that has been made. For example, when Antonia Sáez offers her explanation for the scarcity of dramatic activity in the early part of the twentieth century, one of these explanations is, "la crisis general que en nuestros días sufre el teatro nacional en busca de nuevas orientaciones y nuevos temas."[6] As we shall see in this section, today in Puerto Rico, there is greater confidence in the legitimacy of the theatre genre. The playwrights themselves possess greater confidence in their own originality and capacity to explore a viable body of themes.

Different from Antonio S. Pedreira's theory that insularismo[7] has fostered a limited range of possibilities for Puerto Ricans to realize in their lives, this author has observed, particularly in the case of theatre people, that Puerto Rico's size, combined with the fact that she is an island, has fostered a prolific drive to achieve; to

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be, as well as to do.[8] To wit, many of the people involved in the Puerto Rican drama scene are--or have been at one point in their careers--actors, dramatists, critics and educators. Piri Fernández de Lewis, Myrna Casas and Angelina Morfi are cases in point: writers, actresses, scholarly critics, Doctors of Letters and university professors. Indeed then, perhaps insularismo, although it provides physical limits on the one hand, on the other hand it allows for a parallel development of one's potential, reinforcing the belief that "here in this island, perhaps I can be anything; try anything." Certain goals and accomplishments must appear more possible than in a larger country. This author's experience in Guatemala, as a Fulbright scholar in fact bears this theory out. I observed a theatre world nurtured by people who were forced to do everything--to be everything--in order to have a theatre season. Similar to the situation just described in Puerto Rico, in Guatemala this same small number of people were the critics, the artists and writers.

Sánchez recounts the jarring, but nevertheless comprehensible situation that he found himself in, in May of 1974 following the successful opening of The Passion of Antígona Pérez in New York when he met an American woman who was shocked that there might exist such a species as "Puerto Rican playwrights."[9] The Guatemalan dramatist, Manuel Galich, in a special issue of Conjunto (the Cuban

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theatre journal sponsored by Casa Las Américas), dedicated to the Puerto Rican theatre, insists that it is unacceptable, although regretfully common, that Latin Americans too have been known to react in a similar fashion to that North American woman. Lack of cultural interchange on the continent, compounded by Puerto Rico's historial "apartamiento"--to use the title of one of René Marqués' plays--have all contributed to this. However, Galich insists that:

> Una mirada, una ojeada . . . por el pasado teatral de Puerto Rico . . . es suficiente para descubrir cuan equivocados estamos la dama yanqui y los latinoamericanos y caribes cuando creemos que la isla aherrojada carece de una rica tradición y de un vigoroso movimiento contemporáneo en el campo teatral. Es más, no sólo tiene ambos valores, sino que supera en ellos a no pocas de nuestras repúblicas independientes. 10

As chroniclers of the Puerto Rican theatre document,[11] aside from the major theatrical figures of the nineteenth century, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera y Salvador Brau, the drama that was being written in those early years of the twentieth century, was still under the influence of thematic and esthetic norms originating from Spain.[12] Thus, although the nineteenth century revealed an "auténtico nativismo puertorriqueño,"[13] it is the twentieth century that allows the full creative artistic expression to develop. As Antonia Sáez observed about the Puerto Rican theatre prior to 1945, "puede decirse que Puerto Rico tiene un teatro que responde más que a fines artísticos a condiciones sociales

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y políticas."[14] The history of the modern theatre movement in Puerto Rico is a trajectory that begins with a series of organizations and events directly inspired by Emilio S. Belaval: the Club Dramático del Casino de Puerto Rico (1933); the Club Dramático del Ateneo, where Belaval served as President from 1937-1939; his own manifesto, "Lo que podría ser un teatro puertorriqueño" (1938); and the Ateneo's sponsorship of a drama contest in 1938 which through this first concerted effort to present plays by native authors (El clamor de los surcos, by Manuel Méndez Ballester; El desmonte, by Gonzalo Arocho del Toro; Esta noche juega el jóker, by Fernando Sierra Berdecía), revealed a new direction in the Puerto Rican theatre, a rejection of both the historical and costumbrista movements that were popular previous to that time. The following description of the Ateneo plays provides a picture of the atmosphere surrounding that first attempt at a new direction in Puerto Rican theatre history:

> La aparición de un teatro puertorriqueño bien planteado, buscando su nuevo espacio entre la idea dramática del hombre y las artes escenográficas de vanguardia, causó tremenda sensación. El teatro puertorriqueño nació bajo fuertes objecciones pero contando con poderosos aliados. Las objeciones, desde luego, eran las que habían de esperarse de la mentalidad transitiva sostenida por el apego a la escena de diversión del teatro comercial español que cubría los asuntos consagrados por la sensibilidad de la clase media, tanto los españoles co /sic/ los éxitos importados de Francia y de Italia; los estilos de actuación destacada, propia del teatro de los actores, con un sólo protagonista, y las

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> escenografías pintadas la mayoría de ellas expuestas con una simple luz básica. Sus aliados, desde luego, eran los artistas, los escritores, los periodistas, los maestros, algunos hombres de negocios, hasta los políticos, todos regocijados con la extraordinaria modernidad del primer intento del 1938. 15

Belaval, sensitive to the imitation of foreign models and the conscious or unconscious denigration of Puerto Rican values in the arts, wrote "Lo que podría ser un teatro puertorriqueño," actually a challenge to Puerto Rican artists, where he articulated a national need:

> Algún día de estos tendremos que unirnos para crear un teatro puertorriqueño, un gran teatro nuestro, donde todos nos pertenezca: el tema, el actor, los motivos decorativos, las ideas, la estética. Existe en cada pueblo una insobornable teatralidad que tiene que ser re-creada por sus propios artistas. 16

He observed that:

> Puerto Rico no parece interesado en el drama puertorriqueño: es un espectador que asiste impasible a su propio drama, que arrincona como inútiles bambalinas aquellas ideas históricas, tradicionales y ambientales por cuya conservación los pueblos luchan desdesperadamente. 17

Moreover, in Puerto Rico, their "dramaticismo es una oscura prenda anímica que lleva cada puertorriqueño colgada al cuello como un escapulario de tristeza, como un broche de austero romanticismo, como un voto de silencio por el dolor de una tierra tantas veces expoliada."[18] He proceeds to state his now famous plan for the theatre:

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> 1) Nuestro teatro tiene que ser un teatro fisonómico, no en cuanto a tema únicamente, sino en cuanto a todos los elementos artísticos subsidiarios, tales como decorado, atrezzo, utilería, efectos lumínicos y motivos musicales;
>
> 2) Por estar nuestra máxima teatralidad en el hombre, nuestro tema inicial tiene que recoger el elemento humano preponderante, buscando aquellos tipos, no importa cuáles sean, que tengan mayor definición territorial; 3) nuestro actor tiene que ser un producto nuestro, un intérprete de sentimentos nacionales que en su recreación personal de las obras no vaya a adulterar el tipo o el ambiente en él confiado; 4) Salvando el contenido fisonómico en cuanto a tema, ambiente e interpretación, la técnica dramática debe tender más a ser una técnica actual, incluso una técnica novedosa, para que no resbale sobre la sensibilidad nuestra como cosa arcaica; 5) Los trazos ambientales no deben pecar de ningún regionalismo pinturero, ni en el tema ni en la escenografía, para que el público no vea en el nuevo intento estético una realidad nuestra que no tiene más justificación que la de una literatura pesada; 6) Tratar de crear por todos los medios al alcance del teatro moderno de que la realidad teatral sea esencialmente una reproducción típica de nuestra realidad territorial. 19

From this we can conclude that Belaval "recognized the problem of having no dramatic tradition of their own on which to build, thus he called the new effort not a renovation, but a building from the now, cognizant of their history but not in imitation of what had gone before."[20]

Arriví recognized the significance of the political situation in fostering creative endeavors when he described the atmosphere of the '30s:

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> El Partido Nacionalista conmueve a gran parte de la intelectualidad joven con su afirmación categórica de la nacionalidad puertorriqueña. Por otra parte, los partidos tradicionales tratan de contener un creciente anhelo de reforma social que termina por cristalizar en el Partido Popular Democrático.
>
> La conciencia nacional, partidista o no, da un alto al proceso de norteamericanización y obliga a pensar en las raíces históricas y culturales del país. El reformismo socialista empuja a conocer la dolorosa realidad circundante cuya liberación económica tal parece confligir con la voluntad nacional.
>
> Por un tiempo, la trágica escisión entre historia y necesidad social que desquicia el mejor ánimo puertorriqueño se finge inexistente en la voluntad de los hombres generosos que combaten la política doblemente sorda del poder constituido. Esta inestable conjunción del sueño nacional, con la reflexión socioeconómica sirve de fuerza motriz . . . a la literatura más valiosa de la época. 21

The years between 1937 and 1940 also witness the appearance of theatre groups such as La Farándula Universitaria, La Sociedad General de Actores, founded by Méndez Ballester, and Tinglado Puertorriqueño, founded by Francisco Arriví and associated with the Escuela Superior de Ponce. The crucial impact, however, was to come from Areyto, Belaval's drama society. Its very name is a significant link with Puerto Rico's indigenous past, referring, as it does, to the dramatic recreation of historical events by the Taíno Indians before the entire tribe. In spite of its short lived existence, 1940-1941, Areyto nevertheless

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fulfilled its stated goals, to present original national drama; to awaken artistic talent on the Island; to introduce and integrate into the Puerto Rican theatre new techniques in direction, acting, lighting, scenery, and generally, to stimulate the interest of the Puerto Rican Public for theatre. The four original plays that were presented include Tiempo Muerto (1940), by Manuel Méndez Ballester, Mi señoría (1940) by Luis Rechani Agrait, He vuelto a buscarla (1940), by Martha Lomar, and Escuela del buen amor (1941), by Fernando Sierra Berdecía. As Arriví notes:

> Areyto . . ., no hay duda, es un punto de culminación y de partida de una época teatral, una permanente referencia para fijar con claridad los hechos más significativos de la actividad escénica puertorriqueña, literaria, interpretativa o técnica, entre la década de los treinta y la formulación en 1956 del realizado en parte Proyecto para el fomento de las artes teatrales en Puerto Rico. 22

In evaluating the significance of the Ateneo y Areyto plays, Dauster concludes that "if none of the plays mentioned are masterpieces, The Dead Season, Tonight the Joker is Wild, and My Lordship still have moments of dramatic power. Also, the acclaim of critics and public alike demonstrated that such a program was no longer an unrealizable dream. Finally, these plays have exercized considerable influence on recent Puerto Rican literature as well as on the theater."[23] Names that were to become permanent in the Puerto Rican theatre, came to the fore during those Areyto years, among them, Leopoldo Santiago

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Lavandero, Julio Marrero, and Madeline Willemsen. Both Sociedad General de Actores and Tinglado Puertorriqueño reappear after Areyto's dissolution, the former presenting two plays by Méndez Ballester, Hilarión (1943) and Nuestros días (1944); the latter presenting various works by Francisco Arriví, including Alumbramiento, María Soledad (1947), Caso de muerto en vida (1951) and Club de solteros (1953). The importance of the theatre activity taking place between 1938 and 1941 initiated by both the Ateneo drama contest and Areyto, cannot be overestimated. Dauster accurately reflects the fact that:

> It is obvious that all these works share a common outlook and a common conception of the theater. They spring from the complex of interests which had led to the burst of activity in all cultural fields; they are attempts to define the reality of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican. Whether this reality be the political, the economic problem of the depressed agricultural worker, or the already developing cultural dislocation produced in the Puerto Rican quarter of New York, the plays are basically social and realistic, frequently naturalistic, in style. Dramatists were not interested in the experimental theatre of Europe or the continental United States; their conception of the theater as a means of social reform dictated a strictly realistic pattern which was to dominate the Puerto Rican theater for a considerable period. 24

Dauster, Phillips, and Arriví are direct in clarifying a provocative moment in Puerto Rican theatre history: why plays by Puerto Rican playwrights were prohibited at the University of Puerto Rico from 1944-1956, after the

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presentation of Enrique Laguerre's La resentida, a recreation of the violence by the peasants against their Spanish landowners in 1898. Babín is more allusive when she writes, "Es lamentable que se empiece a crear en Puerto Rico la actitud de favorecer solamente la representación de obras que no comprometen ideológicamente a sus auspiciadores, mientras se rechazan o se silencian las que ofrezcan motivo de sospecha."[25] Notes Dauster:

> Strangely, one of the best equipped theaters, that of the University, presented no Puerto Rican works between 1944 and 1956. The hiatus was caused, apparently, by a polemic occasioned by its production in the former year of Enrique Laguerre's The Resentful. Although more than ten thousand spectators saw this study of passions caused by the political unrest of 1899, twelve years passed before the Teatro Universitario presented Arriví's Bolero and plena, which is certainly a more pertinent and critical work. 26

Arriví adds:

> El joven Teatro Universitario monta el drama en 1944. Ante 10.000 espectadores, sirve para probar, contra los deseos de su director Leopoldo Santiago Lavandero y a pesar de la enorme afluencia del público, que un sector del mundo oficial se enfriaba ya ante la promoción de la cultura puertorriqueña. 27

In commenting upon the daring act of producing a Puerto Rican work--his own Bolero y plena 12 years later, Arriví acknowledges that "el heroismo se debe a Nilda González."[28]

The Areyto generation devoted its energy to promoting numerous endeavors which brought the theatre movement to

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other sections of the population. In 1941, Santiago Lavandero, former director of Areyto, became involved in the development of the incipient Department of Drama at the University of Puerto Rico. The lasting importance of Santiago Lavandero's work, the creation of a training center in the theatre arts for subsequent generations, has been appreciatively commented upon by Arriví and by Enrique Laguerre.[29] Another important direction that the University took was the creation of the Teatro Rodante with Cruz Emeric as Technical Director and Helen Sackett as Wardrobe Designer.[30] The Esuela del Aire, which presented over 400 dramas on the radio over the years became the home for many artists who performed in Areyto, among them Madeline Willemsen, Lucy Boscana, Francisco Arriví, José Luis Torregrosa, Alberto Zayas, Iris Martínez, Edmundo Rivera Alvarez; as well as many important writers and intellectuals such as Abelardo Díaz Alfaro, José Luis González, Wilfredo Braschi, Enrique Laguerre. Arriví directed its programming from 1942-1949. Consistent with his dedication and conscientiousness, he emphasized the need to prepare themselves seriously and not be superficial in their efforts.[31] In later years, Sánchez worked with the Escuela del Aire's successor, Radio Station WIPR. At the University of Puerto Rico in 1947, Cesáreo Rosa-Nieves formed the Comedia Estudiantil Universitaria. In 1940, Teatro Nuestro, another independent group was founded and performed many of the

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plays of René Marqués. In 1952 the Teatro Experimental del Ateneo, under the directorship of René Marqués, later Piri Fernández, and then Nilda González first initiated its activities.

A brief synthesis of the Teatro Infantil movement in Puerto Rico is particularly significant for its bearing upon our author, who has written for that genre. The children's theatre begins in the 40s with the production by the Escuela Modelo de la Universidad of El pájaro azul by Maeterlinck and Las aventuras de Tomás Chiquichaque based on the Adventures of Tom Sawyer, by Mark Twain. María Judith Franco directs both works and puts to use the techniques of spatial synthesis and staging that she studies at the New School of Social Research under Erwin Piscator. In 1949 the Children's Theatre becomes part of the Drama Department of the University of Puerto Rico. Victoria Espinosa directs Ondina by Carmen Natalia, according to Arriví, one of the most notable works of the Teatro Infantil Universitario. Other groups that produce children's theatre include: La Academia de Arte Escénico de Santo Domingo, founded in 1956 by Maricusa Ornes and Magdalena de Ferdinandy, who present La Bella Durmiente and La Cenicenta in versions written by Carmen Natalia. Significant for us is the presentation of La Cucarachita Martina, with music by Jack Delano and choreography by Gilda Navarra which integrates this Puerto Rican folkloric tale into the theatre. In 1962, María Victoria Morales wrote, "Un salu-

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dable indicio del auge que va cobrando en Puerto Rico la afición teatral lo constituye la formación de actividades teatrales infantiles."[32] She refers to the creation of the Teatro Arlequín which presented Sánchez's Cuento de la cucarachita viudita, with music by Jack Delano on November 30, 1961. This work won the Ateneo prize for the best children's theatre in 1959. It was directed by Maricusa Ornes and represented by the students of the Academia de Arte Escénico Santo Domingo.

Theatre activity was not limited to the University of Puerto Rico, nor to the drama societies already mentioned. The 40s and 50s also saw numerous efforts by groups of individuals to present national and foreign plays. Some examples are: the Centro para Trabajadores, a traveling theatre for workers; the Colegio de las Madres which, over the years, encouraged and rewarded interest in the theatre arts and to which the following professional directors lent their services: Leopoldo Santiago Lavandero, Cipriano Rivas Cheriff, Emilio Belaval, Normal Candal, Piri Fernández, Carmen Rosa Díaz de Olano; the sorority Alpha Delta Mu; the Asociación de la Virgen de Nuestra Señora de Lourdes; nad various high schools, such as the Escuela Superior Central, Escuela Superior de Comerío, Escuela Superior del Colegio de San Ignacio; the experimental theatre of the Escuela José Julián Acosta; the Universidad Católica de Santa María; and Arte Teatral, an ambitious escenographic

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enterprise. This brings us to the founding in 1955 of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, the government sponsored agency which represented the hope of the intellectual and artistic community to preserve and cultivate the national heritage as embodied in its music, art, language and literature, all the elements that a society under cultural siege must struggle to maintain.

A final cohesive act was necessary, however, to unify this not yet totally defined organism which over the years, particularly since 1938, had begun to take form, develop a structure and a body of thematic concerns--in summary--the prerequisites for a viable national theatre. In 1956 the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña constituted a "Comisión Asesora de Artes Teatrales" composed of Piri Fernández de Lewis, Nilda González, Gilda Navarra, Rafael Cruz Emeric, Angel F. Rivera and Francisco Arriví, which drafted a five-point plan entitled "Proyecto para el fomento de las artes teatrales": 1) Reseña del teatro en Puerto Rico desde 1940; 2) Necesidades básicas para facilitar la producción teatral; 3) Organización de una Comedia Teatral Puertorriqueña; 4) Festival anual de teatro; 5) Promoción general del teatro.[33] The Institute decided to proceed with Point Four, the annual theatre festival and thus, two years later, in 1958, the Primer Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño occured, effectively fulfilling the need to consolidate the dispersed nature of the theatre efforts being undertaken up to that moment and to provide the

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impetus for the subsequent theatre renaissance that was to take place in Puerto Rico.

How must it have been that May, 1958, when for the first time Puerto Rico saw herself portrayed on such a professional scale; when for the first time she experienced four versions of her reality, in Encrucijada, by Manuel Méndez Ballester, La Hacienda de los Cuatro Vientos, by Emilio S. Belaval, Vejigantes, by Francisco Arriví, and Los soles truncos, by René Marqués. The Teatro Tapia, named in honor of Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, writer and dramatist, is the oldest theatre in Puerto Rico, in existence for over thirty years. Periodically repaired and renovated, "simboliza y encierra . . . toda una historia artística y social."[34] Arriví vividly recreates these deep and highly charged feelings in his essay, "Primero Festival del Teatro Puertorriqueño." To have been part of this effort and to see it develop from its inception is a profoundly moving experience to which he attests:

> Desde que el entrañado Teatro Tapia abre sus puertas el día 15 de mayo para admitir numeroso público al estreno de Encrucijada, hasta el día 8 de junio cuando las cierra después de la última presentación de Los soles truncos, a casa llena, con el público bajo intenso impacto emocional, el Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño podría definirse como fiesta culminante de una generación escénica. Veinte años de esfuerzos en la penumbra. . . ." 35

Thus the enthusiastic reaction of the public in the early days of Areyto, as well as for the Primer Festival de Teatro

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Puertorriqueño, is clear evidence of the presence of a Puerto Rican consciousness eager for the articulation of her essence through an accessible artistic medium.

A great deal has been written about the first Festival in 1958 and its groundbreaking importance: as much for presenting greater thematic variation and breaking with the earlier emphasis on strict conventional realism, as for introducing technical innovation into a theatre saturated with conventionally realistic techniques. As Dauster summarizes, "The considerable advances of the twenty years under discussion are clearly visible in these four plays. Where the 1938-1941 season had been primarily concerned with immediate social problems, the Festival of 1958 was oriented toward a much more basic problem: the nature of Puerto Rico."[36] He suggests how each play deals with this issue in a different way:

> Crossroads is in the spirit of Méndez Ballester's earlier social theater, but it also is concerned with the breakdown of traditional values. The primary impulse of Belaval's Hacienda of the Four Winds is the exploration of a critical moment in the past: the precise moment of the awakening of a national consciousness, when Spaniards suddenly realized that they no longer thought of themselves as such.
>
> This sociological, rather than social, impulse is visible in the other plays as well. Vejigantes is much more an examination of a national guilt--complex than an indictment of racial discrimination; The Maimed Suns is a prolonged dramatic metaphor of the conflict between traditional mores

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> and a new commercial civilization. The themes are varied, but the fundamental orientation is the same. 37

In determining the artistic growth during that significant period in Puerto Rican theatre, 1938-1958, we discern a familiar trajectory, from theatre that examines an objective reality--in this case, that of Puerto Rico--to more introspective, contemplative drama. This essentially follows a pattern in Latin American theatre development from a more naturalistic focus in the 1930s, to the post war theatre, imbued with various tendencies including existentialism and surrealism. The major theme of the Puerto Rican theatre "el ser puertorriqueño" has always remained constant, while the artistic treatment of that theme has continued to evolve. There was particular accessiblity to these new techniques on the part of Puerto Rican directors and writers who obtained their theatrical training in the United States, from Yale, New York University, Middlebury, and Columbia University.[38] These post war plays:

> dramatize characters who suffer from deep personal problems, such as loneliness, or isolation because of age or race or hatred. Some experience serious lack of personal fulfillment, as constant professional failure, inability to return love or persecution because of uncompromising idealism. Others are confronted with crises of materisalism, lack of intimacy, inferiority complexes, and loss of values which constitute the foundation of their culture. What these persons think and feel becomes more important than realism on stage. This

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> need to dramatize the subjective has been at least partly responsible, perhaps, for the playwrights use of other art forms, such as the dance and music, both to concretize the spiritual and avoid excessive conversation. 39

In Dauster's concise style, he offers insightful evaluations of the advances made in this period, observing that:

> The absolute test, obviously, is that of real value as dramatic literature, and it is here that the progress in Puerto Rico is most clear. Vejigantes and The Maimed Suns are typical; they are also two of the best plays yet written in Latin America. Both demonstrate a sense of theatre, an ability to create climactic moments of great emotional tension. However, they are not merely stage tricks; both Arriví and Marqués are mature dramatists skilled inthe use of contemporary technique and concerned with vital problems. In their work come alive characters and situations which are both representative of their immediate reality and of lasting dramatic significance. 40

Babín describes the major difference between the pre-Festival and post-Festival atmosphere this way: "La verdadera innovación en la dramática puertorriqueña de los años recientes consiste en el espectáculo en sí. . ."[41] Here she refers to the seriousness and professionalism of the theatrical endeavors of the post 1958 period as opposed to the essentially aficionado atmosphere surrounding the theatre movement before that time.

Broadly, one can summarize the major thematic directions in the Puerto Rican theatre in the following way: the 1930s offered the Puerto Rican theatre a social view of humankind; the post World War II era of the 50s provided

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an existential vision of the Puerto Rican and revealed its concern for the fate of the spirit and its freedom; between 1938 and 1958 there was a transition from social realism to dramatic lyricism; with Areyto (1940), the Puerto Rican theatre found its highest expression of social realism; with the Primer Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño (1958), there was a transition to poetic realism, revealing the recognizable influence of symbolism incorporated into two of the plays, Vejigantes and Los soles truncos. José Juan Arrom comments on the Areyto generation and its successive generation:

> En fin, la primera anda a la búsqueda de sus raíces culturales y por eso llama su grupo Areyto con intuición de raíces que se aferran en la tierra y en el tiempo. La segunda, agradecida por la lección, conociendo sus raíces, sabe rechazar lo que le es consustancial, lo que no es auténticamente del Puerto Rico de hoy en función del Puerto Rico de siempre. El entusiasmo en agraz de la primera ha llegado a plena madurez en la segunda. 42

By the 1960s the Puerto Rican theatre had moved from realism to "una lírica iluminación, interiorista y simbólica del ser humano."[43] J. B. Phillips adds that those plays:

> Reflect a new pretentiousness, based on a preference for the abstract and the symbolic. Fantasy becomes a frequent dramatic vehicle which allows a release from time and space, at least an apparent divorce from reality. By this means, major dramatists are able to project Puerto Rican identity into a hypothetical future and see it changed beyond recognition, as in Marqués El apartamiento, or

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> engaged in a final vital battle, as in Arriví's Cóctel de don Nadie. Still others juxtapose history and imagination, as in René Marqués' Mariana o el alba, or the works of Julio Marrero Núñez. 44

The development of theatre in the different Latin American countries responds to national exigencies. Similarly then, the situation in Puerto Rico is a confluence of both internal and external factors. As Babín indicates, "The drama of a colony debating its destiny within the orbit of the Spanish domain until 1898, its cultural anxiety during the twentieth century as a possession of the United States, the defense of the Spanish language, the educational dilemma, the social and economic crisis and the political debates constitute an important part of the literary scene."[45] That Puerto Rico's political situation directly influences its literary expression has proved true in all the genres and the theatre is no exception. Phillips affirms this when he refers to the folowing two points:

> First, the drama in Puerto Rico has been and remains essentially a nationalist drama. By this is meant that the island, its people, its problems, its history, and its future have been the subject and object of nearly every play written and produced in Puerto Rico since 1938. Secondly, Puerto Rican dramas, especially the good ones, derive from the deep examination of their people an uncommon universality readily appreciated by those who wish to understand isolation, incommunication, inferiority, the will to survive, the need to have one's own identity, the healing power of love, the ruin of materialism, or the anguish of rejection. 46

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Thus, there is thematic fidelity in contemporary Puerto Rican drama. Perhaps, as Piri Fernández suggests, it is the preponderant theme of the twentieth century, that of existential being. The eternal indagations about who we are, and in the particular case of Puerto Rico, its political ambivalence, intensifies its existential inquiry. She postulates about the recurrence of this theme:

> El tema del ser aparece con expresiones personales, plasmándose en problemas ya políticos, ya sociales, o económicos, étnicos, sicológicos, poéticos, morales o metafísicos, que tienen una relación directa con los problemas universales del siglo XX y con los particulares de nuestro ser nacional. 47

She notes, less with wonderment, than with acceptance, that:

> En un mundo de bombas megatónicas y fábricas atómicas en una periferia insular de 35 millas por 100 millas cuadradas, en un mundo de naciones mal llamadas unidas y asociadas, donde conviven en suicida tensión, colonias y nacionalismos pujantes, donde capitalismo y comunismo son sólo dos caras del mismo Jano materialista y pragmático; en un mundo donde Bondad, Belleza y Bien absolutos no son la base reconocida de la existencia; es natural que se postule el tema universal y eterno del ser, agónicamente, esto es, dramáticamente, como no se había hecho en toda su historia. 48

The elements that determine the Puerto Rican dramatists' artistic outlook include, as Carlos Solórzano suggests, not only the disturbing fact of their cultural isolation, "sino que fundamentalmente, el de vivir una cultura dentro de otra, el fenómeno de la dependencia a otro medio muy diferente que se expresa también de modo distinto."[49] Thus it

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is a logical consequence that artists view their role as actively creating a national theatre and illuminating the Puerto Rican identity, which is precisely the achievement of the theatre festivales, as well as the cooperative efforts of playwrights, actors, actresses and technicians who have succeded in bringing to life through the dramatic medium, "la naturaleza espiritual de una nación en extremo conflicto de ser o no ser."[50] Nevertheless, Solórzano offers testimony to the universal resonance of the dramatic problems posed in the contemporary Puerto Rican theatre:

> Los personajes dramáticos de Puerto Rico temen enajenar su realidad interior, pues sienten que al hacerlo se destruyan a sí mismos. . . . Vemos moverse en el teatro de este país los personajes que mejor lo representan: negros, mulatos, mestizos, blancos. Las situaciones dramáticas también se repiten: acontecen en el campo, en la ciudad de San Juan, en Nueva York. Y . . . este conflicto que está también expresado en el teatro puertorriqueño ¿no es acaso el mismo que experimenta hoy un argelino, un polaco, un sudafricano o un húngaro? ¿no es acaso el miedo a la enajenación y a la autodestrucción lo que constituye la preocupación fundamental de todos los personajes dramáticos de nuestro tiempo? 51

Arrom makes an important distinction about one of the tendencies followed by Latin American dramatists in the 1950s--away from social realism and towards psychological indagations:

> Ahora bien, esa tendencia no es necesariamente una huida de la realidad. Es situarse fuera de ella; ponerla como si dijéramos, entre paréntesis, para obser-

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> varla fenomenológicamente. No hay, pues, evasión. Lo que sí hay es superación de un realismo que, por demasiado rígido, era incapaz de sondeos profundos. 52

He specifically relates this tendency to the Puerto Rican drama:

> En realidad se trata de una nueva manera de contemplar la vida. Se ha visto ya en la poesía, en la novela, en el ensayo y se repite, desde luego, en el teatro. Y lo nuevo de esa mirada es que abre, penetra e ilumina inexploradas zonas sicológicas en el individuo y poderosos sentimientos colectivos en la sociedad . . . y en cuanto a la expresión de sentimientos colectivos, sirva de illustración la labor de la joven promoción de dramaturgos puertorriqueños. Pocas veces ha hablado con voz tan clara el espíritu de un pueblo. . . . 53

Zamora refers to "dramatic neopopulism" to describe the same phenomenon that Arriví has called "poetic realism," and J. B. Phillips describes as a "metaphorization of familiar concrete things."[54] Arriví characterizes it as an "indagación sicológica sujeta al desdoblamiento en planos, a la dislocación de tiempo y espacio de acuerdo con el fluir de la conciencia, a la movilización de los ingredientes dramáticos al impulso de una voluntad lírica fundamental."[55] He sees evidence of it in the following works by Marqués, El sol y los McDonald (1950), Los soles truncos (1958), Un niño azul para esa sombra (1960), by Arriví, Bolero y plena (1956), Vejigantes (1958), Sirena (1959); by Belaval, La hacienda de los cuatro vientos (1958), by Myrna Casas, Cristal roto en el tiempo (1960), and by our

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own author, O casi el alma (1964).

Many of the theatre problems experienced in Puerto Rico are shared by other Latin American countries, as seen in our examination in Part I. Specifically, in relation to Puerto Rico, they include: a concentration of theatre activity in the capitol, to the exclusion of the rest of the country;[56] the need for workshops where plays can be previewed with the intention of providing creative suggestions to the playwright and the cast; the need to develop a public for the theatre; the need for competent and insightful theatre criticism capable of enlightening the audience as well as the artists. Some of these problems directly stem from the nature of the Theatre Festivals. As Pasarell wrote, after the Primer Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño:

> Cada obra era dirigida por un diferente director de escena, lo cual parece ser un inconveniente para la cohesión y formación de un repertorio. Ese sistema unido a los gastos de una escenografía y luminotécnica cuantiosa que luego se arrumba o se almacena para no usarla más--nos parece que son desventajas para el establecimiento permanente de un teatro nativo. 57

Part of the challenge of the Theatre Festivals lies in the excitement generated by the creative potential inherent in presenting untried works. The risk, on the other hand, is that some of the works are still in their embryonic stage and need either a dramatic workshop to polish them, or an expert director to help the author specify his or her

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dramatic conception. There are many who have recognized this need, among them, our own author and María Teresa Babín, who wrote that:

> Los Festivales de Teatro del Instituto de Cultura no han podido llevar a cabo tal trabajo de ensayo teatral, ya que desde su iniciación en 1958 se han dedicado a montar obras en el Teatro Tapia con la envergadura correspondiente a un teatro profesional. Varias de las obras incluídas han sido de autores reconocidos desde hace tiempo. El esperar cada año nuevas obras que merezcan figurar en el Festival, y aceptar piezas de autores noveles o desconocidos sin haberlas sometido al experimento de una vista previa o de una lectura dialogada ante un círculo selecto de personas versada en literatura teatral, es arriesgado y excesivamente optimista. 58

Another facet of this same problem is, according to Professor Babín,

> comienza a preocupar la demanda de nuevas obras cada año, lo cual exige que los escritores apresuren y violenten su facultad creadora, llevando además a los responsables de poner obras en el Tapia cuando llega la hora del Festival a confiar más en los autores conocidos que arriesgarse a presentar lo inédito, y poco a poco va surgiendo un espíritu de narcisismo profesional que ahoga las posibilidades de nuevos caminos creadores.59

Sánchez elaborates his ideas concerning the Theatre Festivals in response to the following questions posed by this author, "Tu has criticado el hecho de ser 'un escritor de Festivales'. ¿Cómo les ha afectado en Puerto Rico este fenómeno?", "Y esta necesidad de ver cada obra en tan poco tiempo, ¿cómo afecta el ambiente de teatro?" See Appendix 1,

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pages 1-5 for the full text of his answers.

As further evidence of the universatility of the problem of theatre criticism, we offer the observation of Argentine playwright Rodolfo Walsh, who notes "una inferioridad de la crítica teatral frente a todo otro tipo de crítica. . . . Es decir, las revistas que influyen tienen, de golpe, críticos teatrales que lo mismo podrían ser críticos de fútbol, cosa que no sucede en el campo de las narrativas."[60] With reference to Puerto Rico, Babín and Dauster have expressed sentiments similar to Nilda González who says:

> Vivimos en un país muy pequeño donde todo el mundo se conoce, la gente de teatro, se mueve en los mismos círculos más o menos, y participa en el movimiento teatral en diferentes formas, de ahí la dificultad para conseguir personas capacitadas y dispuestas a hacer verdadera y objetiva crítica teatral. 61

Nevertheless just as we have directly criticized those critics whose lack of depth is painfully apparent, so must we acknowledge the seriousness and insightfulness of some critics whose names appear and reappear in this study. Their work, both the synthetic, as well as textual criticism, is invaluable. People like Arriví, Belaval, Babín, Fernández, Pasarell, Rosa-Nieves, Margot Arce, José A. Balseiro, do not indulge in facile criticism, but rather attempt to offer direction and suggestions for improvement, as well as analyses of trends and achievements. Their criticism has appeared in magazines, monographic pieces, and critical

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introductions to the plays themselves. Among those who have also written theatre reviews for the newspapers are Nilita Vientós, Enrique Laguerre, Emilio Belaval, René Marqués, Ligia Marchand, Nilda González, José Romeu, Juan Ortiz Jiménez, Juan Luis Márquez, Wilfredo Braschi, José Antonio Ortiz, Alfredo Mantilla, Francisco Matos Paoli, Juan Bautista Pagán, José Armindo Cadilla, Robert S. Lewis and the highly prepared and interested San Juan Star drama critic, James A. Collins.

In documenting Puerto Rico's theatre movement from its difficult beginnings to the present,[62] Arriví must be singled out for distinction, for realizing the historic desire to provide a sense of continuity for his fellow Puerto Ricans. The richness of detail in his reviews, analyses and commentaries provide a vivid sense of the theatre movement for Puerto Ricans and foreigners alike. His forthrightness in mentioning the constant criticism and polemics that the Festivals experienced, as well as the support they enjoyed, is helpful material which allows us to draw conclusions about the theatre movement. Arriví provides the texture, for what could otherwise have been merely dry accounts of plays and their productions. He is a man whose work, and whose life, reflect a personal commitment to serve his countrymen. Through his writing he has demonstrated deep faith in and respect for his fellow

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Puerto Ricans. He reveals great compassion and sincere optimism in their ability to perceive the multilevels of meaning in the works they so eagerly come to view annually. Arriví, the playwright, serves as the link between the Areyto generation and the post war generation.

One of the strongest arguments in favor of the economic and moral support of a national theatre is his assertion: "No hacer caso a la clase que promueve al teatro nacional es darle la espalda a la patria en su símbolo viviente."[63] Nevertheless, ambivalent critical reaction to the realization of a national drama is a fact that Arriví has noted on various occasions:

> Lógica considero la variada, tormentosa reacción crítica, tanto la firmada, como la anónima, como la de palabras al viento, que viene acompañado o desacompañado la aparición contumaz que es el Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño de un ancho y complejo aliento creador inspirado en nuestra particular experiencia de pueblo.

Similarly, he observes, "la conceptualización de Puerto Rico como nación encuentra en el borikén un increíble número de negadores." He sarcastically refers to "los campeones del complejo de inferioridad que nos expone, más que ninguna otra debilidad interna o fuerza externa, a la desnaturalización y finalmente a la muerte espiritual."[63] Although, as Roberto Rodríguez accurately reminds us, "el Festival fue creado como estímulo, y no como solución a los problemas del teatro en Puerto Rico," it is constantly

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vulnerable to criticism, both constructive and otherwise. Rodríguez himself has expressed concern that "por estar los dramaturgos y actores pendientes sólo del Festival para participar, le resten importancia a cualquiera producción independiente que se monte en Puerto Rico; . . ./y/ que sólo se considere profesional el teatro presentado en el Festival de Teatro. El público puede creer mediocre cualquier esfuerzo hecho fuera del Festival de Teatro."[65]

M. V. Morales aptly focuses in on the necessity to create an active public, fundamental for the Puerto Rican theatre:

> Cierto es que aún queda algo por hacer antes de que en Puerto Rico la producción teatral trascienda material y espiritualmente los linderos insulares y antes de que el público grueso, supersaturado de novelones, aprenda a compenetrarse de lo que son los verdaderos valores dramáticos. Existe todavía por parte del público cierto grado de apatía a la vez que cierta confusión de valores en lo que concierne al arte escénico . . . Resultaría ilusorio esperar que, de buenas a primeras, se logre convertir en un público exigente, y al mismo tiempo consecuente, capaz de vivir el teatro y percatarse de sus verdaderos valores a un público que por generaciones se ha visto en la necesidad de importar teatro y atenido a esperar que anualmente hiciera su aparición una que otra compañía de comedias de zarzuelas que nos obligara a escuchar una vez más los mismos versos o las mismas romanzas que en la niñez escuchamos de labios de nuestras abuelas. 66

While criticizing theatre that only presents foreign works, Arriví makes a significant observation about the nature of the Puerto Rican public:

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> Vivir enteramente de un teatro antológico extranjero disfraza espectacularmente un tipo de inmovilidad del espíritu que puede ser síntoma de muerte cultural. Es una de las razones por las cuales el público asiste con tanto entusiasmo a las producciones . . . del teatro puertorriqueño y se aleja de los grupos teatrales que insisten en no ampararla. . . .
>
> Es un pueblo que a pesar de enormes contratiempos y dificultades ha podido asomarse a sí mismo al tiempo que al mundo y cuando esto ocurre ya no es tan fácil a una nación desnaturalizarse, o suicidarse, que es lo mismo y peor muerte, asimilándose de alma a una nación completamente distinta. 67

Notwithstanding the problems mentioned, there have been enormous achievements over the last forty years which we shall discuss here. Merely in terms of numbers of productions, it is significant that when Arrom talks about the areas of greatest theatre movement and interest, he points to Mexico, La Habana and San Juan, Puerto Rico as one concentration of theatre activity and Santiago, Buenos Aires and Montevideo as another.[68] One can ask with equanimity if Emilio Belaval's dream of a national theatre has been realized. This writer believes that in the last 40 years, to a great degree it has been; there exists a repertoire of national works reflective of the Puerto Rican circumstance, and a corps of professional theatre people who are familiar with the latest techniques of staging and play production.[69] Addressing this question in 1964, Babín commented:

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> Lo fundamental del mismo no ha sido captado en su esencia por las nuevas generaciones, demasiado vertidas hacia afuera, empeñadas en sacudirse el estigma del provincianismo con alardes muchas veces vacuos de un existencialismo inauténtico para presumir de europeizantes, de universalistas y de ultra refinados, denunciando el lastre de la superficialidad y de la deslumbradora propensión al espectáculo en sí, con lo cual revelan la influencia directa de los Estados Unidos más bien que otras corrientes latinoamericanas o europeas de buena ley. 70

A viable measuring device for determining the actual achievements of the Festivals, is an examination of the goals established in the original "Proyecto" sponsored by the ICP. The plan recommended:

> 1) La promoción general de las artes teatrales en Puerto Rico; 2) La promoción de la actividad teatral como fuente de empleo profesional; 3) El fomento de la creación literaria teatral puertorriqueña; 4) Creación, tras sucesivas temporadas de una tradición de teatro en el ánimo del público; 5) Adiestramiento de los interesados en las artes teatrales (intérpretes y técnicos); 6) Detección de nuevo talento teatral; 7) Ampliación de las prácticas académicas en un marco profesional; 8) Uso intensivo de las facilidades físicas creadas por el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. 71

The mandate provided for four completely different teams of personnel for each work, that is, different director, actors, set designer and technicians for each production. The Theatre Festivals have achieved many firsts. In addition to providing a supportive framework within which the theatre arts could develop, an important achievement was

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providing concrete opportunity for a whole generation of theatre practitioners (many disillusioned after years of attempting to present theatre, without sufficient economic or moral support), to practice their profession and invest their creative energy in a realizable task. The mere existence of these annual Festivals has served to develop a sensitivity for the theatre medium, and to tap an ever present need to explore artistically Puerto Rican identity. Indirectly, it fostered an atmosphere which led to the creation of other drama groups, with differing ideas about what kind of theatre they would like to represent. New groups keep springing up in spite of the lack of physical locals and a chronic shortage of funds.

The Festivals strengthened another link between Puerto Rico and the rest of the world, since the themes and techniques used in their dramatizations coincided with the major directions in modern theatre. One of the hopes was for the creation of a repertoire of national works able to be presented within Puerto Rico and abroad, as well as the development of a professional theatre sustained by public interest. The impact and vitality of theatre lies in the fact that all the elements involved in its production create the experience. Thus the Puerto Rican public, as much as every other element, contributed to a cultural consciousness. It is noteworthy, as Professor Robert S. Lewis observes, that Puerto Rico, "un pequeño país sin gran

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tradición de teatro, llene sus salas de representaciones año tras año con obras de puertorriqueños, dirigidas, montadas y actuadas por nacionales, es hazaña cultural cuya importancia no puede exagerarse."[72] And why has the public responded so enthusiastically to these Theatre Festivals? Because it sees itself represented on the stage.

> Porque a través de ello dilucida su conflictiva conciencia nacional y afirma su identidad comprometida, porque intuye que la marea de éxitos, de resultados indecisos, de fracasos, se debe a una vitalidad que no quiere desnaturalizarse, que no quiere morir en la ola de una civilización industrial que avanza a rendirnos culturalmente.
>
> El público de teatro, consciente o inconscientemente, busca una explicación a la problemática de su ser, y la busca porque necesita ordenarse interiormente. 73

Clearly, the Festivals have contributed greatly to that universal task of developing a public that would enjoy and attend live drama. As M. V. Morales observed, "Es un hecho indiscutible que el público puertorriqueño va aprendiendo a interesarse por el teatro y que este proceso de aprendizaje se realiza en forma acelerada. Se podrá contar, por consiguiente, con un público dispuesto a auspiciarlo y más aún, a exigirlo."[74]

Another direct result of the Theatre Festivals is the literature that has been published around them: the plays, the critical essays, and the journalistic reviews, all serve to enrich an area of national literature heretofore

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insufficiently developed or appreciated. Says Arriví:

> Nunca antes . . . se había producido en el mundo nuestro del arte un fenómeno cartático de la naturaleza de estos festivales llamados a echar las bases de un teatro nacional. Parecen excitar, como nada, el discurso personal, el articulismo, la consolidación de capillas literarias. . . . No es de extrañarse . . . se mueve en el espíritu mismo de Puerto Rico; pretende dilucidar y fomentar esto que llamamos ser puertorriqueño. Se incuba, pues, en la máxima tensión, tanto del individuo como de la sociedad nuestra. 75

In 1965, Arriví was moved to say that "nuestra crítica parece existir principalmente y, a veces, únicamente, por motivo del teatro, ya que es casi inexistente respecto al ballet, el cine, la radio, la televisión, y la pintura."[76] The creativity, generated by the development of the theatre arts, as documented by Babín, "ha servido de incentivo y de núcleo para una variada serie de expresiones artísticas--poesía coreada, ballet, magníficos carteles, inventiva escenográfica y el ejercicio de una pléyade de actores y de directores."[77] Indicative of the progress that Puerto Rico has achieved in the arts is the fact that in 1961 when Gilda Navarra choreographed the native folktale, La cucarachita Martina, she had to use Spanish dance motifs for lack of an indigenous Puerto Rican choreographic expression,[78] whereas today, each Festival includes a program of Puerto Rican dance, choreographed, performed and written by Puerto Ricans based on native themes. This flourishing of theatre arts as well as plastic arts is not unrelated, suggests

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Babín. Writing in 1964 she notes that art galleries and museums appeared in San Juan and in Ponce and in a parallel cultural reinaissance, one saw the development of such institutions as the Festival de Teatro, the Philharmonic Orchestra, the Conservatory of Music and the Casals Festival.[79]

There is acknowledgment for the successive, steady development in the technical skills involved in theatre production.[80] Arriví singles out the stage designers for special praise in their efforts to modernize Puerto Rican scenography, for their successful subordination of all elements to the conception of the drama as an integrated whole; that is, "Se subordina la línea, el plano, el volumen y el color, a la expresión del tema; se sujetan las áreas de actuación al propósito de la composición pictórica, los énfasis de situación y las posibilidades mágicas de la luminotécnica; se busca una síntesis de atmósfera en función del conflicto dramatúrgico; se libera, en fin, el espacio escénico a las conquistas de la imaginación poética."[81] Among the most active set designers, Carlos Marichal, Rafael Ríos Rey, Rafael Cruz Emeric, Fernando Rivero, Lorenzo Homar, Luis Maisonet, Nina Lejet, Julio Marrero, Felix Rodríguez Báez, two have worked on productions of Sánchez's plays: Luis Maisonet, of whom it has been said, "resuelve con novísimos recursos de expresión la de Sol 13, Interior para el Cuarto Festival"[82] and whose work is characterized

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by a preference for simplicity in order to emphasize dramatic expressions and Fernando Rivero who did the sets for Farsa del amor compradito.

In evaluating the work of the Oficina de Fomento Teatral del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, we are not merely witnessing one more play or one more theatre festival, but rather "el fenómeno de un crecimiento acompasado y amplio de toda una clase artística.[83] Furthermore, a glance at any one of the theatre seasons in the 70s offers evidence of the richness and variety of dramatic activity taking place in Puerto Rico. A case in point is the 1974 calendar which revealed not only the Sixteenth Festival de Teatro, but also the Laboratorio de Teatro Puertorriqueño, the Octavo Festival de Teatro de Ponce, the Tercer Festival de Teatro de Mayaguez, the Temporada de Nuevos Autores Puertorriqueños, the Festival de Teatro de Vanguardia and the Temporada de Teatro Infantil. And this concentration on Puerto Rican drama coincided with the Undécimo Festival de Teatro Internacional which presented works by Ionesco, Prokofiev, Sartre, Buero Vallejo, Beckett, Weiss, Dragún, Jorgé Díaz, Genet, Salom and others.[84] Babín further elaborates upon the direction that the Puerto Rican theatre has taken in recent years as she explores its strength and weaknesses and observes that

> La temática y la problemática del teatro puertorriqueño son testimonios de la fecundida, la imaginación y la responsa-

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> bilidad de nuestros escritores. El horizonte parece claro; el exceso en la urdimbre escénica, la verbosidad y el metaforismo preciosista en el lenguaje, el laconismo y la vulgaridad insistente que caracteriza a los amantes de la pantomima, y la concentración de influencias crudamente asimiladas, han de dar paso en el teatro puertorriqueño de hoy a una mayor seguridad y a un mejor equilibrio entre tema, trama y presentación, cuando autores y directores logren el punto justo de vista artístico sin menoscabo de sus respectivas virtudes. 85

The mere fact that Puerto Rican drama is being examined and commented on by so many Latin American and North American critics is an unmistakeable sign of its incorporation into the universal world of the theatre. We now see Puerto Rican plays more frequently included in theatre anthologies from Latin America in both Spanish and English, always a sign of increasing appreciation of their cultural and artistic value.[86] Simiarly, the fact that Puerto Rican plays have been well received abroad, transforms what was traditionally considered the national monologue, into an international dialogue. In the mid '60s the Venezuelan critic, Suárez Radillo, director of Los Juglares, a Latin American theatre group located in Madrid, traveled through Spain delivering the following talk, "El Teatro puertorriqueño actual: un teatro joven y rebelde." His groups presented a selection of twentieth century Puerto Rican drama including: El milagro by Méndez Ballester; El inciso hache by Andreu Iglesias; La carreta by Marqués; Cielo caído by Belaval; Vejigantes by Arriví; and La hiel nuestra de cada día, by our author. Commenting on the wide range

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of concerns visible in the contemporary Puerto Rican theatre, Arriví notes that:

> Se arraiga en situación de radical conflicto, quizás la más perturbadora y angustiante de país alguno en las varias Américas, razón por la cual algunas piezas de teatro puertorriqueñas han sido incluídas en antologías de teatro hispano-americano. Se le plantea a Puerto Rico el sobrevivir en su naturaleza cultural o sumarse finalmente, con destino de asimilación, al ámbito centrípeto de otra cultura prepotente. Tal disyuntiva aboca a la creación de dramas significativos no sólo para el mundo americano, sino para los demás mundos. 87

The fact that a limited number of plays by Latin American authors have been presented in Puerto Rico since 1940, although lamentable, corroborates a trend in Latin America, to ignore each other's literary achievements in favor of European or North American models. Indeed, Puerto Rico can be seen as a microcosm of Latin American attitudes: a country with an inferiority complex whose manifestation is symptomatic of the malaise of the entire continent; insecure about its own creative capacity and therefore imitative of foreign forms. Regarding the area of foreign influence, and United States influence in particular, over the years the impact of the North American theatre has been more apparent in the technical area than with the dramatic idea. As Belaval corroborates:

> Lo que hemos adquirido del teatro norteamericano es su concepto escénico integral, la ausencia de las protagonizaciones compensadas por una tipificación cada vez mayor lograda, la rítmica tonal, la tersura

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> de su movimiento, la coordinación lumínica en la ambientación, la armonía cromática entre la escenografía, el vestuario y aún los útiles escénicos. 88

Indicative of an ever deepening dramatic consciousness in Puerto Rico, is the proliferation of new theatre groups. The '60s witnessed the appearance of La Mascara, Teatro Yukayeke, Arte Teatral, Alta Escena, Inc., Teatro Incorporado, Producciones Cisne, Teatro de Comedias, Comedia Puertorriqueña, and Theatron, to name a few. Also indicative of the flourishing theatre arts is the parallel growth of the popular theatre movement, a sign of experimentation and renewal, resulting from dissatisfaction with the prevailing thematic and technical trends in theatre. In a lecture describing the development of the popular theatre movement in Puerto Rico, critic and director José Luis Ramos expressed a prevalent attitude among young theatre people, when he accused the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña of "nacionalismo aburguesado." He discussed a number of contemporary playwrights, among them René Marqués, who he said transfers the "impotencia puertorriqueña" to the stage, and Sánchez, who "a pesar de su renovación linguística, sigue la línea de los de la '40." According to Ramos, the basic conceptual difference, or more precisely, difference in political posture, between the present generation performing popular theatre and the older generation of 1940, is that the "Teatro Popular es un teatro de liberación nacional"--while the older generation

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of 1940--"es un teatro de afirmación nacional."[89]

An act of consolidation among seven popular theatre groups was the formation, in 1975, of the Corporación del Teatro Popular: El Colectivo Nacional de Teatro (Anamú, Morivivi), Teatro de Sesenta, Bondo, Rueda Roja, Ballet Tierra, Teatro de Guerrilla, Teatro Absurdo de Caguas. Some of these groups worked with established texts, while others composed their own creaciones colectivas. For example, Anamú concentrated on presenting works based on texts that they adapted, while Morivivi emphasized the elaboration of short pieces that they collectively developed. All of them, however, reflected their involvement with the process of analysis of the text, and analysis of their social reality, which, according to Augusto Boal, is a fundamental and identifiable characteristic of the popular theatre.[90] The central goal of the Colectivo--which is no longer in existence--was to present theatre "comprometido con el cambio de la realidad puertorriqueño, pero teatro con un nivel estético y político que logre impactar favorablemente en todos los secotres de la sociedad. Intenta . . . servir de vanguardia artística en el país abriendo brechas mediante el teatro y otras expresiones afines."[91] How similar these goals are to those articulated in 1938 and again in 1958 by previous generations of Puerto Rican theatre people. It is a sign of the vitality and dynamic nature of the theatre scene that this dialectic

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continues to take place and that its artistic fruits do reach the public, for whom all this creative activity is ultimately intended.

These new groups have, indeed, realized some of their goals in their productions. In 1972, Anamú presented Osvaldo Dragún's Historias para ser contadas. Morivivi presented the Guatemalan dramatist, Manuel José Arce's De compras in 1974, and in that same year Anamú presented El asesinato de X, a work developed by the Teatro Libre from Argentina. A major creative breakthrough was Bondo's production of La movida de Víctor Campolo by the Puerto Rican lawyer, Luis Antonio Rosario Quiles, a political exposé integrating "a dazzling variety of theatrical devices"[92] which included a cast of 200, a live band, high school salsa dancers, slides and film clips. Teatro Sesenta's big success, also in the early '70s, was Puerto Rico Fuá, a satirical revue about 400 years of Puerto Rican history, by Carlos Ferrari, an Argentine living on the Island.

There is a coincidence of spirit between Sánchez and these groups. Their goals--transformation, enlightenment and entertainment--are the same; however, the difference lies in their methods of elaborating those ideals. Sánchez, displays a lyrical use of language, with a marked poetic vision; the popular theatre groups rely more on the use of "un vestuario sugestivo, túnicas y ropa de colores vivos

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y elementos como sombreros, delantales . . . el lenguaje popular y sencillo"--in order to arrive at--"la rápida comunicación con el público y la identificación de este /sic/ con los problemas planteados."[93] Nevertheless, an indication of this coincidence in spirit between works created expressly for the popular theatre and those written by national authors, was the presentation of a Sánchez play by the Corporación del Teatro Popular.

One of the problems facing the popular theatre movement in Puerto Rico is the fragmented structure of so many of the works represented. It has been said that this lineal, often journalistic style is one of the most effective devices for communicating the increasingly rapid tempo of life on the Island. Similarly, the colonial status which encourages constant bombardment by the media, as well as a climate where multiple events occur simultaneously, are all factors which have fostered artistic problems, for one, a lack of in-depth development of themes. However, there is an awareness of these problems on the part of the theatre practitioners and a desire to overcome them. It is interesting to note, in accordance with a trend that Sánchez, among others, predicted, that loosely structured improvisations are being employed less frequently, being replaced by the more structured guidance of the director. In one particular case, Juan Miranda, from Anamú, who directed Jaime Carrero's Flag Inside at the Tapia, actually fulfilled the more familiar directorial task

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of determining the mise en scène and directing the actors, according to his artistic conception.[95] Galich concludes that "el joven teatro boricua se ha incorporado, con ritmo creador, combativo y popular, al movimiento general de rejuvenecimiento revolucionario que se hace sentir, desde la década pasada, en toda América Latina. . . . Es así cómo Puerto Rico ocupa, por derecho propio, un lugar de avanzada en el cuadro general del teatro latinoamericano."[96] We concur with María Victoria Morales' assertion that a retrospective examination of the theatre movement in Puerto Rico conclusively reveals that the existence of permanent theatrical activity has evolved "de una heroica y audaz aspiración, un logro real y efectivo."[97]

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Notes

PART TWO: SANCHEZ'S THEATRE AND DRAMATIC VISION

I. PERSPECTIVES ON THE PUERTO RICAN THEATRE

[1] Francisco Arriví, Areyto Mayor (San Juan: I.C.P., 1966), p. 46.

[2] María Teresa Babín, "Veinte Años de Teatro Puertorriqueño (1945-1964)," Asomante, No. 4 (1964), p. 7.

[3] Arriví, Conciencia Puertorriqueña del Teatro Contemporáneo (1938-1956) (San Juan: I.C.P., 1957).

[4] Nilda González, en El autor dramático, Primer Seminario de Dramaturgia (San Juan: I.C.P., 1963), p. 150.

[5] Gloria F. Waldman, "Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano," LATR 10, i (1976), pp. 94-96.

[6] Robert Rodríguez, "El teatro puertorriqueño de hoy," Alma Latina, Sept. 24, 1960, p. 45.

[7] Antonio S. Pedreira, Insularismo (Rio Piedras: Editorial Edil, 1969).

[8] Arriví in his Prologue to Areyto Mayor, p. 5, acknowledges that "esencialidad de una pequeña nación intensamente creativa desde sus raíces."

[9] Luis Rafael Sánchez, "Literatura puertorriqueña y realidad colonial," Claridad, Nov. 3, 1974.

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[10] Manuel Galich,"Boceto Puertorriqueño," Conjunto, No. 25 (July-Sept., 1975), p. 4.

[11] See our Select Bibliography for critical studies in Puerto Rican theatre.

[12] Among the more significant works are: El grito de Lares by Luis Llorens Torres, written in 1914 and performed in 1929; El héroe galopante by Nemesio Canales, performed in 1934.

[13] Galich, p. 5.

[14] Rodríguez, p. 45.

[15] Anon., "El teatro puertorriqueño," PLSJ, I (1963), p. 37.

[16] Emilio S. Belaval, "Lo que podría ser un teatro puertorriqueño," in Areyto Mayor, p. 245. Subsequent references are to this document. It is significant that before Belaval's manifesto, all previous representations of Puerto Rican dramas were presented by theatre companies from Spain, with the exception of Nemesio Canales' El héroe galopante (Areyto Mayor, p. 15).

[17] Ibid., p. 245.

[18] Ibid., p. 251.

[19] Ibid., pp. 257-258.

[20] J. B. Phillips, Contemporary Trends in the Puerto Rican Theatre (Madrid: Plaza Mayor, 1972), p. 15.

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[21] Arriví, "La generación de los treinta: el teatro," in Areyto Mayor, pp. 15-16.

[22] Arriví, Conciencia Puertorriqueña, p. 7.

[23] Frank Dauster, "Drama and Theatre in Puerto Rico," Modern Drama, IV, No. 2 (1963), p. 180.

[24] Ibid., p. 180.

[25] Babín, "Veinte años," p. 16.

[26] Dauster, "Drama and Theater," p. 181.

[27] Arriví, Conciencia Puertorriqueña, p. 22.

[28] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 24.

[29] Arriví, Conciencia Puertorriqueña, pp. 21-22; Enrique Laguerre, Pulso de Puerto Rico (1952-1954) (San Juan: BAP, 1956), pp. 296-297, offers a comment about Santiago Lavandero's role in the theatre, that we have heard often repeated, "Lo hacía todo: dirigía, enseñaba, producía, actuaba."

[30] Arriví, Conciencia Puertorriqueña, p. 22.

[31] Arriví, "Preparaciones de guiones dramáticos para la radio", in Entrada por las raíces (San Juan: I.C.P.), p. 76.

[32] María Victoria Morales, "La actividad teatral en Puerto Rico," Horizontes, V, No. 10 (1962), p. 101.

[33] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 47.

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[34] Emilio Pasarell, Orígenes y desarrollo de la afición teatral en Puerto Rico (San Juan: Editorial del Departamento de Instrucción Pública, 1970), p. 454.

[35] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 48.

[36] Dauster, "Drama and Theater," pp. 183-184.

[37] Ibid., p. 184.

[38] At that time those who did some of their studies in the United States included Santiago Lavandero, Arriví, Nilda González, and in successive generations: Piri Fernández, Pedro Juan Soto, René Marqués, Jaime Carrero, Myrna Casas, and our own Luir Rafael Sánchez.

[39] J. B. Phillips, p. 89.

[40] Dauster, "Drama and Theater," pp. 184-185.

[41] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 10.

[42] José Juan Arrom, "Teatro Puertorriqueño," Inter-american Review of Bibliography, vols. I & II, pp. 344-346.

[43] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 159.

[44] J. B. Phillips, p. 135.

[45] Babín, "Introduction: the Path and the Voice," in Borinquen, An Anthology (New York: Vintage, 1974), p. XXIV.

[46] J. B. Phillips, p. 205.

[47] Piri Fernández, "Temas del teatro puertorriqueño de hoy," in El autor dramático, pp. 313-314.

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[48] Ibid., p. 316.

[49] Carlos Solórzano, Teatro latinoamericano del siglo XX (Buenos Aires: Editorial Nueva Visión, 1964), p. 63.

[50] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 10.

[51] Solórzano, in El Autor dramático, p. 23.

[52] José J. Arrom, Esquema generacional de las letras hispanoamericanas (Bogotá: Caro y Cuervo, 1977), p. 211.

[53] Ibid., p. 211.

[54] José González Zamora, "Le théatre de la langue espagnole a cheval sur deux continents," Théatre dans le Monde, ITT, XI, No. 4 (1962-1963), p. 346.

[55] Arriví, "El tercer festival de teatro puertorriqueño," Areyto Mayor, p. 67.

[56] Morales, p. 92.

[57] Pasarell, Orígenes y desarrollo, p. 415.

[58] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 15.

[59] Ibid., p. 17.

[60] R. Leal, "Siete autores," Conjunto, No. 6 (1968), p. 19.

[61] Nilda González in El autor dramático, p. 150.

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[62] In documenting this struggle we observe Arriví's repeated usage of such expressions as: "lucha sostenida" (Areyto Mayor, p. 39); "grupos valerosos se lanzan a la épica agónica de montar, por esfuerzo propio, obras de autores puertorriqueños" (Areyto Mayor, p. 268); "torturante insuficiencia de medios materiales y económicos y una gran indiferencia, lo más desalentador, por la expresión de artistas puertorriqueños" (Areyto Mayor, p. 265).

[63] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 205.

[64] Ibid., pp. 123, 193, 195.

[65] Rodríguez, p. 77.

[66] Morales, p. 92.

[67] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, pp. 185-186.

[68] José J. Arrom, Esquema generacional de las letras, p. 213.

[69] Dauster expresses a similar opinion in "Drama and Theater in Puerto Rico," p. 186.

[70] Babín,"Veinte Años," p. 18.

[71] Document "Proyecto para el fomento de las artes teatrales. Parte IV: Patrocinio de un festival anual de teatro puertorriqueño," in Areyto Mayor, pp. 283-284.

[72] Robert S. Lewis, "Drama Festivals Still a Vital Cultural Feat," in The San Juan Star, June 13, 1962, p. 61.

[73] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 207.

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[74] Morales, p. 92.

[75] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 242.

[76] Ibid., p. 183.

[77] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 17.

[78] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 278.

[79] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 18.

[80] Arriví informs us in Areyto Mayor, p. 237, that originally, outside the Teatro Universitario, only Tinglado Puertorriqueño owned a sophisticated set of lights which they cooperatively shared with various groups, for example, the Ballets of San Juan and the Academia de Arte Escénico Santo Domingo.

[81] Ibid., p. 143.

[82] Ibid., p. 144.

[83] Arriví, "De Areyto al Festival de Festivales (1940-1970), RICP, XV, No. 57 (Oct.-Dec. 1972), p. 11.

[84] Galich, pp. 15-16.

[85] Babín, "Veinte Años," pp. 19-20.

[86] Note the inclusion of Puerto Rican plays in the following anthologies: Vejigantes (Arriví) in Frank Dauster, Teatro hispanoamericano, tres piezas (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965); El apartamiento (Marqués) in Ruth S. Lamb, Three Contemporary Latin-American Plays (Waltham, Massachusetts: Xerox College Publishing, 1971); Un cuento

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de hadas (Arriví) in Carlos Solórzano, Teatro breve hispanoamericano contemporáneo (Madrid: Aguilar, 1969); La muerte no entrará en palacio (Marqués) in C. Solórzano, El teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo (México: FCE, 1970); The Fanlights (Los soles truncos, Marqués) in George Woodyard's The Modern Stage in Latin America: Six Plays (New York: E. D. Dutton, 1971).

[87] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 8.

[88] Belaval in El autor dramático, p. 241.

[89] José Luis Ramos, "El desarrollo del teatro popular en Puerto Rico," Talk presented at "Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano," New York City, August, 1976.

[90] Augusto Boal, "El arte y las masas," Primer Acto, Nos. 146-147 (July-Aug. 1972), p. 55.

[91] Colectivo Nacional de Teatro de Puerto Rico, "El teatro dentro del nuevo teatro latinoamericano," Conjunto, No. 26 (Oct.-Dec. 1975), p. 67.

[92] James A. Collins, "Puerto Rican Theater Today," Revista Interamerican Review, IV, No. 3 (1974), p. 324.

[93] Colectivo Nacional de Teatro de Puerto Rico, p. 65.

[94] See Irwin Toffler's Future Shock for a description of this phenomenon.

[95] Colectivo Nacional de Teatro de Puerto Rico, p. 67.

[96] Galich, p. 16.

[97] Morales, p. 92.

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II SANCHEZ: THEORY AND PRAXIS

A. Beginnings

Luis Rafael Sánchez was born on November 17, 1936 in Humacao, Puerto Rico. His primary and secondary school studies took place in the public schools of Humacao and San Juan. On various occasions he has referred to the transient nature of his secondary school years and its effect on him: "Como si fuera un delincuente, me la pasé cambiando de escuelas".[1] Sánchez remembers a difficult childhood, "tenso y bastante triste"(Torres, p. 18). As a shy and withdrawn child, disinterested in the athletic activities of his schoolmates, he was basically on the outside of their world. He placed all of his enthusiasm in his classes. When he was twelve years old his family moved to Viejo San Juan, Calle Sol. As he remembers it, "Aquel era un Viejo San Juan que todavía no estaba devorado por el turismo. De allí recuerdo la barandilla, los paseos por las dos caletas hasta la Puerta y una gran cantidad de amigos" (Torres, p. 18). Both these sets of memories are present in his work: the small town life inspired by Humacao serves as a background for many of the stories in En cuerpo de camisa, for example, "Memorias de un eclipse"; the vivid and sensitive portrayal of Viejo San Juan is background in Sol 13, Interior, the suite which takes its very title from Calle Sol. Another memory, which would eventually help create a political consciousness in

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the young Sánchez was the attack on the house of the well known Puerto Rican nationalist, Don Pedro Albizu Campos. Says Sánchez, evoking an image from the past,

> Yo era amigo del hijo de Don Juan Hernández Valle, un nacionalista que estuvo preso. Conocí a Don Pedro una vez que fuimos a llevarle unas maletas. El nos besó. La sensación que prevalece del lugar es de humedad. Era un tanto hospitalario. Había un hombre que le ponía compresas a Don Pedro, pero no puedo precisar con qué objeto (Torres, p. 18).

Notably it was his early experience with the theatre that brought this period of shyness and withdrawal to an end. It was as a ninth grader at the Baldorioty school that he met Victoria Espinosa, teacher and director, who would have a great influence on his life. Says Sánchez, "Victoria creó en el Departamento de Drama de la Universidad la Commedietta Universitaria, como un programa para llevarlo a todas las escuelas del área metropolitana. En un momento en que uno está buscando opciones, llega a significar mucho el encuentro con una persona tan cálida como Vickie" (Torres, p. 18). Later, he founded the Teatro Experimental Juan Acosta, along with Juan Hernández. And in 1955 he went to Mexico where he acted in El boticario, for the Instituto Nacional de la Juventud Mexicana, and won a medal from that institution as the best young actor for that year, in competition with more than 114 actors. He was sent as representative to the Teatro al Aire Libre de Guanajuato. Also while in Mexico he participated in the filming of the educational movie

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"Ciudad Universitaria," for the Ministerio de Educación de México, along with the young Mexican actors Freddie Fernández and Evita Muñoz. In 1956 he returned to the University of Puerto Rico where he collaborated on ten plays with the Commedietta Universitaria, among them, La muerte, Los justos, La zapatera prodigiosa, La Celestina, El médico a palos, and played the lead, Don Cristóbal, in García Lorca's Títeres de Cachiporra, which was presented throughout the Is and by the Teatro Rodante every weekend for over a year. He also became a member of the Tablado del Coquí, directed by Georgina de Uriate.[2]

Thus, contrary to the case of many Latin American dramatists (For example, Luis Alberto Heiremans, Enrique Swayne, and Agustín Cuzzani), Sánchez was involved in drama from an early age. He was also part of what has been called radio's Golden Age, working with talents like the Puerto Rican actresses, Mona Martí and Madeline Willemsen on station WNEL's radio novels. He continued his studies, although he still dreamed of an acting career. He remembers that period in his life at the University of Puerto Rico, "Luego vino la Universidad. Más breve, más pequeña, más íntima. Entonces prevalecía la excelencia. . . . Ahora la Universidad está sumida en la mediocridad, por causa del pdoer, que no se averguenza de ello" (Torres, p. 18).

In determining when he began to write, he notes significantly that, "La experience de hacer teatro precipitó la

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experiencia de hacer literatura" (Torres, p. 18). His first literary ventures during those university years were in the short story genre. At that time, 1956, the writer, Hugo Maegenat was an important friend and critic:

> Hugo fue mi primer crítico de mis cuentos. Un crítico muy severo. Tenía tras sí la experiencia de la guerra de Corea. Su experiencia bélica, su pasión independentista y su talento lo habían dotado de mucha densidad humana y crítica. Fue Hugo quien insistió en que llevara un cuento mío al certamen de la Facultad de Estudios Generales. . . . Cuando gané el concurso, ya Hugo había muerto. Luego continué escribiendo un poco a la deriva, con un poco de escepticismo sobre mi capacidad (Torres, P. 18).

His comments about the degree of seriousness he felt towards his early writing--"Creo que cuando comencé a escribir carecía de oficio y de conciencia. Escribía un poco por el entusiasmo" (Torres, p. 18)--belie the twenty years of development as a professional that were to transpire.

Sánchez graduated from the University of Puerto Rico with a specialization in drama and a minor concentration in Spanish literature. He recalled the prominence of the theatre as a vital factor in university life at that time. He belonged to the "último momento del Teatro Universitario. Había entusiasmo; toda la comunidad universitaria se movilizaba cuando había función. El teatro era entonces una fuerza determinante en la actividad universitaria" (Torres, p. 20). His first dramatic work, in 1958, was called La espera and was directed by Nilda González for the inauguration of the Teatro Experimental of the University. She was the first

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person to direct a work of his and as Sánchez affirms, "Puedo decir que me abrió las puertas como autor" (Torres, p. 20). Since then he has alternated his creative work with his academic work at the University of Puerto Rico, where he is a professor of Spanish in the School of General Studies. He has studied drama at Columbia University and earned a Master of Arts at New York University and a Ph.D. from the University of Madrid. He has traveled extensively throughout Europe and Latin America, participating in conferences, theatre festivals, workshops and as a judge for various literary competitions. Also, since 1964, he has been a member of the Junta Asesora de Artes Teatrales del Instituto Cultura Puertorriqueña which chooses the plays to be presented at the annual theatre festival.

As is often the case in the study of contemporary literature, generational boundaries are not always clearly discernible in the moment. René Marqués, in the Prologue to his Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy, described Sánchez's position in the following way:

> De la promoción mencionada al escribirse el ensayo--1959--sólo Luis Rafael Sánchez ha descollado posteriormente como buen cuentista, aparte de sus logros en el género dramático. Este escritor, sin embargo, por su edad, podría considerarse más bien como figura de enlace o transición entre las promociones del cuarenta y cincuenta. 3

A 1971 study, "A Tentative Inventory of Young Puerto Rican Writers," attempts to define an "under thirty" generation. Its author, James Ward II, is confronted with essentially the

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same situation we have faced in determining a viable and convenient generational category for our author. We suspect this concern reinforces the legitimate need that all critics have to define, to situate, ultimately, to know a new generation and what it represents. Ward solves this generational dilemma in the following way:

> As has been shown the young poets and numerous and prolific. This is not the case with dramatists. In fact if we adhere strictly to our restriction of 'under thirty' there are not playwrights in Puerto Rico whose work deserves critical mention. There are, though, two playwrights who, while over thirty, can be considered younger writers because of their social attitudes. They are Myrna Casas and Luis Rafael Sánchez. 4

It would be helpful to define what those "social attitudes" are that apparently lend coherence to this "promoción": these young writers share an optimism about the future; a desire to redirect both political and artistic goals of the previous generation; a preference for socialism and marxism; and a desire to see the immediate independence of Puerto Rico. These are all concerns which they believe can be artistically translated into a literature of <u>compromiso</u>.[5] Ward concludes:

> In all these tendencies the Puerto Rican youth seems to be very much aligned with their contemporaries in other Spanish American countries. Perhaps of greater importance is the fact that they feel part of a <u>promoción</u>, or a group with common interests and goals. This group would consist, with few exceptions, of the young writers born in the very late 1930s or early 1940s and who began to publish in the 1960s. Such a sense of solidarity and affinity could tend to reinforce the trends that are already discernible in their work. 6

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B. Sánchez on Theatre

In the following pages we will explore significant elements in Sánchez's theatre: language, recurrent themes, his use of mise en scène, lighting and music; foreign influence on his work, both individuals (from Pirandello and Brecht to García Lorca, Tennessee Williams, Ionesco and Buero Vallejo), and contemporary literary movements, including existentialism and expressionism; and finally, we will examine the relationship of his work to the work of other contemporary Puerto Rican playwrights.

Sánchez shares a common attitude toward the theatre with Dürrenmatt, as revealed in the latter's statement, "La escena no representa para mí un campo de teorías, de filosofías y enunciados, sino un instrumento cuyas posibilidades trato de conocer."[7] Despite this fundamental desire to do theatre, rather than theorize about it, our author has evolved certain opinions and practices in response to the problems he has encountered in his theatre career. It will be illuminating to examine how certain of these theoretical precepts relate to his own work. The areas of exploration included in this section are: Sánchez on the creative process; on contemporary Puerto Rican theatre; as well as on Latin American theatre; on directors; actors; drama festivals; in short, on the breadth of the theatre experience.

He has developed his position in numerous interviews and articles. In the interview with this author, included

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in the Appendix, he was precise, articulate and conversant with the modern theatre in Europe and the United States, as well as in Latin America. He demonstrated a frankness and willingness to share his views on a wide range of issues, from writing a play and staging it, to confronting antagonistic artistic conceptions held by actors and directors. He also offered thoughtful comments about collective works, the star system, the need for more possibilities for laboratory experimentation, fellow dramatists, his own work, theatre criticism in Latin America, influences from abroad, his desire to direct theatre, the differences in creating for the various literary genres, and the infinite space that the novel form provides in comparison with the limitations that the theatre imposes. He offered clarifications and definitions

> precisamente en una época en que se pretende huir de las definiciones, acaso por miedo de no poder afrontarlas y quizás, también, porque, equivocadamente, en estos momentos algunos autores confunden todavía la definición que es claridad con el conformismo, de igual manera que creen que la confusión propicia la libertad creadora. 8

Since the early stages of his career, he has been singled out as a dramatist of great promise by critics such as María Teresa Babín, Jordan B. Phillips, Angelina Morfi, Francisco Arriví, Juan Guerrero Zamora, and Suárez Radillo. Sánchez has been described as "una de las personalidades más ágiles de nuestro mundo teatral" and further as someone "en quien la conciencia social y el genuino quehacer literario se jun-

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tan."[9] As a firm defender of artistic standards, his own work successfully responds to the dual exigencies of quality, and political commitment.

When asked what the major function of the theatre experience should be, he responded, "Entretener. Pero entretenimiento como una diversión capaz de hacer pensar. Que el espectador logre una transformación real y verdadera (Cardona, p. 12). However, attempting to apply these criteria to the Puerto Rican theatre, he bitterly concluded:

> Aquí no se ha hecho verdaderamente teatro. Un vistazo alrededor nos confirma que se han hecho muchas presentaciones pero no se hace teatro con aspiraciones. Los festivales están en manos de unos grupos sin conciencia social, dedicados a la exaltación de una estrella. Logran así hacer teatro de evasión. Teatro escapista. Que escamotea el enfrentamiento con las situaciones que hay, en realidad, que dilucidar. Lo que se está haciendo aquí con el nombre de teatro está lejos de mantener la exigencia de calidad y compromiso necesarios (Cardona, p. 12).

He further links theatrical activity to a perpetuation of the star system. Works are chosen:

> de manera que resalte una estrella. De ahí que se descarten los clásicos, y el teatro de verdadera calidad, si en esas obras no se luce una actuación específica. Ello agravado por la creencia de que el teatro serio y riguroso no apela a los gustos. Esta es una buena justificación para no comprometerse a nivel artístico (Cardona, p. 12).

Thus his response to the query as to whether Puerto Rican dramatists are fulfilling their role is negative. He describes another obstacle to artistic fulfillment:

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> Los dramaturgos han sido relegados a lo que se llama festivales de Teatro. Eso es una trampa. Ninguna compañía se acerca al dramaturgo puertorriqueño porque cree que será visto en el próximo festival. Es un escritor de festivales. Contrario a otros sitios donde se hace teatro, en que todo el movimiento teatral articula alrededor de sus dramaturgos nacionales. Los nuestros pierden así su efectividad porque los festivales han creado una actitud de desconfianza. Se ven como un evento más, sin trascendencia alguna (Cardona, p. 12).

There is a need shared by most Latin American countries, for a government sponsored effort, not with the limited goal of financing individual works, but rather with the broader commitment to train people in the theatre arts.[10] On numerous occasions, Sánchez has articulated his ideas on this subject:

> Nos hace mucha falta un buen Conservatorio de Teatro. Es una política que tendría que tomar y encausar el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, ya que es el encargado de estos menesteres. No es solamente dar dinero para financiar una obra en específico, sino dar el entrenamiento necesario para que se haga teatro de altura.
>
> La isla adolece de un plan de teatro. Las obras se hacen continuamente sin propósito. Los festivales centralizan la cultura, y no llegan a los pueblos (Cardona, p. 12).

He insists that a theatre plan would correct these problems. He talks about the need for "una creación de una política oficial de teatro" which would include "el mejoramiento del Departamento de Drama de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, un taller para aquellos interesados en todas las facetas del arte y la exhortación hacia mayor actividad teatral de los

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grupos independientes" (Cardona, p. 12). With these suggestions he does not pretend to solve the entire problem, but at least propose a start.

Characterizing Puerto Rican literature, he comments:

> Nuestra literatura está en compás de espera. En los últimos años los escritores puertorriqueños hemos estado haciendo una obra decorosa. Pero hay una ausencia de excepcionalidad creadora en nuestro medio. Escribimos bien, con corrección, con acierto expresivo, pero la obra puertorriqueña capaz de llamar atención del continente está por hacerse. Con esa obra están todos los escritores puertorriqueños endeudados. Hay cimas indiscutibles como Palés, Hostos y Julia de Burgos, innegables en una consideración de carácter continental. Y hay clásicos vivos como Corretjer, Matos Paoli y René Marqués. Hay también escritores nuevos espléndidos como Tomás López Ramírez y Manuel Ramos Otero. (Torres, p. 20).

From the vantage point of having created short stories, plays, and a highly successful first novel, Sánchez has often commented on the differences involved in writing for each genre:

> El autor teatral necesita un instrumento técnico más elaborado, más complejo, que el del cuentista narrador. Escribir teatro supone sintetizar toda la experiencia del personaje a través del diálogo y ese diálogo debe hacer pensar que surge en el momento de cada representación. El narrador, en cambio, tiene los recursos amplios de lo que piensa el personaje, de lo que reflexiona pero no dice. El drama del dramaturgo es que sólo cuenta con las palabras que se dicen mientras que el narrador también puede usar la descripción. El narrador se completa ante la maquinilla pero el autor teatral necesita del nexo actor-director para que le interprete (Torres, p. 20).

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He is a consumate cuentista combining technical control with poetic sensibility as realized in the twelve short stories contained in En cuerpo de camisa (1966). His latest work, La guaracha del Macho Camacho (Ediciones de Flore, 1976), is a synthesis of two directions: national and universal. It is the maximum expression of his puertorriqueñidad, while at the same time it reveals the most sophisticated linguistic devices of the twentieth century novel. The protagonist is language, just as it is in the most recent works of Juan Goytisolo, Severo Sarduy, Carlos Fuentes, Manuel Puig, and Cabrera Infante. This enormously successful first novel has allowed him to develop at greater length and with greater depth his major concerns: the relationship between life and fiction; the pervasive influence of the United States on Puerto Rican society; innovative use of language, and concepts of power and its manipulation. He uses the novel form to measure the pulse of Puerto Rico, of his contrymen, just as Enrique Laguerre did in his book of essays, Pulso de Puerto Rico, or René Marqués in El puertorriqueño dócil, and as Emilio Díaz Valcárcel did, fictionally, in Figuraciones en el mes de marzo. He further elaborates upon his ideas concerning the creative process, the ways in which the writer creates his or her literary world, and the characters who populate it:

> No creo en la inspiración. Si alguna, creo que éste nace del trabajo: el escritor se sienta y comienza a escribir. Mi instinto se alimenta básicamente de la realidad, de lo cotidiano. Esa observación se hace selectiva. La realidad no puede trasponerse directamente. El escritor observa y selecciona los materiales que le interesan como ser humano.

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> Este no es nada más que el punto de partida. Lo observado sólo es referencia y debe ser empapado de imaginación. Eso es lo que diferencia a un artista del hombre común. La realidad está abierta a todos. El escritor enriquece esa realidad con su imaginación con unos propósitos estéticos. Luego viene el trabajo y la disciplina. No olvidemos que escribir es el arte de borrar. Hay que cuidar además el vigor del espíritu para no decir hoy no escribo, mañana sí. No caer en la desilusión, que es frecuente en Puerto Rico porque no hay salida. Y sobre todo hay que tener mucho sentido crítico y desconfianza con uno mismo. Lo peor que le puede ocurrir a un escritor es vivir complacido consigo mismo. Es el comienzo del fin. (Torres P. 20).

Woven through his work are the dual motifs, hope and despair. As previously noted, his entire creative drive is nourished by his hope for the future of Puerto Rico. However, the reasons for despair are omnipresent. He notes, that "El escritor puertorriqueño proviene del contexto colonial; es la realidad que lo contamina." Moreover, he sees "la realidad colonial como cantera literaria permanente."[11] In the face of Nilita Vientós Gaston's observation about the "gloomy vision" that Sánchez as well as René Marqués, seem to prefer--an apparent loss of faith in the Puerto Ricans, in the destiny of the Island--Sánchez responded,

> 'Literature . . . has no reason to be either pessimistic or optimistic.' His novel, he said, is pessimistic because Puerto Rico is a pessimistic, bitter and tragic country. 'It would be wrong,' he said, 'for a writer to present an optimistic view of this reality.' 'There is a tendency . . . to confuse the purpose of literature with the purpose of politics. The writer aims . . . to report reality, whatever that may be.' 12

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Interestingly, Chocrón makes a similar assertion when questioned by this author about the apparently pessimistic posture he seems to take about modern human relationships. He replies:

> I don't think it's pessimistic. I think it is a realization that love is a very painful business and happiness is not a reality. There are relative degrees of complacency but that once you love, it's because you suffer. It's not a masochistic sort of thing. You feel very happy loving, but it is not a happy business. I think that's the exciting thing about living, and what I'm trying to communicate in my plays, are my experiences with trying to live with this realization. 13

Solórzano, too, seems to support the contention that modern drama essentially communicates an anguished world view:

> El concepto de angustia . . . me parece que es el que rige, y norma la creación dramática de nuestros días; no sólo porque constituye el contenido mismo de esta creación, ya que refleja la realidad del hombre de hoy que se siente desplazado, sino también porque se hace potente en la postura del dramaturgo, que se siente incómodo al moverse dentro de los límites del teatro y que no queriendo depender de nada, debe respetar algunas leyes. 14

Sánchez describes another element which contributes to the frequently experienced desillusionmnet in Puerto Rico:

> El proceso creador de todo artisto puertorriqueño se interrumpe y pervierte por el hecho de que cumple otras responsabilidades para comer y su capacidad, su entusiasmo, su talento, tiene que repartirse entre su vocación y su trabajo. En mi caso creo que lo que ha afectado fundamentalmente a mi carrera literaria es mi trabajo universitario (Torres, p. 20).

This in turn, leads to "la tremenda fuga de inteligencia que tenemos actualmente," which gravely concerns him. He laments

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that, "nuestro mejores intelectuales se van del país, plenamente convencidos que es éste el único sitio en el mundo en que ni se triunfa ni se fracasa" (Cardona, p. 12).

In noting that his first literary attempt is a short story, curiously enough with a political theme, he enters into a crucial area of examination for himself, as well as other Puerto Rican writers, "independentismo literario frente a independentismo político." He states:

> Nunca me ha interesado el independentismo literario. Me interesa más el independentismo político. Siempre he creido que una de las trampas más grandes para un escritor puertorriqueño angustiado por la acción colonial es la de resolver la literatura con clisés, o estereotipos de conducta, con caricaturas de héroes o villanos y demagogia sin enfrentarse al problema totalizante de la creación. Me parece a mí que el terrible drama de Puerto Rico necesita soluciones fuera de las formas trilladas y conocidas (Torres, p. 18).

He insists that "no hay nada peor en la literatura que lo obvio y la literatura puertorriqueña es obvia"--and moreover, that--"la intención política no salva una obra literatura; un 'texto literario tampoco es mejor o peor por tomar una postura política'" (Torres, p. 18). Consequently he often poses the question as to what degree "la política ahoga o falsifica la literatura" (Torres, p. 18).

Nevertheless, Sánchez asserts, Puerto Rican literature should exercise "una capacidad corrosiva sobre una época, una sociedad." He mentions Valle-Inclán, Vargas Llosa, Zeno Gandía, and Arthur Miller as writers who achieved the

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portrayal of a "radiografía admirable de una época, una sociedad." In his own writing this "ánimo corrosivo" is manifested through humor, parody, gentle laughter, all "elementos -esmitificadores" (Hostos C.C., Oct. 23, 1974). He constantly reiterates that "el artista puertorriqueños debe ser un infiltrado permanente, un peleado consigo y los demás"; in the same way that being a Puerto Rican artist means "combate permanente, lucha y reflexión total" (Hostos CC, Oct. 23, 1974). Furthermore, he is quoted by Manuel Galich as affirming that:

> Quienes sostienen, bien o mal intencionados, que la mejor expresión artística puertorriqueña es monotemática y unidimensional, sostienen una gran verdad: la investigación que el arte hace de la realidad tropieza en el país puertorriqueño con un dato impostergable e ineludible: el fundamento colonial todo lo modifica. Más penetrante en el orden crítico sería el descubrimiento de una tensión omnipresente, informativa de angustia, recelo y desconcierto, tensión delatada por el verbo retorcido, latigoso y el color agrio.
>
> La acusación fácil y acomodaticia se suele lanzar a esa literatura y arte monotemático y unidimensional que afirma, concreta y pregona lo que somos: estar comprometidos con una ideología comprometida con una tesis política como respuesta a nuestra vida de pueblo. Los que acusan y objetan olvidan o quieren olvidar que cuando un artista no toma partido está tomando partido, es parte esencial y numeraria del partido de los que no toman partido. Y ya sabemos con quiénes están y andan los que no toman partido. 15

In all his interviews, his opinions about directors sooner or later come to the force. He expresses the attitude that most playwrights share internationally, that "al fallar

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el director, falla todo" (Cardona, p. 12). As the American playwright, Albert Innaurato so aptly observes, "Original plays do get put on, but it is very difficult because we are living in a non-verbal period when everyone is oriented to the visual, to movies and T.V., and this has affected theater as well. The playwright has been quashed and the director glorified."[16] Even more strongly, says Innaurato, "It used to be that you knew the work of a good director by the fact that it was invisible. But today the director wants his work to stand out."[17] In the same vein Sánchez insists upon the high quality of many actors and actresses in Puerto Rico, but adds "Lo que ha fallaso casi todas las veces es el director. Aquí no hay buenos directores, con muy pocas excepciones" (Cardona, p. 12). He continues, "En el teatro puertorriqueño he visto obras fracasar porque el director no supo interpretarlas, no supo encontrar el ritmo preciso. No entendió o estudió los matices sucesivos de la obra. La verdad es que el dramaturgo siempre está a la merced del que lo interpreta" (Torres, p. 18). We will examine specifically how the director's vision has served Sánchez's plays later on. It is interesting to note the attitude of one of Sánchez's directors, Nilda González, vis à vis the delicate area of permissible changes that a director can make in a playwright's work. Her position--substantially in agreement with his--reinforces the importance of the dramatic text, as we see in her statement:

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> Creo que son permisibles siempre y cuando contribuyan a hacer más claro el mensaje del autor, a llegar más directamente al público. . . . Defensora encarecida de la obra y del autor --aunque no soy dramaturga-- creo que el cambio en concepción y montaje es permisible solamente cuando se beneficia de ello la obra escrita. La estilización, la teatralidad son válidas en tanto en cuento la obra escrita no salga perjudicada. La obra es lo esencial, lo importante. . . . 18

This area of potential conflict is further explored by González, who reveals yet another dimension of the theatre process in Puerto Rico. Calling for an authenticity on the part of the director, she states her criteria for a successful author-director relationship:

> No se puede dirigir a cabalidad una obra si se hace por intereses creados, porque hay que seguir la moda de dirigir teatro puertorriqueño en el caso específico de nuestro país o porque los autores más cotizados en el mundo teatral son los de vanguardia, o los clásicos, o los rusos, o los americanos, según las modas, que las ha habido en todas las épocas y en todas partes. Sinceridad sobre todo, gusto e interés en lo que se va a hacer, han de ser puntos importantes a considerar por el director. 19

She defines her roles as:

> La de llevar al público el concepto, el mensaje del autor, en crear el ambiente pedido por el dramaturgo para que la idea llegue al espectador más fácil y directamente. Lo que importa verdaderamente a mi juicio es la relación establecida entre autores y directores. Mi respeto por el autor y su obra fue el mismo cuando dirigí la obra del que entonces era mi discípulo Luis Rafael Sánchez, que cuando dirigí la obra de don Emilio Belaval por quien sentía y siento una gran deferencia y quien ha sido para mí una figura casi irreal por su labor en el teatro. 20

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However, Sánchez's own sentiments are best reflected in the fierce assertion by fellow playwright Innaurato, "In the end, a living theater is tied to its writers, not its performers, nor directors as performers."[21] Similarly --and just as boldly--Lillian Hellman reinforces the importance of the playwright's written words:

> The manuscript, the words on the page, was what you started with and what you have left. The production is of great importance, has given the play the only life it will know, but it is gone, in the end, and the pages are the only wall against which to throw the future or measure the past. 22

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C. Sánchez on Language

Consequently language is primordial for Sánchez. He believes his task, as well as the task of other Puerto Rican writers, is to save that authentic, rich language of the Puerto Rican people, the language of "committed familiarity" as he calls it. Although he captures and reveals the authentic languages of the different social strata in all of his work, he has particularly succeeded in incorporating the contemporary idiom, the language "of the street, of difficulty, of sweat, of anguish, of salsa"[23] into his latest narrative, La guaracha. In his journalistic work, to wit, in the column entitled "Escrito en puertorriqueño" written for the newspaper, Claridad, he explores the many faceted realities of Puerto Rican Life. In his mordantly critical piece entitled "La Generación O SEA,"[24] he examined the dilemma of language. Sánchez employed the much abused verbal form "o sea," to illustrate the critical situation concerning language in Puerto Rico today. He related the incident where his students, when asked a question about a certain

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novel answers, "O sea que el personaje se suicida a sí mismo con pastillas de dormir, o sea que el personaje se mata a sí mismo, o sea con una dosis grande de supositorios" (Claridad, p. 22). He affirmed that neither the reference to the character who "en el colmo de las osadías se suicida a sí mismo," nor the curious testimony about the massive ingestion of "suppositorios" was the most significant one in this anecdote, but rather:

> La noticia relevante de la respuesta citada es la repetición, una, diez, cien veces de la frase O SEA, utilizada como angustioso recurso de ciego de la lengua que adelanta ese torpe bastón inseguro y vacilante; o sea que reclama la palabra distante que ni llega ni alumbra porque ha sido almacenada en la región de la inteligencia que llamaremos, arbitrariamente, de la expresión cierta; región desde la cual asimos la realidad o la porción de aquella que nos importa y conmueve, hecha toda de palabra la realidad.

He further developed his conception of the function of language:

> En el acopio, la selección y el inventario de las palabras que totalizan la pertenencia individual lo que se hace es acopiar, seleccionar e inventariar nada menos que la idea misma de la vida y, a su vez, las involuciones y las revoluciones que la configuran: en toda palabra se concreta una experiencia de rigor social que nos impone y expone, toda palabra nos fecha en la historia mientras nos historia, toda palabra nos ficha, taxativamente, en la moral. Fecha y ficha plenamente completadas por la simple manifestación del pensamiento más simple. (Claridad, p. 22).

However, the limited possibility for successful completion of this "simple manifestation of the most simple thought"

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is the crux of the language problem which he stressed in his exposition:

> Escribo en puertorriqueño cuando llamo a la frase O SEA recurso ciego de la lengua o muleta dolorosa de quien ha sido educado para no serlo; educación, la oficiada en el salón de clase, reducida al aparato circunstancial justamente prescindible. Cuando el estudiante aludido en el párrafo inicial se lanza a la exposición desde el equívoco trampolín que es la frase O SEA adelanta que no dispone de la palbra que más tarde, en el reconocimiento de la impotencia verbal, juraría tener --paradójicamente-- en la punta de la lengua. La frase O SEA pretende completar, precisar o hasta traducir la afirmación primera: o sea que el personaje se suicida a sí mismo con pastillas de dormir a una lengua creídamente eficaz: o sea que el personaje se mata a sí mismo.

He continued to describe the verbal deficiencies of an erroneously defined bilingual society:

> Escribo en puertorriqueño cuando digo que entre nosotros no se maneja la lengua con comodidad, con soltura y cabilidad, con la naturalidad y el empeño de aquél para quien la lengua no es motivo de tensión pero sí el aparato que transmite su vibración íntima: la espiritual, la ideal, la material. (Claridad, p. 22.)

He asserted that this generation is not willing to take control over the language it speaks, or rather, stumbles through. This act of taking control would imply the need to recognize the inherent power in language, the power we have when we can name the realities around us; when we are truly a vital part of our circumstances, not tongue-tied observers. Language is the tool towards this freedom. Sánchez was not blaming

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the Puerto Rican, nor was this a call to falsified versions of the language, false erudition or imitation, but rather, a call to repossess a facet of their unique national heritage, Puerto Rican Spanish. National forms, local words and expressions all lend richness to the language, but use of "la vacilación nominativa, la recurrencia a la piedad del O SEA traductor de un pensamiento que jamás se efectúa, la sustitución de las palabras reales por los términos de grotesca manufactura como el DESO, la DESA, el COSO, el COSITO ESE, la COSITA ESA, la VAINA ESA, el APARATITO QUE ES COMO UNA COSITA RENDODITA" (Claridad, p. 22), all are impoverished forms of the language rather than unqiue expresssions of originality. He was unequivocal in naming the cause of this linguistic mulilation, "la educación ambivalente, coloniazada y colonizadora a los niveles simultáneos del hogar y la escuela" (Claridad, p. 22). None of this would be so important, Sánchez ironically observes, if words died as soon as they were pronounced; if they were consumed once they were spoken. However, in Sánchez's own voice, "una palabra es mucho más que una palabra: es una toma de poder, un arma que permite la modificación de la circunstancia, una licencia para instalarse en el mundo"(Claridad, p. 22).

He described the process of language impoverishment that unfortunately exists in both Spanish and English, and that both the school and home subject the child to:

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> Tras ese chiquiteo inicial se dispone la reducción de la palabra en su contenido y su número; falsa, torpemente, se asume que el niño niñito está incapacitado para acumular un vocabulario amplio y exacto. Del chiquiteo cuyos ITOS e ITAS presuponen una inmensidad de dulzura y cariño se pasa a la utilización de los términos de grotesca manufactura como el DESO, la DESA, el COSO, el COSITO, la COSITA, la VAINA, el APARATITO QUE ES COMO UNA COSITA REDONDITA: sustitutivos imposibles para la nominación correcta del objeto. Mediante este proceso la realidad se elementaliza hasta hacerse extraña y desconocida y la palabra se niega o se escamotea. La facilidad necia que se le adelanta al niño en los años del ahorro léxico se convierte, una vez adulto, en la más patética de las dificultades: la imposibilidad de la fluidez verbal meramente aceptable (Claridad, p. 22).

He concluded his incisive indictment with these words:

> Escribo en puertorriqueño y llamo generación O SEA a aquella a la que se la pospone la construcción de la libertad social de la palabra: suma mayúscula de las otras. Esa libertad se cumple cuando el individuo se educa para saber el nombre exacto y escueto de las cosas: sin falsificaciones, sin bizquera semántica, sin DESOS ni O SEA trágicos que impiden formar --lisa y llanamanete-- que un personaje se ha suicidado con sopíferos. En su libro El laberinto de la soledad afirma el mexicano Octavio Paz que 'la crítica del lenguaje es una crítica histórica y moral'. Buen tratado para un comienzo: palabra, historia y moral en una sola ecuación (Claridad, p. 22).

It is worthy of mention that in 1963 Sánchez chose to write a critique of El túnel where he paid particular attention to the literary techniques used by Sábato, that he himself develops in so many of his plays. Note the following examples: his description of El túnel as a "intento de dibujo sicológico de un enajenado y de los procesos mentales por los

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cuales atraviesa,"[25] a description equally applicable to Los ángeles; the concept of agonía, in the Unamunian sense, that Castel experiences is similar to Antígona's existential struggle; the particular attention Sánchez pays to the importance of Sábato's female protagonist, María Iribarne, and to her desolation, is an area in which Sánchez achieves his fullest characterizations; and too, the mathematical preciseness of the structure and action of the novel--"El lenguaje es exacto: detiene el interés en los esencial"--[26] is a stylistic element greatly valued by Sánchez and evident in his choice and treatment of similar themes, for example in the essay previously discussed, "La generación O SEA."

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D. About His Theatre: Language, Themes, Technique, Influences

Sánchez illustrates that capacity to articulate a personal vision, which ultimately determines a major artist. As Wright observes, "Merely finding the truth is not enough; it must be interpreted and expressed in a distinctive way." His theatre reveals a command of language and an understanding of the psychology of his characters. This is evident in the felicitous relationship between his characters and their verbal expression, that is, the language used is authentic to the character expressing it. An examination of language in his plays reveals a careful selection of words for their dramatic impact. Thus his consciousness about language, is revealed in praxis in his own work. The preciseness of his language, the successful integration of popular elements within the text, all point to "una conciencia de lenguaje que convierte sus dramas en torrentes nominadores, como si este joven autor quisiera abarcar el total de la apariencia para eximir finalmente el sentido último del ser."[27] Sánchez has mastered what Alfonso Sastre refers to as "buen lenguaje dramático"--that is--"la condensación en pocas y lúcidas palabras de lo que normalmente en la vida se expresa confusa y delatadamente."[28]

A crucial facet of his style is his ability to communicate an unmistakeable stamp of "puertorriqueñidad," which

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he achieves through capturing and expressing the flavor of the idiomatic turns of Puerto Rican Spanish. The authentic relationship between the dialogue and the particular voice of the character who is speaking does not negate the metaphoric language which characterizes the speech of even the most primitive characters. Thus, linguistic fidelity is apparent in all of Sánchez's works, although his style and language varies from one play to another. In La hiel, Píramo and Tisbe speak one way, while doña Ugo, on the other hand, is obviously more crude, raucous, and vulgar in her speech. This writer noticed the delight in recognition that the audience experienced vis à vis Doña Ugo, for example. In La hiel, the language is colloquial Puerto Rican Spanish, which is consistent with the characters being developed. This linguistic fidelity is also true in Antígona Pérez. The dialogue, the style of delivery and the tone of each character is fully consistent with the internal exigencies of that personage. Similarly in Antígona Pérez, the formal style adopted by the characters who represent the Establishment (Creón, Pilar Varga, Monseñor Bernardo), is an effective linguistic device to emphasize the lack of communication or comprehension among them. At the same time it establishes a neutral language which actually fosters distance between Antígona and her adversaries.

As George Woodyard asserts, "The importance of language in the contemporary theatre cannot be stressed too much."[29]

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And Sánchez shares with certain other Latin American dramatists, the ability to fuse linguistic elements so that they become prose-poetry. In this context we can mention in particular: Emilio Carballido, Yo también hablo de la rosa, El día que soltaron los leones among his many works; Luis Alberto Heiremans, Versos de ciego, El abanderado, El Tony chico; Luisa Josefina Hernández, Arpas blancas y conejos dorados, Los duendes; Elena Garró, La señora en su balcón, Andarse por las ramas, Los perros. His conception of writing drama can be articulated by the "intention to catch reality and raise it to a poetic level."[30]

Thus the following statement about the poetic nature of Luis Alberto Heireman's theatre has relevance for our analysis of Sánchez's work.[31]

> When we speak of the poetic language of theater, we are not referring to versification, nor to simple spoken speech that underlines the text, but to theatrical language as such: spoken words, gestures, screams, tears, ornament, color, light, music, dance, costume, set emotion, intrigue, sentiments, etc. 32

As Tamara Holzapfel further asserts, "Poetic drama is the ultimate attainment of contemporary playwrights who combine effectively inner movement with poetic suggestiveness through visual and auditory techniques."[33] Sánchez's theatre is indeed suffused with poetic language, this too, a legacy of the expressionist movement. As Castagnino corroborates, "El expresionismo, con la sugerencia, las

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atmósferas envolventes y la apertura hacia la metáfora escénica insinuó, también, que el lenguaje poético puede jugar su papel."[34] The particularly lyrical nature of Sánchez's language has been described by numerous critics. Piri Fernández de Lewis notes, "Luis Rafael Sánchez carga su lenguaje de poesía. El verso irrumpe ocasionalmente y sin aviso en la prosa. Esto se debe a que el ritmo contado no es en verdad sino una modalidad un poco más lírica del ambiente lírico que ya permea todo el lenguaje."[35] Similarly, J. B. Phillips refers to his rhythmic use of language. The poetic traces in Sánchez work often remind us of García Lorca's theatre, as does his use of music and color. Comments Fernández de Lewis, "La poesía aflora por doquiera en el estilo de Luis Rafael Sánchez.· El ritmo ya sea verso ya sea prosa, es poesía. El uso de la palabra en la oración nace de un retozo poético. Y la esencia misma de la palabra es una imagen poética: una metáfora."[36] And in the article, "Historia del teatro contemporáneo," Juan Guerrero Zamora refers to Sánchez in the following way, "Alcanza a comprimir a la palabra un grado de poética encarnación."[37]

Different from Albee and Pinter, whose dramatic structure is traditional, in fact, conservative, while their use of language is highly original, Sánchez is more interested in using form and language to work for him, rather than breaking with it. Arriví draws some illuminating comparisons

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between Sánchez and the vanguard theatre. He particularly contrasts Sánchez's use of language with that of Ionesco:

> En Ionesco, la palabra dotada de una diabólica proliferación estrangula el alma, acaba por asfixiarla en un sonoro espesor que surge desde la nada a imponer el vacío imperio de ésta. El gesto vital del hombre se sumerge inflexiblemente en la marejada 'de palabras que no significan nada'. En Luis Rafael Sánchez, la palabra también prolífica, se cuela por los intersticios del ser en busca de un significado final de lo que, por no conocerse en su principio, ni en su propósito, resulta aparentemente disparatado. En lugar de ahogar el gesto vital del hombre, lo subraya, lo conforma, lo ofrece en dinámico relieve contra el disparate de existir, como si la vida pugnara por descubrirse a sí misma válida del verbo. En Ionesco la palabra anuncia, la muerte y la consuma; en Sánchez, intenta rescatar lo consciente humano de la injusticia y el dolor de vacío. 38

For Arriví, Sánchez's linguistic density creates his characters. His language is an attempt to salvage what is human from the injustice and pain of emptiness, whereas Ionesco's language augers death:

> Lo que en Ionesco se fragua estoicismo sonreído ante el vano destino del hombre, se torna en Sánchez búsqueda de la razón perdida de Dios. Ionesco se resigna a lo absurdo de un acontecer en los límites del tiempo donde a la vida no le queda más remedio que desplazarse absurdamente hasta desaparecer: Sánchez se resiste a dejarse vencer por la injusticia de haber nacido hacia el fondo de un saco ineludible y forcejea por romper el angustiante involtorio. Para Ionesco, el tener conciencia de ser resulta una maldición ante la cual debemos reír trágicamente; en Luis Rafael Sánchez un doloroso privilegio para gestionar la divinidad. 39

The varied sources of inspiration for this thematic development include sources as disparate as the classical

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theatre (Antígona), the Bible (O casi el alma), the commedia dell'arte (Farsa del amor compradito) and the daily life of his compatriots (La hiel nuestra, Los ángeles). As can be corroborated by an examination of the production of the major Latin American dramatists today, one of their essential goals is "to create a regionalism and through it achieve the universal."[40] José Monleón has indicated that this process of exploring multiple facets of Latin American life, using regional motifs, historical incidents, music, and folklore is essential in defining and communicating the dramatic expression of their authentic voice. Sánchez's use of the Puerto Rican experience, its traditions, folklore, and language, to create artistic images conforms with one of the theatre's major goals, the transformation of concepts into images. His dramatic production illustrates the effective use of this technique through the depiction of fictional incidents to reveal insights into basic Puerto Rican traits and its intrahistoria, as Unamuno would have it.

Equally significant is the fact that his plays transcend the specifically realistic and restrictively Puerto Rican to achieve a theatre, that is at once contemporary and universal. His works have been presented extensively outside of his country because of this world view, because he successfully makes the Puerto Rican ambiance work for him. He uses his own circumstance to illuminate the human condition. Similarly in many of their works, playwrights like

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Chocrón, Luisa Josefina Hernández, Carballido and Dragún use local settings to extrapolate universal concerns. Thus, although the theme of la patria is present in his creative, as well as journalistic work, the will to be universal, to treat themes common to all humankind, is at once apparent. His plays, however, also serve as dramatic metaphors for his conception of the present day Puerto Rican circumstance: in Antígona Pérez he depicts the authentic Puerto Rican, in the character Antígona, who demonstrates purity and determination in the face of the morally bereft society around her; in O casi el alma, the deceit, superficiality of the so-called "believers" in the face of the only sincere soul, the prostitute Maggie; in Los ángeles, the tragic figure of Angela-Puerto Rico corrupted by American values and abandoned first by her Corsican fiancé, then, by these same Americans, finally by her Puerto Rican lover-pimp, thus reinforcing the prevalent historical theme of abandonment and dissolution.

Says Margaret Sayers Peden about realistic plays:

> The good, basically realistic play, based on the investigation of individual--and by extension societal--problems and insight into motivations, is . . . far from frequent. This is not to imply that realism does not exist in Latin American theater, It abounds! But most 'realistic' plays tend toward the didactic and propagandistic on the one hand and costumbristic, slice-of-life recreations of distinct national realities on the other. 41

Our writer, however, belongs to "this new generation of dramatists /which/ has incorporated expressionistic devices

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and techniques in order to break the bonds of straight forward realism."[42] This is evident in plays like O casi el alma, at first glance a play dealing with a realistic situation, the selling and packaging of religion, but upon closer examination actually a metaphysical exploration of the nature of faith in contemporary society. Similarly, Los ángeles and La hiel nuestra ostensibly present realistic situations, however, the artistic treatment of these situations is essentially poetic in nature. Antígona Pérez's strong political and social nature cannot be defined as a mere thesis play because of the author's sophisticated use of dramatic technique. As J. B. Phillips observes:

> Almost certainly, the continued preoccupation of all Puerto Rican dramatists with the problem of erosion of their culture and loss of identity to a foreign materialism accounts for their reluctance to abandon all semblances of reality and cause-effect relationship in their plays. Generally, the dramatists seem to believe that an extremely avant-garde theater is a luxury unbecoming to a small nation struggling to survive as a cultural entity. 43

Sánchez corroborates this assertion in a Conference presented October 21, 1974 at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

His concern with Puerto Rican identity and his subsequent development of that theme, is manifested in a more subtle manner in his work than it is among the members of the Generation of 1940. For example, his Antígona, although not identifiably Puerto Rican, but rather Latin American in

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nature, still represents the independent Puerto Rican spirit asserting its will to freedom. Similarly, the portrayal of the Puerto Rican circumstance and the social criticism implicit in that portrayal, in Sol 13, Interior, O casi el alma, and Antígona Pérez, is always subject, in our author, to rigorous artistic determinations. As Dauster asserts about the generation of Latin American dramatists that our author belongs to, "lo que caracteriza a la generación de Vodanovic, que es también la de Carballido o Dragún, es la presencia tanto de un concepto técnico muy avanzado como de una actitud social muy importante."[41] As we will see further in our examination of his theatre, Sánchez writes with the supple assurance of someone clearly in control of his craft.

He shares with the Generation of 1940, a sensitivity to the struggle for cultural autonomy that Puerto Rico wages daily in the fact of economic, political and media onslought by the United States. He shares their existential foundation, particularly evident in Antígona and O casi el alma. He also shares their willingness to incorporate twentieth century literary techniques into his work, but differs from them in taking these artistic innovations one step further. For example in Antígona, he adapts essentially expressionist techniques most commonly associated with Brecht, to achieve his most dramatic effects. In O casi el alma the nature of the interchange between the two protagonists

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is determined by their linguistic styles. They are in two different places: she, a prostitute, who reveals her street sense in her crude language; he, a mysterious figure, who possesses a hypnotic elegance which he reveals in his seductive verbal style. It is this successful incorporation of traditional Puerto Rican themes with poetic and suggestive language, as well as innovative staging that earns him the ever widening reputation that he enjoys.

Sánchez is a dramatist in revolt, to employ the term used by Lyday and Woodyard. He shares with those authors studied in the book of critical essays of the same name, a sense of rebellion which is manifested by thematic choice as well as by "dramatic configuration."[45] In Sánchez's case that means he choses to write about society's outsiders, the alienated, those who are somehow different, marginal: the prostitutes (in O casi and Los ángeles), the poor (in La hiel), the religious fakers (in O casi el alma), the morally resolute and the morally destitute (in Antígona). Each play employs different techniques which respond as much to Sánchez's own search for "viable theatrical forms," as to the search of his generation of Latin American dramatists. His recurrent exploration of these problems lends thematic and artistic unity to his theatre. Similarly, the recurrence of certain institutions constitutes a particular vision of Latin American reality. Alejo Carpentier has said about America that it is "not just a place, but a state of mind that enforces a set of values which in turn shape a way of

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life." [46] The writer particularizes that vision through his work. Thus the role of certain social institutions is significant in defining our playwright's conception of Latin America. The America that Sánchez describes and criticizes in Antígona Pérez, for example, is a morally bereft continent whose behavior is determined by those corrupt institutions of power such as the government, the military, the Church, and the press. Antígona is his most devastating dramatic statement against these abuses. He also pays particular attention to the power of the media--specifically the press--in shaping public opinion in O casi el alma, regarding Maggie's "miracle," and in Antígona, as a distortion of the events taking place.

As can be deduced from our readings in the Latin American theatre, the artist's critical statement must be made from within the circumstance he or she is criticizing. If the dramatist is not engagé, the criticism is often not as vital. An example that Monleón suggests is Jorge Díaz's leaving Spain to experience Allende's Chile, and perhaps assume the role of the "dramatist of the Revolution," which Monleón considers a contradiction in terms since the dramatist of the revolution per force had to be the Chilean who lived that particular circumstance every day.[47] That is why Sánchez, as an integral member of Puerto Rican society writes plays that are, in their core, Puerto Rican in nature, and at the same time profoundly critical of the

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reality he is depicting. Were he not as familiar with his prima materia, he could not evoke his characters' anguish and foibles as insightfully and lovingly as he does. Indeed, Sánchez poetically captures the essence of the Puerto Rican soul. He criticizes the particular reality of which he is a part, but with tenderness. His protagonists are the casualties of Puerto Rico's embracing the North American ethic of progress and industrialization, as well as her moral corruption (the American marines in Los ángeles), and false values (religion as a business in O casi). The themes he writes about include the need for freedom, for love, for faith, the existence of poverty, loneliness, prostitution, and by analogy, the social system and specific situations which are at their root, all within the context of the Puerto Rican experience. As J. B. Phillips observes, "Sánchez possesss an all encompassing view of his people and their problems, and not simply from a political point of view. His characters plead for a personal freedom which cannot be equated with freedom of movement, but of soul. He understands those institutions which perpetuate slavery, and his plays are calls for change."[48]

Sánchez finds his characters in urban society, in the substructures we have mentioned: the world of the prostitutes, the poor, the disenfranchised and the alienated. This corresponds to a distinct tendency in the contemporary Latin American theatre which places emphasis on the urban

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setting rather than "such staples . . . as the misery of the rural agricultural worker or oppression by absentee landlords."[49] Furthermore, as Dauster points out, corroborating this urban shift and particularly singling out the Puerto Rican theatre movement, there is "concern with loss of individuality and dignity within the structures of the mushrooming cities."[59]

A requisite of modern drama is that it be theatrical.[51] Sánchez's plays employ theatricalism without falling prey to one of its pitfalls, self-consciousness. If, as we have previously asserted, theatre is a synthesis of the arts, then the manifestation of all the elements which create a theatrical experience is its theatricalism. By that term we refer to the magnification, the "exaggeration under control" that characterizes a theatre event. As Wright suggests, "In a real sense theatricalism is an aesthetic style in its own right just as realism, romanticism and absurdism are aesthetic styles, but it is so integral a part of <u>all theatre</u> that theatricalism is usually present in combination with each of the other styles."[52] The particular elements that our author uses to develop a sense of theatricalism include music, lighting, and innovative staging.

As can be seen by a comparison of the dramatic techniques used in his plays, Sánchez is a versatile artist who employs varied forms to communicate his stage conception: expressionist in <u>Antígona Pérez</u>; more realistic in <u>La hiel nuestra</u>, and even <u>O casi el alma</u>; while in <u>Los ángeles</u>, he

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establishes an intimate relationship between character development and its external manifestations in the staging, as he expands the role of the mise en scène to reflect and complement his protagonist's psyche, to wit, Angela's cluttered, disheveled room reflects her cluttered and frenzied mind. He devotes much attention to structure and balance, adhering to a linear development of time in La hiel and O casi el alma, while in Los ángeles, juxtaposing flashbacks with scenes from the present. Although Antígona Pérez follows a linear development of time, it is the richest in dramatic innovation, utilizing, for example, the original structural device of multiple areas where dramatic action takes place which results in additional complexity of dialogue and characterization. In addition to utilizing technical devices to create atmosphere and poetry on stage, it is of particular interest to note the appearance of certain dramatic elements in his theatre which can be found in the work of his contemporarires. For example, the use of a chorus and of the "masses"--generally large groups of people--found in Sánchez's Antígona Pérez, as well as in selected works of Dragún (La peste viene de Melos), of Isadora Aguirre (Los papaleros de rosa), and Cuzzani (El centro forward murió al amanecer). Also note in Antígona Pérez an economy of stage setting, which reflects a basic trend in Latin American theatre, to facilitate presentation of plays at a minimal cost.

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The dramatic monologue is a device successfully used by Sánchez in Antígona Pérez, ... O casi el alma and Los ángeles. Its increased appearance in the modern Latin American theatre is a result of Latin American dramatists' exposure to post World War II trends emphasizing more subjective theatre and portraying the characters' innermost thoughts and feelings rather than adhering to the once prevalent photographic realism. The dramatic monologue in Sánchez's theatre reveals the inner world of his protagonists: the anger and frustration of Angela, converted into verbal turbulence and aggression in Los ángeles; the dense emotional and political ruminations of Antígona; the anguished, moral soul-searching and struggle for integrity of Maggie in ...O casi el alma.

In accordance with Gordon Craig's theories about stage-craft, Sánchez has proven his capacity to evoke the poetry that skillful lighting can achieve, as well as to suggest staging and wardrobe to reveal the dramatic conflict. Sánchez's use of ramps, scaffolding and platforms reflects the influence of Vsevolod Meyerhold, who in 1919 developed the technique of constructivist scenery, that is "scenery consisting of ramps, steps and slides that assured dynamic stage action but established environment only incidentally, if at all." Sánchez, like Meyerhold, "used acting levels for the purely esthetic or Appian purpose of liberating the actor from décor and givin him sculptural dimensionality."[53]

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The following statement by Arrom about contemporary staging techniques, can be applied to Sánchez's own use of scenography:

> La escenografía ahora se emplea para libertar al autor del enjaulamiento creado por las tres paredes del consabido salón del teatro finisecular. . . . La luz adquiere ahora movimineto, variedad y color; destaca a los intérpretes, señala áreas de mayor acción, crea ambientalmente el tono de sutiles estados psicológicos, y hasta cobra a veces un valor de símbolo dentro de los confines estéticos de una obra. 54

"The lighting designer's primary responsibility is to reveal what's there."[55] However, the possibility also exists to rectify problems in other areas, thus reinforcing the interdependent nature of the theatre experience. For example, if the costume designer finds that a color is either too bright or is disappearing completely, then a particular lighting scheme can be used to achieve the desired effect; likewise, scenery can be emphasized or minimized according to the lighting scheme. As the highly talented and successful American lighting designer Jennifer Tipton states, "The lighting designer not only reveals what works, he or she also tries to cover up mistakes."[56] In theatre, a lighting designer's work is to a great degree determined by the scenography. A major influence in the area of scenography, on world theatre and Latin American theatre as well, is Charles Dullen, who represents a mediating force between extremes in staging techniques. From his familiarity with expressionism, Dullen brought to the theatre a poetic appre-

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ciation of the technical elements, emphasizing less rigidity in staging direction and freer reign for improvisation and suggestion. All of these effects are found in the Latin American theatre today. Particularly applicable are his statements about lighting, "La luz tiene una especie de poder semejante al de la música, estimula los otros sentidos, pero influye como tal; la luz es un elemento vivo, uno de los fluidos de la imaginación; los decorados son cosa muerta."[57] Almost 50 years later, Jennifer Tipton echoes Dullen and makes the similarly provocative statement, "Scenery just gets in the way. First of all it gets in the way of where you want to point the lights. Light hits an actor and then travels past him to hit the scenery."[58]

The fact that plays are sometimes written with particular theatres in mind, affects their staging. Dauster pointed this out in relation to certain Puerto Rican playwrights, and their use of the Alejandro Tapia Theatre in San Juan. He postulated that the enormity of the theatre might be a significant factor in explaining the possible reason for the elaborate lighting instructions that Marqués always provides.[59] In an interview with Sánchez, he also indicated to us how the large physical size of the Tapia is a distinct factor to be considered in the staging of a play (Appendix 1, pp. 1-2). Light and sound effects are important throughout his plays to convey emotions and changes in tone. Sánchez uses an Appian application of lighting in his theatre; that is, he

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creates a dramatic atmosphere by using lights to paint the stage, just as an artist would use a brush. Correspondingly, his lighting effects seek to enhance the symbolic meaning of the text.

In this section we will elaborate further upon the influence of contemporary literary movements on the Puerto Rican drama, and focus, in particular, on those movements and individuals who have exercised the most direct influence on our author. The post World War II period in the Puerto Rican theatre produces works which reveal the influence of various schools of dramaturgy, predominantly though, from North America and Latin America. The most perceptible influence, however, is the North American theatre, at least in so far as dramatic forms.[60] However, as Babín notes, that influence was more visible in the directors' work than in the dramatists':

> La influencia del teatro norteamericano se aprecia mucho más en los directores de teatro puertorriqueño que en los dramaturgos. . . . Los autores, buscando acoplarse intelectualmente al ritmo universal de las corrientes estéticas y filosóficas del siglo, reflejan la huella de Europa en el sesgo temático, en el lenguaje simbólico, en el refinamiento y la patria existencial con que barnizan el dilema del ser y del estar, circunscrito a un lugar del mundo que es Puerto Rico. 61

Belaval has made the same point that the Puerto Rican theatre is now looking abroad and to Latin America, rather than to the United States, for sources of inspiration. Babín, as well as Cesáreo Rosa-Nieves, ennumerate those sources that

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have repeatedly exercised an impact on the Puerto Rican drama:

> Los que hemos seguido de cerca la evolución del teatro escrito por autores de Puerto Rico en la última década no solamente notamos esas fuentes, sino que, además, vemos la insistencia con que repite la influencia de Tennessee Williams, de Sartre, de Becket, de Ionesco, de Genet. 62

Rosa-Nieves further elaborates upon how, "la promoción de estos autores aparece hondamente influida por la estética dramática de Pirandello, Sartre, Eugene O;Neill, Shaw, Chejov, Strinberg, Kaiser, Tennessee Williams, Elmer Rice, Arthur Miller."[63]

Sánchez has acknowledged the position of Pirandello and Brecht as the "sacerdotes del teatro" whose impact is evident in countless Latin American plays, among them, Sánchez's own Antígona Pérez, and Osvaldo Dragún's Heroica de Buenos Aires, strikingly reminiscent of Mother Courage.[64] However, he indicates that more than Pirandello or Brecht, the absurdists have exercised a significant influence on the contemporary Puerto Rican scene, on Myrna Casas, for example, "pero los absurdistas que descomponen la realidad; gente como Ionesco; un poco menos Arrabal, que siempre me ha parecido un dramaturgo sobreestimado; gente como Kopit, el de Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mother's Put You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad; gente como el Albee de su primera obra The American Dream, The Death of Bessie Smith, ya menos en Zoo Story . . . y en ese sentido Pirandello y Brecht no han

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influido capitalmente en el teatro puertorriqueño." He points to a mistrust in Puerto Rico of the concept of experimentation, as we see it manifested in the French, German, or American theatres. He elaborates:

> No vamos a hablar sólo de Open Theatre, del American theatre, sino del Living Theatre y algunas de las cosas que luego ha hecho Joseph Papp en el Public Theatre del New York Shakespeare Festival, ya no sólo experimentación de formas, sino experimentaciones para ver hasta qué punto los actores negros pueden interpretar a Chejov, como hizo Papp con El jardín de los cerezos en '74. En Puerto Rico la palabra 'experimental' es una palabra que la gente mira con desconfianza porque cree que 'experimental' quiere decir que se trata de una obra que no está lograda (Appendix 1, pp. 7-8).

Another palpable influence on Sánchez's generation is that of Tennessee Williams, particularly on René Marqués, Sánchez and Myrna Casas. It is in the portrayal of their female characters that Williams' influence is quite evident. We refer specifically to the female protagonists in Casas' Cristal roto en el tiempo, and to Angela in Los ángeles; all reminiscent of Blanche Dubois of Streetcar Named Desire. It is not coincidental that Sánchez expressed a predilection to direct the Tennessee Williams play, Sweet Bird of Youth (Appendix 1, p. 19).

In the following pages we will examine Sánchez's relationship with the significant movements of existentialism and expressionism and their application to his work. Existentialism stresses personal decision in the face of a world without reason. Sánchez's plays contain situations

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where his characters reflect existential decisions. J. B. Phillips suggests that the play, ...O casi el alma "repeats the existentialist theme that the one sure value is living: 'La eternidad es el plasma de la vida. Vivir es eternizar.'"[65]

Existentialist philosophy is manifested in Sánchez's work in the responsibility of individual characters in the decision-making process in their lives: in Píramo's decision to take his own life; in Maggie's statement at the end of the drama, "Si aquel hombre no llega a mi ventana, nada habría pasado. Pero yo dejé que entrara. Es mía la culpa" (O casi, p. 85); in Antígona's assertion to her mother, "Aspiras a que Creón me perdone sin sentirme culpable es empezar a ser como no soy. Imposible. La vida es intransferible, Mamá. Los deberes son intransferibles" (Antígona Pérez, p. 28). In two cases, however, Antígona Pérez and La hiel, existentialist decisions lead to death. Both Píramo in La hiel, and Antígona in Antígona Pérez choose death as significant acts of self definition. It is important to examine the significance of these resolutions to life problems. Is it significant that two of Sánchez's protagonists choose death? Or is the very decision itself, most significant? We opt for the latter possibility. The decision, the act of choosing one option over another, is more important, since it implies the character's attempt to take control over his or her life, which is, in fact, at the heart of existentialism. For, as Eugene R. Skinner notes:

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> Human existence is equated with potentiality. Unlike an animal that simply is, man exists and must create his own being through a process of conscious election. These decisions are made in aguish and suffering, face to face with his ignorance and his limitations. The failure to accept fully this responsibility results in an inhuman existence. 66

Existential anguish is manifested in Sánchez's work through conflict, suffering, and struggle within Antígona; through conflict, and then the quiet decision by Píramo to kill himself; through Angela's visual flight into madness. What is clear from the outset are the varied manifestations of that same tendency in numerous Latin American playwrights. For example, one could juxtapose Jorge Díaz's absurdist vision of existential reality with his recurrent themes of barenness and futility, with Sánchez's vision.

Also, in La hiel nuestra it is worth examining the fact that the couple is childless. What does being childless mean within the context of the play? In actuality there is no child to take care of them in their old age, a fact which exacerbates their lonely and helpless situation. However, in examining barrenness as a possible metaphor for the barrenness of the human situation,[67] the image does not hold up, since Píramo and Tisbe's tender, long term relationship with each other actually outweighs the lack of support they receive from the rest of the world. And even though, at times, they do blame each other for their barrenness; they do argue; they do express bitterness, frustration and disgust with each other, however, the dramatic development of the play, revealed through the dialogue, stage directions

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and physical details, communicate the abiding affection and mutual concern they have for each other.

The expressionist movement plays a significant part in Sánchez's dramatic production. Various techniques, popularly called Brechtian, in fact, derive from the dramatic experiments of expressionism. J. B. Phillips observes the following tendency in contemporary Puerto Rican drama:

> Marked by a desire to trim away as many superfluous details as possible, today's dramatists are attempting not to create realistic reflections of objective things, nor to simply stylize language and movement, but in the spirit of the expressionists, to create poetic metaphors which represent whole subjective worlds . . . which Arriví calls active imagery. 68

Among the often quoted characteristics of expressionism, the following, from Ilse T. M. de Brugger's Teatro alemán, particularly applies to our author:

> En este teatro las cosas así como los hombres no son, sino que significan. Este hecho se manifestó ya en los nombres genéricos de los personajes que son indicadores de su función, o de su situación anímica o de su destino . . . Esos personajes se explayan en el monólogo . . . que para los expresionistas constituye un medio insuperable para dar a conocer la realidad reflejada en el alma, para descubrir . . . las ideas del personaje en comparación y aún en contraposición con sus actores . . . Vuelven a emplear recursos utilizados . . . por el teatro griego . . . Vuelve a introducirse el coro . . . Interesa el tratamiento abstracto del espacio, la forma geométrica, la línea y la luz como factores aptos para enmarcar y subrayar puntos esenciales de un proceso o desarrollo espiritual . . . En todo el escenario predomina el principio de lo lineal. 69

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A cursory glance at Antígona Pérez reveals the use of many of these techniques by our author: the relationship between the heroine's name and her destiny; the use of a Greek theme, as well as a modern version of a Greek chorus; a conception of mise en scène that closely adheres to the expressionist precepts quoted, with multilevels and scaffolding creating both a linear and geometric effect; and creative lighting to punctuate a sceen. This author agrees with the interpretation that Brecht, rather than initiating the techniques of the epic theatre, served as its actualizer and systemizer. Certain of Brecht's distancing techniques, such as narration and oral stage directions, are used in Antígona Pérez, and while these expressionistic devices are not original, they do work successfully for Sánchez.

Continuing with this examination of foreign influences on Sánchez's theatre, we are aware of his appreciation of the Spanish dramatist, Antonio Buero Vallejo, and, at the same time, observe an affinity between the realism of Buero and its manifestation in poetic realism in Sánchez. Buero Vallejo's La escalera, as well as Sánchez's La hiel nuestra reveal to us a palpable world: the rich and variegated rhythm of a neighborhood, in one case Spanish, in the other, Puerto Rican. In both cases, however, we are conscious of a fabric that has been woven, an autonomous world that has been created for these characters to inhabit. The following observation by González Zamora about Historia de una escalera,

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is equally applicable to Sánchez's La hiel nuestra, "L'héritage de la saynète est recueilli, mais elle est dépouillée de son pittoresque, afin d'exposer la dégradation inévitable mais aussi les germes de salut contenus dans la classe populaire."[70]

A determination of the areas of concern manifested in Sánchez's writing, reveals certain thematic reiteration. For example, in several plays he creates dramatic situations around the following concerns: moral integrity in O casi el alma, Antígona Pérez, Sol 13, Interior; political analogies, in Antígona Pérez, Los ángeles, O casi el alma, La hiel; the will to destruction, in Antígona Pérez, La espera, La hiel, Los ángeles; madness, in Los ángeles, O casi; death, in Antígona Pérez, La espera, Los ángeles, La hiel; and the image and portrayal of women in all of his plays. These areas will be further explored as they specifically refer to the exegesis of each play.

Morality is a major theme in Sánchez's theatre. The lack of it is evident in the characters El Hombre and La Señora in ...O casi el alma, in Doña Ugo in La hiel, and in Antígona Pérez, in Creón, Monseñor Bernardo and all the other significant figures representing the power structure. Conflicts about it are manifested in the numerous interpersonal confrontations between Maggie and her antagonists, and between Antígona and her antagonists; between doña Ugo

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and Píramo and Tisbe; and in Angela's monologues recreating those significant figures and incidents from her past. Sánchez symbolically uses prostitutes to reveal morality in a world without values, populated with falseness, greed and hypocrisy. His characters are divided among those who strive for moral perfection, or at the very least, moral consistency, and those who exploit, and who typify Ortega's concept of masa that is, a standard of mediocrity, conformity and smallness of spirit.

The three following themes, the will to destruction, the role of madness, and the theme of death are integrally related to each other. Each character's will to destruction is nourished by a specific impetus. Georgina's destruction in La espera stems from her unrequited love of Gabriel and her subsequent rejection of life and her withdrawal into the past; Antígona's destruction is rooted in her ideals; Píramo and Tisbe's final demise is caused by their mutual love and willingness to sacrifice themselves individually for each other; Angela's profession as a prostitute, is, in its essence, self-destructive and self-deprecating, compounded with her lack of self regard, and specific social and political circumstances leads to her eventual destruction; in Maggie's accepting the role of "Santa," she opens herself up to the risk that the people around her could turn against her and destroy her, that God could turn against her and destroy her for the falseness of

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her "miracle," as well as the falseness of her religious conversion. We ask ourselves what factors, if any, mitigate the pure will to destruction. They appear to be the very reasons behind that drive towards it: in Georgina's case, the sacrifice of her life for the illusion of love; in Antígona's case, her love of truth and justice; in La hiel, Píramo and Tisbe's love and mutual devotion; in Angela's case, her role as victim of circumstances and the recurrent pattern of degradation and abandonment which is replayed throughout her life; in Maggie's case, her sincere desire to make a moral choice.

In examining the role of madness in Sánchez's plays we must ask ourselves if Angela, indeed, is mad. Or does that retreat into herself, into her own inner world, allow her to isolate herself from others, in fact, protect and shield her from more cruel outside realities. We see her "madness" as a protective defense, an assertion of self, rather than a defeat. And in the case of Píramo's poisoning himself, in order to reveal the winning lottery number to Tisbe from the ultratumba, is that madness? His suicide is more cultural and religious than personal, based as it is, on a firm belief that the world of the spirits will finally bring Tisbe the material fulfillment that their earthly life together did not afford them. Similarly, does the religious fervor of El Hombre, mixed with material greed, as manifested in his plan to create a miracle, constitute a type of madness? Sánchez subtly explores this n'ether world of madness, and

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borderline madness in the development of his characters. Our experience of these characters cause us--his readers--to reexamine old premises about the boundaries between madness and sanity and the interrelationship between the two.

We note the recurrence of the theme of death, in both metaphoric and literal sense, in many of Sánchez's works: the death of Antígona in Antígona Pérez; the inexorable march towards death of both Píramo and Tisbe in La hiel nuestra; the death of religion in ...O casi el alma; Angela's alienation from life and her emotional death in Los ángeles; in La espera, the death of Georgina and death as a protagonist in the same play. Arriví has observed:

> . . . se interroga respecto a la insistencia de la imagen nihilista de la muerte en la dramaturgia de Jean Bautista Pagán, Pedro Juan Soto y Gerard Paul Marín autores respectivos de El rey detronado y (1957) y Angel (1957), El huésped (1957) y en El principio de la noche era serena (1960). Se enseria ante la constelación de la prostituta irredimible en el panorama de nuestro teatro según se refleja en Cristal roto en el tiempo (1960), de Myrna Casas y Los ángeles se han fatigado (1961) de Luis Rafael Sánchez. 71

Sánchez has responded to questions about this concern with death by stating that "simplemente hay conflictos que pueden solucionar solamente con la muerte."[72] Arriví alludes to the will to overcome death in Puerto Rican drama, as exemplified in ...O casi el alma:

> Tal como en El milagro, de Méndez Ballester se da una contestación a Esperando a Godot, de Becket, con ... O casi el alma, de Luis Rafael Sánchez, se da una contestación al crecimiento indetenible del cadáver del

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> Amedée de Ionesco. Hay una voluntad de sobrevivir la muerte en la dramaturgia puertorriqueña (¿será por conciencia de una agonía?) y no hay duda que Luis Rafael Sánchez se suma con mensaje propio a esta voluntad. 73

Max Reinhardt said: "El objeto más elevado del teatro es la verdad, no la verdad exterior, siempre materialista, sino la verdad esencial del alma."[74] Sánchez illuminates that "essential truth of the soul" especially in his female characters.[75] Their actions are authentic responses to internal, as well as external motivation. Women hold a significant place in his theatre; they are often the only protagonists actively involved in the existential struggle to grow, to change. The experience pain, sorrow and loneliness, but Sánchez invests them with an inner strength that allows them to survive. An example occurs in La hiel, after Píramo's death, when Tisbe summons the strength to go on living, although all alone now. "El sillón de Píramo no se mueve. Tisbe sube la cabeza para mirarle. Y comienza su luto." (Sol 13, Interior, p. 620). Angela, in Los ángeles se han fatigado, although actually alone for the duration of the play, achieves a degree of inner freedom through her world of fantasy. Maggie, in O casi el alma, is also alone, weighed down by the responsibility of protecting other people's faith, while she herself is disillusioned with society. However, she is willing to sustain all of these disappointments, to "save" God.

In each work the inner strength of the female protagonist makes her the central focus of the action. This

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sensitivity to the portrayal of the female in Sánchez's work, can be compared with the depiction of other compelling female protagonists in contemporary Puerto Rican drama: doña Gabriela from La carreta by René Marqués, the archtypical pillar of the family, strong and yet gentle; Mama Toña, from Vejigantes by Francisco Arriví, wise and patient, wronged, yet not resigned to the obscurity that her daugher's racism and shame relegates her to: María Soledad, from the play of the same name, also by Arriví, enigmatic and ambivalent; Eugenia Victoria, from Eugenia Victoria Herrera by Myrna Casas, tied to her love of the land and of Puerto Rico, a character whose roots can be found in traditional Puerto Rican values; doña Laura from Cristal roto en el tiempo also by Myrna Casas, similar to Inés in Marqués' Los soles truncos, women struggling to maintain traditional values in the face of rapidly changing external realities.

Correspondingly we note that the portrayal of the male in Sánchez's work reveals them as generally deceitful, aprovechadores, cruel and prideful, in a word, machistas. We see these qualities in the following instances: El hombre in O casi deceives the masses of believers and uses Maggie as an instrument to gain power; Santiago, in Los ángeles is cruel to Angela and is characterized as the prototype of the macho pimp; Píramo, in La hiel, is weak and dependent and ultimately chooses not to go on living, thus he commits suicide and leaves Tisbe to cope with the very poverty and

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unhappiness that they both once faced together. He ostensibly kills himself to be able to "soplarle el número" so that Tisbe's economic problems might be solved.

As we have suggested, the women are often the only protagonists consciously committed to the quest for personal freedom and truth. For example, Antígona demands freedom and integrity as an external, as well as personal code of behavior. In her case that struggle takes the form of a political confrontation with the institutions of the state: the law, personified by Creón and Pilar Varga; the Church, personified by Monseñor Bernardo; and the family, personified by Antígona's own mother, Aurora. Angela, in Los ángeles, seeks compassion in her life, and an end to personal exploitation. Her monologue embodies her desire to understand her life, to decipher and make sense of it. Within the essentially non-linear structure of the monologue, all the threads of her life are interwoven in an attempt to order them. Thus the stream of consciousness technique serves as an ordering vehicle, as well as a catalytic device to reveal the details of her life.

Maggie, in O casi el alma, also struggles to decipher certain truths about life and to understand her role in the universe. She has been convinced by a strange visitor that he is a messenger from God and that she has been chosen as a vehicle to renew people's faith in God. She is torn between genuinely wanting to effect the course of religion,

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and at the same time, wanting to expose the hypocrisy of the visitor, a con man whom she recognizes as an entrepreneur of religion, who skillfully manipulates her primitive faith for his own ends. He is aware of the personal conflicts that she is experiencing in her life, and psychologically capitalizes on those doubts and fears in an effort to convince her to help him, and thus "help" God. Maggie is torn and struggles to understand her role in his duplicitous plan, as well as the role of the others who allow the sham to continue: the neighborhood priest, who finally accepts the "miracle" of the son of God's visit, the mobs of believers, the wealthy Church women, and the press. Each one of these protagonists struggles in her own way to confront the hypocrisy around her, to reveal it, and thus exorcize it from her own life; Antígona, through overt confrontation with her enemies and with herself; Angela, through her self revelation and her madness; Maggie, through her inner struggle to do the right thing and her final confrontation with her own destiny; Tisbe, through her ceaseless cajoling the saints and spirits, and constantly buouying Píramo up for their daily bout with life. Tisbe's search for freedom takes the form of a desperate wish for release from a lifetime of poverty and unfulfilled dreams. The vehicle for their salvation, however, is one last dream, that of winning the lottery. For her, truth is the message that the spirits will eventually send her.

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Although Sánchez draws many different Puerto Rican women, they all share, to a greater or lesser degree, a carefully delineated, strongly defined sense of themselves. They seem to say by their very actions, "This is who I am; this is what I believe in": in death, which is the fate of Antígona Pérez; in madness, which is the fate of Angela Santori; in the aloneness of disappointment and deceit, which is the fate of Maggie; in the spirited fight to maintain her dignity in the face of poverty and ruin, which is the fate of Tisbe. He presents women who prevail, who suffer and struggle, and who ultimately touch us. Antígona is destroyed by the political establishment which could never permit loyalty, comradeship and love between friends in la lucha; and especially not permit bravery, sacrifice and decisiveness in a woman. Angela Santori is destroyed as much by her love for Santiago, her pimp, as by the omnipresent American sailors who represent those "ángeles," in their uniforms, whose strong arms encompass her, seem to protect her, but in reality only use her until she is spent and half mad. The play is a tour de force, a soliloquoy where Angela passionately reenacts her entire life. She is human; she has strength of character; she is poignant in her anguish, and asserts herself, even in her madness, by avenging Santiago's cruel treatment toward her, by killing him, which ultimately takes her over the brink. Angela thus frees herself from Santiago, a paradoxical free-

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dom through, since she seeks refuge in madness and in the past. Maggie, in O casi, believes in the religious visions of a strange man who purports to be the son of God; transforms herself from a prostitute into a faith healer, only to be left all alone to examine her own beliefs and integrity, when he reveals his true intentions to exploit the religious followers who have helped to create and perpetuate Maggie's miracle. What does it mean, however, that Sánchez's protagonists ultimate destinies are bleak? We believe that their fate only intensifies the fact that Sánchez is using his female characters to embody his social criticism of Puerto Rican conditions and customs. In the process, he reveals the roles of certain women in society and attempts to explore their psychology.

His women are generally marginal beings who run the gamut from aging prostitutes, poor and old women, to his most hopeful creation, Antígona Pérez. In Antígona Pérez he draws one of the boldest portrayals of woman in contemporary Latin American literature. She personifies strength of character, integrity and a sense of justice as well as the human capacity to love and suffer. In her portrayal, Sánchez is never polemic, and is ever aware of his artistic tools of language and nuance. He creates a heroic female character, even within the confines of the classic structure imposed by the Antígona theme, which he adapts in various significant ways: Antígona is twenty five years old, mesti-

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za, and is a contemporary university student. The Tavárez brothers, whom Antígona buries, have no blood relationship with her. They are her comrades in political struggle. Nor have they killed each other, but rather were machine-gunned while attempting to assassinate the dictator, Creón. Her determination not to betray her own ideals is challenged by all the major characters in the play; by her uncle, Creón; by the religious leader, Monseñor Escudero, who is a tool of the dictator; and, interestingly, by the other female figures who contradict Antígona's values. An example is her mother who asserts that if Antígona had been a male, she would have supported her struggle, but, since she is "nada más que una mujer. Callar y bordar, Antígona." Another example is Pilar Varga, the First Lady, obsessed with power and status; then Irene, her best friend, who comes to Antígona's prison to tell her of the worst betrayal, that both Irene and Antígona's boyfriend, Fernando, have opted for survival and have sold out to the dictator. Antígona remains firm. She will fulfill her own destiny and choose--in the best existential tradition--authenticity and death. She is a political symbol as much as a multi-dimensional creation.

Technically, his characters are viable literary creations endowed with the possibility to explore the full range of human behavior; that is, the author's insight and sensitivity towards his female characters is manifested by his skill in allowing them to develop autonomously. His skill

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in elaborating an initial concept, as well as defining the characters contained within that concept, adheres to Gassner's exigency that, "A character, of course, is not a reproduction of a person in the street, but a playwright's and actor's creation, which makes him a work of art. This involves selectivity, intensification, special perspective, composition or design, and a certain abstractness along with the obvious attention to creating a resemblance to persons."[76]

Drawing upon Fergusson's threefold tragic sequence of purpose, passion and perception,[77] the question arises as to the subtle distinctions between the concept of a "tragic ordering of life" versus the tragedy.[78] We ask ourselves, vis à vis Sánchez's work, what it means for a character to be of the tragic mold. Is he creating tragic figures in his women protagonists? The complete tragic figure perceives the significance of her existence, through her suffering. If we apply that criterion to the three protagonists of Los ángeles, Antígona Pérez and O casi el alma, we find that Angela is the least aware of herself in a global sense, but nevertheless, is closest to her essential emotions; that Antígona most closely fits the tragic mold; and that Maggie also reaches awareness about the relationship between her personal suffering and anguish and the ultimate meaning of her life.

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E. Situating Our Playwright in Relation to the Contemporary Puerto Rican Theatre

In this section we shall specifically examine the relationship of Sánchez's work to that of other contemporary Puerto Rican playwrights. In certain respects his work is illustrative of the work being done by fellow dramatists with whom he shares points of contact such as: a general focus on Puerto Rico, as the ambiance where the plays take place; concern for philosophical and religious themes, leading them to write what could be termed conscience plays; and a finely developed sense of humor which is revealed through farce and fantasy. In 1969 critic Wilfredo Braschi linked Sánchez with Pedro Juan Soto and Gerard Paul Marín as promising dramatists possessing "una afición creciente y un afán poético."[79] However, in 1973, Frank Dauster more accurately singled Sánchez out and observed that:

> No hay otros dramaturgos de personalidad definida todavía, a pesar de que muchos han tenido algún éxito con una o más obras. Pedro Juan Soto, conocido como novelista, estrenó en 1956 El huésped; Cesáreo Rosa Nieves ha hecho obras de diverso tipo; Julio Marrero Núñez, Roberto Rodríguez Suárez, César Andreu Iglesias, Piri Fernández, Myrna Casas, Gerard Paul Marín, Ana Inés Bonnin /sic/ Armstrong y otros han presentado obra en los distintos festivales. Como se nota, hay bastante actividad pero la escena puertorriqueña está dominada todavía por las figuras de Arriví, Marqués y Sánchez. 80

Another unifying link between Sánchez and his generation is the exploration of religion in their theatre.

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Phillips writes, "Religion, formal and personal, is an important motif in the works of Luis Rafael Sánchez"[81] and accurately points to Los ángeles, with Angela's expressed desire for "un Dios sencillo, para hablarle de tú a tú . . . un Dios (muy suave) mío . . . que supiera mis cosas . . . y tuviera fe en mí" (p. 640), and to O casi, which as a totality, conveys a critical attitude toward religion. Piri Fernández de Lewis develops this theme in De tanto caminar (Teatro Puertorriqueño, 1961) which she calls "auto alegórico en tres cuadros." In it she explores the relationship between feelings and sin. The play is the exteriorization of the nun Carmen's inner turmoil concerning her previous life and whether or not she should leave the convent. Fernández employs the device of a dream sequence to reveal the past and incorporates such diverse elements as nymphs, clowns and apostles to reveal her protagonist's crisis. The titles of the acts are overtly religious: Act I, "Te lucis ante terminum," a monastic evening prayer; Act II, "Somnia"; Act III, "Noctium phantasmata," all originating from the hymn's second stanza, "Procul recedant somnia et noctium phantasmata."[82]

Gerard Paul Marín's En el principio la noche era serena (Teatro Puertorriqueño, 1961), although less directly filled with religious symbolism, nevertheless includes a Christ like main character, an exploration of the theme of guilt and pardon, and Biblical references to Solomon's song.

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The play, filled with symbolic characters like El Hombre, La Sombra, La Amante, La Madre, El Hermano and La Esposa, is an enactment of the Man's life and his relationship with the others around him. As the play opens he has just committed suicide and the first act is an interior review of the significant events in his life, among them his guilt about being the favorite son, and about not being able to choose between his child's life and his wife's life during a dangerous childbirth. As the others realize that the Man forgives them for whatever they might have done to him, we are led to recognize the redeeming effect of love, since the Man symbolically has died for them. In Marín's Trilogía Fársica Phillips refers to the literal connection between Juan Canelo and Jesus Christ, as well as to the emotional relationship between Juan Canelo and the Puppets, whom he has created and nurtured. Note Phillip's socio-political interpretation of the play:

> In view of the direct Biblical references and to the use of religious terms such as 'innocence,' 'purity,' 'sin,' and 'Satan,' Juan Canelo may be interpreted as the soul of Puerto Rico. For all their weaknesses--lasciviousness, betrayal, disrespect for minorities, imitation of others--Juan Canelo always forgives his puppets and comes to their rescue. But when they directly plot against him and take his life, they too, die. 83

El cielo se rindió al amanecer (Teatro Puertorriqueño, 1964) by Edmundo Rivera Alvarez, takes place after the destruction of humanity by the atomic bomb and contains the

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following religion laden symbolic characters: a preacher, Mr. Ruther; Mr. J. Iscot, the symbolic Judas; Mr. J. Christopher, the symbolic Christ; Meda, a prostitute; and even an episode enacting a trial, representative of the Last Judgment. Arriví compares Beckett's End game, which points to the ultimate absurdity of life, with Alvarez's positive vision of life after the bomb, imbued with Christian faith. Ana Inés Bonin Armstrong's symbolic view of the end of the world, La difícil esperanza (Teatro Puertorriqueño, 1966), emphasizes the ecumenical values of peace, equality and hope, and also includes the religious figures, El Pastor and Miguel, the Christ equivalent.

Although the religious motif is present in the theatre of other Latin American countries, for example, Buenaventura's En la diestra de Dios Padre; José de Jesús Martínez's Juicio Final; Jorge Díaz's El génesis fue mañana; Heireman's Versos de ciego, El abandonado and El Tony chico; and Solórzano's Las manos de Dios, we have noted its prevalence in the Puerto Rican theatre. We have concluded, as a possible hypothesis to explain this phenomenon, that in Puerto Rico, more than in other countries because of the United States' influence, there is a generalized and profound lack of confidence in their own society and institutions; therefore the necessity exists to reestablish, or at the very least, explore traditional values, one of which is the Church and religion. Notice though, that the religion strived for does not

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follow the classic Latin American pattern of corruption, greed and hunger for power, but rather the original Christ-inspired values of brotherhood, love and generosity of spirit--the values of the "new Church"--profound spiritual and human values as opposed to a specific, organized religion.

In the category of conscience plays Sánchez's Antígona Pérez stands alongside Myrna Casas' Eugenia Victoria Herrera (Editorial Cordillera, 1964), the classic Puerto Rican dilemma concerning a woman's traditional love of the land in the face of her sister's desire to give it up, and Luis Rechani Agrait's ¿Cómo se llama esta flor? (Teatro Puertorriqueño, 1960), revolving around the love of Emilio, a young revolutionary, for Raquel, the daughter of the dictator Zambrano, and the ensuing problem of conscience about whether love or revolutionary dedication should prevail. He chooses love--of personal freedom, of friends, of Raquel--thus establishing Rechani's theme of self-identity through love.

Humor, another element shared by contemporary Puerto Rican dramatists, is a significant factor in many of Sánchez's plays, including Farsa del amor compradito, Cuento de la Cucarachita Martina, Sol 13, Interior and O casi el alma. The use of farce can also be seen in Gerard Paul Marín's 1958 one act play, El retablo y guiñol de Juan Canelo, presented at the Ateneo's Experimental Theatre, and also his Trilogía Fársica, consisting of Los cuernos de Caliche,

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Las beatas de Cantalicio and Pasión y ridícula muerte de Don Juan Canelo, presented at the Tapia in 1967. Phillips particularly singles out the more biting satirical quality of Sánchez and René Marqués versus the humorous satire of Méndez Ballester and the more philosophical style of Emilio Belaval, both belonging to the previous generation of playwrights.

More than the others, Myrna Casas' work generally reveals greater stylistic and temperamental affinities with Sánchez's theatre. Both demonstrate an acute concern for language, manifesting itself in lively dialogue and a playfulness with words; the warm native Puerto Rican sense of humor; the use of Brechtian techniques; and various themes which both explore in their theatre, such as time and its attendant decay. Their absurdist vision of life is best illustrated in Casas' Absurdos en la soledad and La trampa, and in Sánchez's Farsa del amor compradito. Sánchez's language is poetic and colloquial, evocative and yet still rooted in the vitality of Puerto Rican speech. Casas achieves her greatest thematic and linguistic originality in her theatre of the absurd. Also, in the area of technical innovations perhaps only Casas demonstrates as firm a grasp as Sánchez of the use of lighting, music, special effects and staging.

Casas' professional training is clearly reflected in her work: undergraduate studies at Vassar and the University

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of Puerto Rico; graduate studies at Boston University, Harvard, the Instituto de Cultura Hispánica in Madrid, and New York University where she received her doctorate in theatre. Presently she is Director of Producciones Cisne, with Gilda Navarra, as well as chairperson of the Department of Drama at the University of Puerto Rico. Piri Fernández de Lewis observed the affinities between these two contemporaries in her article, "Temas del teatro puertorriqueño" where she notes, "El ser proyectado en el tiempo y el espacio absoluto es dramatizado por . . . Luis Rafael Sánchez y Myrna Casas, como expresión de la vida en degradación, al ser la vida 'el sueño eterno hacia la nada' (Myrna Casas) en una 'vida sin fe' (Luis Rafael Sánchez), donde el disparate vital quisiera ser rearreglado por los que lo viven, pero tan sólo consiguen hacer más patente la esencia absurda de la vida."[84]

J. B. Phillips concludes that "generally, the dramatists seem to believe that an extremely avant-garde theatre is a luxury unbecoming to a small nation struggling to survive as a cultural entity."[85] This is echoed by Sánchez in a speech made at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York on October 21, 1974. However, this observation is not as accurate now, at the end of the 1970s, as it was then. What we now witness with greater frequency is an avant-garde theatre, struggling to merge message and method, political impact and technical competence. Sánchez

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is, indeed, the bridge between old forms and new ones. Alongside his theatre is the vanguard theatre movement in Puerto Rico embodying the serious intention, if not always realized, to have their work demonstrate an equally strong commitment to art and social change.

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Notes

II SANCHEZ: THEORY AND PRAXIS

A. Beginnings

[1] Luis Rafael Sánchez, interviewed by Artemio Torres in "Sin prisa, pero sin pausa, como las estrellas," La Hora, Sept. 29, 1972, p. 18. Future reference to this source will be included in the text as Torres, with the corresponding pagination.

[2] Previous biographical information from I. Z. de Cabanillas, "'La Espera' de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, Feb. 23, 1959, p. 9.

[3] R. Marqués, Cuentos puertorriqueños de hoy, Prologue (Puerto Rico: Editorial Cultural, Inc., 1971), p. 31.

[4] James H. Ward, "A Tentative Inventory of Young Puerto Rican Writers," Hispania LIV, No. 4 (Dec. 1971), p. 926.

[5] Ward, p. 930.

[6] Since the most cultivated genre is poetry, the majority of writers included in Ward's study were poets: Andrés Castro Ríos, 1942; Edgardo López Ferrer, 1943; Sadi Orsini Luiggi, 1938; Marcos Rodríguez Frese, 1942; Vicente Rodríguez Nietzche, 1942; Carmelo Rodríguez Torres, 1941; Jorge María Ruscalleda Bercedóniz, 1944; Juan Sáez Burgos, 1943; Iván Silén,

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1944; Marina Arola, 1939; José Manuel Torres Santiago, 1940. Poets, more or less formally belong to different groups, each with a particular ideology and publication; the most active groups are Mester and Guajana.

B. Sánchez on Theatre

[7] Raúl Castagnino quotes Friedrich Durrenmatt from Problemas teatrales (Buenos Aires: Sur, 1961) in Castagnino, Teatro: teorías sobre el arte dramático, II, p. 57.

[8] Solórzano, "Procesos de creación del autor dramático," in El autor dramático, p. 17.

[9] Ivan Cardona, "La pasión del teatro puertorriqueño según Luis Rafael Sánchez," La Hora, Aug. 2-8, 1973, p. 12. Future reference to this source will be included in the text as Cardona, with the corresponding pagination.

[10] It is significant to note that this need is not limited to Latin American theatre, as corroborated in these remarks about what a National Theater should do, by Robin Phillips, Director of Canada's National Theatre: from "The Brilliant Briton Who Runs Canada's 'National Theater,'" by Samantha Dean, The New York Times, Sunday, July 3, 1977, D, p. 4: "At the same time we realize that our main commitment is to train the actors, designers, directors, writers of the future--if we don't who is going to?"; "We nevertheless

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should have a school, which is what I want most here, so that we can start people younger and so that they're not put on the stage to make their mistakes publicly before at least some grounding has taken place."

[11] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Remarks made at a lecture at Hostos Community College, CUNY, Oct. 23, 1974. Future reference to this source will be included in the text as Hostos C.C., Oct. 23, 1974.

[12] Eneid Routte, "The New Puerto Rican Novel: What It Is And What It Isn't," The San Juan Star, Sept. 8, 1976, p. 73.

[13] See Appendix 2, p. 17.

[14] Solórzano, in El autor dramático, pp. 17-18.

[15] Galich, p. 13.

[16] Elenore Lester, "Innaurato--His Passion for the Outcast is Finding a Place on the Stage," The New York Times, Sunday, May 29, 1977, D, p. 5.

[17] Lester, p. 5.

[18] González, in El autor dramático, p. 110.

[19] González, pp. 107-108.

[20] González, p. 107.

[21] Lester, p. 5.

[22] Lillian Hellman, Pentimento (New York: New American Library, A Signet Book, 1973), p. 125.

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C. Sánchez on Language

[23] Routte, p. 73.

[24] Luis Rafael Sánchez, "La Generación O Sea", Claridad, Jan. 23, 1972, p. 22. Future reference to this source will be included in the text as Claridad, p. 22.

[25] Luis Rafael Sánchez, "El túnel: novela de Ernesto Sábato," El Mundo, Dec. 23, 1963, without pagination.

[26] Luis Rafael Sánchez, "El túnel," without pagination.

D. About His Theatre: Language, Themes, Technique, Influences

[27] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 168.

[28] Alfonso Sastre, Drama y sociedad (Madrid: Taurus, 1956), p. 50.

[29] Woodyard, "Jorge Díaz and the Lithurgy of Violence," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 60.

[30] José Triana, "El nuevo teatro cubano," La Gaceta de Cuba, June 30, 1963, p. 7.

[31] In a personal discussion with Sánchez, Aug. '75 he indicated that he and Heiremans were friends in New York City in 1963, where they both studied.

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[32] Teresa Cajiao Salas, Temas y símbolos en la obra de Luis Alberto Heiremans (Santiago: Fundación Luis Alberto Heiremans, 1970), p. 135.

[33] Tamara Holzapfel, "The Theater of René Marqués," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 153.

[34] Castagnino, Teatro, II, p. 37.

[35] Piri Fernández de Lewis, "Reseña del 'Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita' de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, Dec. 5, 1960, without pagination.

[36] Fernández de Lewis, "'Cucarachita Viudita,'" without pagination.

[37] Juan Guerrero Zamora, "Historia del teatro contemporáneo," BAAcPR IV, No. 2 (1968), pp. 485-486.

[38] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, pp. 176-177.

[39] Ibid., p. 177.

[40] Plinio Marcos, quoted from taped interview with Peter J. Schoenbach in "Plinio Marcus: Reporter of Bad Times," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 255.

[41] Margaret Sayers Peden, "The Theater of Egon Wolff," in Dramatists in Revolt, pp. 190-191.

[42] Lyday and Woodyard, Dramatists in Revolt, Introduction, p. XVII.

[43] J. B. Phillips, p. 136.

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[44] Dauster, Review of Willis Knapp Jones, Behind Spanish American Footlights, Rev. IB XXXII, No. 62 (1966), p. 325.

[45] The authors discussed in Dramatists in Revolt are: Antón Arrufat, José Triana (Cuba), Emilio Carballido, L. J. Hernández (México), Augstín Cuzzani, Osvaldo Dragún, Griselda Gambaro, Carlos Gorostiza (Argentina); Jorge Díaz, Egon Wolff, Luis Alberto Heiremans (Chile); René Marqués (Puerto Rico); Jorge Andrade, Alfredo Dias Gomes, Plinio Marcos (Brazil).

[46] Harss&Dohmann, Into the Mainstream: conversations with Latin American Writers (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967), p. 64.

[47] J. Monleón, "Experiencia con el movimiento teatral latinoamericano, "Remarks made at the 'Primer Festival de Teatro Popular Latinoamericano,' Aug. 10, 1976.

[48] J. B. Phillips, p. 205.

[49] Dauster, "Social Awareness in Contemporary Spanish American Theater," KRQ 14, ii (1967), p. 121.

[50] Ibid., p. 121.

[51] Alyce de Kuehne, "The Spectacular in the Theater of Agustín Cuzzani," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 53.

[52] Wright, Understanding Today's Theatre, p. 8.

[53] Gassner, p. 150.

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[54] J. J. Arróm, Esquema generacional de las letras hispanoamericanas, pp. 210-211.

[55] Jennifer Tipton, quoted by Roger Copland in "She Casts Ballet Dancers in the Proper Light," The New York Times, Sunday, July 3, 1977, D, p. 12.

[56] Copland, p. 12.

[57] Castagnino quotes Charles Dullen, Correspondance, No. 10 (Nov. 1929) in Teatro: teorías sobre el arte dramático, II, p. 45.

[58] Copland, p. 12.

[59] Dauster, "The Text as Theatre," paper delivered at "Theatre in Latin America: A Symposium," Pennsylvania State University, Oct. 29, 1976.

[60] Anon., "El teatro puertorriqueño," PLSJ I (1963), p. 37.

[61] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 10.

[62] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 10.

[63] Cesáreo Rosa-Nieves, Historia panorámica de la literatura puertorriqueña 1589-1959 (San Juan: Editorial Campos, 1963), p. 677.

[64] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Conference at the Graduate Center, CUNY, Oct. 21, 1974.

[65] J. B. Phillips, p. 180.

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[66] Eugene R. Skinner, "The Theater of Emilio Carballido: Spinning a Web," in Dramatists in Revolt, pp. 19-20.

[67] The English play Ashes, presented by the New York Shakespeare Festival Public Theatre, in its 1976-1977 season, examines this same theme: physical barrenness as a reflection of the emotional barrenness of contemporary society.

[68] J. B. Phillips, p. 23.

[69] Castagnino quotes I. T. M. Brugger, Teatro alemán expresionista (Buenos Aires: La Mandrágora, 1959) in Castagnino, Teatro, II, p. 31.

[70] J. González Zamora, "Le théatre de la langue espagnole," Théatre dans le Monde XI, No. 4 (1962-1963), p. 354.

[71] Arriví, "Evolución del autor dramático puertorriqueño a partir de 1938," in El autor dramático, p. 151.

[72] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Unpublished material made available to me by Ms. Nelly Santos, Librarian, Seminario de Estudios Hispánicos, at the U.P.R.

[73] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 178.

[74] Castagnino quotes Max Reinhardt Comoedia, June 26, 1928 in Castagnino, Teatro, II, p. 35.

[75] The theme, "Female figures in the plays of Luis Rafael Sánchez," Gloria F. Waldman, was explored at the

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"Symposium on the Hispanic-American Woman" at the State University of New York at Albany, April 30-May 1, 1976, sponsored by the Department of Hispanic & Italian Studies, Puerto Rican Studies and the Bilingual Program.

[76] Gassner, pp. 200-201.

[77] Francis Fergusson, The Idea of Theater: A Study of Ten Plays; the Art of Drama in Changing Perspective (Princeton: N.J., 1972).

[78] Holzapfel, "René Marqués," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 152.

E. Situating Our Playwright in Relation to the Contemporary Puerto Rican Theatre

[79] Wilfredo Braschi, "Nuevas tendencias en la literatura puertorriqueña," in Literatura puertorriqueña: 21 Conferencias (San Juan: ICP, 1969), p. 551.

[80] Dauster, Historia del teatro hispanoamericano siglos XIX y XX (México: Ediciones De Andrea, 1973), pp. 79-80.

[81] J. B. Phillips, p. 179.

[82] J. B. Phillips, p. 141.

[83] J. B. Phillips, p. 146.

[84] P. Fernández de Lewis, "Temas del teatro puertorriqueño de hoy," in Areyto Mayor, p. 316.

[85] J. B. Phillips, p. 136.

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Introduction to Sánchez's Theatre

In the preceding sections, the essential elements of Sánchez's dramatic work were considered. We continue now with an evaluation of his contribution in general. A chronological examination of his theatre reveals a development and increasing maturity with regard to dramatic techniques, conception and form. Carlos Solórzano has said:

> Desde un punto de vista subjetivo, la creación de una obra dramática proviene de la necesidad que tiene el autor de ver exteriorizada una parte de su mundo interior. La trama o anécdota va surgiendo como desenvolvimiento de esta motivación, que seguramente tiene su origen en la correlación que se establece entre la realidad circundante y los mundos consciente y subconsciente del autor. 1

The worlds that our author reveals include the external realities of Puerto Rican life: poverty, prostitution, political pressures, in La hiel and Antígona Pérez, as well as the internal psychological manifestations of those realities, Angela's schizophrenia in Los ángeles, and Maggie's religious questioning in O casi el alma. Méndez Ballester further notes:

> El autor concibe su idea, su argumento, sus personajes, en contacto con la realidad objetiva, y todo ello lo va elaborando, creando imaginativamente, en su realidad ideal, abstracta. Pero llega entonces el instante de darle concreción, verificación, y recurre entonces a su particular dimensión, a la realidad probable . . . lo que hace el dramaturgo al tomar contacto con la realidad humana y expresarla, lo hace por vía de ese

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> fenómeno estético de la imitación, de la mimesis, cuyo descubrimiento lo realiza el genio de Aristóteles al analizar la naturaleza de la tragedia. La obra teatral es pues, una imitación de la realidad. Es la imitación de una acción humana, real y como se trate de una imitación, es decir, de imitar, de hacer algo a semejanza de otra, no podemos, ipso facto, referirla directamente a la realidad humana para verificarla, y recurrimos entonces a ese tercer plano de la realidad probable. La obra de teatro se mueve, pues, en el reino de la probabilidad que, en el sentido antiguo del voacblo, quiere decir lo que puede ser verdadero según las apariencias . . . la probabilidad que oscila, entre el concepto subjectivo del autor y la realidad objetiva, externa. 2

The crucial first step in the structuring of a drama is "singularization," a term used by Enrique Buenaventura to mean the necessary reduction of reality in order to reveal a social process, to realize a concept, a problem, or one's thesis through a specific event. It is the establishing of a limited focus rather than a generalized, diffuse one, the difference between fragmentation and integration. A compelling question is exactly what elements such a choice includes. Artistic, political, social, economic factors come to bear on that determination. The dramatic situation is composed of the general concept, and the singularization of that concept.

Part of Sánchez's talent lies in his having mastered the technique of particularizing an idea. For example, in Antígona Pérez, his vehicle for exposing the church, the military, the hypocrisy of bourgeois values, and the experience

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of betrayal, is the passion of a young revolutionary, Antígona Pérez. His major thematic and creative concerns are amply developed through that framework; in La hiel he chooses an old couple to personify the pain and neglect of old age; in Los ángeles he allows madness and freedom to merge in the suffering of an aging, emotionally wounded, and angry prostitute; in O casi el alma religious hypocrisy and problems of faith are juxtaposed in a modern day miracle invented by a con man to be effected by a prostitute, only to have her strong belief transform the false miracle into a true one. His plays succeed as serious dramatic experiences because his ideas serve his art, and never vice versa. His plays are always about a specific something, and in their realization, they reveal the entire range of contemporary dramatic techniques.

As Sánchez has said in conferences and articles, the very fact of living in a colony determines what one writes about. However, it does not determine how one elaborates those themes. As we have seen, the themes developed in the Puerto Rican theatre in the last twenty years include: national identity; the forced flight from the countryside to the city; the pressure of urban existence; forging a life in the concrete jungle of Nueva York. Sánchez's position as a link between generations determines, more than what he writes about, how he approaches his work. Thus through his articles and conferences we can trace his concern with preserving and

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enhancing cultural values and giving life to traditional symbols. For example, Píramo and Tisbe can clearly be perceived as living embodiments of jíbaro values, such as generosity, warmth and astuteness. [3] However, it is the incorporation of modern theatre techniques and a willingness to experiment with different theatre genres, the commedia dell'arte in Farsa del amor compradito and expressionistic style in La espera, which truly makes Sánchez as an experimenter as well as an exponent of more traditional literary techniques.

A significant area of exploration in Sánchez's theatre is the interaction between the public and the play. The theatrical presentation provides us with the dramatist's world vision, thus reinforcing the inherent necessity for the playwright to have his or her work presented. The essential creative element of the audience relationship with the play is described in the following assertion, "A playwright must meet a public in order to develop and the public must meet the playwright in order to develop its own understanding of what he has to say."[4] Brecht concludes the Breviario de estética teatral with a statement about allowing creative margen to the public, "El teatro puede conservar en el público su productividad, además del mero hecho del espectáculo." Castagnino notes that with that concept Brecht "incorpora la dramática a la corriente avanzada de las artes, que buscan en el receptor --público,

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lector, observador-- el cierre del círculo creador que traza el autor. . . ."[5] Similar ideas have been propounded for the narrative by Umberto Eco en Obra abierta and by Juan Goytisolo, particularly in El furgón de cola, a collection of critical essays. These works themselves are a call to participate in creating the work; so too with Cabrera Infante's Tres tristes tigres and Severo Sarduy's Cobra. How much more true is this, then, for the theatre, the genre of interaction par excellence.

As we have seen, these theories of communication are manifested in Sánchez's theatre in various ways. In 1973 Sánchez criticized the implicit lack of faith that playwrights have demonstrated in the public, pointing out "la creencia de que el teatro serio y riguroso no apela a los gustos. Esta es una buena justificación para no comprometerse a nivel artístico.[6] And in 1974 he said, "El lector debe ser el investigador de esta realidad inventada."[7] As Belaval says:

> Cada día sabemos más, aunque nos sintamos menos seguros, de esa extraña ontología que es la realidad dramática. Sabemos que la realidad dramática nunca queda fijada de un todo, con una significación inalterable. Por el contrario se trata de una realidad movible supuesta a completarse fuera de sí misma. La realidad dramática es distinta para cada expectador; lo es asimismo para cada director, cada actor, para cada crítico. La virtud esencial de la idea dramática es esta disposición a transformarse en el complejo juego de las reciprocaciones. Debe ser capaz de personificarse o despersonalizarse, convertirse en símbolo o reducirse a una simple imagen dentro del proceso creacional. 8

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The dramatic interaction that Sánchez's works evoke varies depending on the play. For example the audience-play identification is particularly strong in La hiel nuestra. I suggest due in part to the familiarity of theme, and the character portrayal. Note too, how the scenography creates a particular relationship between the audience and the play. Antígona involves the audience; makes the public work by means of lighting, the physical placement of the actors and the mise en scène. As does O casi el alma, La hiel uses a more traditional mise en scène; in one version of La hiel the staging works to intensify identification of the public with the play; in another version the setting was more skeletal and suggestive. However, audience identification occurred there also. In Los ángeles, the emotional nakedness of Angela is juxtaposed with the clutter of her room on stage, thus the importance of creating an intimate space versus a wide open stage, as Sánchez noted in an interview with this author. In Farsa del amor compradito, although not strictly a period piece, the main goals are theatricalism and Brechtian distance from the audience, which are achieved through the use of a stylized black and white setting, reminiscent of a daguerrotype suddently brought to life as the actors begin to move.

An interesting aspect of Sánchez's theatre is his pattern of choosing names: naming his plays, as well as naming his protagonists. For example, note the religious

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identification of the title, La hiel nuestra da cada día, a free adaptation of The Lord's Prayer, where instead of the request, "Give us this day our daily bread," the request is for "our daily bitterness"; and the title, O casi el alma, which reflects Sánchez's technique throughout the play, of using irony and counterpoint in the dialogue to create a rapid tempo within which Maggie can engage in self exploration.

In relation to the names of his characters, many of which originate in Greek mythology or in the Bible, we observe a recurring conflict between flight from, or fulfillment of the traditional significance of their names. Some examples are: Píramo and Tisbe, the earnest, yet beseiged lovers who in La hiel have lived their lives together, a different fate from the one prescribed by the Olympian gods; Angela, in Los ángeles se han fatigado, inherent in whose name is the suggestion of a "fallen angel"; Magdalena-Maggie, a version of the Biblical prostitute who in O casi el alma is saved through a reaffirmation of her own faith; and Antígona, the young Greek woman condemned to fulfill the deadly symbolism of her name. Thus titles and names in Sánchez's theatre are far from gratuitous choices, but rather they integrally reinforce the thematic line of each play.

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Notes

Introduction to Sánchez's Theatre

[1] Carlos Solórzano, "Procesos de creación del autor dramático in El autor dramático, Primer Seminario de Dramaturgia (San Juan: ICP, 1963), p. 19.

[2] Emilio S. Belaval, "Noticias del mantenedor y reflexiones finales," in El autor dramático, Primer Seminario de Dramaturgia (San Juan: ICP, 1963), pp. 221-222.

[3] M. T. Babín, "El Jíbaro y el Criollo," in Panorama de la Cultura Puertorriqueña (New York: Las Américas, 1958), pp. 106-132.

[4] Playwright Albert Innaurato, as quoted by Elenore Lester in "Innaurato--His Passion for the Outcast is Finding a Place on Stage," The New York Times, Sunday, May 29, 1977, D, p. 5.

[5] Castagnino, Teatro: teorías sobre el arte dramático II, p. 36.

[6] Ivan Cardona, "La pasión del teatro puertorriqueño según L.R.S.," La Hora, August 2-8, 1973.

[7] L.R.S., Conference delivered at Hostos Community College of CUNY, Oct. 23, 1974.

[8] Belaval, p. 239.

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La espera

La espera[1] is significant for a number of "firsts": it is Sánchez's first, full length, represented play; it is the first time in the history of the Drama Department at the University of Puerto Rico that a student's work was performed; and also, the play was chosen to inaugurate the Teatro Experimental Universitario, a 100-seat space designed by Rafael Cruz Emeric. The play's avant garde nature is an appropriate choice for a new theatre desirous of exhibiting its modernity. The work opened on February 23, 1959. In 1962, Sánchez, in the capacity of librettist, adapted La espera for its presentation by the Ballets of San Juan, at the Quinto Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño, with music by Frank Martin, choreography by Juan Anduze and set design by Lorenzo Homar.[2]

The play originates from still another genre. It is based on a short story that was published in El Mundo in 1957. A comparison of the play with the short story reveals several facts: the short story has a tighter, more unified structure and vision than the play; and there are fewer characters in the short story. As Sánchez explained, in one of those infrequent pieces that dramatists write about their own plays (and usually only when zealously pursued by critics seeking clarification or comment):

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> Tomando el tema del tiempo como médula dramática y haciendo una revisión de un cuento que había escrito antes, encontré el asunto para La espera . . . . Del cuento saqué tres personajes (Gabriel, Georgina y La Hermana) y el elemento del espejo imaginario. Empecé a caracterizar más detalladamente; La hermana dejó de ser 'un bulto negro de voz gangosa', traté de dibujarla mejor y ahondar en su mundo interior, buscando nuevas posibilidades a su carácter y su vida. Añadí cuatro personajes más para ampliar la acción dramática y traté de moverlos en 'un mundo oscuro y solo, una penumbra aparentemente muerta', con un personaje presente y ausente para toda la obra: el tiempo y empecé a garabatear un rato. 3

His description at the beginning is photograph-like, capturing the barest essentials, in adherence to the title Sánchez himself added to the story, "Un cuento fotografiado." In its shorthand, it is very much like the stage directions in a play:

> Cuatro paredes. Un mundo oscuro y solo. Una puerta siempre cerrada y un hueco pequeño que se empeñaban en llamar ventana. Una cama de hierros, una coqueta con un espejo y una butaca. Nada más. ¡Ay! . . . Y ella. Ella también. Otro mueble de aquella cueva negra. Pero ella no importaba. 4

Characters are tied to the past and to each other. For even when the Man appears in the short story he is too late to provide any comfort to Georgina since she is already dead. Similarly in the play, although Georgina and Gabriel do share a verbal interchange, she still chooses to live in her rarified world of dreams and waiting, rather than in the outside world of agreed upon reality.

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It is a technically competent play belonging to a type of theatre which still had resonance in 1958 when Sánchez wrote it: an existential theatre, laden with symbolic figures playing out the anguish of unrequited love against a backdrop of passing time and inevitable death. He also incorporates expressionistic techniques through the use of dreamlike sequences and symbolic characters who represent La Hermana's guilty conscience about her treatment of her sister, Georgina. Nevertheless, within this familiar scenario, the young Sánchez artfully manages to shape the material by his skillful use of these theatrical devices: music, ambitious lighting, and the additional elements of El Payaso and La Niña, lively creatures who lighten the tone and add originality to the play. Thus even here in his first represented full length play, Sánchez provides us with a glimpse of what will later become his strongest assets as a dramatist: his creative use of the stage and its theatrical possibilities: dramatic coherence; a fine grasp of structure; and rich verbal texture of the language, all of which will be revealed with even greater vigor and originality in his later work.

The play portrays the internal workings of Georgina's tormented mind: her guilt, the longing and ambivalence about existing in a state of continual espera. As Sánchez wrote, describing the relationship of time to the play:

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> El plano vida muerte resulta un camino inevitable para el ser y a veces se convierte en conflicto obsesionante. Por ello resulta penoso el transcurrir del tiempo: toda la problemática está en su paso, no se detiene y por tanto más que vivirse, diríase que se sueña. Es un escaparse continuo de horas, momentos, ilusiones, dolores --todo parece regirse por una ley inexorable de finitud--. 5

The lighting, costumes, and music all work together as a unit to convey the phantasmagorical nature of the work, a reflection of what is going on in the protagonist's mind. The dual concept of reality and illusion are exposed here: with time, represented by El Payaso, death represented by La Sombra, and Georgina's childhood represented by La Niña, interacting alongside the only live characters, the Policeman, who represents authroity and societal order, and the Sister. All the rest are phantoms or materializations of the fears and complexes of La Hermana. The play takes place on two planes symbolized by the window: the present, outside the window, and the past, which is eternally relived inside the window. A more subtle development of the reality-illusion theme is apparent in his later work.

In this play the atmosphere created is the most important element in its realization. Sánchez is not interested in providing the audience with external details, but rather in using the full range of the theatre's technical recourses to create a hallucinatory setting. A play where "la vigilia, el sueño, el recuerdo, la alucinación, la muerte se interponen y confunden las líneas del argumento,"[6] relies on the skill-

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ful interplay of lights, music, reality, illusion and folkloric elements to ensure its vitality. In counterpoint to the bitterness of La Hermana, and the stagnant waiting of Georgina, is the aliveness of the familiar children's verses which are intermittently heard throughout the play, such as:

> "A la víbora.
> A la víbora
> de la mar
> por aquí pueden pasar" (p. 16, Act I).
>
> "A la limón
> A la limón
> que se rompió la fuente." (p. 16, Act I).
>
> "Ay tururete, ay tururete
> el que no tiene vaca
> no bebe leche" (p. 15, Act II).

The use of the circus allows Sánchez to introduce disparate elements and characters into the play. Music becomes more important as El Payaso announces:

> Bajo el almendro largo la carpa de mil colorines. Bajo el flamboyán blanco las hormigas. Y mis trajes sobre la grama hasta que se llene de sol. Traed la corneta. (Sonido de violines todo el tiempo en esta escena) (p. 18, Act I),

Musical elements in the play include bells, violins, dance music evoking memories of the past, children's rhymes and popular folk songs. The noise, colors, lights and general merriment intensifies as El Payaso continues:

> Aquí el circo, aquí el circo. Gran función ahora mismo. Dos botones y una piedrita. No traigo osos pero sí ovejitas. Ovejitas que hacen bee bee y son más suaves que las motas de algodón. Y una cajita llena de hormigas negras, rubias, azules. Llegó el circo. Llegó el circo. Gran función ahora mismo (p. 18, Act I).

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Also enhancing the orignality of the play is the effective use of fauna and flora indigenous to Puerto Rico, as well as actual locations on the Island. For example, el Payaso talks about "Escaleras llenas de besitos de coco y tortas de arroz" (p. 17, Act. I), and with a strong reaction to the word "esperar" he replies, "Cada vez que la digo se me hincha la boca y el corazoncito de piña en mi pecho hace ta-ta-ta" (p. 17, Act I). And note Georgina's evocation of the plaza at Humacao, where Sánchez spent his early childhood:

> La plaza de Humacao es como una barca ancha llena de copos de nieve. La iglesia en el medio parece un papitán. Las deinitas (sic) amarillas y negras comen migajas de pan a los pies de San Antonio mientras los viejecitos piden las limosnas y los zapateros hacen los zapatos. La plaza de Humacao es redonda como una bola. Las torres altas de la iglesia le guiñan de noche al cielo. Me gustaría lanzarme desde ellas al espacio (p. 19, Act I).

Even in the discussion between La Sombra and El Payaso concerning Georgina's impending death, Sánchez includes native elements:

> El Payaso. -- Déjala. Una tarde rosa, una tarde negra, una tarde blanca. Una tarde larga como la torre de la Universidad.
>
> La Sombra. -- Esta noche con los coquíes. No lo sabrá. Me la llevará sobre la ovejita que se te murió esta mañana (p. 20, Act I).

And there are other references to "los junquillos en flor" (p. 15, Act II) and to "la tía de Caguas" which also

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distinguishes a particularly Puerto Rican atmosphere. Thus, within this work which displays overtly metaphysical concerns, is a complex mixture of universal and national imagery.

The elements of the fantastic are apparent when La Niña and El Payaso are present. Note Sánchez's stage direction, "El Payaso comienza a llorar hojas secas" (p. 15, Act II), a metaphor similar to the one García Márquez would create years later in Cien años de soledad, concerning the character Mauricio Babilonia and the ubiquitous butterflies that follow him everywhere. Says La Niña:

> No llores, que me haces reír. No llores, que caen flores, flores, flores (p. 15, Act II).

The characters are symbolic creations, not real human beings, a manifestation of expressionism. Note the following examples where Georgina represents an ideal, not a person for Gabriel, "No es la casa lo que guardo, sino los pedazos de un amor grande" (p. 14, Act II). Similarly, he is an illusion, not a person for her:

> Nada, nada, nada. Me voy a plantar en esa ventana y me voy a consumir mirando hacia fuera. Sol. Lluvia. Espera. Vida. Vida misma. Llegará hoy, mañana, siempre. Estará conmigo sin estar, a pesar de los años que nada pueden . . . a pesar de mi muerte en vida (p. 14, Act II).

Thus here we see introduced a favorite Sánchez theme, the interplay between reality and illusion, which will also be developed in O casi el alma and Sol 13, Interior. Death,

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portrayed as a woman of undetermined age in the character of La Sombra, marks that area between drama and reality. Notwithstanding the links that critic Angelina Morfi sees between La Sombra and similar creations of Lorca, Maeterlinck and Azorín "en lo que éstos destacan de misterioso y familiar, de poético y enigmático, de presencia intransferible y fatal en el enfoque del tema," Morfi nevertheless recognizes the originality of Sánchez's character, "inspirando algunos de los pensamientos más profundos de la obra."[7]

Sánchez invents multiple responses to dramatic situations through his creative use of lighting. He indicates the use of rose lights for scenes from the past, between El Payaso, La Niña and La Sombra; whiter lights to denote the present, Georgina and La Hermana; red lights for those love scenes between Gabriel and Georgina; green lights and later, multicolored lights, for the circus scenes; white light for a discussion of death between El Payaso and La Sombra; grey lighting for the scene where Georgina perceives her own death; and yellow lighting for the last scene where La Hermana is alone.

The following Arriví quote appropriately introduces our discussion of the musicality of Sánchez's language, as revealed in La espera, "Luis Rafael Sánchez intenta establecer al impulso de un proceso técnico fluído, desarticulador poético del tiempo y del espacio, una especia de 'música de la acción dramática.'"[8]

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In his first set of stage directions, Sánchez establishes the lyrical tone of the work, as well as its flow from reality to the realm of dreams:

> Las paredes deliciosamente desiguales tienen la fragilidad única de la vida. El lugar es un mundo oscuro de recuerdos donde el tiempo ha convertido la vida en poesía. El sitio une dos planos de realidad y sueño. La habitación parece romperse y hacerse estérea y alada (p. 15, Act I.).

Among the numerous examples of Sánchez's poetization of the language are the following lines:

> La Sombra. -- Los muebles están llenos de pesares y lágrimas . . . (p. 15, Act I).
>
> El Payaso. -- Un camino en carbones para ir. Un sombrero de nubes, un traje de jazmín (p. 17, Act. I).

Or an image like the following:

> Romper yo misma mis palabras, y si alguna vez se escaparan, al llegar a la garganta se convirtiesen en flor (p. 12, Act II).

When the long awaited Gabriel finally does appear to Georgina, their conversation is both oniric and poetic:

> Georgina. -- ¿Por dónde has venido?
>
> Gabriel. -- Por el tiempo.
>
> Georgina. -- De azul.
>
> Gabriel. -- No, de negro. Para que se creyeran que era la noche.
>
> Georgina: -- Has cambiado.
>
> Gabriel. -- Siempre te quiero.
>
> Georgina. -- Lo sé, sí . . . pero hay algo nuevo.
>
> Gabriel. -- La vejez me habita.

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Georgina. -- ¡Qué larga la espera!

Gabriel. -- Quince años.

Georgina. -- Creía que eran cuatro.

Gabriel. -- Cuatro eran ayer. Hoy se han cumplido quince. Mírame el rostro. La espera se me desliza por las sienes como una corona de dolor. Estoy cansado. Me pesa la separación.

Georgina. -- Tú quisiste.

Gabriel. -- No me hagas más pesada la carga. Yo me fui, pero vine entre las hojas secas.

Georgina. -- Como un mal recuerdo. (P. 12, Act. II)

Sánchez's familiar enumerative style is evident in La espera in its embryonic form. Note Georgina's description of herself, "Mírame ahora. Desesperada, fuerte, herida. En otros momentos soy cobarde, triste, casi tonta" (p. 18, Act I). But more pronounced is his litany-like style that is apparent in the following interchange between Georgina and La Hermana:

Georgina. -- Hay gentes cayéndose, gentes agarradas de sillones torcidos y jorobados. Hay mucho pelo blanco pero blanco de llantos, blanco de dolores.

La Hermana. -- La cara se te hace larga y delgada.

Georgina. -- Sí.

La Hermana. -- Como si fuera una espiga.

Georgina. -- Es que me arde. . . . Parece que me han clavado mil alfileres,

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La Hermana. -- Lloras.

Georgina. -- Antes.

La Hermana. -- No. Esta tarde.

Georgina. -- Siempre hoy.

La Hermana. -- Llorabas.

Georgina. -- No era yo.

La Hermana. -- Cómo.

Georgina. -- La otra.

La Hermana. -- No entiendo.

Georgina. -- Yo tampoco.

La Hermana. -- Entonces cómo lo dices,

Georgina. -- Igual que otras cosas que digo desatinadas.

La Hermana. -- Como cuerdas rotas.

Georgina. -- Así.

La Hermana. -- Pero tú.

Georgina. -- Qué.

La Hermana. -- No, nada.

Georgina. -- Dilo.

La Hermana. -- No.

Georgina. -- Temes herirme.

La Hermana. -- No.

Georgina. -- No lo niegues. Me lo dicen tus palabras calladas.

La Hermana. -- No sabes.

Georgina. -- Sí, sé. (Sonríe.) ¿Qué quieres que haga con la hojita?

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La Hermana. -- Píntala de verde.

Georgina. -- No es su exterior lo seco.

La Hermana. -- Quémala a la luz del sol.

Georgina. -- Voy a encerrarla con nosotras y las tres esperamos a Gabriel.

La Hermana. -- ¿Las tres?

Georgina. -- Sí.

La Hermana. -- Yo no le espero.

Georgina. -- Es inútil
(p. 19, Act I).

The following is another example of the repetition of certain words and phrases for effect, a technique, common to his theatre in general, "La Hermana. -- Quince años que son quince agonías, quince ocasos temblorosos" (p. 17, Act II).

La espera reveals certain themes and directions that Sánchez will pursue and develop more fully in later works. One of these elements is time, the central metaphor that provides the artistic unity of this work. As Sánchez commented about the play and its subtitle "Juego del amor y del tiempo," "El título señala a grandes rasgos la idea de la trama: esperar es consumirse, vivir, morir, renacer, purificarse; el ser reverdece con la espera aunque sea soñándose se hace mejor."[9] Note the following examples of his exploration of the theme of time:

Y el tiempo no se detuvo. Se fueron todos a la tierra. Por eso no importan. La casa sí ha sobrevivido y en ella el mundo continúa

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> con la muerte y el tiempo guarecidos en ella. Aquí se esconden las hojas secas y los ríos que una vez morían en el mar. No os detengáis en los momentos de luto y sangre, que todo pasa. Sólo queda la casa, la penumbra y el tiempo corriéndose por sobre las cosas. Nada más. He aquí la niebla (p. 16, Act I).

Another example,

> Georgina. -- No, hay años que miden mi espera. Creo que al nacer ya lo esperaba. Era una angustia rosa mi niñez. Ida por todos los caminos, detenida en cada orilla esperando el agua, los gatos, los caballos y la abuela de Candelero. Luego él . . . haciéndome ceniza la vida (p. 13, Act II).

And here is Georgina, firm in the conviction that the power of love can overcome time, life and death:

> Georgina. -- El tiempo no se tiene. Se hace. Se inventa, se trae. Se cose una cuerda larga y se va uno sobre él sin caerse. La vida toda es el caminar sobre una cuerda floja. Abajo están los leones (p. 14, Act II).

Angelina Morfi, acknowledges the importance of the element of time in the play, as a constant factor exercising psychological and physical pressure on the characters. However, the temporal element that she finds most interesting is "la concepción surrealista que pretende borrar la idea de sucesión," or, as we have called it, the juxtaposition of time, as in the following lines:

> Sin embargo ha pasado mucho tiempo.
> ¿Cuánto? No sé. Ayer . . . hoy . . .
> siempre o nunca, pues a lo mejor todo
> fue un sueño (pp. 15-16, Act I).

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There are a number of points of contact between La espera and Sánchez's later work. Los ángeles se han fatigado. The themes of abandonment, waiting, disappointment in love, madness, and time as a destructive, inexorable element are all developed later in Los ángeles, although in a less abstract and symbolic way than in La espera. The portrayal of the wasted prostitute and the drunken sailors that will later provide the central image for Los ángeles is first revealed in La espera when Gabriel talks about the wife of the carbonero in this way:

> La última vez que la vi velaba las góndolas
> a la orilla del mar. Los marinos borrachos
> le pegaban por dormir sobre los muslos
> (p. 13, Act III).

In both plays we note the essential relatedness of three themes: the will to destruction, the role of madness and the idea of death. In La espera, La Hermana is alone on the stage in the final moments of the play. A policeman has come to take her away. The following passage reveals her confusion as to what is past and what is present:

> (Se lleva las manos a los oídos. Mira
> todo extrañada como si no conociera el
> lugar. Una luz amarilla cae sobre ella y
> la mujer alucinada parece al fin compren-
> der toda la verdad.)
>
> La Hermana. -- Quince años que son quince
> agonías, quince ocasos
> temblorosos.
>
> Policía. -- Vamos, señora.
>
> La Hermana. -- Sí, en seguida, Georgina . . .
> Georgina no me oye . . . no
> me oye . . . La casa nuestra
> se queda intacta de mentiras,
> intacta de lágrimas. Llena de

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> miradas de Georgina. Se quedan las telarañas cayéndose por las paredes. Se queda la verdad aquí encerrada. Todo . . . Todo . . . Quince años, cuatro . . . ayer . . . hoy . . . siempre. . . quince años . . . cuatro . . . quince . . . cuatro . . . (sale.)
> (La música es ahora una marcha triunfal.)
> (P. 17, Act II.)

At the end of Los ángeles, Angela responds to a knock on the door (the police? or the mental institution attendants?) by setting her invisible bird free, grabbing her invisible baby, and taking refuge in the past:

> ¡Córcega, la boca de Yauco, la vida cierta! Todo lo doloroso empieza a desaparecer. Y el presente y el futuro se ahogan en sus propios minutos (Teatro Puertorriqueño, 1962, p. 648).

A theme that is introduced in La espera and further developed in O casi el alma is the fascination with the street and the secret life that is revealed to those who have the gift to sense its aliveness. In the following exchange between La Hermana and Georgina we see two opposing attitudes toward the phenomenon of la calle:

> Georgina. -- Hermoso callar cuando las flores se caen de los árboles, cuando el viento se mete por las ventanas, por los huecos de las habitaciones, por las almas. Hermoso callar cuando hay en la calle gente que ríe y que llora.
>
> La Hermana. -- (Enfurecida.) -- ¡La calle! Gente que ríe y que llora. Hombres hechos de sombra. Polvo, polvo. Eso nada más. Podridos por dentro y por fuera. Espera, consúmete, sigue esperando nada (p. 12, Act II).

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There are significant parallels between this play and other works in Spanish. First, we must acknowledge the strong influence of Lorca on the young Sánchez: in the use of symbolic figures, much as La Sombra en El Payaso; in the incorporation of popular elements, such as the circus and folk rhymes; in the expressive use of lighting to signify a change in mood, for example in these stage directions, "Las luces se transforman en piedras verdes" (p. 18, Act I). The following dreamlike passage, with its collage of images and juxtaposition of time, is reminiscent of the lyrical raptures of Lorca's Yerma:

> Georgina. -- Ahora . . . estoy sola . . . Aunque sea una novia vieja. . . Vuelve . . . Ya tengo las sábanas . . . Dormiré sin ropas para que el hijo nos nazca más pronto. Sube . . . Vente ahora, Gabriel . . . Tengo el hueco en la sien. Sube. Subeeeee. No importa que me veas fea y enferma y distinta y otra siendo la misma. Gabriel, sube. Hace años que te espero. Sube. Ven y olvida el ayer y el hoy . . . sube . . . sube . . . (p. 14, Act II).

We also perceive strong Lorquian parallels, this time thematically, not just stylistically, in the similarities to La casa de Bernarda Alba. Note the following interchange where we learn that both Georgina and La Hermana love the same man, just as the daughters of Bernarda Alba all loved Pepe el Romano:

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La Hermana. -- Le querías tanto como yo.

Georgina. -- ¿Qué dices?

La Hermana. -- Eso.

Georgina. -- Repítelo para romper el aire.

La Hermana. -- No quiero.

Georgina. -- Le amas también.

La Hermana. -- No. Fue antes.

Georgina. -- No mientas. El amor no tiene tiempo ni edad. Por eso no me dejabas. Por eso no me permitías asomar la cara a ese horrible hueco. Porque temías que lo viera en la calle (p. 14, Act II).

The totally enclosed atmosphere of Sánchez's play evokes Lorca's Bernarda Alba, as well as René Marqués' Los soles truncos. The theme of time and decay, as revealed in the following lines by La Hermana,

> . . . nada queda . . . . La casa. Celda de recuerdos, pudriéndose de sangre estancada, llena de telarañas que envuelven hasta las almas. Hay que abrir las ventanas. (Arranca las cortinas.) Hay que hacerle paso al aire y al polvo (p. 17, Act II),

is effectively developed by Sánchez's contemporary, Myrna Casas, in her play Cristal roto en el tiempo, which was presented in 1960 at the Tercer Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño.

There is an intensely dramatic passage between Gabriel and La Hermana which creates a sinister atmosphere dominated by the barking of dogs in the distance. The use of dogs is reminiscent of the play by Elena Garro, Los perros, and

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the short stories by Abelardo Díaz Alfaro, "Los perros," by Horacio Quiroga, "La insolación," and by Juan Rulfo, "No oyes ladrar los perros."[10]

As in later Sanchez's plays, he reveals great sensitivity to audience reaction and in turn to their participation in the theatre experience. As Iris Z. de Cabanillas has noted, the role of the audience in this play is formidable, since "el espectador, más que una figura aparte del drama, se hace personaje, porque es quien va a interpretar los símbolos."[11] As we have indicated, this first work of Sánchez's contains kernels of the artistic elements that he will develop more fully in his later work. We concur with Angelina Morfi's measured evaluation of the work:

> En La espera el joven Luis Rafael demuestra que ha dirigido su mirada profunda a la vida. Fascinado por la fuerza compleja del amor, del tiempo y de la muerte se ha regodeado como en cámara lenta en los sentimientos y pensamientos que le provocan. Como enamorado de las múltiples facetas de la vida, no puede menos que angustiarse por sus rasgos sombríos recogiendo las impresiones en un hálito poético que asfixia un poco el acontecer dramático. Pero esta obra es ya indicio de que ha nacido un talento dramático en Puerto Rico. 12

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Notes

La espera

[1] L. R. S., La espera, in Cuadernos de Artes y Letras, Nos. 37, 38 (1960). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 125.

[3] L. R. S., "En busca de un motivo," El Mundo, Feb. 23, 1959, without pagination.

[4] L. R. S., "Un Cuento Fotografiado: La Espera," El Mundo, Dec. 28, 1957, without pagination.

[5] L. R. S., "En busca de un motivo," without pagination.

[6] Angelina Morfi, "El teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," RICP, No. 52 (July-Sept. 1971), p. 40.

[7] Morfi, p. 40.

[8] Arriví, "Undécimo Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño," RICP, (1969), p. 21.

[9] L. R. S., "En busca de un motivo," without pagination.

[10] See Elena Garro, Los perros, in 12 obras en un acto (México, 1967); Abelardo Díaz Alfaro, "Los perros," in Lecturas Puertorriqueñas: Prosa (Sharon, Conn.: The Troutman Press, 1966), pp. 345-353; Horacio Quiroga, "La insolación," in Cuentos (México: Editorial Porrúa, 1970), pp. 4-8; Juan

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Rulfo, "No oyes ladrar los perros," in El llano en llamas (México: F.C.E., 1969), pp. 114-118.

[11] Iris Z. de Cabanillas, "Por primera vez el Departamento de Drama de la U.P.R. presenta una obra de un alumno," El Mundo, Feb. 23, 1959, p. 9.

[12] Morfi, p. 40.

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Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita

In the following two works, Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita[1] and Farsa del amor compradito, we see another side of Sánchez, a rich humor which draws upon traditional Puerto Rican folklore, and a linguistic playfulness, full of double entendres and puns. We also see a willingness to experiment with new forms: in Cucharachita Viudita, children's theatre; and in Farsa, the commedia dell'arte. Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita, originally a short story, was adapted by Sánchez for the stage. As Piri Fernández de Lewis, who also starred in the production, notes:

> Como García Lorca, Luis Rafael Sánchez ha sabido transformar con imaginación la tradición popular, enhebrándola con formas dramáticas innovadoras para crear un mundo poético que simbolice lo eternamente humano.[2]

This is Sánchez's first incursion into the field of children's theatre and it was a successful one indeed, as critics Angelina Morfi and Ester Feliciano Mendoza sustain. In 1959 Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita received the prize from the Academia de Arte Escénico Santo Domingo as the best children's theatre work sent to their "Certamen de Navidad" that year. Morfi makes special mention of Sánchez's talent for assimilating well known children's stories and games into his theatre, through characters as well as through "disposiciones sintáticas, elementos rítmicos, recursos caracterizadores, el desborde imaginativo, tonos y actitudes afectivas y vocabulario."[3]

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Sánchez takes certain liberties with the plot, characters and locations of the original folktale, "La Cucharachita Martina," known throughout Latin America, in order to create dramatic conflict and intensity. The original tale recounts the loves, marriage and widowhood of Cucarachita Martina, who prefers Ratoncito Pérez to her other suitors, all of whom in turn acquiesce to her choice. Sánchez, however, creates a lively battle among her suitors, and in addition, changes the nature of her relationship with Ratoncito Pérez. Although he is her original suitor, she prefers the attention of the gentler, more modest Lagartijón Primero, and "forgets" her commitment to Ratoncito Pérez. Says Ester Mendoza about this new romantic interest, who doesn't appear in the original children's story, "Es un tipo, fino, guapo, muy verde y muy galán, que creó Luis Rafael para enamorar a la presumida Cucarachita y a su abuela."[4]

The tension increases as a fight ensues where Ratoncito Pérez kills Lagartijón Primero and then marries Cucarachita Martina. His immediate desire to eat, causes him to fall to his death into the cauldron of food, while "Cucarachita Martina le canta y le llora."[5] Says Piri Fernández de Lewis, Cucarachita Martina's preference for the suitor who will make her "reina del viento y el mar" corresponds to the symbolic nature of the play:

> Este juego infantil es símbolo del mundo entero, no sólo de los animales, o de los niños. Los espíritus delicados prefie-

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> ren a los seres generosos y poéticos, pero esa preferencia es causa de 'tragedillas', pues en la lucha mundana triunfa lo burdo. El símbolo no empeña, sin embargo, la moraleja que debe llevar toda historieta y toda fábula de animales. El triunfo es sólo aparente, el dominante rastrero recibe su castigo: ¡El Ratoncito Pérez se cae en la olla! 6

Also differing from the original folktale are the human attitudes that Sánchez reveals through his characters, for example the Abuela's pride in her "race." Note her admonishment to Cucarachita Martina who dares to marry Lagartijón Primero:

> Pues no . . . tú te casarás con un cucarachito como hicimos tu tartabuela . . . tu bisabuela . . . tu abuela y tu madre.[7]

Mendoza also enjoys the changes Sánchez made from the original tale, this time by adding other insects like "el cucubano, el grillo, las moscas, además de otros encantadores amigos del jardín como la mariposa o el lagartijo. . . ."[8]

The theatrical elements include chorus and dance, consisting of pantomime based on musical arrangements of popular themes. As Morfi comments:

> Difícil como es escribir para niños, ha logrado conservar el encanto del cuento que desde 'los tiempos de María Castaña' ha disfrutados los niños y nos ha dado una 'tragedilla' con un diálogo vivo, de notas sentimentales, aires candorosos y un delicioso vuelo poético e imaginativo. 9

Cucarachita Viudita is a flight into the world of children. As in all children's tales it has its moral for adults and

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children alike: that greed and pride are not rewarded. As we shall see, Farsa, too, is a flight, but in this case a flight from reality into the unreality of absurdly humorous and contrived situations, with solutions imposed by the characters themselves to ensure our eternally sought after happy ending.

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Notes

Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita

[1] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita, Typewritten copy at the Academia Santo Domingo, 25 pages. All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Piri Fernández de Lewis, "'Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita' de Luis Rafael Sánchez." Review in El Mundo, Dec. 5, 1960, without pagination.

[3] Ester Feliciano Mendoza, "Recordando el Cuento, 'La Cucarachita Viudita.'" El Mundo, April 22, 1961, Suplemento, p. 7.

[4] Mendoza, p. 7.

[5] Morfi, p. 41.

[6] Piri Fernández de Lewis, in "Programa de Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita," quoted by Morfi, p. 41.

[7] Morfi, P. 41.

[8] Mendoza, p. 7

[9] Morfi, p. 40.

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Farsa del amor compradito

The Farsa del amor compradito,[1] Sánchez's venture into the traditionally popular commedia dell'arte genre is unique in his work. It was greeted with critical acclaim both in its New York and Puerto Rican performances. As Jim Collins observed:

> Ever since its beginnings in the early 16th century the Italian commedia dell'arte has delighted continental Europeans as a popular art form. It has meant for the Europeans what Kabuki has meant for the Japanese, the music hall for the British, vaudeville for the United States--a type of comic catharsis purgation by means of belly laughs at human folly. And its influence can be seen in the works of virtually every European dramatist of importance in this century, from Pirandello through Brecht to Beckett. 2

Sánchez can be counted among those dramatists who have experimented with the genre, incorporating distinctly Puerto Rican elements and humor into this universal art form. Sánchez's play is patterned on the original commedia dell'arte which also included improvised dialogue, jokes and audience --actor repartee, with the insertion of poems and speeches taken from literary sources.

The theme is familiar, an amorous triangle involving Arlequín, the villain; General Cataplum, the deceived lover; and the loved one, Colombina, who lives in the unexpected setting of a bordello owned by her Aunt Quintina. Then there is Pirulí Pulcinello, director, organizer, improviser

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par excellence, who bemoans to us, the audience, about the rigors that the other actors, and life itself, subject him to. The author frequently uses Pirulí as his spokesperson to direct himself to the "habitantes de la Insula de Cúlturis a Priori" (p. 44), a play on the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña.

This farce is a subtle, and at other times not so subtle, satire that is revealed through dialogue heavy with double meaning and insinuation and recited by those classic characters from the commedia dell'arte, Colombina, Arlequín, Pierrot, as well as the original characters added by our author, Pirulí Pulcinello, a variant of the Pulchinella figure and Goyito Verde, Quintina and General Cataplum. The fun Sánchez has in the onomatopoeic creation of the characters' names is only one element in the festive mood he creates and sustains in this work. Even the diminutive "compradito" suggests the mocking tone that characterizes the farce. The jocular tone is developed by multiple theatrical devices, plays on words, a fanciful mixture of the vernacular with literary jargon, piquant sexual allusions that enliven the dialogue, and constant "musiquilla de feria y gran espectácula." Luis Hernández Aquino comments:

> Podríase decir que Luis Rafael Sánchez añade a nuestro teatro . . . una nota distinta, la de la farsa, con un sentido puertorriqueño, en que va implícito mucho de ese relajito criollo que no han tenido a bien llevar a sus cuentos y novelas otros autores puertorriqueños, y que buena falta nos hace, por aquello de que no se explota literariamente, nuestro humorismo.[3]

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There are precedents in Puerto Rico, however, for Sánchez's Farsa in the Farándula Bohemia of Ramón Ortiz del Rivero, alias Diplo, who took his "'comedia del arte' antillana, a escenarios, tablados y plazas, y logra, con las bufonerías del negrito, la mulata, el gallego y los nuevos tipos populares que incorpora al género, una continuidad de representación desconocida en el país."[4]

In Farsa, theatricalism is advanced by means of spectacle, pantomime and dance, as well as music, exhuberant lighting schemes, Brechtian techniques, broad gestures and play on words. Brechtian devices are ably employed to create a play within a play; as the drama begins the actors, still putting on their makeup, actively discuss the work they are about to perform, and its author. This allows Sánchez to indulge in some amusing self-criticism:

> Colombina: -- Pirulí . . . Mi sabroso Pirulí, mi Pirulito de azúcar prieta, si pudiéramos cambiar la representación, si pudiéramos hacer Romeo y Julieta.
>
> Pirulí Pulcinello. -- Señorita, la función ha comenzado. Todo este público está esperando. Vuelva a su sitio.
>
> Colombina. -- Pero es un público fresco y merece algo mejor. Por qué no darle algo realmente hermoso.
>
> Pirulí. -- Señorita. ¿Cómo se atreve detener la representación? La gente ha venido a ver la Farsa del Amor Compradito.
>
> Colombina. -- Pero es una obra absurda, ilógica, insensata. El autor carece de madurez.

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Pirulí. -- Mi querida señorita, desgraciado de mundo si se poblara de cosas lógicas.

Colombina. -- Todo tiene su límite. El autor ha creado situaciones sin ton ni son, majaderías de todos los colores.

Pirulí. -- Es un autor joven.

Colombina. -- Eso no es excusa. La gente no tiene por qué pagar sus vidrios rotos. Si el niño tiene ganas de escribir, que ensucie las paredes de su casa, pero que deje el teatro tranquilo. Toda esa gente ha venido a marvarillarse, a llenarse de alegría de vivir (pp. 46-47).

The Brechtian use of obvious props and signs is seen in the following stage directions:

> Goyito Verde se saca del pecho un inmenso corazón de cartón y lo corta en pedazos con unas tijeritas. Luego cae al suelo bien muerto (p. 75).

We note the use of direct address to the audience, another Brechtian device, in the following examples. At one point Colombina declares aloud:

> Ahora se me olvidó por dónde iba (p. 68).

And at another point Colombina complains,

> Nadie me irá a socorrer. (Se levanta.) Esta obra es una catástrofe . . . . Nadie se sabe las líneas, nadie se sabe las entradas . . . nadie se sabe nada. Señoras. . . señores. . . ustedes que soportáis esta farsa con viso de disparate, vean cómo se complican las cosas (p. 113).

At that point Colombina leaves the stage and sits among the audience, leaving a bewildered Arlequín to ask, "Quintina,

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Quintina, Colombina no está en escena. . . . ¿Qué hago? (p. 113), whereupon Quintina goes in search of Pirulí, who as usual, resolves all problems of this type, and does no less in this case than save the day himself:

> Un libreto, Quintina. Aflautaré la voz y me convertirá en una graciosa Eva. . . . Querido público . . . una desgracia tras bastidores nos obliga a alterar el reparto. El papel de Colombina será interpretado por este señor aquí parado. Los que no estén conformes pidan el dinero en la taquilla, pero recuerden que voy derechito a la ruina (p. 114).

The final scene of the play is filled with much movement to and from the stage into the audience, and with a lively argument between Colombina and Pirulí as to how the play should end. Colombina wants a happy ending and a reunion with General Cataplum, while the reality is that she has been deceived by Arlequín's trickery into marrying Arlequín:

> Colombina. -- Este final no es un final.
>
> Pirulí. -- ¿Y qué es?
>
> Colombina. -- Un disparate.
>
> Pirulí. -- Telón, telón.
>
> Colombina. -- Que no. Abran el telón. Me niego a representar. (Se baja al público.) No ven que el autor ha roto el sueño. ¿Cómo se va a engañar así al pobre General? Desde el principio fue un personaje bueno.
>
> Pirulí: -- ¡Loquitos! El autor es dueño y él quiere un final trágico. El autor pretende que los asistentes lloren y que al irse se lleven un recuerdo triste. El autor es . . .

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Colombina. -- Un tonto.

Pirulí. -- No seas loca.

Colombina. -- (Hablando al público.) Señoras y señores, esta pieza va a terminar otra vez; de la manera hermosa. ¡El sueño y la ilusión realizados! (pp. 128-129).

And as the shouting and hysteria increases, Pirulí addresses the audience:

Señoras. . . señoras. . . esta obra no acaba así . . . sépanlo todos . . . esto es improvisado. (Sigue gritando.) (p. 131).

And as the actors "have their way," the thwarted Pirulí has the last word,

Señores . . . señoras . . . esta obra ha sido alterada. No fue el final verdadero. Esta obra no es así, pero vuelvan mañana. Todo será distinto. El autor se pondrá furioso. Esta obra no acaba así. (Llorando.) No, no acaba así, no acaba así . . . (p. 132).

The language in Farsa is rich in humor, metaphorical and popular allusions, as well as with Lorquian overtones. Here are some examples of his metaphorical language:

Colombina. -- ¿Qué le duele?

Arlequín. -- Un poema que me viene saliendo desde el ventrículo derecho. Ay . . . ay . . . se ha colgado de las cuerdas vocales . . . ahora corre por los puntos de articulación . . . Se me sale . . . ya (p. 85).

And later in the stage direction:

Arlequín se consume de fiebre provocada por el dolor metafísico de saberse despreciado (p. 89).

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Also, note the lingustic distortion in Colombina's words:

> El do en el güiro es un do, el re es un re, el mi es un tu, el fa es un sol, el sol es una luna, y el la un lo (p. 122).

Often in this play, Sánchez uses the stage directions to reveal humor, as in these three examples. The first:

> Quintana. -- (Con reverencia medieval.) General.
>
> Madame. -- (Con reverencia renacentista.) General.
>
> Colombina. -- (Con reverencia dieciochesca.) General (p. 53).

The second,

> La música del can-can llena la escena. Las mujeres lloran como unas magdalenas. Las luces comienzan a descender. El telón se escurre aburrido (p. 61).

The third,

> Deja caer la cabeza mientras ca el telón cansado de oír tanta majadería (p. 87).

We have previously referred to Sánchez's inclusion of folkloric elements in his theatre. In Farsa, in addition to capturing the native humor, full of teasing and good will, he has Colombina sing the song "Arroz con leche" (p. 49) and has General Cataplum sing the song "Naranja Dulce" (p. 61), and later has the General say to Colombina, "Ve ensayando miles de besitos de coco" (P. 51). María V. Morales observes, "hay ilusiones a Doña Ana, Arroz con leche, el gallo pelón, la abuela zapatona. Se deja ver también en la misma el gusto por los refranes populares, callejeros."[5] She quotes Colombina's phrase, "Me extraña y me

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araña." Morales also describes the essentially Lorquian nature of the play:

> Se puede catalogar esta obra dentro del tipo de la farsa lorquiana, con la que guarda los siguientes puntos de contacto: el sentido del teatro como artificio y disparate; el recurso del teatro dentro del teatro; la poetización de elementos puramente externos en la utilería y la escenografía; el desenfreno en el lenguaje; la alusión a los temas del sexo, sin llegar necesariamente a lo procaz; así como también el sentido simbólico de los nombres de alguno de los personajes. 6

It appears to be created with the two Lorca works in mind, Retablillo de don Cristóbal or Títeres de cachiporra.[7]

His characters discourse on life, politics, art, social conventions, and on the nature of the theatre experience itself, as the following lines reveal:

> Pirulí. -- Señorita, el teatro es imitación de la vida. Es pintar allá arriba en el escenario lo que vemos cada mañana acá en el mundo.
>
> Colombina. -- Pirulongo, no seas disparatero. El teatro es el sueño del ser. Es el escape hacia lo que se desea pero no se tiene. Ahora mismo yo podría ser Isabel la Católica, o Catalina la Grande, o una vagabunda, o Julieta la de Romeo (p. 47).

Referrring to the line, "El teatro es el sueño del ser," Gallego Díaz comments that:

> Así como los sueños se evaporan del escenario de nuestra vida tras un proceso de decantación de la realidad, la poesía de este 'disparate escénico' se condensa como una imperceptible neblina que más tarde se resuelve en lluvia de metáforas certeras y bellísimas. 8

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The theme of time is also treated in all of Sánchez's work. Different from the seriousness with which he developed the metaphysical and existential overtones in La espera, he adopts an amused attitude toward time in Farsa, which we observe as Pirulí opens the Segundo Capricho:

> El tiempo, amigos míos, nos saca la
> lengua a todos y se queda muy tranquilo.
> Cuando menos lo esperamos, llantos,
> lágrimas, enanas, suspiros con hipo y tos.
> Y al final se asienta el agua revuelta
> (p. 62).

What we see in the following battle of Arlequín's conscience is an example of a stylistic device Sánchez uses in all of his work, a dialectical alternating of opposing or complementary sides of an issue, often taking the form of lists, as we will see particularly in La hiel, O casi, and Antígona. Here is Arlequín's conscience debating the decision about whether or not to change the contents of General Cataplum's letter, which would falsely inform Colombina that the General had died, thus deceitfully winning her hand in marriage:

> (Arlequín se queda un momento inmóvil.
> Una música paranoica llega por el aire.
> De repente el poeta comienza a sacudirse
> de pies a cabeza.)
>
> ¿Quién me habla . . . quién?
>
> (Saca un muñequito en forma de diablo.)
>
> Mi conciencia mala.
>
> (La conciencia mala tiene voz de
> chicarra.)

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Hola, qué tal. ¿Qué dices? . . . Que cambie la carta.

(A cada pregunta surge una contestación de la conciencia en forma de melodía desafinada.)

¿Que mate a Goyito Verde . . . que rapte a Colombina . . . que qué?

(La conciencia le dice algo al oído. Arlequín ríe histérico mientras la conciencia grita desordenada.)

¡Qué idea estupenda . . . qué idea maquiavélica . . . principesca! ¡Qué buena es mi conciencia mala . . . qué mucho sabe!

(Comienza a bailar. Una música fría y suave se oye. Arlequín se detiene de pronto.)

¿Quién me pellizca? ¡Oh! . . . Hola, conciencia buena . . . Tú siempre tan aburrida y tranquila . . . ¿Cómo? . . . ¿Renunciar a ella . . . que haga el bien? ¡Qué noble . . . qué buena es mi conciencia buena!

(La conciencia buena y la mala se miran y ven que no pueden existir a la vez. Deciden batallar el alma en pena. La lucha comienza. En un momento decisivo la conciencia mala derrota a la buena. Arlequín enseña los dientes como si fuese un temible villano.)

¡Otro triunfo para la conciencia mala! (pp. 102-103).

Gallego Díaz suggests that Sánchez's criticism of contemporary society is perhaps inspired by "las líneas esperpénticas del mejor teatro valleinclanesco,"[9] an observation with which we concur, given Sánchez's openly expressed appreciation of Valle Inclán, as a much underrated

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dramatic force. And as Lillian Skerrett de Torres quotes, the plot is only a simple pretext

> para que el embeleco se corra en las bocas de los personajes. Lo realmente importante es la fina observación de los valores decadentes y la constancia de un orden intelectualizador hueco y estéril que ha empezado a enraizarse en algunos sectores culturales de su país. 10

Social criticism is present in all of his work, and no less so when he uses humor to make his point. The idiom may change, but the essential message or invective, in this case against the eternal monotony of the confirmed bourgeoisie, is universally used by contemporary dramatists, to name a few: Ionesco, Jorge Díaz, Egon Wolff and Luisa Josefina Hernández.[11] In this case the invective is ceremoniously delivered by Pirulí, who Hernández Aquino refers to as "un mal hablado, por cierto que el Cristóbal de Lorca":[12]

> Pirulí. -- Mis queridos amigos de rigidez almidonada, de paraguas, cuello y sombrilla.
>
> (Suena una batería y un tambor a manera de fanfarria.)
>
> Con bombo, platillo y serpentina de carnaval anuncio el tercer capricho del disparate. La situación planteada, mezcla de pretexto intelectualoide y carnet social, se estira ahora como resultado final. Este es un producto neto de la ínsula que tan hábilmente preside la cotorra enana. Hablar, hablar, hablar y otra vez hablar, hablar y hablar hasta convertir la ínsula en un cacareo constante con la consabida y hasta premisada meta: todos bostezan aburridos de sí mismos, mientras tanto las instituciones, o palacios de charloteo, no

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> se amilanan y siguen en su indestructible afán, congreso del fin último, ponencias filosóficas, razonamientos, posiciones, preámbulos, papeles, más papeles, hasta que surge inevitable, sediento, enfermo sobre todo, el repugnante orgullo burocrático y el papel y la palabra se confunden en un abrazo deliciosamente fraternal. Y todo queda en un solemne bla, bla, bla. Con permiso. (Se retira meneando la cola como un ave rara) (p. 88).

Sánchez pokes fun at the world of tradition as well as the obsession to be modern. We see Arlequín, desperately fighting against the traditional wedding:

> Yo soy del siglo veinte (p. 120).

He continues,

> ¡Qué dirán los académicos, qué dirán los teorizantes, qué dirán los filósofos estéticos . . . ¡qué dirán los filósofos del devenir absoluto! Bergson, Bergson (p. 121).

And then we see Goyito break with the ritual we expect and perform his own ceremony, a la absurd:

> A casarse, a casarse. (Abre un libro y lee.) Tum, turum, tum, tum, bim, bam, bum. Ley del come caña del código moral-civil. Tratado III del libro cuarto. página uno. El matrimonio se realizará con ruido y maraca. El novio entregará una tesis sobre la angustia metafísica de una hormiga loca. La novia disertará sobre las variaciones polifónicas del güiro de Toribio (p. 121).

Sánchez mocks literary conventions and the hypocrisy of pseudo-intellectuals:

> Arlequín. -- Ahora soy el poeta de lo plácido, lo feo . . . Soy toda una escuela estética. Yo soy existencialista.

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Goyito Verde. -- ¿Y eso qué es?

Arlequín. -- Pues . . . diríamos que . . . sí, pretensión de amarguras, barbita descontento, pose y escepticismo de pies a cabeza. Además conocer de nombre a Sartre y Kierkegaard y un cierto gesto que anuncie la náusea cada cinco minutos. . . . (p. 109)

Another sarcastic allusion to the literary world occurs when Sánchez has Goyito Verde refer to Arlequín as "el poeta de la rima escondida, procedente del Conservatorio Poético del Limbo . . . declamador y encanto de cocteles . . . con diez libros inéditos y una novela en preparación . . ." (p. 96).

In Farsa, as was mentioned with regard to La espera, Sánchez depends on the complicity of his audience for its success. Lillian Skerrett de Torres observes that this play demands "una imaginación fértil y un sentido humorístico para poder saborear las situaciones descabelladas y el diálogo picante que la caracterizan."[13] Although she insists on the necessity to see this type of work represented on the stage, for all the potential theatricality of the picaresque farce that it is, we, nevertheless, found that this is a play which reads surprisingly well, causing the reader to laugh long and often with amusement and recognition at the human and societal foibles portrayed.

Farsa was the inaugural production of Iris Martínez's Teatro Yukayete. The play was presented in 1961 on October 21, 22, 28 and 29 at the Ateneo Puertorriqueño. The cast consisted of: Onix Báez as Pirulí Pulchinelo, Marta Romero

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as Colombina; Angelina Morfi, as Quintana; Luis Cosme, as General Cataplum; Alicia Moreda, as Madame; Edwin Ramírez, as Pierrot; Andrés Quinones Vizcarrondo, as Goyito Verde; and Walter Mercado, as Arlequín. The critical acclaim for the presentation by Teatro Yukayeke singles out director Pablo Cabrera for "un espectáculo lleno de movimiento y colorido, utilizando todos los recursos del arte escénico y llevando a la exageración la mímica de los personajes." [14] In the 1961 version, the work was brought to the stage as a "pequeño teatro de vaudeville, con la escenografía en blanco y negro simulando un grabado en cartón llevado a la tercera dimensión."[15] Critic Myrna Deliz observed that the costumes, consistent with the absurdist vein of the comedy, didn't correspond to any definite time period and varied from the style of Madame Pompadour to modern sports clothes. [16] Thus the period costumes, wigs and other garb were felicitiously mixed with Puerto Rican speech, humor and mannerisms. All the theatre reviews highly praised the music, written by Amaury Veray, and the particularly effective touch of having the three musicians, Angel Ramón Rivera on piano, Nilda Pérez on trompet, and Wilfredo Hernández on Violin, right on stage interacting with the characters. As indicated in the text, the characters often left the stage and freely mingled with the audience, providing the lighting technician with an opportunity to do some creative work, which Myrna Deliz indicated was the case regarding Hector Lebrón's

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talented lighting at the Ateneo Puertorriqueño.[17]

The ties between Mirian Colón's Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre and Luis Rafael Sánchez run deep. Sánchez's Farsa was one of the first works presented in 1968 by the then year old Traveling Theatre. It was directed by Puerto Rican poet and director Pedro Santaliz, who is presently the Director of the Teatro Pobre de América, a troupe composed of teenagers who do collective work and have traveled extensively inside and outside the Island. As usual for the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, their ambitious schedule included taking Farsa to playgrounds, schools, parks and housing projects during the entire summer of 1968. The cast was composed of Iraida Polanco as Madame; Jaime Sánchez as Arlequín; Emil Belasco as Goyito Verde; María Soledad Romero as the Aunt; Ramón Pabón as General Cataplum and in supporting roles, Lucy Vega, Tony Salim, Héctor Mercado, Miriam Colón, Laura Figueroa and Diógenes Grossal.[18]

Arriví notes that along with Sánchez's Farsa, the following works reinforce the appearance on the Puerto Rican scene of the "personaje de serrín y trapo": Retablo y guiñol de Juan Canelo by Gerard Paul Marín; Hilos, by Anagilda Garrastegui, Absurdos en soledad, by Myrna Casas and Club de Solteros and Coctel de Don Nadie, both by Arriví. His conclusion, upon observing the growing popularity of works of that type, is that there is no question that

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behind the façade of puppets, guignol is the "perturbadora problemática borinquense". Arriví sees this genre as an extension of the "obra realista de los treinta, y la poética realista de los cuarenta, esta obra de la imagen activa --puesto que los muñecos metaforizan totalmente una realidad dada-- nos plantea por detrás de sus vivos colores y su acción caricaturesca el terrible dilema de ser o no ser que tan profundamente afecta a la dramaturgia de la conflictiva nación puertorriqueña.[19] Sánchez addressed these grave problems through his use of humor within the commedia dell'arte genre. As Angelina Morfi concludes:

> El lleno que tuvo La farsa del amor comprado . . . y el aclamo que se continuara demuestra que su autor pulsó los resortes humorísticos adecuados y consiguió dentro del espíritu festivo una positiva crítica social, literaria . . . sin opacar la risa. Una dosis de autocrítica con su carga de ironía revierte, hábilmente al públic crítico. 20

Demonstrating affinity with another writer of his generation, we observed similarities between Farsa and Myrna Casas' El Impromtu de San Juan,[21] written in 1966 and presented in the Sixteenth Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño, in the creation of a play within a play, in the use of humorous language, of Brechtian techniques, including direct address to the audience, and in the use of an earlier dramatic form as its model, in this case, Moliere's L'Impromtu de Versailles.

Sánchez's imaginative use of the commedia dell'arte is consistent with his creative approach to theatre in general.

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As Bravo Elizondo observes, "La constante obvia es el uso consciente de la imaginación poética que elimina las limitaciones formales en la concepción teatral."[22] We also discern a connection with Sánchez's use of the commedia dell'arte in the following provocative statement by drama critic Richard Eder, "The highest theatrical experience does not consist of falling completely under the illusion we are offered, but of being aware of the illusion as we fall under it."[23] This is so in Farsa, where the concept of traditional commedia dell'arte characters addressing Puerto Rican realities works as both counterpoint and complement which intensifies the theatrical impact.

The ability to create autonomous characters, fully developed and capable of independent action, is a strength of our author. It is true in this play--note Angelina Morfi's observation, "La comedia del arte se enriquece con otros gestos espontáneos con la autonomía que estos personajes demuestran sobre el autor"[24]--and it is true, too, in his later plays in the development of the characters Antígona, Píramo, Tisbe, Angela and Maggie.

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Notes

Farsa del Amor Compradito

[1] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Farsa del amor compradito in Teatro (San Juan: Ediciones Lugar, 1959). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Jim Collins, "True Harlequinade is a Delight," The San Juan Star, Sunday, April 23, 1972, p. 45.

[3] Luis Hernández Aquino, "Teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, Jan. 28, 1961, without pagination.

[4] Arriví, Conciencia puertorriqueña del teatro contemporáneo (1938-1956) (San Juan: ICP), p. 14.

[5] María V. Morales, "La actividad teatral en Puerto Rico," HPR 10, V (1962), p. 99.

[6] Morales, pp. 98-99.

[7] L. Hernández Aquino, "Teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," without pagination.

[8] José Gallego Díaz, "Dos obras de teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, Nov. 19, 1960, without pagination.

[9] Gallego Díaz, "Dos obras de Luis Rafael Sánchez," without pagination.

[10] Lillian Skerrett de Torres, "Presentan 'Farsa del Amor Compradito'" El Mundo, Oct. 10, 1961, Suplemento, p. 10.

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[11] Note the development of the anti-bourgeois theme in the following works: Ionesco's The Bald Soprano; Jorge Díaz's El lugar donde mueren los mamíferos; Egon Wolff's Los invasores; Luisa Josefina Hernández's Los frutos caídos.

[12] Hernández Aquino, "Teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," without pagination.

[13] Skerrett de Torres, p. 10.

[14] Skerrett de Torres, p. 10

[15] Skerrett de Torres, p. 10.

[16] Myrna Deliz, "Montan Hoy de Nuevo la Obra 'Farsa del Amor Compradito,'" El Mundo, Oct. 28, 1961, without pagination.

[17] M. Deliz, "Farsa," without pagination.

[18] Specific information concerning PRTT performances was obtained from the personal archives of Miriam Colón, founder of PRTT. In a conversation with Ms. Colón, Summer, 1978, I learned that a doctoral dissertation on the origin, history and significance of the PRTT had just been completed by Puerto Rican actress Rosa Luisa Márquez, at the University of Michigan.

[19] Arriví, "Décimo Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño," RICP (1968), pp. 8-9.

[20] Morfi, pp. 41-42.

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[21] Myrna Casas, La trampa y El Impromtu de San Juan, (San Juan: Colección Uprex, Editorial Universitaria, UPR, 1974).

[22] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 153.

[23] Richard Eder, "In This Theatre the Stage Becomes An Actor," The New York Times, July 21, 1977, C, p. 19.

[24] Morfi. p. 41.

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Sol 13, Interior

In most criticism written about La hiel and Los ángeles,[1] both works are treated separately. However, they are in fact part of a "Suite de obras en un acto y dos actos respectivamente" as Sánchez indicates in his title, and they do form an organic hole, providing complementary facets of a total picture of despair and lost dreams in a San Juan tenement. Let us examine those common elements which allow us to see both plays as part of a cycle. First, they share a common setting, which includes certain characters such as the landlady Petra. The human condition is reflected in the physical setting of both plays. In La hiel, the couple, Píramo and Tisbe, are as old and broken down as the furniture surrounding them, as the apartment building they live in, as their tarnished hopes and aspirations. Similarly in Los ángeles, Angela's interior state of mind and her physical setting are one; there is a richness of experience, of loving and suffering in the disorder that is her life. Sánchez artistically resolves the technical aspect of rendering the chaos in Angela's life through the use of two particular stylistic devices: the flashback and juxtaposition of time.

The tone of helplessness, depression, death and insanity that pervades the atmosphere is skillfully tempered with

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unexpected playfulness on the part of the characters, revealing Sánchez's talent for portraying the complex relationship between humor and pain. He has particularized his vision of life in a poor tenement in Old San Juan by narrowing in on one building, Sol 13, Interior; on one couple, Píramo and Tisbe; and one aging prostitute Angela. Although we do not see them interact directly, we sense the intimacy of the ambiance in Sol 13: everyone knows everyone else's business; who has died; who owes money; who has inherited something; who has moved; who has won the lottery; who who has lost. Thus there is a connectedness that comes from living in the same building, and even more so in a warm climate where windows are always open and where people informally visit each other without a more compelling motive than the desire to chat. Sánchez's lyrical language transforms these esentially naturalistic ingredients into what Arriví accurately calls "fuentes de poesía trágica."[2]

A major difference between the two works is their structure; Los ángeles is more complex in nature than La hiel, using a sophisticated manipulation of time and flashbacks to Angela's childhood and recent past. Los ángeles is a dramatic monologue while La hiel employs Aristotelian structure, adhering to the traditional unities so that the entire action takes place in the apartment with no time lapse between scenes. In discussing Sol 13, Interior the theme of time is apparent. Although not directly explored, it is implicit in the development of both dramas:

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> En ambas obras un personaje invisible impera sobre los visibles, el tiempo, que a manera de destino móvil se distiende y contrae con los agonistas hasta constreñirlos finalmente al gran silencio allende el alma. 3

The theme of protest, against an unresponsive social system, against the North American monolith, is revealed in subtle ways in both plays. Different from the more overt conclusions of Marqués, in La Carreta or La muerte no entrará en palacio, for example, Sánchez allows the tone of protest to develop through the presentation of the characters themselves. Sánchez places their human conditions above the idea of protest; he presents their circumstances with love, as well as with indignation. Thus we experience Píramo and Tisbe's plight as old people and as poor people, who are ignored by society at large and left to their own devices to survive, in this case though their dream of winning at the numbers game (la bolita). Similarly, in Los ángeles, Angela describes the American sailors "los ángeles," who were ever present in San Juan, looking for prostitutes, looking for her. As she grows older and they stop seeking her out, "se han fatigado," and we experience her plight in its human dimensions rather than as a political tract. Morfi suggests, Angela herself is "un ángel fatigado pero su ego no le permite admitirlo."[4] The emotional impact on the audience of her flight into madness is intensified by the structure of the play itself, a searing dramatic monologue.

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Dramatist David Rudkin asserts that, "When the cultural order is breaking down and the myths are not standing up to the reality of experience, people seem to need to ritualize their doubt and anxiety in a public way."[5] The following observation by M. T. Babín confirms Rudkin's statement and further adds that the 50s and 60s mark the appearance of the Puerto Rican theatre scene of particular types of characters, an abundance of:

> personajes que responden a una expresión seria de la crisis de nuestro tiempo: homosexuales, prostitutas, monjas, hombres, niños y mujeres desfigurados, neuróticos y suicidas, han llegado a acaparar el reparto que antes le pertenecía a personajes tradicionales. La sociedad ha dejado de interesar como tal, y el interés se ha trasladado a la intimidad, buscando la cristalización en un teatro de conciencia que tal vez llegue a producir mejores frutos que los logrados hasta la fecha. 6

Sánchez's contribution to this direction in the theatre lies in the two plays, Los ángeles and ...O casi el alma, where his particular talent for drawing characters is manifested in the ability "to isolate those radiant, revelatory spaces"[7] where the lives of his characters connect. Similarly one must note the autonomy of Píramo, Tisbe and Angela as characters:

> Son personajes, porque son personas. En ellos reconocemos algo de lo que somos. En ellos late una aguda conciencia de nuestras dificultades y enigmas. Son alertas a nuestro espíritu para que nos encaremos con nuestras realidades, preguntándonos sobre nuestro ser y nuestro destino. Al inclinarse sobre los espejos trizados de sus vidas, entrevemos los perfiles de un Puerto Rico que todos queremos salvar. 8

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When discussing La hiel, one must mention the recurrent theme of el azar or luck, and its relationship to the function of the absurd within reality. The latter preoccupation thematically links Sánchez to the theatre of the absurd; his linguistic innovations link him to the contemporary theatre movement; while his structural preferences follow the more traditional pattern of the well-constructed work. In Los ángeles, however, we are immersed in the torrent of words and feelings, the stream of consciousness of Angela Santoni Vincent, where multiple versions of reality are chaotically and creatively fused. As Arriví warns, "O nos dejamos arrastrar por la marea emocional, con sus embates y remolinos, ora lúcida, ora arrebatada, o no podremos identificarnos con el drama."[9] The suite, Sol 13, Interior, however, is not simply a presentation of one couple or one prostitute's situation, but rather a dramatic metaphor for an entire society's insensitivity toward the nuances of feelings and need.

Arriví sees in Sol 13, Interior a recreation of the ancient conflict posed by Cervantes between reality and illusion, an important theme in Sánchez's work, which he also treats in ...O casi el alma and La espera. We observe this dream/reality theme in Tisbe's words:

> Mírame, Píramo. Estoy soñando pero bien despierta. Soy feliz, pero despierta, Soy ahora, otra vez, como una niña, despierta, despierta. Es como nacer otra vez, sin miedo a la vida. Porque la vida tiene sen-

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> tido ahora. Sin hambre, sin dolor,
> dejando atrás Sol 13, atrás, atrás, donde
> el tiempo es tan sólo una imagen borrosa,
> un recuerdo (p. 596).

In La hiel, the old couple, tortured by poverty, is still looking for a way out of their plight in the mystery of la bolita and in the hope that some dead relative will magically soplar, or communicate, the winning number to them; in Los ángeles we witness the interplay between Angela's real life and her imagined recreation of it. Arriví aptly suggests that both works could easily be antitled, Réquiem para dos ilusiones.

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La hiel nuestra de cada día

We shall begin our examination of Sol 13, Interior with a closer look at La hiel nuestra de cada día. In it Sánchez depicts the false hopes of the old couple, which ultimately lead to their own disillusionment. Far from criticizing them, he sensitively weaves the tale of their life. His technique in La hiel is to take a familiar situation and draw out the poetry from it; remove it from its mundaneness and emphasize its humanness and pathos. As Suárez Radillo wrote:

> 'La hiel de cada día', hermosa pieza que mezcla elementos que sintetiza el temperamento y el acervo cultural de los personajes, entre los cuales ocupan primer plano el íntimo conflicto de la realidad y la ilusión, que tan fuertes acentos cobra en la vida del hombre de las Antillas, y la decisiva influencia del azar, al que se confía a veces, como en el caso de los protagonistas, con desoladora justificación, la solución de los problemas vitales. El azar, desde luego, no como un hecho aislado en sí, sino mezclado a sus creencias religiosas en las que juguetea un humor delicioso que no excluye la más auténtica veneración. 10

"Mundo y cementerio de Píramo y Tisbe" (p. 571), these initial words in the stage setting and description of the subsequent Act introduce us to the poetic tone of our author: "world and cemetery", an all-encompassing verbal definition of their life space; vital circle, "world," and final resting place, "cemetery"; two apparent opposites reconciled in one poetic metaphor; the whole of their existence summarized in this way.

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Comedy, as a significant element in Sánchez's plays is most apparent in La hiel and Farsa del amor. Director and professor Rafael Acevedo Barrios distinguishes the traditional recourse, comedy relief, from Sánchez's use of humor which permeates the entire play "a través de lo grotesco resultante de lo cotidiano."[11] He provides the following example, "oye pan, dame media de agua." We agree with his contention that Sánchez uses humor as a means to reveal the distortions of the reality that the author wants the spectator or reader to observe, and that even the most dramatic scenes begin or end with humor, apparent in the language of the characters. Doña Ugolina is the embodiment of the shrewd businesswoman who is defined by her sharp tongued humor. She repeatedly responds to Tisbe or Píramo's incorrectly calling her by the name, doña Ugo, with the following words:

> Ni doña Ugo, ni doña Lina. Doña Ugolina. Doña de la d a la a. De las pocas doñas que quedan en Sol 13 (p. 613).

We found an interesting similarity between doña Ugolina's retorts and those of Mme. Quintina in Farsa del amor compradito:

> No soy mademoiselle Cinq, sino Quintina a secas. Desde que mi marido, el corredor en bienes raíces, me hizo su esposa, dejé de ser mademoiselle. De allá para acá ha llovido mucho. (Farsa, p. 65.)

Sánchez recreates a version of the spoken language of his characters, but endows them with the poetic range of written language. In transcribing their spoken parlance he

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generally uses the accepted orthography, that is, he preserves the integrity of the written language. The exception is the transcription of past participles like "soplao" for "soplado" (p. 572) or "condenao" for "condenado" (p. 573) or "sacao" and "fallao" (p. 573), or words containing the generally elided intervocalic "d" sounds, as in "deo" for "dado." An example is doña Ugolina's retort, "Están salaos!" (p. 613).

Metaphoric language embellishes the speech of even the most primitive characters. The poetic rein he allows his characters is seen in the following instance where Tisbe is trying to awaken the sleeping Píramo:

> Píramo, levántate. Ya el sol está
> por los adoquines (p. 573).

Note the following example with its rhythmic and ritual-like tone which is actually a hymn to the end of poverty. It occurs after Tisbe sees a dog in the patio and is convinced that their lucky number begins with a four, or ends with four, or has a four in the middle:

> TISBE
> Entonces, la salvación, la verdad, el fin de la pobreza. Son los espíritus, Píramo, los espíritus que nos quieren ayudar. (Desde este momento hasta la primera salida de Tisbe la escena cobra la precisión de un mecanismo matemático.) Hay que jugarlo corriendo.
>
> PIRAMO
> ¿Con cuánto?
>
> TISBE
> Con una peseta.

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PIRAMO

Sí, sí. Una peseta es un veinticinco. Y un veinticinco es cinco veces cinco. Y un venticinco es dos veces diez y un cinco. Y un venticinco es tres veces un ocho y un uno. Y un veinticinco es tres veces un siete y un cuatro. Y un veinticinco es cuatro veces un cinco más cinco.

TISBE

A cuatro pesos cada perrita. Veinticinco perritas a cuatro pesos perrita son . . . son . . . son . . . (Asustada, incrédula.) ¡cien pesos!

PIRAMO

¡Tisbetita! Una peseta es muy poco. Mejor un medio peso. Un medio peso es cincuenta perritas y cincuenta perritas a cuatro pesos perrita son . . . son. . . son . . . ¡doscientos pesos!

TISBE

Pues sí con medio peso. (Tisbe corre hasta el fondo.)

PIRAMO

(Casi histérico.) Tisbe, juega de una vez los seis reales pa ver si salimos de pobres y nos largamos de este condenao trece.

TISBE

(Radiante, feliz.) Sí, sí, sí, lo que tú quieras.

Seis reales son setenta y cinco perritas y setenta y cinco perritas a cuatro pesos perrita son trescientos pesos.

(Tisbe corre hasta el fondo. Cuando va a salir se detiene. Vuelve el rostro desencajado.)

Píramo, el dinero.

PIRAMO

Sí, sí, sí. Para la casita, para Petra, para don Flor.

TISBE

Píramo, el dinero.

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PIRAMO
Sí, sí. Para las deudas y para salir de pobres (pp. 591-593).

He uses words like "histérico" (p. 592) to describe the increasing frenzy of this couple who spends all their life energy dreaming about how they will be delivered from their poverty. In corroboration of our observation, J. B. Phillips asserts:

> A notable quality of the plays of Luis Rafael Sánchez is the rhythmic use of language. It frequently takes an unraveling or litany form. Píramo or Tisbe makes a long statement of complaints. The other's response will take each item of the complaint and elicit a conciliatory reply. . . There are many very short statements, often not sentences, and usually expressed in series. 12

Discussing the technical aspects of the play, we note that its tempo is rapid and we are immediately involved in the action, that is, the conflicts between Píramo and Tisbe's actual situation and their desires; between the memories of their youth, and the stark reality of their old age. We are presented with their decrepit physical condition and their correspondingly dismal socio-economic status. Acevedo insists that "el lenguaje es aquí el vehículo de toda una filosofía de vida."[13] In fact, part of that philosophy is based on an absurdist vision of life as can be seen in the following interchange, initiated in response to Tisbe's question, "What are we living for?"

PIRAMO
Para morir. Te lo he dicho muchas veces. Se vive para morir. Se trabaja para morir. Se nace para morir.

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TISBE
De una vez debíamos nacer muertos.

(Píramo asiente y sonríe. Tisbe sonríe también. Píramo cambia su sonrisa por una risa fuerte. Tisbe ríe a su manera pitando el pecho. La risa es desesperada.)

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Si naciéramos muertos no tendríamos que pensar en la vida.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Porque la vida sería entonces la muerte.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Y en la muerte no habría muerte.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Claro, claro. Ni habría miércoles, ni lunes.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni habría tercera guerra.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni segunda, ni primera.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni habrían marinos paseándose por San Juan.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni habrían cobradores.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni vendedores.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni revendones.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni administradores.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni panaderos.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni alcaldes.

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TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni alcaldesas.

(La voz de doña Ugolina sube ahora para incorporarse a la histeria.)

DOÑA UGOLINA
Voy haciendo el dos en el baño.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni el número dos, ni el número tres.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni el número cuatro, ni el número cinco.

DOÑA UGOLINA
Que estoy con el estómago vuelto al revés.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni estómagos, ni hígados.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni el derecho, ni el revés.

DOÑA UGOLINA
Desde anoche sin probar chorro.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni noches, ni días.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni chorros, ni tazas llenas.

(Píramo y Tisbe ríen ahora más fuerte a punto de lágrimas.)

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Colón no tendrá el dedo arriba.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni habrán borrachos.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni atómicos.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni marihuanos.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni tecatos.

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TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni mapriolas.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni putas viejas.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni jóvenes.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni habrá un viejito que se mea en la cama.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni habrá una vieja regañona.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni habrá un viejito con los riñones enfermos.

TISBE
(Riendo.) Ni habrá una viejita que se cansa de todo.

PIRAMO
(Riendo.) Ni habrá un viejito que abusa de su Tisbetita (pp. 579-582).

Two important staging elements for Sánchez are lights and music. In La hiel he indicates in his first set of stage directions that, "La luz y la música de arpa aumentan a la vez" (p. 571). Subsequently we recieve our first impression of Tisbe. A certain lightness, that we later identify with hopefulness, is apparent in her figure:

> Por la primera puerta izquierda aparece Tisbe con sus sesenta y tantos, liviana como pluma, ágil, saltona de ojos, arrugada de pies a cabeza, firme en el gesto a punto de parecer dura. Su rechonchez no afea del todo su persona y algún indiscreto podría descubrir en ella un aire de niña vieja o más a tono con sus añitos, de vieja niña (p. 571).

Also from the first set of stage directions, we are

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introduced to an element of central importance in the play, the belief in the spirits:

> Preside la puerta al fondo un mendrugo de pan y un vaso de agua, ofrendas permanentes al santo espíritu de las aguas (p. 571).

Tisbe then introduces an image el pájaro malo, that she will refer to often in the course of the play. She makes her first entrance on the stage coughling weakly and then more strongly.

> ¡Gases, gases, gases! ¡Parece que me ha soplao el pájaro malo! (p. 572).

In this context, as well as later on el pájaro malo represents all the unnamable evil spirits who plague Píramo and Tisbe's life. Tisbe reveals the familiar conversational tone she uses for the "spirits" in the following exchange:

> Condenao espíritu de las aguas. Cuidao que te gusta darte el palo. Eres fiestero y borrachón. Nunca conocí un espíritu tan cuquero. ¡Cómo tragas la caña! (p. 573).

And further:

> No cumples. No tienes palabra. No me has sacao de pobre. ¡Hasta hambre! Yo nunca te he fallao, pero tú no me has cumplío (p. 573).

In a fit of frustration, as the noise of the tenement, the rats "bailando por las vigas" (p. 513), and the vulgarities of doña Petra, the landlady, who spent "toa la noche tirando chifletas" (p. 573), a strange glow comes over her face as she passionately invokes the spirits:

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> ¡Santo Espíritu de las aguas, llévate la salazón! Sácame de esta casa asquerosa, podrida de malas palabras, y llévame hasta una casita con patio y jardín. Por esas urbanizaciones que se mudó Chela, por Puerto Nuevo, por allá, por un sitio que no haya este polvo colorao. Una casita con jardín. Espigas de azucena, margaritas, duendes silvestres y lirios del valle creciendo hacia arriba, bien alto, alto, como si fuesen chiringas. ¡Dame la combinación Santo Espíritu de las aguas! O mete la mano en el candungo y saca el bolo mío. Yo te doy lo que tú quieras. ¡Ron para que te arrastres! ¡Tabaco para que te revuelques! ¡Jembras que le zumban la manigueta (en voz baja, casi secreto) jembras que enseñan hasta el ombligo! (p. 574).

In this passage Tisbe reveals her dream, to leave the sordidness of the house she has lived in for fifty years, and to move, as did her friend Chela, to a new urbanización, or housing development. Another motif, that will be developed by Píramo, is introduced here, the theme of the imminence of a Third World War. She hopes to win the lottery with the help of the Spirit who will provide her with the winning number:

> ¡Antes que sea demasiado tarde!
> ¡Antes que estalle la tercera guerra! (p. 574).

Theatre, perhaps for its immediate connection with reality, is the least escapist of the genres. Thus in La hiel, we see the author confront multiple social issues such as: old age, poverty, senility, greed, indifference of the state towards its citizens, and a generally unresponsive social system. As Woodyard indicates, one of the most pre-

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valent themes found in the plays of the new dramatists is the examination of the exploitive social system in Latin America:

> Social conditions are equally susceptible to a leftist treatment, in which the inequities of the system and the exploitation of the lower classes by a comfortable bourgeoisie are denounced. 14

Thus Sanchez, with La hiel, is in the mainstream of those new Latin American dramatists who are artistically exploring the social and political conditions of their time.

The very fact that Píramo and Tisbe believe that their deliverance will come from the lottery, from the saints and spirits, and that their energy is accordingly directed emphasizes to the reader-audience the futility of their looking toward the half measures of the government for salvation. They are not even meagerly provided for by welfare and have ceased to hope for a solution from that sector as is apparent in Tisbe's comment,

> Que no podemos seguir aumentando la cuenta. Usted no tiene con qué pagar. Bienestar Público no le da la ayuda (p. 588).

Josemilio González states, after further examination of the political implications of the play:

> Para resumir, Sol 13, Interior, polemiza dramáticamente en torno a ciertos problemas que acongojan al hombre contemporáneo y, específicamente, al de Puerto Rico. Uno de sus resortes es la oposición entre dos imágenes del mundo y de la vida, lo que se ha llamado conflicto de dos culturas, la mecanizada e industrial moderna, carente del sentimiento de lo real, y la rica cultura existencial puertorriqueña. 15

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Sánchez illustrates the value system of Píramo and Tisbe by means of contrasting symbols, such as the sofa and the housing development; the sofa represents a sentimental tie to the past, while the dream of moving to Puerto Nuevo is a leap into the future. However, one can hardly prognosticate that this move might significantly affect their social status given the degree to which our protagonists are tightly locked into their social class and milieu. The symbol of the sofa is further used to establish the contrast between their their values and those of doña Ugo, as we witness the transformation of their sentimental attachment to the sofa into doña Ugo's materialistic gain. In his comments concerning the class conflict in the play, Acevedo makes the following observations about doña Ugolina's role, "Doña Ugolina se convierte entonces no sólo en el personaje que anuncia la tragedia que el ojo del espectador no puede soportar, sino además en el símbolo de una clase opresora."[16]

Sánchez has described one of the essential difficulties in writing drama as that of capturing the totality of a character in a few lines of dialogue. In a personal interview with this writer he said:

> La técnica de exponer para que se represente es excepcionalmente difícil porque no es escribir de manera que aquello se quede con expresión de mi persona . . . sino que es hacer un diálogo y cada línea tiene que responder a una personalidad distinta. . . . Línea tras línea es el trabajo exhaustivo de ver si esa línea define y recoge la manera de ser de la persona. . . .

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> En el teatro hay algo realmente terrible, y es que el dramaturgo tiene que recordar todo el tiempo que los espectadores sólo tienen una ocasión para oir aquello. 17

In the development of the relationship between Píramo and Tisbe, the concept of dramatic growth is successfully elaborated. Although they appear to be unreconciliable opposites in personality and temperament, in fact, they do complement each other. Note for example certain weak and strong parallels: Píramo has a bad kidney; is indecisive and sleeps a great deal, while Tisbe is healthy, determined and always awake. Tisbe is the source of physical and spiritual strength who gives impetus to the action of the drama; it is she who has the "combination" which hopefully will allow them to win the lottery. Joan Rea Green considers Píramo "a sad manifestation of the ironic hero, inadequate and victimized by an unyielding society."[18] Notwithstanding their differences, the depth of their relationship is palpable. Their emotional intimacy is a quality that is directly revealed through their dramatic interaction, as in the following example:

> TISBE
> Tú y yo somos tú y yo. Píramo y Tisbe. Con las manos cogidas. Tú y yo. El mundo es de la demás gente. Ese no es nuestro mundo. Nuestro mundo es la fe, nuestro mundo es el pecho del otro. Lo demás no importa. Mi mundo eres tú, mi gente eres tú, mi muerte eres tú. Yo soy yo en tí, para ti, por ti, ahora, este minuto perdido y siempre, la hora eterna (p. 608).

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As Ross Wetzsteon notes:

> Of all the areas on stage, the hardest for a playwright to locate, and the most important to reveal, is that dangerous, incandescent space where two lives touch. No matter how evocative a playwright's language, skillful his structure, perceptive his theme, everything must coalesce in moments of revelatory interaction between his characters. For while characterization in the theatre, more than in any other art form, may begin with analysis of individual personalities, it must end in resonances between them. 19

The relative physical distance of one character from another is reflective of their psychological and emotional relationship. For example Píramo and Tisbe do touch each other, and physically approach each other, albeit, tentatively at times. In their unspoiled, unsophisticated way, they explore the essence of human relationships, marriage, love and affection. She urges him, "haz una tontería" (p. 610). After much coaxing and self-consciousness on his part, Tisbe approaches Píramo and kisses him on the mouth.

> PIRAMO
> Me da verguenza.
>
> TISBE
> A mí también.
>
> PIRAMO
> No sé. Ya tú eres como otra cosa.
> Mi mujer, mi madre, mi hija . . .
> no sé. . . otra cosa . . .
>
> TISBE
> Tú también. Mi marido, mi padre,
> mi hijo. Otra cosa, pero que es
> muchas juntas (p. 611).

It is clear that real closeness does exist for them in spite of poverty and loneliness, and in the face of imminent death.

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This coincides with a concept defined by Arriví as the "teatralización de la esencia." In discussing the works presented in the Cuarto Festival, Arriví considers Sol 13, Interior, María Soledad, and El milagro as representative of this category "por cuanto se apoyan en la interioridad del drama anímico y conforman lo exterior a su compulsión. . . ."[20] The tenderness they have for each other is manifested in their conversations as well as in their arguments. The following statement by Píramo reflects his feelings of desolation regarding their present life:

> Aquí estamos al final de nuestras vidas,
> sin nada, como al principio. Sin saber
> qué hacer, como al principio (p. 616).

In another statement this futility is revealed in the structure of the sentence. The circular nature of the passage of time with its attendant frustration, is expressed by the repetition of the verb girar:

> Girar, girar, girar, girar más fuerte
> aún y de pronto, sin siquiera darnos
> cuenta, dos viejos que miran el inte-
> rior de Sol 13 porque allí se pudrieron
> sus sueños, allí se pasmaron sus daños (p. 616).

Sánchez isolates his protagonists from emotional connections with others around them. Thus he chanels the tension that they experience and allows it to emerge in the interactions with each other. Aside from one scene with doña Ugo in La hiel, and Angela's screaming at the unseen Petra, or at the unknown person who is knocking at her door in Los ángeles, there is no affective communication between the protagonists and the outside world, which reinforces the

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central theme of isolation that is common to both works. There is a tragic resonance at the conclusion of La hiel in the final interchange between Píramo and Tisbe:

TISBE
Píramo de mi locura . . . ¿qué es esto?

PIRAMO
Nada, nada. Desde allá sacaré mi ojito y mi mano bajará al candungo. Y (tratando de reir) sacaré tu bolo. No fallaré. Te quiero mucho para fallarte. Mucho.

TISBE
Qué hora horrible este momento. Las vigas cayendo sobre tu recuerdo. ¡Sola! No podré. Sola. (Tisbe corre y se abraza a las rodillas de Píramo.) ¡Sola! ¡Sola! ¡Sola! Me quedaré sola.

PIRAMO
No . . . nunca . . . nunca. Quedaré viviendo en ti. (Le pasa la mano por los cabellos. Es una caricia torpe.) En ti por siempre como un cuerpo . . . uno . . . ¡Somos uno en cualquier suma! Uno . . . uno (pp. 619-620).

These final lines, full of the richness of feeling they share, convey "the fusion of grief and joy mandatory in the final moment of true tragedy."[21] Here we experience death as another step in the life cycle; moreover as a regenerative process, since according to Píramo, his death will bring enhanced life to Tisbe. The motivation for his death is linked to his love for Tisbe, thus the image of death as final yields to a richer conception, more linked with life giving imagery.[22]

The central image of the work is contained in the title. However, is the central image, in fact, la hiel, the bitter-

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ness, the daily dose of recriminations and regrets that Píramo and Tisbe suffer, or is it more complex than that? Rafael Acevedo poses a variant of this question, "¿Es su lucha y angustia metafísica o materialista?"--he concludes it is both--"Píramo y Tisbe son víctimas de fuerzas superiores a ellos. No los Dioses ni el fatum sino una superestructura social. Pero ellos no lo saben. Gracias al autor, nosotros sí lo sabemos."[23] This writer contends that through a tightly woven series of intimate interactions, ranging from game playing,[24] to quiet, yet desperate discussions seeking solutions to their dire economic situation, a balance is struck between outward despair and inward faith and tranquility; between a justifiable bitterness towards life and a warm, essentially joyous regard for each other.

As we examine the plays seen by this writer, we are reminded of María Teresa Babín's admonition concerning drama critics and criticism:

> El estudio detenido y el análisis valorativo del teatro puertorriqueño como cosa viva hay que hacerlo desde el punto de vista del espectador-lector, y los que aspiren a ser considerados críticos dramáticos en la época contemporánea, además de leer y estudiar las obras que se han escrito desde el 1940 hasta ahora, deberían asistir a los teatros y familiarizarse con el mundo de la dramaturgía en acción. 25

This writer has had the opportunity to view two different performances of each of the two plays that make up the components of Sol 13, Interior, an experience that affords

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the unique possiblity to compare and contrast varying creative approaches to the enactment of the same text.

La hiel was first presented as part of the Cuarto Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño on May 11, 1961 with Laura Martell as Tisbe, Roberto Rivera Negrón as Píramo, and Eva Alers as doña Ugolina. The direction for both pieces in Sol 13, Interior consisted of Victoria Espinosa, with Rafael Acevedo and Luis Rafael Sánchez himself, serving as Assistant Directors. The set design and illumination was done by Luis A. Maisonet, with the technical aspects of the lighting done by Jane Worley and the technical aspects of the staging done by José Jolguera.[26] In 1963, La hiel was chosen as the Puerto Rican entry in the "Ciclo de Teatro Hispanoamericano" at the Institute de Cultura Hispánica in Madrid, where it was premiered on March 28, followed by a colloquium directed by Antonio Buero Vallejo.[27]

Píramo and Tisbe's dignity and authenticity, integrity and sense of humor, are apparent throughout the play, and are manifested, for example, by the offense they take at the vulgarities around them. As José Emilio González observes:

> En él /Píramo/ se conservan --toscos, pero palpitantes-- los jugos más vivos y puros de la nacionalidad. En Píramo y Tisbe el puertorriqueño ofrece una figura prometedora. Tienen algo de lo virgen todavía, de madera no labrada. Son ellos mismos tal como son. En su sencillez adivinamos una dimensión vertical. 28

It is this dimension of authenticity that is portrayed in both stage versions, that this writer saw. In both versions

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there is a union of the production with the script. There is an integrity of tone, a fusion of the theatre's twin sources--written words and actual performance.

La hiel was presented at the Henry Street Settlment's New Federal Theatre in 1973, as part of the Suite including the monologue, in English, The Angels are Exhausted. It was directed by Ben Gutiérrez-Soto who had a special interest in Sol 13, Interior since 1963 when he translated, designed and directed the American premiere of both works at the Pasadena Playhouse. It is noteworthy that Los ángeles has also been translated into the French by Alexandre des Echeroles under the title, Les Petits Anges se sont Lassés. Gutiérrez also did the costume design for both plays at the Henry Street Settlement. This version contained sensitive and effective performances by the three well-known principals: Irene de Bari, who has appeared both in the United States and in Europe, including Off-Broadway performances in Yerma, Uncle Vanya, The Balcony, and Camino Real at the Spoleto Festival, as well as the role of Irene in the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre's production of Sánchez's The Passion of Antígona Pérez; Ernesto González, seasoned Broadway actor who has worked under Elia Kazan's direction in Camino Real and in numerous otherBroadway productions, among them The Saint of Bleeker Street, Oh Dad, Poor Dad and and Off-Broadway shows including Life is a Dream, with an active film career, attested to by his appearances in Frank

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and Eleanor Perry's Last Summer, Shirley MacClaine's The Possession of Joel Delaney and Robert Niro's Bang the Drum Slowly; veteran character actress Iraida Polanco, who has been seen in La casa de Bernarda Alba, The Windows, El Casorio, La Jíbara, Club de Solteros and in the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre productions of Winterset, La Farsa del amor compradito, Antígona Pérez, El Maleficio de la Mariposa and "A Dramatized Anthology of Puerto Rican Short Stories."[29]

There was a clear identification by the public with the language, humor and mannerisms of Tisbe and Píramo. In particular, doña Ugolina received much affectionate laughter from the audience. It is an excellent role for an actress, with rich possibilities for creative interpretation. Doña Ugo, as played by Iraida Polanco, was a rough, hard-nosed woman whose constant wisecracking accompanied her will to get what she wanted, often at the expense of other people's happiness. So it is in this play as she wins the hapless couple's coveted sofa and so it is, also, for another Sánchez's character, La Señora in O casi el alma, who hypocritically assuages her conscience by doing charity work, but really never getting involved. C. Richard Mill's setting strongly suggest island-type decor: with an altar for the Saints in an alcove; the symbolically significant window; the all important sofa; and the bedroom, raised a step and hidden behind the curtain. All of these elements contribute to the creation of this realistic ambiance.

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Quite different from this realistic approach to the staging is Teatro De Orilla's version performed during the summer of 1976 at Abdón Villamizar's Teatro IATI (Instituto Arte Teatral Internacional), directed by Rafael Acevedo, with set design executed by Carlos Fuentes and lighting by José and Minerva Rivera. In this small, Off-Off Broadway pocket theatre, minimal staging was utilized and objects were suggested, rather than represented. In those instances where staging is minimal, the attention is necessarily focused more on the acting. In this case Rafael Acevedo's sensitive direction was evident in the nuances the actors lent to their roles, revealed in the vulnerability and playfulness of Manuel Morales' Píramo and stage and movie actress, Lupe Garnica's Tisbe, as well as in the sharp folk humor of María Tai's doña Ugo. Their voices were wonderfully expressive: Píramo's, old and shaky; Tisbe's, stronger and vibrant, revealing the eternal hope she maintains that things will change. He is ever dignified, while she is outwardly spirited and brave and willing to teach him to beg on the street in order to obtain the money to bet on this last "sure" number. Their control of the range of theatrical devices is total. Their use of the entire stage space, of dramatic silence, of voice and gesture, all reflects the professionalism of this performance.

Different from a prevalent trend of non-communication in contemporary drama, Sánchez's characters do communicate,

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particularly Píramo and Tisbe. They fulfill the criteria that Woodyard suggests: "Real communication involves a giving of self, a revealing of the soul, a lowering of defenses to the point that another can penetrate to the essence of one's being."[30] Maggie, too, in O casi el alma, through her interchanges with El Hombre arrives at this vulnerable place where real communication can take place. In that instance, however, her openness and faith in others is betrayed by the falseness of those around her.

As Babín asserts, "Puerto Rican literature is only a partial testimony of the existence of a much vaster and deeper creativity."[31] Part of the creativity alluded to by Professor Babín lies in the oral tradition where generation after generation shares stories, legends and essential values, all originating in the areyto, an early manifestation of theatre by the Taíno Indians. Luis Rafael Sánchez attempts to communicate this "vaster and deeper creativity" in his portrayal of an affective relationship between an older married couple in La hiel. Their imaginative solutions to their poverty, their faith in destiny, religion, life, and in each other, constitutes a successful attempt to portray original responses to life situations. His two protagonists --quite different from the legendary lovers--are exasperating, amusing, affectionate and always thoroughly recognizable, corroborated by the enthusiastic response to the play.

Sánchez's vehicle for communicating his vision of Puerto Rican life is literature, specifically here, the drama. Since

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a play, once presented, ceases to be literature and becomes theatre--that ritual communication between audience and actors--from the opening curtain to the final scene, the audience discovers, perhaps rediscovers, an authentic quality about the characters on stage. The gestures and expressions manifested by each character reveal their essential Puerto Ricanness not as a function of costumbrismo, but rather as a vital manifestation of language and culture. What then is this "greater creativity" that we are alluding to? To a great degree it is Sánchez's successful recreation of the language of his protagonists, the richness of their spoken language, replete with refrains, popular sayings, variations and allusions, taking into consideration the gestures, facial expressions, intonation and emphasis provided by the actors. He accomplishes this in the literary tradition of José Luis González, René Marqués, Abelardo Díaz Alfaro, Emilio Belaval, to mention a few of the writers who have revitalized Puerto Rican literature by creatively molding popular language to their art.

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Notes

La hiel nuestra de cada día

[1] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Sol 13, Interior (suite de obras en un acto y dos actos respectivamente): La hiel nuestra de cada día; Los ángeles se han fatigado in Teatro Puertorriqueño. Cuarto Festival (San Juan: ICP, 1962). All subsequent references are to this edition. Note similarities in situation and characters between La hiel and Sánchez's short story, "La parentela."

[2] Arriví, Introduction to Cuarto Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño (San Juan: ICP, 1962), p. 15.

[3] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 78.

[4] Morfi, p. 43.

[5] Benedict Nightingale, "Why do playwrights thrive in Britain?," The New York Times, Sunday, July 10, 1977, D., p. 8.

[6] María Teresa Babín, "Veinte años del teatro puertorriqueño," p. 19.

[7] Ross Wetzsteon, "Susan Miller Tracks the Cannibals of Emotion," Village Voice, Sept. 5, 1977, p. 71.

[8] José Emilio González quoted by Arriví in Areyto Mayor, p. 78.

[10] Suárez Radillo, "Tema y problema," p. 99.

[11] Rafael Acevedo Barrios, "Destino y estructura social, en 'La hiel nuestra de cada día,'" Claridad En Rojo, May 13-19, 1977, p. 11.

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[12] J. B. Phillips, p. 178.

[13] Acevedo Barrios, "Destino y estructura social", p. 11.

[14] Woodyard, The Modern Stage, p. XVI.

[15] Arriví, Cuarto Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño, p. 15.

[16] Acevedo Barrios, "Notas al Programa de 'La hiel nuestra,'" Teatro IATI, Summer, 1976.

[17] See Appendix 1, pp. 24-25.

[18] Joan Rea Green, "The Hero in Contemporary Spanish American Theatre; A Case of Diminishing Returns," LATR 5, ii (1972), p. 24.

[19] Wetzsteon, p. 71.

[20] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 83.

[21] Tamara Holzapfel, "The Theater of René Marqués," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 153.

[22] The English writer, Aldous Huxley, in Chapter XIV in Island (New York: Bantam Books, 1962) communicates a non-western conception of death, as an organic extension of life, rather than an abrupt, unwelcome and ultimately inexplicable phenomenon.

[23] Acevedo Barrios, "Destino y estructura social, p. 11.

[24] The use of games in La hiel is an effective recourse also used in other Latin American plays, among them, La muerte del Neque and La noche de los asesinos by José Triana. Howard

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Quakenbush establishes the influence of Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf, on those Latin American playwrights who portray the ritualistic use of games in their theatre.

[25] Babín, "Veinte años del teatro puertorriqueño, p. 16.

[26] Arriví, Cuarto Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño, pp. 56-57.

[27] The complete program for the Ciclo, as printed in El Mundo, March 28, 1963, p. 3, included: Argentina, La farsa del cajero que fue hasta la esquina, Ferretti; Colombia, El camino, Andrade Rivera; Cuba, El hombre inmaculado, Ramón Ferreira; Chile, Moscas sobre el mármol, Luis Alberto Heiremans; Guatemala, Soluna, Miguel Angel Asturias; México, Una ciudad para vivir, Ignacio Retes; Puerto Rico, La hiel nuestra de cada día, Luis Rafael Sánchez; Uruguay, La casa quinta, Héctor Plaza Noblía.

[28] José Emilio González, "'Sol 13, Interior' de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, July 15, 1961, p. 39.

[29] Program Notes for La Hiel, Henry Street Settlement, 1973.

[30] Woodyard, "Jorge Díaz and the Lithurgy of Violence," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 61.

[31] M. T. Babín, Borinquen, An Anthology of Puerto Rican Literature, Eds. Babín and Steiner (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), pp. XII-XIII.

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Los ángeles se han fatigado

The following words by Sánchez are particularly applicable to our examination of Los ángeles, and later, to O casi el alma. He reminds us that:

> la poesía es desbordamiento, pero el dramaturgo, el novelista, debe ser un obrero calculador. Incluso la emoción intensa debe producirse desde la frialdad del creador. Debe amar a sus criaturas desde la distancia para lograr la capacidad de tratarlas con objetividad. Así que por ejemplo, si en un drama creo a una prostituta, cuido que las simpatías por ese personaje no me devoren. 1

Los ángeles is dramatic monologue where the protagonist addresses an imaginary public, her neighbor and herself. In the short span of twenty five pages, Angela reveals her intimate self, her life and her angst. Through her own energy and vitality, embodied in words and movement, she brings the characters in her past to life as she focuses in on them and recreates them. There is a richness of self, evident even in her fragmentation, and the anguish she is filled with is part of the life force that she is.

In this play we have an example of psychological problems growing out of aberrations in society. That is, Angela is distraught, out of touch with reality, even hallucinating, in part because Santiago, her pimp and lover, has abandoned her; likewise the American sailors who used to seek her out have abandoned her. We can condemn a society, any society,

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that not only provides prostitution but also sanctions it and furthermore condemns and abandons the prostitute when she is no longer young enough, or attractive enough to be marketable at a profit. Such is Angela's case. Santiago himself is an aberration of society; in his role as pimp, he is the personification of the exploiter. Angela attaches all her frustration and anger to Santiago. During the play she alludes to the action that eventually determines her future, that is, her personal revenge through his death. In fact, she has been driven to murder and to madness by the indifference of a hostile society. The following selection illustrates the previously mentioned themes:

> Me gustaban los oficiales americanos que decían yes, señorita, yes. (Con coquetería.) Yo era la señorita, claro está. Oficiales con camisas blancas y el pecho forrado de medallas, oficiales con las manos abarrotadas de dinero, oficiales altísimos y rubios con brazos abiertos como alas inmensas, invitándome a esconderme en ellos. Alas anchas, anchísimas, para proteger a la niña de Yauco. Alas anchas, manos velludas, ojos azules, hablar suave al oído: yes, señorita, yes. . . . Oficiales con medallas en el pecho para las demás. Angeles con alas para mí. Angeles que bailaban hasta el delirio, ángeles con labios mojados, ángeles desnudos, ángeles con el cuerpo afiebrado, ángeles de tetillas pequeñas, ángeles con los bolsillos repretos de moneda. (Cambiando.) Angeles descarados que se orinaban encima. Los ángeles llegaban con los brazos cubiertos por mangas estrechísimas a vaciar su delirio en mi cuerpo. Y los ángeles con caras largas, larguísimas, rojas, rojísimas, ofrecían en su mirar hondo un sin fin de ilusiones. Eso al principio. A la llegada. Luego se iban transformando en bestias. Y aquellos ángeles que en el prin-

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> cipio eran santos y serenos y buenos se iban convirtiendo en buitres que besaban enloquecidos mordiendo como culebras venenosas. Y aquellos ángeles que en el principio eran santos y serenos y buenos me escupían el rostro para demostrar su sucio odio a la vida. Los gritos de los ángeles se confundían con el horro de la música. . . (Imitando voces de oficiales.) Dirty, dirty, dirty, whore, whore, whore. Y la música subiendo. . . Oh papa loves mambo. . . Y los ángeles cantando. . . Whore, whore, whore. . . Y las luces del cuarto se iban apagando hasta sólo quedar el brillo de los ojos abiertos. . . Oh papa loves mambo, whore, dirty, mama loves mambo. Voces desesperadas de ángeles cansados, ángeles enfermos, ángeles que desprecian, que odian, que destruyen, ¡ángeles fatigados! Al principio me resultaba difícil vender el cuerpo o fingir éxtasis ante cada tontería. Luego . . . me acostumbré. Santiago decía que el piso se cogía fácilmente . . . y lo cogí en una semana. Una semana que bastó para que mamá muriera de pena y papá envejeciera de dolor. Una semana que bastó para que la prima Teresa, tan estricta, educada en internados franceses, se enterase de mi paradero y exclamara con la voz rota: ¡Te tendrá que meter a la vida! ¡Como si la vida fuese una rueda en que se sube a capricho! Una semana que bastó para que el dolor se mudase a mis entrañas (pp. 638-639).

Arriví includes Sol 13, Interior in the category of works that share philosophical concerns, a direction of exploration that begins to have some influence in the 1940s. In all of these works he suggests:

> Podemos señalar el 'arrojo' del ser humano a un mundo indiferente y sin salida, la angustia de la 'caída' y la lucha del espíritu y por redimirse de ella, el sentido de la culpa ante la insoslayable imagen de la libertad, el ansia de vencer la acción devoradora del tiempo en la eternidad de un regazo metafísico. . . . 2

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Referring to the structure of the play, there is no linear sequence of temporal elements in Los ángeles. It is an example of direct interior monologue, where the imaginative material comes directly and incoherently from the psyche of Angela. Another distinctive feature of this play, at the same time a distinctive feature in all of Sánchez's work, is the poetic quality of the prose. Neglia reminds his readers of the correspondence that Edward Dujardin points out between modern poetry and direct interior monologue, given the minimum sintaxis that is used in both forms.[3] José M. Villafaina similarly observes that the play is written "con un sentido brillante de lo poético y con un intenso dominio de lo dramático. . ."[4] As Negli comments:

> Desde la alteración del concepto tiempo introducida por Proust y luego Joyce, no se puede seguir con un espacio inmóvil y externo. Existe también un espacio psicológico que se mueve en el tiempo y, como éste, capta este nuevo concepto del espacio que es una realidad más profunda de como se lo concebía antes. 5

These theories concerning the fluidity of time and space can be applied with particular success to Los ángeles, where the interior monologue of the single character lends itself to a fluid movement from the past to the present.

Neglia mentions another direction in the Latin American theatre, "el teatro de introspección, preocupado por el tema de la personalidad y su despliegue en sensaciones que pasan por las orillas de la conciencia y que crean en la escena una atmósfera alucinante de pesadilla."[6]

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This tendency is evident in Sánchez's Los ángeles which is a dramatic exteriorization of an interior monologue. Neglia further elaborates, "El interés de este teatro estriba no solamente en la intensidad de los conflictos sicológicos. . . sino también en la manera dramática en que se exteriorizan estos conflictos."[7] This last point is pertinent to our examination of Sánchez's work, since a measure of a dramatist's metier is the way in which the interior passions and conflicts of his or her characters are externalized. Neglia continues:

> Aprovechando de los hallazgos del expresionismo escénico los autores de este teatro han llevado al tablado lo que en la narrativa se ha venido planteando desde James Joyce, es decir, el fluir psíquico, el stream of consciousness de William James y el consiguiente tratamiento del tiempo y espacio, que ha dado a la estructura de las obras su conocido carácter fragmentario. 8

We witness the coincidence of theme and structure as Angela verbally recalls incidents and people in her past, and the play becomes a mosaic of chaotic episodes that corroborate the emotional and spiritual disorder of her life. Our author found the perfect outward structure to present the painful mental drama of his protagonist.

Often the staging itself reflects the inner state of the characters. This is particularly true in Los ángeles where Angela's inner state of confusion and despair is reflected in the outward disarray of her room. The cluttered set emphasizes Angela's distress. This space, through which

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no air seems to circulate, intensifies her agitated state, her sense of being lost. Also the unmade bed is the visual center of the scenario, just as it is the central metaphor for her life: the unkempt, disheveled bed, heaped with extraneous objects, junk, old clothes and food, reveal how Angela thinks of herself and how others think of her, as something spent and worn, isolated from human contact and without value. It is clear that the idea of value is connected with economic productivity; thus, since she is no longer successful in her profession, and consequently does not earn money, she no longer has value in her society, another manifestation of the influence of North American values in Puerto Rico. She is alone with her memories which in her madness, she effectively revives by acting out.

There is a temporal displacement in language, not, however, in actual staging. The action shifts from past to present, dramatized by the protagonist's behavior rather than any change in scene, by allusion rather than reality. This is the perfect opportunity to use expressionistic staging techniques to convey the sense of shift in time, since expressionism incorporates into the theatre the tangibility of the oniric, "sueños y ensonación."[9] Angela's intense, erratic behavior is reflected in her language, which swings broadly from rhetorical grandiloquence to common speech. The language is generally lyrical. However, when it is interrupted by English words it acquires an a-rhythmic

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grotesqueness, somewhat the same effect that seeing English signs in Puerto Rico has, that is, to disrupt the continuity of the hispanic context.

The theme of time in Los ángeles has been variously treated by Angela, who appropriately ends the play by referring to the nature of time, and by the critics. Note Angela's closing words:

> Me parece imposible dejarlo todo. Es como si el tiempo se hubiese arrepentido y volviese hacia atrás. ¡Eso es! El tiempo arrepentido va borrando lo que nunca debió ocurrir, el tiempo avergonzado va devolviéndo todo lo que devoró a su paso. ¡Córcega, la boca de Yauco, la vida cierta! Todo lo doloroso empieza a desaparecer. Y el presente y el futuro se ahogan en sus propios minutos. No quedará nada feo. Ni lágrima, ni borracheras, ni gente extraña paseándose por San Juan. No había dolor en el tiempo porque el tiempo no tendrá prisa esta vez. ¡Libre! ¡Libre! (p. 648).

Critic Gallego Díaz suggests that it is not Angela, but rather time, "quien acentúa la agonía patente en todas sus páginas. El tiempo 'gran dramaturgo','haciendo un collar con los seres y las cosas.'"[10] Luis Hernández Aquino refers to the tridimensional sense of the work, "poesía en la evocación del pasado, tragedia y sátira del presente, catarsis actuante para un futuro entrevisto,"[11] and later notes the fidelity of our author to his own time and country:

> Los tiempos pasado absoluto y presente actual están discurriendo en escenarios que responden a lo que desea satirizar o enaltecer el autor: La casa, hacienda de Yauco, en época dorada, nostalgiosa de lo europeo parisién, y el presente en una casa de mala reputación en San Juan, esto

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> último con su corolario de marinos y oficiales Yankis putañeros y borrachos, y un ambiente asfixiante de adulteración, con lo norteamericano relajante, superficial y chillón por añadidura. En fin, dos tiempos puertorriqueños, que podía deducir el buen lector: pasado con alma y tiempo europeos, y presente ambiguo de estilo adulterador. 12

As in other of his works (Antígona Pérez and La hiel, for example), Los ángeles is a play rich in political allegory. Angela can be seen as the embodiment of the themes of destruction and abandonment, essentially the historical trajectory of Puerto Rico. The Spaniards, the French, the English, the Dutch exploited her and expediently moved on to richer conquests.[13] As José Villafaina notes:

> Todo el proceso histórico de conducta engendrado en esta mujer caída en desgracia no es más que un reflejo del proceso histórico de su pueblo cuya idéntica conducta enlaza perfectamente. La simbología que el personaje deja entrever en su estado grave de delirio nos habla de la belleza e inocencia seducida, deshonrada, prostituida, explotada y abandonada (por '¡Santiago . . . y cierra España!') para después ser 'salvada', confundida, 'comerciada' y desgastada hasta la locura (por los 'Angeles' americanos). 14

The acceptance of Angela as the literally and symbolically violated woman, is analogous to Octavio Paz's interpretation of La Malinche, the ultimate symbol of the subjected Mexican women.[15] As Soberón Torchía observes, "no es el tipo convencional de prostituta sanjuanera: es la humanización de la isla en Angela,"[16] thus establishing the connection between Angela and Puerto Rico.

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The following statement by Angela establishes a relationship between Puerto Rico and Córcega, and is rich in interpretive possibilities:

> Nuestra tierra no es igual. Esta calle termina ahí enfrente. Es una calle con un fin inmediato. Córcega era tierra sin fronteras, con un solo amo y una sola raza (p. 630).

One can make the analogy then, that before the Americans came to the Island, Puerto Rico experienced the few months of autonomy that were to be her only taste of relative "freedom." The idea of "una sola raza" can refer to the mixture of races. together forming one race. The author's vision of Puerto Rico's future can be expressed in the image of a "callejón sin salida." Puerto Rico cannot return to what it once was; likewise with Angela, whose life definitely changed once she came to San Juan and met Santiago. The parallels can also be established between Santiago and the United States. Santiago is a parasite, living off Angela's body; similarly, the United States is a parasite, living off Puerto Rico. Angela-Puerto Rico lives a love-hate relationship with Santiago, parallel to the relationship Puerto Rico experiences with the United States.

One of Angela's recourses for dealing with her life is to escape into the past. The entire drama inexorably moves through an atmosphere of fatalism and intimations of destruction. Possibilities exist, however, that allow us to view Angela's retreat into madness as her ultimate freedom. That is, she exchanges daily abuse and inferior treatment

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for her own richer world of memories and fantasies. It is ambiguous whether or not she actually killed Santiago. However, the question remains, has she freed herself with his death or has she taken refuge from painful reality by retreating into madness? Morfi suggests that after Santiago's "assassination," "ya liberada de su trauma dolorosa, simbólicamente abre la jaula al pajarito, toma las manos del niño y gritando ¡Libre!, sale."[17]

Certain works immediately come to mind regarding this often treated theme of madness as freedom, or madness as another oppression: the Mexican actress, Carmen Montejo's passionate portrayal of Déborah, also a dramatic monologue, uncannily similar in theme and treatment to Los ángeles; the female character, María Iribarne, in Ernesto Sábato's El túnel; and too, Dostoievski's Notes from Underground. Critic Villafaina suggests this same theme of madness as freedom in an article where he refers to Angela's life as a sordid web which envelops her:

> Una atmósfera que se espesa, un clima de vida parecido al de un sueño mortal y doliente del que no se sabe despertar, pero en cuya inercia se producirá al cabo el sacudimiento de la tragedia, cuando toma voluntad accediendo ser recluída en una casa de salud, siendo esto como un último grito de horror, pero también como el último grito liberado. 18

The Dominican playwright, Franklin Domínguez, has written a play, El último instante,[19] which is strikingly similar to Los ángeles in certain details: Noemí is the only character in the play; she is a prostitute, drunk and on the brink of

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suicide; in this two-scene play she reviews the unhappy events that have shaped her life. Through her language we experience the fluctuation of images without any logical sequence. Also common to both plays in the theme of frustrated motherhood: Angela en Los ángeles pretends to have a baby with her in her room; Noemí is alone on the stage, but has had a baby in the past, however, her monologue, with its shift between past and present, suggests that she is giving birth to the baby in the present. In both cases the insistence on specific episodes and the repetition of specific words helps the reader to discern the causes for both women's gradual dissolution. Another similarity is the social criticism implicit in both plays. As Neglia comments: "El mundo en que se mueve Noemí es uno en que el hombre hace y deshace a su antojo."[20] No rebel, she abandoned her family because they opposed her marriage plans; her flight towards life presented her with insuperable obstacles and never with the happiness she hoped for. Angela, on the other hand, is jilted by her fiancé and leaves her comfortable family in Yauco to seek a totally different life in San Juan. When she meets and falls in love with the pimp Santiago, her life's course is determined. The leitmotif of the American sailors, "los ángeles con alas" (p. 638), and their eventual abandonment and humiliation of Angela, provides the framework for the social criticism of the play. This author sees Sánchez's intention in writing the drama

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as twofold: to render a sensitive portrayal of the human situation of disappointment and suffering, as well as to criticize the American influence on the Island. Domínguez, on the other hand, seems to adhere to Neglia's analysis, that is: "No estuvo en la intención del autor convertir esta obra en instrumento de protesta social; quiso sólo presentarnos los conflictos internos y los últimos instantes de la vida trágica de una mujer. . . ."[21]

As John Gassner suggests, "In a sense, acting is characterization, and the soundest theatricalist artists know only what realists also have known--namely, that there are both 'round' and 'flat' characters in a play, just as in novels."[22] Sánchez's creation, Angela Santoni, is clearly a "round" character, whose portrayal allows for generous interpretive latitude, as will be documented in an examination of three different performances of Los ángeles. The play has an energy that crackles between the script and the production and particularly in the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre's production, Mila Conway rides this energy in a performance that is a true tour de force. The actress is called upon to command all her talent in this demanding role. She is alone on the stage for more than an hour and a half, dealing with this complex character.

Madeline Willemsen played Angela in the original 1961 version at the Cuarto Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño. Jim Collins, drama critic for the San Juan Star and Professor

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of English at the University of Puerto Rico, favorably reviewed director Victoria Espinosa's 1975 production of Los ángeles at the National Center for the Arts in Old San Juan. In particular he praised Elia Enid Cadilla's "sweltering interpretation" of Angela:

> The emotional flagellation is almost too much to bear; and it is manifested not only in the desecrated altar of the bed and the pitiful doll-child, but in the torn and stained nightgown of the high priestess herself and in her disheveled hair which falls to her shoulders like the remnants of a flayed halo.
>
> For this, it impresses me, is above all a ritualistic, a religious, and, indeed, a sacramental piece. And behind the blues and tangos which counterpoint the ravings and the sobs of Angela's perdition, can be heard the inexorable chant of the Dies Irae. 23

Having myself seen two quite different versions of the play, at the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theatre in 1973, and at the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre in 1974, I offer the following observations, comparisons and conclusions. The originality of the New Federal Theatre version, directed by Carlos Gorbea, director-choreographer and long time assistant to Broadway's Harold Prince, lies in C. Richard Mill's set design and Craig Evans' light design which transformed a traditional stage into a more intimate setting through the use of floating articles hanging from suspended panels that served as walls; the bed, covered with gauze; and generally dark lighting, all suggesting much disarray.

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Carla Pinza, actress, as well as artistic director for the Puerto Rican Bilingual Theatre, played a believable, accessible Angela. Ms Pinza has appeared in The Oxcart; has been directed by José Quintero; originated the role of Julia in Joseph Papp's production of Two Gentlemen of Verona; has choreographed for June Taylor and is presently the artistic director for the Latino Playwright Workshop at the Henry Street Settlement.[24] The emphasis in her portrayal of Angela was on tragedy, on the pitiful situation of Angela, drunk and gradually building up to a more out of control personality. There is great pathos in her Angela--dressed in a slip throughout the monologue--convincingly communicating the pain of her destroyed memories. Her past, originating from a wealthy family in Corsica, was credible; consequently her desintegration was plausible and tragic. The audience identified with her as a victim of love and circumstance.

However, it is Mila Conway's Angela, also in English, and produced by The Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, that corroborates critic Richard Eder's assertion:

> Performing and acting have a lot in common--acting is, in part, performing--but there is an important distinction. The essence of performance, is delivering a blow. The essence of acting is receiving it. Listening, registering, reacting, these are the heart of stage acting. 25

Conway brings a flair for comedy and a haunting quality to her portrayal of a San Juan prostitute.[26] Recognizing that the monologue is a difficult genre, demanding immediate changes from drama to comedy without the usual transitions

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that are found in plays with more characters, drama critic Alberto R. Oliva concludes that "Mila Conway sale bien parada del intento: su Angela es un logro de histeria, drama y soledad.[27]

Conway downplayed the underlying tragedy of her character, opting for comedy. The audience actually laughed at many of her lines, gestures, facial expressions and mannerisms. Under Manuel Yesckas' direction, this was a more hysterical, aggressive and extravagant interpretation than Carla Pinza's. The audience experienced more repulsion towards her overt sexuality, her tantalizing and tempting body movements, rather than empathy through identification with her. She revealed abrupt mood changes, reflecting definite imbalance and even manic-depressive behavior. As New York Post critic, Edmund Newton observes:

> Every gesture is perfect. One minute Miss Conway is the crass slattern, the next she's a vulnerable little girl, then she's a trapped animal. She gives a would-be John the glad eye, then whirls into a one-woman party. Suddenly those meretricious mambo steps become the movements of a tormented soul. 29

She was a much earthier Angela; therefore it was difficult to find convincing that young, innocent Angela from the past. Perhaps then, this version, although quite original, raises the issue of adequate dramatic growth of the main character. That is, this version does not reflect an integrated, developmental approach towards Angela's personality, as does the lower key, more restrained interpretation by Carla Pinza.

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Perhaps the key word for Conway's performance is flamboyant. Even physically, her Angela is more flamboyant, the exhibitionist par excellence. Her speech is more frenetic and dislocated than in Pinza's performance. She seemed less sensitive as a woman in this performance; she had suffered, but she reacted with anger, lashing out violently and self-destructively, rather than revealing a sense of inner struggle and pain, of disappointment with life, emphasizing the essential poignancy and pathos of her plight. However, as Edmund Newton enthusiastically affirms:

> I would have to say that hers is one of the finest performances I've ever seen anywhere. The only performer in the play, Miss Conway keeps you absolutely spellbound for an hour, slowly telling her story, fragment by fragment, acting it out with such intensity that there's an impulse to avert your eyes. 29

In regard to Anibal Otero's set and lighting design and Benito Gutiérrez Soto's costume design, we become involved in the more material aspects of her existence. It is a very physical setting, although sparse, revealing her bed, a trunk, a great deal of clothing hung up around the stage. The set is not suggestive, as in the first interpretation but rather shows us the physical objects in her life. Similarly the lighting was also brighter. The limited physical space of the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre's 18th Street loft also added to the sense of intimacy between the audience and Angela's life space.

The answer to the question, "Are both versions successful theatre?" is a definite yes; both illuminate different

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possibilities inherent in the work. It is up to the director to choose which version he or she will realize. My own conception of the role corresponds to Carla Pinza's Angela, of the first version, which emphasized empathy, identification and pathos, rather than the loud, hysterical child--woman, and "obvious" prostitute of the second version. In agreement with the ambivalence I feel concerning those comic touches, Oliva notes:

> Pese a todo, a este crítico no le lució convincente el nivel cómico, que nunca llegó a estimularle una sonrisa a pesar de que muchas veces se justificara, como por ejemplo sus diálogos con el canario Hitler. Aquí, el trabajo de Yesckas se luce más, aunque parece haber descuidado esa pauta cómica mencionada. 30

Is one performance more powerful than the other? It is our opinion that the audience who saw the first version had a stronger foundation for comprehending Angela's downfall because of the dramatic growth of the character; the audience experienced with her the pain, and at the same time, the impulsiveness of her vengeance, and also the melancholy of her knowledge and acceptance that she was going to an asylum. For the second audience, who witnessed a portrayal of extremes, it was possible to distance themselves from Angela and her plight. Although, at the same time, people who relate better to humor, will certainly find their area of identification in Conway's performance. She is an earthy whore with a sad story and a pathetic end in a mental institution. Whereas, in Pinza's version, she is incidentally

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a whore; she still desperately maintains certain illusions about herself, about the way a person of her upbringing, breeding and status should behave. . . . Dramatic tension is present in both stage versions. We witness a dense and complex, as well as sensitive development of the story which builds to a dramatic climax. Both performances reveal the materialization of the fantasies of Angela, who is absolutely isolated from the world around her. Consequently the monologue form, which reinforces her ultimate isolation, also provides structural and thematic unity.

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Notes

Los ángeles se han fatigado

[1] Luis Rafael Sánchez, quoted by Artemio Torres, "Sin prisa, sin pausa," p. 20.

[2] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 82.

[3] Neglia, Aspectos del teatro moderno hispanoamericano, p. 75, refers to E. Dujardin's Le monologue intérieur, son apparition, ses origines, sa place dans l'oeuvre de James Joyce (Paris, 1931).

[4] José M. Villafaina, "Unos ángeles . . . fatigantes y un Retablillo . . . ingenuo," El Nuevo Día, Aug. 26, 1975, p. 29.

[5] Neglia, p. 78.

[6] Neglia, p. 71.

[7] Neglia, p. 71.

[8] Neglia, p. 71.

[9] Castagnino, Teatro: Teorías sobre el arte dramático II, p. 31.

[10] Gallego Díaz, "Dos obras," without pagination.

[11] Hernández Aquino," Teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," without pagination.

[12] Hernández Aquino, "Teatro de Luis Rafael Sánchez," without pagination.

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[13] For further information on the history of Puerto Rico, see: Gordon K. Lewis, Puerto Rico: Freedom and Power in the Caribbean (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1963); Alfredo López, The Puerto Rican Papers (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973); Manuel Maldonado Denis, Puerto Rico, una interpretación histórico-social (México: Siglo Veintiuno, 1971); Juan Angel Silén, We, the Puerto Rican People (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971); Kal Wagenheim, The Puerto Ricans: A Documentary History (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973); K. Wagenheim, Puerto Rico: A Profile (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971).

[14] Villafaina, "Unos ángeles," p. 29.

[15] Octavio Paz, Chapter 4, "The Sons of La Malinche," in The Labyrinth of Solitude (New York: Grove Press, 1961).

[16] Edgar Soberón Torchía, "'Los ángeles se han fatigado,'" El Vocero, Sept. 17, 1975, p. 33.

[17] Morfi, p. 43.

[18] Villafaina, p. 29.

[19] Franklin Domínguez, El último instante in El teatro hispanoamericano contemporáneo, ed. Carlos Solórzano (México: FCE, 1970).

[20] Neglia, p. 76.

[21] Neglia, p. 77.

[22] Gassner, p. 201.

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[23] J. A. Collins, "Sweltering Show at Arts Center," The San Juan Star, Sept. 19, 1975, without pagination.

[24] Program Notes for La hiel and The Angels are Exhausted at the Henry Street Settlement, 1973.

[25] Richard Eder, "And Now For Some Good Actors," The New York Times, Sunday, Aug. 22, 1976, D., p. 11.

[26] Sylvia Rosales, in an unspecific source from private archives of PRTT.

[27] Alberto A. Oliva, "Reseña de 'Los ángeles se han fatigado,'" ABC de las Américas, p. 52, incomplete bibiographical information from private archives of PRTT.

[28] Edmund Newton, "PRTT Presents One-Act Plays," New York Post, March 1, 1974, p. 24.

[29] Newton, p. 24.

[30] Oliva, p. 52.

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. . . O casi el alma

As most critics agree, it is in ...O casi el alma[1] that Sánchez achieves full artistic maturity, demonstrating he can handle a complexity of dialectical concepts, symbolism and structure. The play is an attempt to reclaim some small part of the soul. It is Maggie's mission to realize a new definition of life, indeed, to negate Sánchez's epigraph that "Vivir es dejar que el cuerpo refugie el deseo mientras se pierde al alma . . . o casi el alma" (p. 11). Asserts Angelina Morfi:

> Vibrante y moderno auto de fe tiene el pasaporte asegurado al público en su dimensión humana, especialmente la contradictoria y agónica lucha del hombre por comprender el sentido del bien y del mal en el mundo y su relación con Dios. El criterio independiente del autor al plantear su tesis puede encontrar censura en los teorizadores del dogma pero él ha encontrado un filón dramático insospechado. 2

The religious publication El Piloto both praised and criticized the play: it was praised for the sensitive realistic portrayal of the religious ambiance in present-day Puerto Rico; and criticized for portraying the priest as an accomplice to Maggie's lie.[3]

Our female protagonist is Maggie, "la del siete," a prostitute, friendly and outspoken. Our male protagonist, simply called El Hombre, is a mysterious, somewhat shabby stranger who fascinates her with his harmonica and his

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philosophizing about the meaning of his life and the lives of the people who pass through it. As Act I opens it is Lent, Good Friday, and business is slow. Maggie is planning to go out with her friends but The Man's harmonica recital attracts her attention and she reluctantly allows him into the dingy, dark room where she has earned her living for the past six years. There we witness the verbal seduction of Maggie, as well as her transformation from a tired prostitute to a modern day saint, and, finally, to a person in possession of a deeper knowledge of herself.

The dramatic tension in Act I depends on the atmosphere of suspense and expectancy created by various elements: the harmonica playing of the stranger; the subsequent interchange that ensues between Maggie and him; his outrageous and unexpected announcement that he is the son of God; and his involving Maggie in his plan to create a miracle and save God. Sánchez uses various devices to create the play's atmosphere. Music, an important element in all of his work, is central to this play, where Sánchez's choice of the "sinfonía de boca" reinforces the dual image of verbal seduction of Maggie both by The Man's musical talent and his verbal artistry. Also in the stage directions, Sánchez requires the musical counterpoint of the harmonica and an omnipresent melody in the air to create a nostalgic mood:

> Una tonadilla pegajosa viene trepando los aires, tonadilla nostálgica de épocas pasadas que resucita entre los latidos de una sinfonía de boca (p. 13).

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He uses religious imagery to create the mysterious atmosphere, as we see in the titles he gives to each act:

> Primer Acto. Primer día: día de la entrada del hombre en el laberinto. Segundo Acto. Primer día: día del nacimiento del milagro. Tercer Acto. Cualquier día: día de la condena final (p. 9).

Note here what can be considered the play's central image: the labyrinth into which El Hombre enters on that first day, as the entrance into the labyrinth of faith.

The verbal seduction and rhythmic frenzy of the first act, which, as the stage directions indicate, takes on "el sortilegio de un extraño rito" (p. 28), revolves around an interchange concerning El Hombre's concept of time as linked to one's affective state, and begins with the metaphor, "Las horas son heridas nuevas en la vida de cada quien" (p. 22). When Maggie questions The Man about how he found out the time from a woman with no watch, he explains, "Tal vez porque estaba triste. En ese momento le tocaría su dosis de tristeza. . . " (p. 23). Gradually more frenetic, El Hombre reveals his own emotional clock and how he can tell time by his feelings:

> A las siete. Hora de empezar a vivir. Me levanto, me tiro a la calle, recojo una colilla. No me llevo el humo al pecho sino que lo soplo hacia afuera. ¡Así! (Lento.) Con el humo la tristeza empieza a salir. Puedo anunciar una a una las horas que desfilan frente a mis ojos.
> (El hombre cierra los ojos y grita el paso de las horas en tono heráldico desesperado.)

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> ¡Siete de la mañana! Hora que anuncia el comienzo de la lucha, hora perversa y asesinaaaaaa. ¿Ocho de la mañana! Promesa de un día infinito, promesa, promesaaaa. ¡Nueve de la mañana! Sacudida del día al tropezar con la conciencia, agonía, agoníaaa. (Abre los ojos despacio.) Hasta que al fin la sangre anuncia las diez de la mañana. ¡La sangre se hace necia a las diez de la mañana! Brinca por las venas como azogue, huye de lado a lado limpiando los residuos de la fatal tristeza; borra sombras y prepara la entrada de la piedad (p. 24-25).

Here, El Hombre, consummate expert in human psychology, guides Maggie to a knowledge of her own humanity, and finally, to an awareness and identification with others, and a personal willingness to create a miracle in order to save her own faith and the faith of others.

The Man describes how he watches people pass by and tries to imagine them in all kinds of situations; how he defines them and searches for the essential significance in each life. In the face of Maggie's staunch insistence upon the value of "minding her own business," El Hombre affirms another of our playwright's basic themes:

> Es imposible no juzgar. ¡Es imposible no tomar parte! ¡Es imposible no comprometerse! Nadie puede escapar (p. 26).

El Hombre invites Maggie to play his game and free associate around the question, "¿Qué es una señora con un perro?" She astutely senses the emotional danger implicit in letting her defenses down and identifying with the sadness of the people around her, and refuses to play, until finally El Hombre wears down her resistance:

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EL HOMBRE
(Enérgico.) Levante la mano . . . levántela. Sienta que algo la arrastra. Mire cómo la mano se agarra a algo. ¡A algo! Olvídese de usted. Hace bien olvidarse de uno de vez en cuando. (De pronto.) ¿Qué es una señora con un perro?

LA MUJER
(Agotada.) Una señora sola.

EL HOMBRE
(Frenético.) Cercene esa palabra. Estrangule esa palabra.

LA MUJER
¿Cuál?

EL HOMBRE
Sola.

LA MUJER
So-la.

EL HOMBRE
Más lento.

LA MUJER
S-o-l-a.

EL HOMBRE
¿Qué es una señora con un perro?

LA MUJER
Una mujer que no tiene a nadie.

EL HOMBRE
¿Y un hombre con un bastón?

LA MUJER
No voy a seguir . . . no.

EL HOMBRE
(Insistiendo.) Con un bastón . . .

LA MUJER
Un hombre que busca apoyo.

(La escena empieza a hacerse vertiginosa. La mujer busca las respuestas en la cuarta pared. Al principio titubea, a la quinta o sexta letanía el ritmo se hace prodigioso.)

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EL HOMBRE
Un niño cruza la calle.

LA MUJER
Otro soldado para la guerra.

EL HOMBRE
Una mujer mirando una rosa.

LA MUJER
Una enferma de amor.

EL HOMBRE
Un viejo que tiembla de frío.

LA MUJER
Una llama que quiere apagarse.

EL HOMBRE
Un hombre que quiere morir.

LA MUJER
Otra vida que sabe el tormento.

EL HOMBRE
Una voz implorando justicia.

LA MUJER
Una voz que se muere en el desierto.

EL HOMBRE
Una mujer que alquila su cuerpo.

(La mujer se queda petrificada.)

¡Una mujer que alquila su cuerpo! (En grito.) Siga. El mundo agoniza frente a nosotros. La vida se nos ahoga dentro. Hay que definir para salvar (pp. 28-30).

Then he reveals his plan to return faith to the people and save God who is ever dying because of the people's lack of faith in him. When Maggie once again defends her indifference, El Hombre insists that all of this must necessarily matter to Maggie because, "Te llamas Magdalena . . . Eso les bastará. Pensarán que es la misma historia . . . La de

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la Magdalena redimida" (p. 41), another example of the Sánchez theme of fulfilling or rejecting the significance of one's name. Then El Hombre describes exactly how she must go into the street, wait for a sufficient number of people to gather, fix her eyes on one spot and shout "que Dios se ha presentado en una nube para pedirte que sigas a su hijo" (p. 42). He continues this ritual exhortation until he triumphs and the curtain falls on Act I:

> No te pido un favor. (Suplicante.) Te pido el sacrificio de ese grito. Ni siquiera soy yo quien lo pide. Lo pide tu amor a Dios. Necesitan aturdirse con lo extraordinario. Si ahora mismo yo fuera a buscarlos me darían la espalda como han hecho con el viejo Dios. Pero hay aire de novedad en un milagro. Es casi señal de apocalipsis. Despertarán del letargo, contestarán al llamado cuando vean que es otra Magdalena la que llora y suplica (p. 42).

And,

> Pues sálvate a través del sacrificio. Acepta la furia de ellos. Más allá de él, quién importa (p. 43).

And,

> No te niegas a ti misma. Tú eres otra vez la elegida, puesta en el camino de los justos, señalada entre los siglos, Magdalena, otra vez pecadora, otra vez crucificada. (Hipnótico.) Tú dijiste que estaba escrito. Tenías razón. Desde una edad lejana. Desde los padres de tus padres. Caíste para levantarte. Descendiste por la maldad de ellos. No fuiste tú. Fueron ellos. Los mismos que ahora rescatarás por ejemplo de humildades. Tú eras buena en el principio (p. 43).

And their final interchange continues:

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LA MUJER
(Maquinalmente.) Era buena.

EL HOMBRE
Pero ellos te desgarraron. A tí. La buena Magdalena. La pura Magdalena. La santa Magdalena.

LA MUJER
(Tensa.) La santa. Magdalena.

EL HOMBRE
Ahora es la venganza tuya. (Rápido.) No con la cicatriz. Pero con el amor. Tu venganza será traerlos al camino. Yo soy el camino. Salva Magdalena y sálvate. Quede el sacrificio de tu grito. Piensa en tus amigas que se fueron al cine. Transformarás su pecado en bendición. Piensa en los hombres que quieren comprarte. Convertirás su deseo en sosiego. Piensa, por una vez, en tí. Aliviarás la terrible condena.

LA MUJER
(Lentísima.) ¿Y Dios?

EL HOMBRE
Volverá triunfante al paraíso para premiar aquellos que todavía sienten la miel de su nombre.

LA MUJER
(Lentísima.) ¿Y Dios?

EL HOMBRE
Estará contigo, amante, ahora y siempre.

LA MUJER
Conmigo. Ahora y siempre. (La mujer hace una pausa larga. Luego empieza a salir muy despacio. Abre la puerta y vuelve el rostro.) Dios conmigo, ahora y siempre.

(Entonces sale majestuosa mientras el hombre monologa con pasión en encendido crescendo.)

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EL HOMBRE
El hijo de Dios ha vuelto. El hijo del Dios Infinito ha vuelto. El hijo del Dios del hombre mortal ha vuelto. El hijo del Dios de la pasión ha vuelto. El hijo del Dios de la garganta hambrienta ha vuelto.

(Ha subido los brazos, tenso, grave. Sobre su imponente discurso baja tranquilo el telón.) (pp. 43-44).

As Act II opens it is raining outside and the stage directions, full of plastic images, indicate, "Un soplo de penumbra se mueve por el cuarto cubriendo de melancolía las paredes, los muebles, los seres" (p. 45). Maggie enters the room, soaked and disheveled, as if she had just left the battlefield, with torn clothes and scratches all over. In Act II Maggie's anguish and uncertaintly about the "miracle" is combined with her continued determination to save God, as she later says "Salvar a Dios de Dios, salvarlo del miedo de los hombres, salvarlo de las oraciones huecas, salvarlo de los templos fingidos. Salvarlo del temor que es su nombre" (p. 79). She ecstatically describes the public's acceptance of her "como un Cristo que se hiciera hembra" (p. 46), and at the same time anguishfully wonders when her life will return to normal again. But El Hombre has other plans for her, "Te espera una carrera gloriosa. Misionera . . . salvadora de almas . . . socio fundador de Dios S. A." (p. 50), a corporation that people can pay, to hire others to pray for them. Upon hearing this Maggie wants to denounce him, but is afraid of the anger

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and loathing that the people might feel towards her.

El Hombre, gradually reveals more facets and contradictions in his personality. And as Morfi suggests, the following words capture the picture of modern man alienated from God:

> EL HOMBRE
> En un siglo como el nuestro hay que cambiar la táctica de ganar almas. No hay que soñar con un pueblo hermanado que corre a buscar al Salvador. Nuestra época prefiere otros poderes. ¡Ahora es Dios el que tiene que hacer la carrera! (p. 51).

We see in him a mixture of the material and the spiritual, of the visionary and the con man. As he orders Maggie around, much like the pimps who always acted as if they owned her, she rebels and he reminds her of the only sin, "El tuyo: Te llamas Magdalena" (p. 56). As Morfi notes,

> El personaje se enriquece con la contradicción de su pensamiento. Dentro de su mismo oportunismo expresa la verdad. Cree en que hay que sacudir, crear pánico para que el hombre se enfrente consigo mismo y pueda advenir una nueva fe, 'fe que corresponda con la tortura de nuestro siglo.' 4

However, El Hombre triumphs once again with his aggressive logic, and in a scene parallel to the one heralding the "extraño rito" in the first Act, this Act ends with a religious litany recited by El Hombre and punctuated by Maggie's response, "Tú, hijo de Dios" chanted in a dry, monotonous, hollow voice. We concur with the observation, "En este acto que se desenvuelve en un tono alto, climático, Luis Rafael enmadeja hábilmente la acción y el pensamiento."[5]

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In Act III the grave questions still remain: concerning the nature of lies and truth; concerning the nature of means and ends. As the stage directions indicate, Maggie's old room has changed considerably: it is filled with folding chairs; the lighting has changed too, "siendo ahora nebulosa, poco diáfana" (p. 61). The Man's clothing is also different; although the directions indicate a dark, somber suit, both productions seen in New York by this writer, as well as the original 1964 version at the Tapia, have him elegantly dressed in white. Maggie, too, is dressed in a simple white dress with tied shoes and a black umbrella. Once more Maggie and El Hombre discuss the ever increasing commercial success of their "miracle" and it becomes clearer and clearer that he has come to believe in his own divinity; while she continues to insist in vain that she is not Magdalena, but rather "Maggie, Maggie la del siete."

Critics such as Morfi, Arriví and José Emilio González agree that the next scene between Maggie and the President of the Women's Club is basically unnecessary to the development of the play and could easily have been excluded. It is, however, an example of Sánchez's grasp of social satire and a wonderful role for an actress. In the 1964 version in Puerto Rico, José Emilio González called Norma Caudal's performance "estupenda" and added that she deserved the

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applause that she received at the end of the scene. Similarly in the Repertorio Español version, the immensely talented Cuban actress, Ofelia González, also received a spontaneous ovation at the end of the scene. This once again attests to Sánchez's ability to create recognizable and vibrant popular characters, as we have seen in Cuento de Cucarachita Viudita, in Farsa del amor compradito, and in La hiel. The Lady came to ask Maggie if she would approve of her Club's changing its name to "Las siervas de Magdalena." This scene provides certain relief from the tension created in the earlier scene between Maggie and El Hombre; it allows Sánchez to criticize the hypocrisy of those upper class women who create dinners, dances and various and sundry meetings with the real intention of keeping track of their husbands whereabouts. The Lady presents the contradiction of her class: she says she wants to help, but whines, "Es que la pobreza me aterra" (p. 73); she has no money, only a hundred dollars, to pay the Club dues and buy her daughter a new pair of shoes for a dance; she will return tomorrow with a reporter, to make sure the Club gets the proper publicity. Morfi suggests another justification for the scene, that it vividly contrasts Maggie's increasing sweetness and candor with The Lady's frivolity and hypocrisy.

Ironically, given the context of her life, Maggie is the only honest, honorable character in the play. She is closer to the truth than the cynical son of God, or the

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worldly priest. This is most evident in the final scene with the priest where she tells him the truth. He is shattered and appalled at her news. He begins to think about how the people's faith has deepened since the miracle. Then he slowly recovers and insists, in the face of Maggie's desire to reveal the truth to all, that the faith of the people themselves has converted the lie into truth. Thus he affirms, as in Dostoievski's "Inquisitor" and Unamuno's San Manul Bueno, mártir, that what is important is the fact of believing and he exhorts her to silence:

> Yo te pido que no destruyas. Vamos a callarnos todos, tú, él, Dios y yo. Vamos a pecar a conciencia. Vamos a condenarnos quedándonos con la mentira (p. 84).

He concludes wondering if the strange new peace and love he feels might truly be the presence of God.

The final stage effects in this last scene must rely on lighting to focus on the exteriorization of Maggie's emotional state. We find her alone, transformed, more natural and wiser now, left to ask her own questions about the nature of God, and by analogy, about who she is. In this dramatic monologue, both poetic and intense, she finally accepts existential responsibility as the architect of her own circumstance; then she embraces the once hated name and fate of Magdalena; and finally gives herself to the unknown will of her unknown God:

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> Es cierto. Acaso sea Dios ese amor. O acaso sea El esta mentira. Acaso sea El esta rabia, esta protesta que me golpea la entraña borrándome la gana de existir. ¿Por qué no? A lo mejor Dios es una silla vieja y muda o un cántaro lleno de agua. ¿O vacío! O a lo mejor Dios es aquella puerta por donde se llega a cualquier sitio. Eso es. Dios es una puerta ancha por la que cabe el mundo completo. ¡Completo! Puerta que da paso al hambre, al engaño, a la traición. Aquí estoy frente a la puerta. Sola. Empezando otra vez. Aunque ya todo ha terminado. Si aquel hombre no llega a mi ventana nada habría pasado. Pero yo dejé que entrara. Es mía la culpa. Dios sigue siendo inocente. Por eso, esté o no esté en los cielos, santificado sea su nombre. Voy a llamarme siempre Magdalena. Hágase así, su terrible voluntad, allá en su tierra como acá en mi infierno (p. 85).

Concludes Angelina Morfi, "Aprovechando mitos, simbolismos y nombres cristianos se incorpora a la secular dramaturgia religiosa con una posición individualista, antidogmática, flexible. En una anécdota sencilla diluye ideas impresionantes sobre Dios, la verdad y la mentira, el bien y el mal, traducidas en palabras frías o emotivas, superficiales o profundas, vulgares o poéticas, según sea la hora en el corazón humano. . . ."[6] Arriví situates the play within a Puerto Rican context and establishes a relationship between Sánchez's work and Ionesco's:

> Tal y como en El Milagro, de Méndez Ballester se da una contestación a Esperando a Godot de Beckett, con ...O casi el alma de Luis Rafael Sánchez. se da una contestación al crecimiento indetenible del cadáver del Amedde, de Ionesco. Hay una voluntad de sobrevivir la muerte en la dramaturgia puertorriqueña (¿sería por conciencia de una

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> agonía?) y no hay duda que Luis Rafael Sánchez se suma con mensaje propio a esta voluntad. 7

Gassner warns:

> The obscurities of the soul, the inscrutability of fate, the mystery of faith may well provide matter for meditative poetry, unless aided by strong plot and characterization, they are likely to prove soporific on the stage. 8

In O casi el alma, the dilemma of religious faith is posed, however, with the artistic sensibility necessary for the successful dramatic development of the work. Charles Pilditch has called the play, first produced in 1964 "both an anticipation of the controversial 'God is Dead' theme so prevalent in the following decade and an imaginative interpretation of it."[9] In this play Sánchez establishes his thematic affiliation with other Puerto Rican writers who have developed theological concerns in their work: Alumbramiento, Francisco Arriví; El milagro, Manuel Méndez Ballester; De tanto caminar, Piri Fernández de Lewis; and El cielo se rindió al amanecer, Edmundo Rivera Alvarez. In Alumbramiento, the protagonist's search for God is realized in his son's birth, the perpetuation of the species; in El milagro, perhaps an answer to Waiting for Godot, the searchers find God in the very act of existential being; in De tanto caminar, a nun's faith in her vocation is renewed in a soul searching journey through her spirit; in El cielo se rindió al amanecer, a loving and compassionate God is suggested, rather than a tyrannic and vengeful one;

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in ... O casi el alma, there is a direct analogy established between Magdalena/Maggie and Christ/El Hombre, which the author pursues with originality, transforming these Biblical figures into two Puerto Ricans.

The hypocrisy of the Church, its need to sacrifice truth in order to maintain power over the people, recalls Unamuno's San Manuel Bueno, mártir. The priest, El enviado, reveals an unwillingness to share with the people the fact that Maggie's miracle is a lie. The Church refuses to tell the people the truth since it would destroy their faith, which, we are told, is the force that gives them hope in their lives. This attitude reinforces Woodyard's observation that the institution of the Church in Latin America "is used to establish an atmosphere of ignorance and fear which leaves man helpless against its intransigent authority,"[10] and to the same end, "victimizes man and destroys his freedom of thought and expression."[11] This is particularly so in Antígona Pérez, and is also true in O casi, where El Hombre originally expresses decidedly metaphysical and spiritual concerns, and by Act II has exchanged the crucifix for the dollar sign.

The following observation can be made about Sánchez's use of dramatic realism in ...O casi el alma:

> If one rightly understands the nature of dramatic realism, he has to accept that the dramatist must portray some environment with as high a degree of accuracy as

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> possible. That is the nature of realism. But, realism in the hands of talented artists does not stop there. Rather, the atmosphere--the environment portrayed--becomes the backdrop against which the characters reveal themselves. Further, it often becomes an motivation of the characters. Anyone who misinterprets this point will surely fail to appreciate the movement of the work, of the character in conflict. 12

Poetic realism, as the term itself suggests, is a more allusive use of a familiar style. In ... O casi, even more than in his other works, Sánchez reaches a powerful level of communication by successfully transforming the stage experience into a poetic metaphor. Comparing ... O casi with another entry in the 1964 Theatre Festival, Rechani Agrait's Todos los ruiseñores cantan, Arriví notes:

> El autor, al igual que Rechani Agrait, ha proclamado la sencillez de la obra en cuanto a suceso y lenguaje. No hay duda que en la misma se simplifica la composición dramática y que su lenguaje lo es el imaginístico del pueblo de los bajos fondos compelido por Sánchez, pero al igual que en la obra de Rechani o Marqués, tras esta superficie, subyace en ...O casi el alma, la voluntad poética de metaforizar en una sola imagen todos los factores que confluyen en la creación de un mundo artístico de la escena. Este mundo termina por constituirse en acto subjetivo del dramaturgo y no pretendido reflejo realista de la existencia. 13

Arriví further describes the process of poetic transformation of the dramatic statement in the following evaluation of all the plays in the 1964 Festival:

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> A Todos los ruiseñores cantan, El apartamiento, ...O casi el alma, y Cóctel de don nadie, por dejabo de los diversos juegos de apariencias, de sus diferentes temáticas, de sus múltiples interpretaciones de la realidad y los prismáticos recursos de estilo, las une un nuevo concepto teatral, el del poeta transformador de la escena en contra del autor realista --fotógrafo impersonal de un trozo del cuerpo social-- el de creador de mundos en contra del almacenista de objetos. 14

Reviews of the play reflect the recognition of this merger of traditional realism and innovative technique, as can be seen in segments from two reviews, the first from the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña:

> En ...O casi el alma, Luis Rafael Sánchez discute un polémico punto de fe dentro de un ambiente y con un lenguaje de indiscutible acento puertorriqueño. La obra tiene un enfoque realista, al tiempo que el joven dramaturgo se vale de novísimos recursos de expresión teatral de acuerdo con su filiación generacional. Es notable su afán por darnos un drama sicológico dentro de nuevos moldes expresivos. 15

And from Lillian Skerrett in El Mundo:

> Con una técnica segura, Luis Rafael Sánchez ha escrito una obra teatral que podemos calificar de reto "...O casi el alma" . . . constituye un mentís a los que creen que las formas dramáticas convencionales han pasado de moda. El tiempo de acción es completamente lógico en esta obra; no hay flashbacks ni recursos espectaculares; es sencillamente el desarrollo de un tema a través de tres actos. Por esta razón el tema en sí tiene un impacto tremendo; sobre todo porque está expuesto de una manera realista, y aun la fraseología algo lírica de algunos pasajes, no logra suavizar el realismo casi brutal que sacude al espectador desde el primer acto. 16

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Arriví establishes Ionesco's influence on Sánchez, while at the same time he emphasizes Sánchez's originality. He observes,

> Lo que en Ionesco es sonoro espesor, oleaje de la nada, resulta en Luis Rafael Sánchez angustia ante el misterio, aparentemente disparatado del ser. 17

In another article, he continues his analogies:

> Lo que en Ionesco se fragua estoicismo sonreído ante el vano destino del hombre, se torna en Sánchez búsqueda de la razón perdida de Dios. Ionesco se resigna a lo absurdo de un acontecer en los límites del tiempo donde a la vida no le queda más remedio que desplazarse absurdamente hasta desaparecer; Sánchez resiste a dejarse vencer por la injusticia de haber nacido hacia el fondo de un saco que se cierra al cer /sic/ en él, y forcejea por romper el angustiante envoltorio. Para Ionesco, el tener conciencia de ser resulta una maldición; en Luis Rafael Sánchez, un doloroso privilegio para gestionar la divinidad. 18

It is approrpiate to refer to the dramatic technique of unmasking, used with particular success by Sánchez to develop the characters Antígona, in Antígona Pérez, and Maggie in ...O casi el alma. Their inner psychology and personalities are revealed through extensive dialogue (between Maggie and El Hombre, and Antígona and her major antagonists); through these intense interchanges the characters participate in a process of self exploration and eventually, self revelation. For Sánchez, this process includes the characters' becoming aware of self through conflict. Note the highly charged verbal duels that Antígona engages in; the more lyric exchanges between Píramo and Tisbe in La hiel; and the philo-

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sophical explorations about life and faith that Maggie and El Hombre conduct, followed later by interactions between Maggie and La Señora and El Enviado, all of whom reveal their attitudes toward religion and society through these dialogues. A focal point for an analysis of the dramatic growth in O casi is an examination of the development of Maggie as a multi-dimensional character. It will become apparent that her trajectory of self discovery is the compelling force behind the drama.

A crucial point to recognize in this analysis is the direction that various Sánchez characters take in their development. Maggie is just one more example of this direction which I have chosen to call the will to destruction. All of his characters approach this possibility and then either choose to embrace it or reject it. Their motivations are important in determining the ultimate action they take. Antígona, for example, moves toward her own destruction, her death, motivated by ideals; Píramo and Tisbe move toward their death motivated by their love for each other; Angela's destructive tendencies are manifested in the self-deprecation of being a prostitute; her will to destruction is motivated by social and political circumstances as well as a lack of self regard; in Maggie's case her choice to enact the miracle, to become la santa, makes her vulnerable to larger consequences, possible destruction by the people, who could turn against her, or by God, who could destroy her for the falseness of her conversion. It is our contention that these characters

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do not choose destruction as much as they are propelled towards it by the overriding passions that define them as characters: that is, in Antígona's case, her love of truth and justice' in La hiel, Píramo and Tisbe's love and mutual devotion; in Angela's case, her role as victim of social circumstances and sexual politics, as a woman living an unexamined life, impulsively drawn to the pimp Santiago, and consequently locked into a life of degradation and servitude.

In Maggie's case, however, one can pose the question, "Is she a victim too, or are there alternate interpretations of her circumstances?" Throughout the play Maggie strives to change the Man's plan, and mold it to her own conception of religion and life. In Act II, when she breathlessly returns to tell El Hombre of her success, of her acclamation as a saint, she struggles to renounce the role of instrument and assume responsibility for the miracle. By Act II she has, in effect, transformed the miracle into her miracle. We witness her changing view of herself from Maggie, the sex object, who refers to herself in the third person:

> Era cariñosa, claro que sí. ¡Le pagaban por ser cariñosa! A veces Maggie no quería . . . no podía ser cariñosa. . . pero aparecía un hombre con el bolsillo lleno de dinero. Nadie sabe lo que es el dinero para una muchacha como Maggie. Aunque Maggie no quisiera o no pudiera . . . se mostraba cariñosa. Así Maggie aprendió a mentir. Maggie conoció un día que no estaba cariñosa a un hombre muy cariñoso que le pedía un milagro (p. 77),

to Maggie, victim of her name, just as Antígona is a victim of hers,

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> un solo pecado. El tuyo. Te llamas Magdalena (p. 56),

to la santa, who grants audiences to the faithful and allows her name to be used to sponsor charitable clubs. Notwithstanding the lies, craziness and greed of El Hombre, she maintains her principles, to save the people's faith and to save God. Thus she reaffirms her autonomous vision of reality. Maggie's integrity contradicts her stereotyped role of prostitute. She has a strong sense of values and a sense of self. Throughout the play she insists upon her own definition of herself; she is a prostitute and not a saint, who nevertheless, maintains her own individual relationship with God and the Church.

Thus the Maggie at the end of the play decides to continue with the ostensible lie of her existence; however, she now takes responsibility for the events in her life. Her faith in God has not diminished, although her way of referring to God has changed. She has condemned herself to suffer the consequences of her decisions. Thus her final monologue is the dramatic conclusion to this process of self discovery. When she asserts, "Hágase así, su terrible voluntad, allá en su tierra como acá en mi infierno" (p. 85), we experience and understand the trajectory that has culminated in her recognition of her circumstance, her false "miracle" and the true miracle of her personal faith.

...O casi el alma has in common with the other three plays presented during the Séptimo Festival de Teatro Puerto-

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rriqueño in 1964, the realization of a new expression, through the scenography, of the traditional theme of Puerto Rican existence, as well as a desire to achieve universality through a more accessible dramatic language. This renovation in Puerto Rican stagecraft includes a focus on:

> lo psíquico con subordinación de lo externo a la evolución expresiva de lo primero . . . una propulsión de la escena de acuerdo con el lirismo creativo del autor y a su vez el director . . . un énfasis en el actor como símbolo existencial en lugar de imitador costumbrista. . . . 19

The cast consisted of Marta Romero as La Mujer, Jacabo Morales as El Hombre, Norma Candal as La Señora and Alberto Zayas as El Enviado, with direction by Pablo Cabrera, set and lighting design by Carlos Marichal, and wardrobe by Gloria Sáez.[20] José Emilio González considered it the best play in the Festival, "no es sólo promesa, sino realidad plasmada," valuable for posing vital existential questions about the role of religion in contemporary society.[21]

The two versions this writer saw, O casi el alma and A Miracle for Maggie, both directed by Rene Buch, were presented in English and in Spanish by the same cast of the Spanish Theatre Repertory Company (Compañía de Teatro Repertorio Español) during its 1974-1975 season and starred: Raúl Dávila (The Man), President of H.O.L.A. (Hispanic Organization of Latin Actors), a regular on the hispanic theatre scene in New York, whose successes include the role of George in Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, and

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most recently, La valija and La fiaca, both by Ricardo Talesnik; Isabel Segovia (The Woman-Maggie), who started her career in her native Peru and has performed for Repertorio Español in Yerma, Las Pericas, La vida es sueño, El hospital de los locos, Don Juan Tenorio, Electra Garrigó, and with the Dumé Spanish Theatre in Uncle Vanya; Charlotte Jones (The Lady), a character actress for over twenty-five years who has also taught acting and dancing and now heads the speech workshop at Repertorio Español; veteran Cuban actress, Ofelia González, who played La Señora in the Spanish language version, whose numerous credits include starring roles in La Celestina and Maruxa Vilalta's Esta noche juntos amándonos tanto, and Jorge Díaz's El lugar donde mueren los mamíferos; and Fernando Miyares (The Envoy), a familiar face at Repertorio Español where he has interpreted roles in Cruce de vías, Doña Rosita, The Spinster, Yerma, Blood Wedding, Electra Garrigó, Esta noche juntos amándonos tanto, and La Celestina.[22]

Roberto Federico's set utilized both real objects, the table and chair, as well as suggestions of objects, a window painted on a panel, rags hanging from simulated walls and suspended bars to create the disarray of Maggie's tiny room. Maggie's language, faithful to Sánchez's conception, was colloquial. However, The Envoy, The Lady and The Man, all possessed distinct speech patterns reflective of their different social classes. In our opinion, the English version

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was superior to the Spanish one, revealing greater measure and control. The following remarks are about the Spanish version, which, although competent, at times displayed acting which was too strident. For example, Segovia's Maggie lacked dramatic growth: it was a portrait in extremes; or she was shouting, running and crying, or she was angry and self possessed. Similarly, The Man's personality, complex and ambiguous, vacilating between con man and son of God in the written text, changed too abruptly in the stage version from Act I to Act II. It became increasingly difficult to believe in the religious conviction of The Man in Act I, as the audience was faced with the cynicism of The Man in Act II. This kind of shift, or displacement in the audience's judgment, usually creates a lack of identification with that particular character and a general sense of disbelief in the work, not an advantageous phenomenon for successful theatre. This is not to say that the two protagonists did not act together; occasionally there was a meeting, a touching, a communciation of anguish. To wit, a particularly affecting scene was the opening one, their initial encounter, a play on trust and mistrust; but even there, the tempo was off, since the exhange of dialogue was too rapid.

We believe the nuances in the staged version were not as well developed as in the written text. This is a difficult play for an audience, exploring as it does the subtleties of faith; thus its success hinges on the development

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and credibility of its characters. For this critic, the weakness in the dramatization of the play lies in a sense of our not having been presented with enough human material, with enough dramatic interpretation to sustain the theatrical illusion. Contrary to the experience of the written text, an element absent from the stage enactment was a sense of the full dimension of Sánchez's characters.

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Notes

. . . O casi el alma

[1] Luis Rafael Sánchez, . . . O casi el alma (Barcelona: Ediciones Rumbos, 1966). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2] Morfi, p. 44.

[3] El Piloto, XL, No. 1900 (V-9-64), p. 7.

[4] Morfi, p. 45.

[5] Morfi, p. 45.

[6] Morfi, p. 46.

[7] Arriví, "'O casi el alma,' Nueva Gestión de Dios . . .," El Mundo, April 25, 1964, without pagination.

[8] Gassner, p. 190.

[9] Charles Pilditch, "'O casi el alma': A Bilingual Production," LATR 9, i (1975), p. 85.

[10] Woodyard, "Theater of the Absurd in Spanish America," p. 184.

[11] Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p. XVIII.

[12] John K. Knowles, "Luisa Josefina Hernández: The Labyrinth of Form," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 140.

[13] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 168.

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[14] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 169.

[15] Anónimo, "'...O casi el alma': Se Estrena Hoy Obra de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, April 23, 1964, without pagination.

[16] Lillian Skerrett, "'...O casi el alma' es un Reto," El Mundo, April 25, 1964, p. 53.

[17] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 168.

[18] Arriví, "'O casi el alma,' Nueva Gestión de Dios. . .," without pagination.

[19] Arriví, Areyto Mayor, p. 155.

[20] O casi, p. 9.

[21] José Emilio González, "'O casi el alma' de Luis Rafael Sánchez," El Mundo, June 1, 1964, p. 18.

[22] Program Notes for O casi, Repertorio Español, 1974-1975.

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La pasión según Antígona Pérez

Throughout the ages writers, especially dramatists, have drawn their material from the Antigone myth. Its recurrence and reelaboration in literature evince the perennial fascination of artists with mythological themes and the necessity for each generation to produce its own version of the ancient story.[1] The form that the myth assumes depends on the intentions and capacity of the artists and on the relationship of the author to the thought and literary conventions of his or her time. As Francisco Arriví notes in his comments on the Undécimo Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño:

> La pasión según Antígona Pérez, que sin duda es, hasta el momento, la creación teatral más significativa del joven escritor, se inspira, como Hilarión /Méndez Ballester/ en Edipo, Rey, en la tragedia griega Antígona, una y otra de Sófocles. Al igual que Méndez Ballester, Sánchez se sirve de argumento y de los personajes del dramaturgo heleno, recaracterizados en un ambiente hispanoamericano para exponer dramáticamente el conflicto del ánimo amoroso libre de conciencia frente a la voluntad del estado tiránico; amor, hay que notar, que se agranda en la crucifixión como la pasión cristiana. . . .
>
> Sánchez efectúa, por arte metafórico, una reencarnación directa de Antígona (Antígona Pérez, Creonte Molina) a tenor con un'estilo épico' . .. que se sirve de actualidades para intensificar, por contraste con la esencialidad del drama griego, la universalidad del acto puro de amor sacrificado por la tiranía. 2

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Both universality of theme and concreteness of characterization are found in Antígona. Similarly, it is open to numerous levels of interpretation, from a socio-political focus to a more psychological one. Our analytic approach to this work, evident in our interpretation of Sánchez's other plays, is eclectic, integrating and evaluating the available criticism with the intention of fully exploring its dramatic and literary possibilities. We agree that:

> To isolate morality from drama is to reduce drama to its lowest function--that of objective esthetic appreciation while the consideration of drama only as a "well-wrought urn" might increase our appreciation of the intrinsic beauty contained therein, such an attitude would ultimately fail to reveal to the fullest the universal value of drama by divorcing that which is most human, the conduct of men, from our most penetrating form of examination. 4

Several of the themes developed in his other plays are also explored in Antígona Pérez. It is in Antígona, however, that the phenomenon of conceptual and stylistic evolution is most apparent, and consequently, where these major concerns are most skillfully integrated. These concerns include: the need for justice, also present in La hiel; the corrupt nature of the major institutions of power, such as the Church, the military, the government; the fragility of human relations, also developed in Los ángeles; the prevalence of greed as another element in human nature, personified by Santiago, the pimp, in Los ángeles, and doña Ugo, the landlady, in La hiel. Arrivi further observes that

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in Sánchez's Antígona, our author does not respond to:

> . . . institución política alguna, sino a una compulsión humanística ante el conflicto del que ama y se niega a apartarse de lo amado o a rendirlo en un cóctel de la nada; pretende hablarle no sólo a los hombres de las Américas sino a los hombres de todo el mundo. Llama a un mundo cristiano, paradójicamente, a respetar y comprender el amor en aquella situación en que por reclamar su "libertad de amar" engendra su vía crucis. 5

J. B. Phillips links Antígona with the epic tradition, as does Arriví. Phillips, however, adds:

> It is true that great passions, extraordinary deeds, and the future of nations are involved. The dramatist does sustain his characters, avoids strong propagandizing, and produces a play which may be interpreted as both a personal and collective tragedy. Above all he has limited himself to dramatizing the problem of personal freedom, and has not attempted to include all the effects of tyranny. 6

There is critical concensus that with Antígona Pérez Sánchez reveals his artistic capacities in their full maturity.[7] As Angelina Morfi observes in her evaluation of Sánchez's dramatic trajectory, "Su teatro comienza en un mundo evasivo, de recuerdos y agonías, en la última vuelta de la ilusión o enfrentándose a la realidad con una actitud fatalista que luego cambia a una conciliadora con la cirunstancia dramatizada, hasta convertirse en el ánimo de protesta y lucha de Antígona Pérez."[8] Dauster places Sánchez's contribution within a broader Latin American context in the following statement:

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> Ha habido en los últimos años unas cuantas tentativas serias por recrear en sentido actual, relevante, no la forma exterior de la tragedia clásica sino la interior, la pasión humana y el inevitable sacrificio que yacen en su fondo: La muerte no entrará en palacio, de René Marqués; Medusa, de Emilio Carballido; Los huéspedes reales, de Luisa Josefina Hernández, para citar tres de las más destacadas. Ahora, con su Antígona Pérez, Luis Rafael Sánchez hace una notable contribución a la tragedia y toma lugar destacado entre los dramaturgos del mundo hispánico. 9

One of the most striking originalities in Sánchez's version of Antígona is her motivation for defying the state: in the Greek version, Antígona justifies her action by claiming that the dead would be denied eternal rest, if the body were not buried; in the French version, her rebellion is more capricious; however, the hispanic Antígona defies the order of the dictator, Creón Molina, because she is committed to the defense of a human and political cause. Imprisoned in the dungeon of the palace she wants to show that only she is free.[10] Thus, her refusal to reveal the burial place of her friends' bodies, although it constitutes a suicidal act, nevertheless is consistent, authentic and deeply felt. Antígona, in her capacity as citizen of Molina, challenges the terrestial authority of Creón, dictator of Molina. Thus a direct confrontation is established between Creón's law and Antígona's individual conscience. Using the framework of the Greek myth as a metaphor for the affirmation of human values over static, hierarchical values and despotic civil law, Sánchez creates a theatrical expe-

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rience which allows us to participate in Antígona's "passion," as well as her search for freedom and authenticity.

While Antígona forcefully dramatizes the conflict between a decadent political system and the oppressed masses, in the person of a woman, who at the same time is a youth, there is also an existentialist dimension to that conflict. Antígona struggles with personal choices: to bury the Tavárez brothers; to stand firm in the face of Creón's bribery and threats to find out where they are buried; Pilar's cajoling; her mother's exhortations; and Irene's betrayal; in effect, to decide whether to live or to die. She achieves self-realization as she exercizes free choice. It is the totality of those decisive acts that define her. This independent spirit profoundly disconcerts General Creón, who becomes progressively more excited. Antígona's serenity contrasts with Creón's distress, which ultimately reveals, rather than belies the fact that she is, indeed, winning a moral victory over Creón. The issue of power is crucial in this play. Who ultimately controls Antígona's destiny, Creón or Antígona? The existential elements are significant here: we are the creators of our lives, through our decisions we invent our lives. Antígona's decision to die reverberates onto the other characters and consequently affects them and changes them. Since at the end of the play it is made to appear

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that Antígona has confessed, in effect has betrayed her own ideals, we are left believing the existential position that what was most significant was not the end result of Antígona's sacrifice, but rather the process, the struggle that she experienced, the choices that she made along the way. She fulfills the most rigorous requisite of existentialism; at no time is she inauthentic. She may waver --she suffered visibly upon learning about Fernando and Irene's betrayal--but she never faltered in her decision to adhere to her principles. As Alyce de Kuehne observes, "The epigraph from Camus at the beginning of the book established the even broader existentialist affiliation of this Spanish American author: 'Nada en el mundo merece que se aparte uno de lo que más ama.'"[11]

Ironically, although Antígona never leaves her prison, she is the center around which the action and conflicts of all the other characters revolve. Because of Antígona, Creón experiences fear and uneasiness, and is forced to face himself and to recognize that the justification for his wielding power is not the people's love for him, but rather his brute strength as demonstrated by the actual military support he enjoys. Similarly, she exercizes her moral influence on each of the other characters. She forces them to reexamine their narrow points of view about life and duty. The dramatic text allows us to observe her

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effect on them. In his review of the play, Dauster insists on her tragic dimension:

> Pero esta nueva Antígona no es ni un pretexto de propaganda política ni un refrito seudoclásico, sino un personaje trágico en el sentido más riguroso. A medida que avanza la obra, sufre Antígona un progresivo e inevitable proceso de autodescubrimiento, en sentido etimológico de des-cubrirse, de quitarse capa tras capa de lo que creía ser hasta verse entera en la percepción trágica. 12

How does Sánchez physically portray his protagonist, this woman whose moral strength is capable of symbolically reclaiming a corrupt continent?

> Antígona Pérez resume en su físico el cruce de razas en que se asienta el ser hispanoamericano. En la anatomía angular de su cuerpo no hay curvas. El perfil es de una puntillosa rectitud, un pretexto las manos para diez huesos conversadores. Entre sus rasgos destacan el pelo lacio caído sobre los hombros, los pechos apretados, la boca carnosa (p. 13).

Her moral resolve is reflected in her walk, her gestures, her will, "De caminar es resuelta. Resuelta es también de gesto. Y de voluntad. Nunca vacilará. Ni siquiera cuando pida la muerta" (p. 13). Likewise, the emotional price Antígona pays for her moral stance is reflected in her physical appearance: "una vejez que nada tiene que ver con la edad la posee a ratos, especialmente en la réplica que devuelve a los que la atropellan" (p. 13). She wears a wide black skirt, a long sleeved black sweater, and flat shoes. She is free from external ostentation,

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from jewelry or other ornamentation, "No lleva medias, ni prendas, ni hebillas en el pelo" (p. 7). She is not more than twenty-five. She suffers as much owing to the human wrongs done to her, as to "la manera de vivir su vida al día con la eternidad "(p. 13). Passion is a significant factor in the play: Antígona's intense feelings for the Tavárez brothers, for her father, her tender love for Fernando; Pilar's passion for power; Irene's passion for Fernando, her intensity in defending Fernando's renunciation of the values they all once shared, as well as the passion with which she justifies their love for each other. Each one of the above is an element in Antígona's decision to be true to herself and to her ideals, and, ultimately, her decision to die.

She speaks with an intimate rhythm. Her opening speech sets the tone of the play; it is political, in the encompassing way that all of life is political:

> "Sí. Quiero hablar. De los que crecimos en una América dura, América amarga, América tomada. De las generaciones, dolorosamente, estranguladas. Los periódicos han inventado una historia que no es cierta, los periódicos enfermos de fiebre amarilla (p. 14).

The rhythm of her language in the soliloquoy is reminiscent of someone reciting, or declaiming. There is a self-consciousness about language on Antígona's part, that is she utters a poetic phrase and then justifies it. For example, "Cierto que soy joven. Pero, esta juventud del

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cuerpo ha sido acunada por la triste vejez del alma. ¡Poesía! Claro que poesía. Si tengo veinticinco años y voy a morir mañana (p. 14). She explains the literary allusion to her own name and describes her pre-consciousness about her historical "destiny," that of the original Greek Antigone, thus putting into perspective her name, her role, her sense of identity. She is never a mere symbol for the audience or for herself. She is at every moment self-conscious, that is, conscious of herself as a decision making person. This self-consciousness in his protagonist is a device that Sánchez uses to intensify the dramatic growth in the play, as well as to bring the character, Antígona, to life. There is an approaching and a distancing from her own name, in effect, from the fulfillment of her identity, as she begins to tell her version of the truth. She says:

> Comienza con mi nombre, este Antígona tenso con el que satisfizo mi padre su inclinación a lo heroico. Sus amigos, militares igual que él, eran a admirarme. 'Ven acá, Antígona pequeñita, dónde están tus hermanos.' Yo miraba a mi alrededor, sonreía y no sabía qué decir. Porque no había aprendido que para llamarse Antígona se necesitan hermanos. Ni sabía que Antígona era la muchacha joven que se decide por la muerte (p. 14).

The flowing rhythm of the language, particularly in Antígona's speeches, compels the reader to move with it. As Angelina Morfi asserts:

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> Vemos como el lenguaje responde estrictamente al modo de ser de los personajes, no hay regodeo en expresiones bellas que no reflejen el carácter o la situación. La frase poética surge natural; y la poesía que satura su teatro anterior está ahí pero está íntimamente ligado al desarrollo del tema, del acontecer dramático y del ser heroico, traspasando el estilo periodístico, directo y escueto y el diálogo de lógica incisiva. 13

Likewise, the directness of her language is disarming; it is at once poetic as well as taut and concise, as in the statement, "ni sabía que Antígona era la muchacha joven que se decide por la muerte" (p. 14). In Antígona's speeches often one word will become the focal point, which when repeated creates a distinct rhythm in her language. In the following selection the word orden is the crucial word that structures and intensifies the impact of the passage:

> No hablemos de orden para no confundir. Orden que nace de la diaria inspección militar. Orden que nace del diario asentimiento de cabezas. Orden que nace del diario aplauso de las manos. Enfermo, pobre, caótico orden que impone el ordenado Creón. (En un grito perfecto.) No (p. 20).

Technique is at least as important as theme in Antígona, with Sánchez achieving a complex level of dramatic composition in this work. We are in complete agreement with Dauster when he asserts, "Quizá el elemento más impresionante sea su estructura," and proceeds to describe the internal structure of the play:

> Al adaptar una obra clásica, supo Sánchez adaptar también la estructura, en sentido

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> creador; en vez de emplear todo el aparato ramplón de la seudotragedia histórica, echó mano de la forma clásica estricta: la confrontación de agonista con antagonista. 14

Consequently, the play is a tighly structured series of conflictive interchanges staged, or more accurately, choreographed to complement each other. The multiple effects upon Antígona of the visits by Creón, the Monseñor, Irene, Pilar and Aurora Marzán serve to deplete her inner strength, to wear away at her soul, as well as to force her to turn inward. Morfi further corroborates, "Cada visita es una nueva caída en su sufrimiento pero también es una afirmación de su libertad interior."[15]

This total view of Antígona embraces the persona, as well as the agonizante, in Unamunian terminology. The term passion, derived from the Bible denotes suffering; through this process, Antígona reaches her very center. The structure of the play affords the reader-spectator the same possibility of discovery. The internal structure Sánchez chooses for Antígona reflects his theories about drama:

> La crónica está dividida en dos partes con estructura de largo acto. A su vez, cada parte se subdivide en escenas, aunque esta segunda división tiene como único propósito reducir la complicación del diseño de luces, fondos musicales, cambio de vestuario, etc. (p. 12).

These ideas about simplicity of staging and manageability of cast size are developed by both Sánchez and Chocrón in the interviews included in Appendices 1 and 2. Bravo-Elizondo makes a valuable observation about the structure of the play

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and its relationship with the crónicas of early Latin America. He says:

> Luis Rafael Sánchez ha titulado su drama como una 'crónica americana en dos actos'. Las crónicas fueron la primera manifestación literaria en la América recién descubierta. Característico de la crónica es la arbitrariedad, la falta de unidad en su composición, deslumbrados muchas veces los redactores por los sucesos que narraban o las maravillas que se presentaban ante sus ojos. Sánchez ha utilizado esta estructura para dar forma dramática a La pasión según Antígona Pérez, logrando una simbiosis entre contenido y forma él destaca en las acotaciones escenográficas al iniciarse el drama.
>
> > 'Como el recuerdo es arbitrario, los personajes tendrán las más diversas entradas y salidas. . . . Como el recuerdo es inmenso, ilimitado, el movimiento de Antígona Pérez no estará confinado a área alguna, aunque ella tome el centro del escenario frente a la plataforma (p. 12)'.
>
> La arbitrariedad en el desarrollo de la obra es, pues, un recurso consciente, un tipo de narración épica. 16

Sánchez, in common with most Latin American dramatists today, provides lengthy and specific stage directions within the text. This is part of a new professionalism in the Latin American theatre, where the dramatists themselves provide the necessarily detailed stage directions for their own works. The previous impreciseness in the playwrights' own stage specifications frequently posed a problem for theatrical interpretation, and left many areas open to the director's discretion, with often unfortunate, or at the very least, unharmonious results. Sánchez directly informs

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us that "El mural sustituye abiertamente el ciclorama tradicional" (p. 12). Nor is there any furniture, "Si cualquier escena precisara de asientos podría recurrirse a los escalones" (p. 12). The stage is by no means stark, however, filled as it is with the moveable panels that refer to the actual political situation in Latin America:

> DEMOCRACIA CRISTIANA, LO HARAN LOS DESCAMISADOS, PATRIA O MUERTE, 26 DE JULIO, BOSCH PARA PRESIDENTE, YANKIS GO HOME, EL CANAL ES DE PANAMA, MINAS DE BOLIVIA PARA LOS BOLIVIANOS (p. 12).

As we have previously observed, lighting and music are elements of primary importance in all Sánchez's work. Since "Theatre is the medium of dramatic art, and effectiveness in art consists in using the medium rather than concealing it,"[17] let us observe how in Antígona Pérez he establishes the importance of lighting in the first stage directions, "La luz es la pincelada definitiva en la creación de la atmósfera de absoluta teatralidad que debe prevalecer en la crónica" (p. 12). From the first scene we are forced to pay attention to Antígona's soliloquoy which is punctuated by light, "un chorro cónico de luz se estrella sobre la prisión de Antígona Pérez. El resto del escenario está sumido en sombra" (p. 13). When she ends her soliloquoy, "El chorro cónico de luz se evapora (p. 14). Sánchez then proceeds to prepare the setting for the rapid paced scene that follows, full of movement, numerous entrances and exits and an intensifying rhythm. His

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complete control of the theatrical process is apparent in these stage directions:

> La melodía elemental ejectuada a contrabajo aumenta hasta alcanzar brillantez. Las ocho gigantescas columnas que forman el mural regio rotan vertiginosamente deteniéndose en el panel que acomoda, simétricamente láminas de metal con anuncios de gaseosas, cervezas, cigarros, señales de tránsito y toda bulla de propaganda. A lapsos intermitentes se encienden reflejos luminosos que dividen el escenario en islas de luz, hay una isla en el centro de la plataforma, otras en los dos pasadizos rectangulares, etc. De repente docenas de páginas de periódico levantan raudo vuelo por todo el espacio escénico. Dos mujeres con capas livianas, apenas visible el rostro, cruzan de derecha a izquierda persiguiendo las páginas. Tres hombres, uno de ellos con bastón, emergen del foso de la orquesta y al igual que las mujeres persiguen las páginas de los periódicos. Parejas de adolescentes, luego una enfermera, inmediatamente un militar, se suman a la caza. Por todas las vías de acceso asoman curiosos que forman una histérica multitud de doscientas cabezas en persecución de las páginas. El ritmo se apresta poderosamente. Los periodistas--cinco hombres fornidos, elásticos, vestidos con pantalón oscuro y chaqueta deportiva--se cuelgan simiescamente de los pasadizos rectangulares y, en carrera desenfrenada, llegan hasta el plano inmediatamente anterior a las candilejas. Los periodistas se acompañan de una cámara fotográfica liviana que no obstaculiza el sinuoso movimiento que define su presencia. La multitud lee vorazmente las páginas de periódico que ha logrado alcanzar (p. 14.)

He has orchestrated the "islands of light," the flying newspapers, the men, women, couples, and finally the multitude, into a rhythmic conglomerate, avid to know what the newspapers have to say. Thus "theatricality springs

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logically from the play's philosophic underpinning, and the diverse elements reinforce rather than conflict with one another."[18] Into this hysterical atmosphere, he introduces his five newspapermen whose presence serves to refocus the action from generalized, febrile activity, to concentrated attention on each "periodista." Sánchez employs the now familiar scaffold structure, used with particular success by award winning set designer Ming Cho Lee, in numerous Joseph Papp, New York Shakespeare Festival productions. His five reporters, omnipresent throughout the chronicle, hang, as Sánchez indicates, "simiescamente" from the scaffolding. They too, rush to grab the flying sheets. They identify themselves, "One" through "Five," first according to their newspaper, and then with their own names. They smile as they introduce themselves, but subsequently adopt a cold, official attitude, the personification of loudspeakers, when they read their "news." In this initial exposure to the chorus of journalists, the order of presentation of their news is significant. First, the "local news" indicating that Antígona Pérez, "quien desafiara a la autoridad de nuestras máximas instituciones con su participación en los sucesos del pasado trece de abril sigue detenida en los sótanos de palacio" (p. 16). Every other reportage refers to the local scene: that the Generalísimo Creón Molina will receive the Very REverend Monseñor Bernardo Escudero; and more information on the evil Antígona Pérez who has resisted questioning by the

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highest authorities in the Republic, after burying the bodies of the rebels of April 13.

What appears as a problem in staging, however, is that huge number, "doscientas cabezas en persecución de las páginas" (p. 14). Sánchez has previously assented that it is unreasonable, uneconomical, and unwieldy to require too many actors in a play; this applies to elaborate sets and costumes also. Surely then, these "doscientas cabezas" are a symbolic or metaphorical quantity. In O casi, however, Sánchez adheres to his previously expressed awareness of, and sensitivity to the myriad problems involved in an unwieldy cast, and utilizes the device of allowing scenes requiring confrontations among many people to take place offstage. He also has Maggie actively describe these scenes to El Hombre and reenact them for him. Thus large numbers of people are not necessary, since she can symbolically evoke the action of the scene. This scene with the newspaperman, however, is the only one suggesting such a large number of actors. My doubts about the large number of secondary characters in the text, have been proven unfounded, at least in the play's premiere performance in 1968, at the Undécimo Festival de Teatro, judging by these words of Juan Luis Márquez:

> 'La pasión según Antígona Pérez' tiene, además un amplio elenco secundario, integrado por soldados y otro tipo de militares, eclesiásticos, diplomáticos, criados, mujeres y hombres del pueblo,

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> ciudadanos de la 'República de Molina', lo que el director Pablo Cabrera, maestro de la 'Mise-en-scène' movió con evidente efectividad. 19

Nevertheless, other critics have also mentioned the huge number of extras needed in various scenes in the play. Bravo-Elizondo comments on Scene 6, the banquet scene, where "quinientos militares," as well as the whole ecclesiastic procession are received by Creón and Pilar. Notes Bravo-Elizondo

> La expresión de 'quinientos militares' que hemos subrayado, nos recuerda el lirismo de Federico García Lorca, desplegado en La casa de Bernarda Alba, cuando comenta que 'doscientas mujeres' desfilan ante Bernarda para expresar su dolor por la muerte del marido. 20

An illustration of the concept that the stage can, in part, become the message,[21] is found in Antígona Pérez where the symmetrical mise en scène construction precisely reflects the ordered sequence of confrontations that Antígona has, first with Aurora (Act I, Scene 2), then with Creón (Act I, Scene 3), Monseñor Bernardo (Act I, Scene 7), Irene (Act II, Scene 3), and finally Pilar (Act II, Scene 4). Thus the directions for the stage design reflect the essential symmetry and symbolism of the play. Just as Ernesto Sábato maintains, that in the modern novel "cabría decir que el paisaje es un estado de alma"[22] so it is true for the staging in Antígona Pérez, that the barrenness of the set emphasizes the loneliness and spiritual isolation

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of our protagonist. Dauster refers to Sánchez's "highly effective use of split staging, choral effects and double levels action."[23] Thus the staging is a source of innovation which frees the actors and allows them maximum flexibility, visibility and movement. The additional use of direct address, particularly by Antígona, effects a more intimate actor-audience relationship. In this play Sánchez offers an excellent example of the integration of form and theme. All scenographic effects are coordinated in order to achieve the maximum dramatic impact. For example, at the end of Act I, Scene 3, Creón's exit and the imminent sexual assault on Antígona by Creón's soldiers is marked by the parallel use of music and light, "La música elemental ejecutada a contrabajo vuelve a escucharse. La luz empieza a eclipsar en la prisión. Con estudiada lentitud los soldados se acercan a Antígona Pérez" (p. 48). Bravo-Elizondo further notes that the use of these two elements "es todo un lenguaje espacial artodiano" and also observes an emphasis in the play "al lenguaje mínimo y gestual."[24]

Sánchez's Brechtian concept of staging in this play allows Antígona to be a participant in the dramatic action as well as a spectator. He utilizes two levels: a lower one where Antígona is, which is actually the space that is her jail; and the upper platform, or level, where the other scenes take place, between Creón and Pilar, the newsmen,

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and Creón and the Monseñor. Thus Antígona can view the action that is taking place in another part of the palace and comment on it, changing the focus of the action, and at the same time enriching the possibilities for development of a particular scene. The loneliness and constancy of Antígona's vigil are also emphasized by her spatial separation from the rest of the characters, since physically she is on a lower plane than they are. In her role as spectator, Antígona uses the soliloquoy to communicate information to the audience. In the following example she uses this unique stance, at once removed and yet involved, to describe Pilar Varga, the First Lady of the Republic of Molina. The stage directions indicate how this technique functions: "La Primera Dama empieza a ponerse la falda. Antígona se desplaza hacia la derecha aunque señalando insistentemente a la plataforma" (p. 53). Antígona then proceeds to describe Pilar:

> Pilar Varga, Primera Dama de la República de Molina, novia de Creón desde los años en que el hoy Generalísimo era aprendiz de militar, raso aprendiz, torpe aprendiz, sangriento aprendiz, ha pulido su roce, su gesto, su sensibilidad. Ha pulido también su ambición, una ambición sacudida por la codicia, una ambición que no descansa. Dentro de un momento la veremos acosar al Generalísimo, exigirle una conducta, recordarle lo que él quisiera olvidar: que está en el poder por la fuerza. Pilar Varga, Primera Dama de la República de Molina (p. 54).

Sánchez assures the attention of his audience by expert manipulation of the requisite theatrical devices: lighting,

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music, visual and sound effects. In Antígona Pérez he combines the elements of lights and music in a syncopated form. When the lights become more intense, so does the music. The musical background is introduced in the following way: "Paralelo al oscurecimiento de la sala nace, en sincopado ritmo, una melodía elemental ejecutada a contrabajo" (p. 11). The simplicity of the form creates a unique atmosphere in the play. The music does not overwhelm the public's senses, but rather indicates to them the important moments in the work. For example, the confusion surrounding the entrance of the newspapermen is intensified by the increase in volume of the melody, that reaches "brillantez" (p. 14). At the end of Act I, in the third scene, there is an unexpected halt in the music, to emphasize Antígona's torture and her subsequent scream (p. 48). And as Bravo-Elizondo observes about the end of Act I, "Es un close-up, en que no es el personaje quien da relieve a la acción, sino el conjunto armónico de luz, sonido, y actor."[25] In the final scene of Act II the music stops, with the execution of Antígona. The intensification of the music causes great tension in the reader-public. The opposite effect is the measured calm in the voices of the newspapermen (p. 122), who recount the major local and international events of the day, one of which is Antígona's death. The contrast between the newsmen's emotionless voices and the reader-public's unbearable tension is a

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revealing indictment of the insensitivity prevalent in society today. Sánchez integrates one of the newsmen's major props, the camera, into his luminotechniques. The reporters punctuate their entrances and exits with their own lighting schemes, "Al terminar el 'último parte de prensa los periodistas disparan su cámara fotográfica. El relámpago es magnífico" (p. 18). Creón, too, acts as his own director when he demands, "Luces, luces" on numerous occasions (Act I, Scene 4; Act II, Scene 1).

Although Brecht's epic theatre cannot be reduced to a mere catalogue of characteristics, according to Bravo-Elizondo "sus novedosos aportes han caracterizado al menos una tendencia que ha encontrado terreno fértil en un continente en que el teatro es una herramienta con una función humana y social: Latinoamérica."[26] Given the widespread influence of Brecht on the Latin American theatre, it is no surprise that our author incorporates various epic elements such as: direct address; relating by one character of events that have already occurred; abrupt transition from scene to scene; and generally stark mise en scène. Arriví draws parallels between Brecht and Sánchez when he notes that the action of the play develops according to "una dinámica de teatro épico propio de la escena contemporánea la cual en Bertolt Brecht, por ejemplo, se da muy influida por lo periodístico y cinematográfico."[27] Both Alyce de Kuehne and Angelina Morfi document the presence of

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epic theatre in Antígona Pérez. Professor Morfi observes:

> Dentro de la tendencia épica está el don de ubicuidad con que dota a Antígona para que pueda comentar y protestar los argumentos de sus antagonistas en Palacio. La transición de un acto a otro por un efecto de luz que ordena Creón. . . es un detalle técnico alienante y a la vez caracterizador del personaje que corresponde también a esta tendencia. Así como la música . . . aquí no tiene enlace sentimental con los sucesos ni los ilustra, más bien es antisentimental. La mímica y los pasos rítmicos de carácter coreográfico ejecutados por el coro constituido por la prensa o los periodistas, la multitud, y con los efectos de anuncios y noticias proyectadas sobre el escenario, completan la función distanciadora. 28

And according to critic Juan Luis Márquez, even the directing style of Pablo Cabrera incorporates Brechtian techniques, including "dinámica y controlada actuación de muchos de los personajes y . . . escenas estáticas, con . . . vigoroso e imaginativo ritmo interno.[29]

Beginning with Antígona's first appearance, her soliloquoy, the play's structure includes the Brechtian device, direct address to the audience. She uses the soliloquoy to establish her identity: who she is, what she believes, and later, why there are necessarily two versions of her story, "Nombre, Antígona Pérez. Edad, veinticinco años. Continente, América. Color . . . (sonríe). No importa" (p. 13). This presentation of herself corresponds to the role that the corifeo played in the Greek tragedy. Later she uses direct address to comment on Creón's rigid, dicta-

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torial behavior towards her, "(Al público) Característica de Creón de la ofensiva. Es su política de lucha" (p. 38). Occasionally Antígona directly addresses Creón, however, she refers to him in the third person, or uses his title, rather than directly using the subject pronoun, "Creón es un luchador formidable" (p. 38). This device allows Antígona to distance herself from Creón, even in direct address. Consequently she can remain in her own space and not allow his person, his power and authority to invade her totally. Another example of this direct address to the public is Antígona's sarcastic reference to Creón's manner of refining his speech, "con afectada elegancia" (p. 39).

Antígona, "firme en su convicción" (p. 48), imagines aloud how Creón's soldiers will torture her. She clearly establishes her moral position here, "Violarán mi cuerpo con la esperanza de que violan mi espíritu. Como si la lealtad a mis hermanos no estuviera preparada al sacrificio" (p. 48). The chant-like, ritual quality of the language is particularly clear in this passage, as evidenced by her short sentences punctuated by the use of the future tense:

> Harán lo más horrible . . . violarán mi cuerpo con la esperanza de que violan mi espíritu. . . . Harán lo más horrible en sus términos. El cuerpo, me mancharán el cuerpo. . . . Pero me dejarán inmaculado el corazón. . . . Harán lo más horrible (p. 48).

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The rhythm of Antígona's cadences sustains a tension that both begins and ends with the same terrifying phrase, "Harán lo más horrible." Sánchez's use of Brechtian devices facilitates the creation of an epic heroine. As Bravo-Elizondo observes:

> Luis Rafael Sánchez utiliza los elementos paradramáticos en el sentido épico brechtiano, en que los hace cumplir una función reforzativa de la acción de los personajes, armonizando el bagaje cultural drmático en una forma teatral americana y universal a la vez. Porque Antígona no es sólo la muchacha que muere por un ideal, sino que es el símbolo de la familia, de la sociedad, en la lucha contra el Estado y lo que él representa.

And although Bravo-Elizondo suggests that the conclusion of the play "deja de ser un fin en sí, para convertirse en un medio que provoca más un análisis de ideas que de comentarios sobre los personajes, línea típicamente brechtiana,"[30] we believe, however, that the analysis of the characters in this play is as challenging as the analysis of ideas, as we will see shortly.

"Morir es la cuestión menos seria del hombre" (p. 81), asserts Antígona and early in the play she challenges her mother, "¡Qué sabes tú de morir o vivir!" (p. 29). As we see in these statements and others like it, life and death are crucial issues here. The verbal interchanges between Antígona and her antagonists provide a perfect platform for the articulation of their personal philosophies about life

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and death. What they are willing to die for and live for is revealed as each one approaches Antígona and tries to convince her to opt for his or her choice. Thus the crucial conflictive elements in the play are revealed through Antígona's successive confrontations with each antagonist, through both the dialogue and narrative. Antígona's inner struggle manifests itself not through subservience or escapism, but rather through heroic resistance to the pressures around her. Similarly we can trace the stages in the interior development of her character with each person's visit.

Let us examine the first interaction between Antígona and her mother, Aurora Marzán. From darkness, Aurora Marzán emerges, climbing up from the orchestra pit to the stage level. Physically she is "una mujer frágil, vestida con traje de gasas que resalta su enjutez. Los hombros los guarece en un chal lila. Por las manos breves le corretea un pañolito de encajes" (p. 21). She represents the Latin American attached to the past, who is influenced by ancestry, background and economic position, while her daughter, Antígona, represents the younger generation that is not willing to sacrifice moral reforms from material comfort. In this scene Sánchez captures the essential ambivalence in their mutual desire to protect each other from the painful facts of their present existence. In their relationship we perceive a certain openness, a tentative

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desire to share their inner fears and emotions, yet at the same time, a closedness, an inability to approach each other intimately, to overcome the barriers that separate them. What is apparent is the eternal conflict between youth and age, the political and moral differences between their generations, the sense that Aurora clearly represents a generation linked to the past, while Antígona represents the present.

An example of the difference in values between mother and daughter is Aurora's judging Antígona because she is in prison, "como un criminal . . . como una mujer sin clase . . . sin apellido. . . . (p. 22). Antígona responds to her mother's class conscious remark this way, "Mamá, las mujeres que tú llamas sin clase, sin apellidos, tampoco merecen una condena injusta" (p. 22). Aurora complains that Antígona doesn't understand her, that she has never understood her and in a statement which supposedly clarifies her position, Aurora reveals her anti-egalitarian views, thus separating herself even more from her daughter:

> Quiero decir que hay gente para todo, gente para quien estar en la cárcel no supone una afrenta, gente que no tiene mayor aspiración que la de comer tres veces al día. Tú no estás hecha para esos extremos. Es otra piel la tuya. Bien criada, celebrada por un escogido círculo de gente de primera, hija y nieta de militares, señalada por un apellido reverenciado en toda la República. ¡Nada menos que una Pérez y Santisteban! (p. 22).

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Antígona replies that the kind of social categories her mother is referring to, do not correspond to Antígona's own way of looking at the world. In a statement that draws analogies about life from the realm of drama, Aurora insists: "El mundo es de una sola manera, Antígona. Personajes principales, personajes secundarios, comprarsas. Así fue siempre, así es siempre, así será siempre" (p. 22). Antígona associates her mother's attitude with the voice of the majority who resist change in the name of maintaining the status quo "alegando que si hasta entonces lo han aceptado para qué necesitan cambiar" (p. 23). This scene establishes quite early in the play (Act I, Scene 2), one of its major themes, the will to resist change in the face of a challenge. In this case, we see the necessity of the ruling class, personified by Creón, Pilar, and Monseñor Bernardo, to solidify its position in the face of a direct challenge to its sovereignty by the revolutionaries, as well as by Antígona. In the interaction between Antígona and her mother we see the articulation of this resistance to change. Antígona addresses the public:

> Mamá es inflexible cuando de definiciones se trata . . . . Cuando un pueblo se levanta contra su tirano, lo condena. Cuando los negros se levantan contra sus blancos, los condena. Cuando un esclavo se levanta contra su amo, lo condena. Defiende tajante su actitud alegando que si hasta entonces lo han aceptado para qué necesitan cambiar. . . . La voz de Mamá es peligrosamente mayoritaria. A su lado están los más, los que se resisten a todo cambio. . . . (pp. 22-23).

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Aurora's mundane questions, "Where do you sleep?," "Is the food good?," serve as a sharp contrast to Antígona's existential concern: the coming to terms with her decision to resist Creón's pressure, in the form of physical torture and psychological blackmail, to reveal where she has buried the Tavárez brothers. Echoing the words frequently directed from one generation to another, Aurora laments. "Tus locas ideas que no sirven para nada. Quijotes, Quijotes, y al final Yo soy Alonso Quijano" (p. 24). Aurora does not support Antígona's decision to conceal the burial place of the Tavárez brothers. She pragmatically insists that they are already dead and not worth Antígona's sacrifice. Antígona's concept of friendship, however, is more inclusive even than blood ties, "Héctor and Mario Tavárez dejaron de ser mis amigos y se hicieron mis hermanos" (p. 27). The political implications of that statement are evident: solidarity in the struggle to liberate the republic of Molina created relationships as strong as--or stronger than--those bound by blood. Aurora, however, as she did years before in her husband's case, urges Antígona to retreat from her position, "(Intensa) Antígona . . . la salvación empieza con el arrepentimiento" (p. 26). When she sees that Antígona does not waver, she pulls her trump card, "Antígona, abandona tu terquedad. Si no por tí, por mí. Si no por mí, por Fernando, que te quiere"(p. 28). As we see in the context of the play, other antagonists use

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this same strategy as their last resort, the ultimate bribe. Here, as in subsequent encounters, Antígona affirms her love for Fernando, while at the same time uses the opportunity to define her own life struggle, that is, to maintain her authenticity.

In her staunchness and resoluteness, Sánchez's Antígona is close to the Greek version. When Aurora recounts how she went to the palace daily to beg for Antígona's freedom, Antígona says: "No sigas. Más bien me haría oír que te apostaste en los portones del palacio con la exigencia de que te condujera al lugar donde el tirano encarcelaba a tu hija" (p. 30). When Aurora remembers, "cuando tu padre murió. . . . " (p. 31), Antígona, in her frankness, insists on the real version, "Cuando mi padre fue asesinado. Las cosas como son" (p. 31). Even their memories of the past differ: her father's prestigious military career brought them happiness, according to her mother; according to Antígona, it brought, "muy sosa, muy triste, muy vacía felicidad" (p. 25). In the process of revealing Aurora's motivation for her cowardly behavior in the past--forcing Antígona to leave their own home because Aurora was afraid of Creón's reprisals for harboring a "fugitive"--Antígona still shows compassion for her mother, seeing her as a victim of the fear Creón's regime had instilled in its subjects. Antígona wonders though, what more Aurora could have lost by standing up to Creón.

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In a statement reflecting existential overtones, Antígona says: "Si te mataban, rompían ellos por tí el nudo de la soledad, se decidían por el extremo al que tú no acudirías nunca. ¿Quedaba algo más por perder?" (p. 32). With fresh insight into herself, Aurora answers: "Acaso . . . (Revelándoselo a ella misma) acaso el miedo. (Como si arribara a una poderosa verdad) La lealtad al miedo" (p. 32). Although their understanding of each other is limited, there is great tenderness in their relationships. Aurora plaintively asks, "(Con mucho miedo) Antígona, ¿por qué tienes que ser tú?" (p. 33). Why must she be herself and everything that choice implies. Aurora personifies her daughter's life and fate, if Antígona were to take the other road and abandon her principles. Aurora refuses to consider the transcendent importance of Antígona's actions; rather she is concerned with the immediate goal of saving her daughter's life. Antígona, on the other hand, sees herself as part of a larger world, of a significant movement for freedom. Thus she can assert, "Esta vez me tocó a mí. Luego le tocará a otros" (p. 33). Aurora resents that sacrifice, is angered by it and insists that "los otros no son hijos míos" (p. 33). Antígona tenderly reminds her: "No lo son. Pero también su ausencia desgarrará las gargantas. El dolor se parece tanto al dolor" (p. 33). Here we see Antígona, as "la conciencia de América."

In the following interchange, Antígona once again reveals her astute political nature. She knows that Creón

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will allow her mother to visit her again. She knows that in the psychological warfare that Creón is waging, each antagonist is a possible victor for Creón in the struggle to convince her to abandon her beliefs:

AURORA
¿Me dejará volver?

ANTIGONA
(Segura) Necesita que vuelvas. Necesita que todo lo que más quiero me estremezca (p. 34).

The tentativeness, and the tenderness in their relationship is seen at the end of Scene 2 when Aurora is about to leave:

AURORA
(Tomándole la cabeza) Antígona, sufres.

ANTIGONA
No.

(Aurora retira suavemente las manos.)

AURORA
Puse unas cortinas en tu cuarto. Quedaron muy bonitas.

(Antígona Pérez toma las manos de la madre y se las trae a su rostro.)

ANTIGONA
Sí, Mamá, sufro (p. 34).

Antígona's next antagonist is Creón; by contrasting the physical characteristics of Antígona and Creón, Sánchez reinforces the emotional and moral distance between them. The diminutive stature of Antígona contrasted with Creón's regal, imposing self, counterpoints her superior moral strength and his inherent insecurities. Likewise, the type of clothing suggested complements the characterization, but

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does not distract attention from the acting. Antígona, dressed in black, is the personification of suffering, of "passion," just as "el traje lujoso y resplandiente de Creón" emphasizes his majesty and power. Outwardly he is arrogant and at ease, but inwardly there is ambivalence and doubt. His interactions with Antígona force him to assume fully the unequivocal role of military dictator. It has been traditional in literature to contrast dark iconography, simbolizing the negative, villanous or somber aspects of a particular character, or life itself, with light colored imagery, depicting positive elements. Creón's need for outwardly positive symbols to set off his "dark," evil person is manifested in his clothing, "viste siempre de impecable blanco" (p. 37), and in his demand for light, "Particular es en su revesamiento la necesidad de mucha luz" (p. 37). His very first words in the play are, "Luces. El generalísimo baja a sus sótanos" (p. 37).

He never sits down once during the play, "como si intuyera que la fuerza la tienen los que están de pie." We become familiar with his style from his first interchange with Antígona, the brusque command for her to stand up. In this instance Antígona uses direct address to the audience to define Creón's behavior pattern for us, "Característica de Creón es la ofensiva. Es su política de lucha" (p. 38). They are testing each other, much like two boxers in the ring, dancing around each other, sizing

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each other up. The stage directions corroborate the mental and physical jockeying they employ in order to maximize their positions. We sense increasing tension as the scene progresses and the direction of their verbal duel is revealed: Creón will use personal attacks and slurs to intimidate her. He accuses her of playing at being a conspirator; he tries to bully and manipulate her into revealing the information he wants by emphasizing his self proclaimed generosity, "El generalísimo ha condescendido a posponer día a día tu declaración motivado por una virtud que le es muy cara: la paciencia" (p. 39). His attempts to bribe her culminate in physical violence.

As we have seen from his first entrance, Creón refers to himself in the third person, a shrewd device which effectively creates a larger than life identity for himself. He becomes more than a mortal human being: he becomes the personification of impersonal power. Antígona indicated her awareness of that process of mythification and its paralizing effect on people when she corrected her mother in Scene 2:

AURORA
El generalísimo dice . . .

ANTIGONA
Creón se llama.

He hypocritically professes concern for Antígona when his true motive is the elimination at any cost of the threat she represents to his rule:

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> Me interesa que vivas muchacha, que te reintegres, prontamente, a la sociedad a la que has faltado. No voy a permitir que un desmán, una aventura inconsecuente arriesgue tus posibilidades de mujer joven. Vamos a hablar como amigos . . . como compañeros . . . como colegas que se necesitan mutuamente" (pp. 40-41).

Creón's sensitivity to what is politic and what is impolitic includes masterful manipulation of the media for his own benefit. For Creón, these conversations with Antígona are real only when the newsmen give them form, and substance. Without them, his interaction with Antígona doesn't exist.

Nevertheless, he is no facile caricature of a Latin American dictator: evil, brutish, unidimensional. He is a man who needs the people to believe in him because he possesses certain superior qualities. He is characterized by his pride and is also defined by his fears. Perhaps the most compelling fear, common to all dictators, is that of losing their power. Consequently, any show of compassion, or lack of firmness with Antígona would constitute a fatal sign of weakness for him. The incessant tropical heat and lack of relief is a leitmotif in the Creón-Pilar relationship. His refusal to air condition their bedroom, at first glance an insignificant point, nevertheless highlights the extent to which Creón's nameless fears and incipient doubts permeate his life and define his behavior:

> (Impaciente) El acecho se oye mejor en el silencio. Los oídos me resultan guardianes formidables si hay silencio. El aire refrigerado desfigura la percepción de los oídos. El aire refrigerado es cómplice del sueño profundo. ¡No debo, no puedo dormir! (p. 55).

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Similarly we observe Creón's phobia about darkness--"la perturbación que en el ánimo del Generalísimo Creón Molina ocasiona la oscuridad" (p. 12)--which can be readily understood considering his role as dictator, inherently fearful for his life, externally fierce and macho, while internally wary and afraid.

Another element in Creón's personality is the dichotomy between his vision of himself and his actual situation. The interpretation Pilar adheres to is made clear in the following interaction:

> CREON
> Pilar, yo necesito que se crea en mí por mi capacidad, mi inteligencia, mi superioridad adelantadas, visionarias, incomparables.
>
> PILAR
> Rechaza esa inclinación a la responsabilidad. Acepta sin pudores . . . trasnochados que estás en palacio porque fuiste el más fuerte (pp. 56-57).

He insists that he has the welfare of the majority in mind and that he was "el único que garantizó la reconstrucción de la República dentro de unas normas de orden inviolable" (p. 57). Pilar cynically admonishes him: "No te engañes Creón, no te reduzcas a hombre democrático. (Tranquila) No te acorrale la vehemencia de una muchacha miserable de veinticinco años. No. No te desquicie la sobrina que regresa (p. 57).

Pilar is fully aware of the moral challenge that Antígona poses for Creón. Antígona, with her youth, zeal,

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purity and revolutionary fervor is a formidable rival for him: "No te aplaques, no te conmuevas ante la juventud de esa sobrina que con aire de revolucionaria te sale al paso. Afírmate en lo que eres: dictador (p. 58). Creón responds violently: "No quiero la sombra de esa palabra" (p. 58). Pilar's position, however, is unambiguous. She reminds him that he came to power on the heels of a coup and that no matter how he justifies his rule, the fact still remains that he was not elected President by the people, but rather took over by force. She further insists that there is only one way that he will stay in power and that is by preserving that force, "Te retiene en el poder la fuerza. Te quedarás en el poder si conservas la fuerza . . . Igual que los virtuosos afinan constantemente su instrumento, igual que los conquistadores afinan constantemente su poderío"(p. 58). Pilar's straight forward attitude is jarring to Creón's sense of self. He does not want to see reality that way. However, Pilar's imposing personality prevails and his brusque reaction to their interchange--"Basta. Terminemos. Monseñor Bernardo Escudero está esperando" (p.59)--signifies reluctant acceptance of her interpretation.

The staging in Scene 3, where Creón and his entourage of soldiers once again visit Antígona in her prison creates a visually symmetrical set. The stage itself is expansive and bare with a stairway connecting the upper level with

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the lower level. The symmetry is created by positioning Antígona on one step of the staircase, Creón "en el tercer escalón contando a partir del piso" (p. 38), and the four soldiers who accompany Creón, "dos, de espaldas al público al final de la escalera, los otros dos de espaldas a Creón Molina, cara al públic" (p. 38). This painterly effect is maintained later in the scene when one of the four soldiers leaves and "Creón Molina vigila el arreglo que hacen los soldados restantes para acomodarse en la escalera, simétricamente" (p. 42). This visual positioning of the soldiers reflects the verbal vying for position between Creón and Antígona. Creón's next tactic in his attempt to demoralize Antígona is to question the nature of her relationship with the Tavárez brothers. His strategy will be to break her spirit by attempting to discredit her reputation, "¿Alguna turbia relación en la que Antígona fuera una especie de mujerzuela asalariada?" (p. 43), while at the same time taunting her with the cruelties that his thugs perpetrated against the Tavárez brothers. To Creón's assertion that "Héctor Tavárez fue castrado en una riña callejera" (p. 43), Antígona says--"(Febril) Creón cataloga de riña callejera lo que fue emboscada de sus guardaespaldas" (p. 43). She responds in an articulate, controlled way to Creón's insinuations and insults. We witness a clash of wills, a testing of each other's mettle, with the pendulum swinging first one way and then another, and with the only constant, Antígona's

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life, hanging in the balance.

Antígona infuriates Creón by directly accusing him of rewarding the hired gangsters with political favors, and for the first time he loses control and hurls insults at her, "Perra arrastrada, embustera" (p. 43). He retaliates by repeating the rumors that "Mario Tavárez padecía de una grave limitación en la brega con el sexo opuesto" (p. 43), causing Antígona to react "(Ahogada) Puedo dar testimonio de lo contrario" (p. 43). And so the verbal fencing continues: Creón will falsely represent Antígona's position to the press; she will denounce the opposition party as controlled by him; he will hypocritically portray her situation in jail as practically free, "Tú, suelta, por los sótanos, casi libre o libre de una vez porque tienes soldados que vigilan, protegen, defienden tu libertad" (p. 45). Antígona, ever aware of the political game they are playing scornfully points out, "Si no cuidaras ahora de mi libertad, como podrías quitármela luego" (p. 45). Antígona offers substantive arguments while Creón responds with rhetoric and indignation, bombast, threats, and cajolery. The balance was always weighted against Antígona, since at any moment Creón could end the verbal fencing and autocratically reassume his role as powerful dictator, rather than verbal opponent. This, in fact, is what happens when Antígona staunchly refuses to reveal where the bodies are buried or to accept his "generous offer" to

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forget her defiance of his laws. Two details in particular, reveal his despicable person, when he turns to Antígona "con una dignidad cínica" and his final departing gesture reminiscent of the Nazi military salute "que incluye el fuerte golpe de los dos talones" (p. 48).

Antígona remains firm in her loyalty to her beliefs, to herself, to her dead companions. She addresses the audience and reveals her knowledge that Creón's soldiers will brutally torture her, "Porque Creón sí es el amo de los cuerpos. Pero me dejarán inmaculado el corazón. El corazón es lo que importa" (p. 48). The efectiveness of this dramatic scene is in great part due to the theatrically of its final moments. Sánchez accomplishes this by successfully coordinating lights, music, gesture and space to heighten the tension and fully develop the dramatic potential of the moment. Creón executes an about face and leaves Antígona's prison, on the lower level, to climb to the upper platform, where he remains with his back to the audience until the end of the scene. Once again "la música elemental ejecutada a contrabajo" (p. 48), is heard. The light begins to fade. The tempo of these final moments deaccelerates, as "Con estudiada lentitud los soldados se acercan a Antígona Pérez" (p. 48). From stage right another soldier appears brandishing a broken bottle neck. The action is slow and deliberate, achieving dramatic intensity as "los soldados se colocan

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frente a Antígona Pérez." The music suddenly stops; the silence and penumbra is broken by Antígona's piercing scream. The light then disappears completely; "En festín de siluetas los soldados abandonan la escena" (p. 48).

With Creón's treatment of Antígona, the familiar Latin American cycle of violent injustice and violent retribution is at once apparent.[31] In Act I he uses brutality to intimidate her; in Act II he tries to throw her off balance by revealing that she is his niece, that he and her father were half-brothers, thus trying to intimidate her through this blood relationship. Why did we wait so long to tell her? "Paradójico. Porque esperaba que flaqueras. Deseaba que la fragilidad femenina escamoteara la fuerza heredada y flaquearas. Entonces el parentesco hubiera sido menos doloroso" (p. 92). When he tells Antígona that she is really like him, she knows that the weapons in this next stage of their confrontation will be psychological ones:

> CREON
> Antígona, te pareces a mí.
>
> ANTIGONA
> (Jubilosa) Gracias por mostrarme las armas, Creón (p. 88).

He is furious when she calls him "assassin" and twists her arm severely. Once again we get a lesson in practical politics; Creón's superior force will subdue her. Says Creón: "Hay un privilegio que me da absoluta ventaja: la fuerza"(p. 91). Here he proceeds to describe a similar

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situation which took place with Antígona's father, where Creón was "forced" to impose his law. His advice to Antígona is to give up, "Cede. Yo no sé retroceder. Tú todavía puedes aprenderlo" (p. 92).

Throughout the play and especially in these scenes, it is clear that Creón cannot conceive of the possibility that Antígona's values might be real; that she might be capable of dying for a moral cause. He insists: "Tienes veinticinco años. Sálvate" (p. 92). However, Antígona astutely intuits Creón's vacillation in the face of her resolve. The power shifts in this scene as Antígona begins to insist, "Dudas, Creón, si mi muerte no será el comienzo de la tuya" (p. 93). His cynicism is apparent as he urges her to confess, and promises her that there will be no trial, no interrogation, no questioning here about whether she had accomplices in the burial. The height of his cynicism is his assurance that she can then return to the University, apply for a position in any government agency, and in effect, resume her life. Creón's frustration heightens the dramatic tension surrounding his conflict with Antígona. However, even while she suffers torture and martyrdom at his hands, she is clearly the moral victor.

The next antagonist is Irene Domingo y Zúñiga, Antígona's best friend. In their interaction we observe the development of another series of contrasts, both physical and emotional. From the beginning of Scene 3 Irene's physical type is established--"hermosa blonda de clásica

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figura vestida con traje blanco de corte lineal que resalta el estatuismo de su cuerpo" (p. 105)--very different from Antígona's mestiza features. This scene proves the most emotionally taxing for Antígona and reveals her most vulnerable side. She is subjected to a barrage of assaults by Irene's words, the first one, that Fernando is in fact Antígona's keeper, since Creón promoted him and charged him with the control over who is or who is not allowed to visit her. As the stage directions note, it is the first time she breaks down, and her physical reaction is the manifestation of her inner pain and turmoil, "El tronco, a partir de la cintura, se comprime. Los brazos se le tumban por los muslos. La cabeza se le gotea por los hombros" (p. 106). Nevertheless, she appreciates Irene's closeness and remarks through her tears, that the pain is somehow less since the news came from Irene, her special friend. It is through the issue of Fernando's collaboration with Creón that we witness Antígona affirm, once more, her moral position as dissident. She is the purist who urges risk, as the price that youth exacts. Slowly Irene's position becomes clear: she cannot wait for the political "transfiguración" that Antígona is working for. She bitterly denounces América, as "la tierra de los hombres perpetuos" (p. 108): men with values that are perpetually postergated on the altar of expediency; men who are forever waiting, hoping, dreaming,

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planning. Irene is the voice of the disillusioned rebel, now content to conform to Creón's regime in order not to provide him with the excuse to harrass her or Fernando. Antígona is stunned as Irene affirms:

> Uno sueña con una salida honrosa, hace votos de pureza de convicciones, se desquicia con las vilezas y atrocidades. Pero un día madura, recapacita, asienta los pies en la tierra y descrubre que todo lleva a lo mismo. Así que se decide por vivir buenamente e incluso aceptar el puesto de teniente coronel que Creón le ofrece (p. 109).

Bravo-Elizondo observes that the same ambition that motivates Pilar Varga motivates Irene. She envisions Fernando as Creón's successor one day.[32]

However, it is through Irene's spontaneous reaction that she couldn't bear to think of Fernando risking his life for his beliefs and possibly dying, that it is acknowledged that Fernando and Irene love each other; that they have learned they are similar, how in fact, neither aspires to change the world "por más que nos parezca despreciable. Nos resignamos, sí. Nos conformamos" (p. 111). Then Irene--in the name of Antígona's love for Fernando--tries to convince Antígona to admit that she broke the laws of the Republic. For Antígona, though, there is no turning back, and as she dramatically "acomoda en sus pulmones el aire de todo el universo" (p. 112), she says goodbye to Irene, with her final words intensely spoken,

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"Irene, con Fernando la vida se toma a pequeños sorbos, como si sus minutos fueran licores cuya borrachera dura horas" (p. 113). In the closing monologue in Scene 3 Antígona contrasts the past with the present and acknowledges Fernando and Irene's past bravery which only makes the recognition of their present attitude that much harder to accept. Indeed, they have abandoned her and she concludes with the existential affirmation, "si la fe no manara de uno mismo, qué difícil resultaría vivir" (p. 113).

In our discussion of the next antagonist, Pilar Varga, and her interaction with Antígona, the elements of voice and gesture must be singled out in order to describe Pilar adequately. Sánchez offers the following information about her in his introduction to Act I, Scene 5:

> La Primera Dama doña Pilar Varga, tiene cuarenticinco rítmicos años, esbeltos cuarenticinco. El gesticular agresivo describe su capacidad de mando, súmase a ello una voz de sorprendente flexibilidad que acota los más ricos matices (p. 52).

She is astute, calculating and certain about what she wants. She is the power behind Creón and often directly advises him; reminds him how to behave; and how to interpret numerous situations. She is greedy and insensitive to people, the incarnation of sheer will, like a conduit of determination and energy that she transmits from herself to Creón. She is decisive and controlling, which she achieves by manipulation, astuteness and the ability to

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correctly read a situation. We recognize the character: she is at once a familiar archtype, from her clothing (when we first see her three women are helping her to dress and she is wearing a wide brimmed straw hat, a flowing white chiffon robe and white shoes), to her demeanor ("La Primera Dama es caprichosa, se verá en seguida; caprichosa, roída por las altas ambiciones que le quitan la paz incluso del sueño", p. 52).

Pilar's obsession with power, wealth, status and prestige is challenged by Antígona's existence. Pilar must assert herself, and convince Creón to act, that is, to kill Antígona. In the scene between Antígona and Pilar, Act II, Scene 4, we see the interaction of two strong women, both possessing very different approaches to life. Pilar, totally identified with the State, with Creón, with the status quo, will not be moved by Antígona, the abandoned, solitary heroine, who finally must renounce everything, even the hope of love, to fulfill her destiny, the acceptance of her death.

Related to the issue of morality, a basic theme in the play, is an exploration of a political nature, with the social criticism implied therein. The theatre of protest, of a revolutionary as well as popular vein, is both an authentic social, as well as artistic expression. Thus on one level of interpretation Sánchez's Antígona Pérez is clearly a statement of social protest. José González Barja suggests that:

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> El conflicto de Antígona es únicamente el cañamazo que sirve de hilo conductor para hilvanar una dura crítica a las dictaduras militares de Latinoamérica. . . La crítica va dirigida, a su vez, contra la Iglesia cuando subordina los encargos de Dios a los encargos de Creón; contra el periodismo sensacionalista y vocingífero que inventa y tergiversa los hechos; contra la masa, afanosa de no verdades, sino de noticias. . . . 33

Let us examine these elements more closely. González Barja asks if this is a political drama; of course it is that, but it is also profoundly human. He correctly observes that "el teatro político se salvará para la historia futura sólo en la medida que sea, a la vez, drama humano. Antígona se rebela contra la tiranía militar, pero su mente va más allá de lo político.[34] Sánchez dramatically documents different levels of alienation in a political context but does not succumb to the pitfall of tendentious theatre, nor to what John Gassner suggests as the general reason for the failure of any contemporary topical or even downright propaganda play as tragic art:

> the social dramatist's and the propagandist's failure to achieve a catharsis. He fails chiefly because in striving so conscientiously for enlightenment, he so often substitutes statement for dramatic process and neglects to effectuate the 'pity and fear'--that is, the tensions and emotional rapport or identification implicit in the Aristotelian terms.

For Gassner, "only enlightenment can therefore round out the esthetic experience in tragedy, can actually ensure complete esthetic gratification."[35]

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Pedro Bravo-Elizondo devotes an entire section to an analysis of Antígona Pérez as social theatre in his recent book, Teatro hispanoamericano de crítica social. He notes that:

> En la novelística hispanoamericana El Señor Presidente de Miguel Angel Asturias . . . sigue siendo la obra que mejor trata las dictaduras latinas. Hasta la aparición de Antígona Pérez, sólo La muerte no entrará en Palacio y Las manos de Dios entregaban un panorama muy general de lo que pudiera ser una dictadura. En cambio Sánchez reconoce abiertamente desde el comienzo de la obra que ésta será la historia de los que han crecido 'en una América dura, América amarga, América tomada'. 36

We concur with his observation that the play offers explicit and revealing social criticism. Specifically, he notes that:

> Las instituciones y la sociedad son los blancos directos de la crítica, con la utilización de un lenguaje fuertemente apelativo, dialéctico, y no como un simple artificio retórico. El argumento dramático deja de ser fundamental, para que la acción dramática surja y domine. Antígona Pérez está referida tanto a las dictaduras hispanoamericanas, mal endémico, como al símbolo que encarna Antígona de ser testigo de su tiempo, aún al precio de su vida. Antígona es la síntesis de la familia, del pueblo, ante el Estado totalitario y omnipresente que representa Creón. 37

The social themes developed in the play reveal both universal and national concerns in their portrayal and contemporary reality. As Bravo-Elizondo observes about today's playwrights, "se han empeñado en brindar una explicación de por qué existe la pobreza, la injusticia, el no respeto a la

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dignidad humana o a las instituciones que rigen un país."[38] In Antígona Pérez both the social and political system is challenged through the critical portrayal of two of its institutions, the Church and the military, both of which "han jugado todos los papeles reservados al conglomerado social, en cuanto a ejercicio del poder corresponde."[39] As Antígona points out on one occasion, "Mi padre era militar, lo repetirá Mamá dentro de un momento. En América, la milicia es la carrera que encumbra" (p. 25.).

The concept of the political allegory is ably developed by Alyce de Kuehne in her article. "The Antigone Theme in Anouilh, Marechal and Luis Rafael Sánchez." She asserts:

> Strictly evaluating the work as a political allegory, Antígona embodies the surviving spirit of the earthly entrails of Puerto Rico. Thus, when Creón demands to know the location of the interred bodies, she retorts: 'En su tierra, Generalísimo Creón Molina, en la tierra que corresponde a sus cuerpos, en la tierra donde tu ley no es buena'. 40

She convincingly substantiates the argument that the play is a political allegory by linking various symbols within the play to the socio-political history of the Island, for example: the home of the Pérez family, "mansión de Miramar" is Puerto Rico itself; Aurora, is the Popular Party; the castrated university student Tavárez, embodies the outcome of the repeated attempts by authorities to render the university impotent; Antígona's rape is the material rape

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of the Island. As further corroboration of the play as political allegory, our protagonist, Antígona, can be seen as the embodiment of Puerto Rico's potential: she is decisive, clever, confident, aggressive, sensitive, loving, afraid, but resolute; just as Puerto Rico, of the present and future, must be. We cannot separate the form from the content in analyzing the atmosphere of protest in the play. Thematically the fact that Sánchez takes on the Church and the military, those key institutions of power and corruption, represents a particular social and political stance. Technically, with regard to the mise en scène, he uses rotating panels which reveal significant political events in Latin American life which, as Alyce de Kuehne notes, conforms to the "Brechtian technique of drama, /where/ the mere mention of some apparently insignificant detail may be the key to the play." She concludes that "these tacit allusions, together with the mention of university disturbances, constitute the restless climate of panoramic protest of the play."[41]

In Act I, Scene 5, the intimate relationship between the Church and the military is suggested by Pilar's words of admonition to Creón, "Monseñor Bernardo Escudero se molestará de que no lo hagas esperar. Los minutos de tu tardanza le permitirán comadrear con tenientes y coroneles. Entre ellos tendrá más brillo la mitra de su santísima cabeza" (p. 59). An essentially pagan and decadent ambiance reigns in Scene 6, characterizing the interaction among

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Creón, Pilar and Monseñor Bernardo. The scene is also revelatory for the insights it provides into their personalities. Sánchez's successful manipulation of different styles of language is evident as we witness the verbal badinage between Creón and Monseñor. In Antígona's own evaluation of the Bishop, she chooses the following characteristic to describe him, "Arma suya es la palabra, ventaja suya" (p. 60). In this scene he is pedantic, spouting platitudes and formulas; Pilar is deferent ("Reverendísimo, sea usted a ordenar y nosotros a cumplir", P. 61), while Creón is alternately cajoling and manipulative ("Mi alma anda reposada. Lo único que podría alterarla sería el descreimiento de Monseñor de que está en reposo", p. 63), and demanding ("en las misas de pasado mañana domingo se dará lectura a una pastoral en la que Monseñor Bernardo Escudero condenará el atentado, exhortará a cerrar filas tras la paz que garantiza el Generalísimo Creón Molina y advertirá que todo aquel que no cumpliera con esta recomendación no podrá en lo adelante, confesar ni comulgar", p. 71).

Also in this scene we witness the development of Monseñor Bernardo as a character. He gives the external impression of a man with an independent style, while in fact, he is bought by the government. Note the following remark by Creón, "¿Querrá que le enviemos al obispado unas botellas de vino chileno, Reverendísimo?" (p. 63). He moves within a materialistic world and personifies a Church that is motivated by politics and dedicated to the

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upper classes.[42] His expensive taste, as well as his social climbing and name dropping, is evident in his request for a specific wine and by his own statement that when in London, "le oímos susurrar a Pablo Neruda que los vinos chilenos no parangonan con los de sitio alguno" (p. 61).

Monseñor Bernardo, Creón and Pilar engage in an elaborate ritual consisting of an exchange of platitudes and formulas which reinforce their intrigue and involvement. Creón summoned Monseñor Bernardo from the Vatican when the situation in Molina became grave and Monseñor complied. Creón's intention is to have the Church publically condemn the so-called attempt against the lives of Creón and Pilar and deny confession and communion to any citizen who fails to support the present regime. As Creón gives his own version of the attempt against his life by the Tavárez brothers, he adds salient details to impress the Monseñor:

> CREON
> La Primera Dama y yo nos dirigíamos a las ceremonias de bendición de una capilla que habíamos obsequiado a la piedad de la Virgen del Pilar. Esa ofrenda es de su conocimiento.
>
> MONSEÑOR
> Y de nuestro regocijo. La contribución suya al sostenimiento y engrandecimiento de la Madre Iglesia gana bendiciones para su espíritu caritativo (p. 66).

And later when the Monseñor gives his perception of the situation in Molina, based on rumors that he has heard "de persecuciones civiles, de represión histérica, de encarcelamientos disparatados" (p. 68), he is directly confronted

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with Pilar's blackmailing words, "Imagino que su sensatez defendería el buen nombre del gobierno que tan gustosamente engrandece a la iglesia y la sostiene" (p. 68).

The Monseñor ponders the real intentions behind the assassination attempt, "Especulamos que el de demostrar que sí hay oposición a su régimen, Generalísimo" (p. 70). He also shows surprise when he finds out that Antígona's crime was removing the Tavárez brothers' bodies from the public square. He cannot understand why the bodies were in the public square in the first place. In response to Creón's lies about why the bodies were there, "El velorio pretendía que los deudos identificaran a los terroristas" (p. 73), Antígona comments from her own space on the stage. "Mentira. El mandato de Creón era que los cuerpo se pudrieran a la intemperie después de servir de escarmiento público" (p. 73). Monseñor also balks at the possibility of the death penalty for Antígona's crime. In response to Creón's logic, reminiscent of the Inquisition, "Yo no ordeno la muerte de prisionero alguno. Pero no puedo evitar que cualquier prisionero la ordene. El prisionero tiene siempre el refugio de la confesión, la aceptación de la culpa, luego el arrepentimiento público de la culpa. Las alternativas son claras" (p. 74), he queries, "¿y si algún prisionero no fuera culpable?" to which Creón provides his own definition of justice, "Imposible, Monseñor. Una vez se entra en los sótanos de Creón se es culpable" (p. 74).

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As Creón aquiesces to the Monseñor's wish to talk with Antígona, the Press's escalating tone culminates with the prediction, "Extra. Extra. Extra. Antígona Pérez a punto de confesar. Extra. Extra. Extra" (p. 77). The interchange between Antígona and the Monseñor is sharp and rapidly paced. The Bishop is forced to comment, "Tienes un almacén de respuestas" (p. 79). The Monseñor tries to convince her to choose life. "No dudes en tender la mano a la vida. Vivir es la alternativa espléndida. Confiesa el lugar donde enterraste a los Tavárez. Acepta la culpa. Las leyes deben cumplirse" (p. 83). When he realizes that she is firm in her convictions and that he has lost the verbal battle, he returns to the platform where the full pomp and circumstance of the ecclesiastic cortege continues to reign and the culmination of the dramatic tension that has been building throughout this scene is felt in Creón's imperious command, "Luces" (p. 84). At that moment we experience the orchestration of the major dramatic elements: the lights come up; the music intensifies; Creón descends into Antígona's prision; and while the ecclesiastic cortege continues to sing, the curtain majestically descends.

The role of the newsmen as chorus is a significant structural device that reflects both technical and thematic concerns. Their presence represents an innovative element in the play, as well as reinforces an awareness of the corrupt nature of the political process. This modern version

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of the Greek chorus is hungry for sensational news about Antígona. In a tight parallel structure where the verb used in the question is transposed and repeated in the answer, we see a visual representation of the falsification of Antígona's words and spirit:

> PERIODISTA 1
> ¿Qué dice Antígona Pérez?
>
> PERIODISTA 2
> Antígona Pérez dice que no se arrepiente de su delito.
>
> PERIODISTA 3
> ¿Qué piensa Antígona Pérez?
>
> PERIODISTA 4
> Antígona Pérez piensa que nuestras instituciones pueden alterarse según caprichos de unos y otros.
>
> PERIODISTA 5
> ¿Qué sabe Antígona Pérez?
>
> PERIODISTA 1
> Antígona Pérez sabe que sus simpatizantes forman un grupo ínfimo, sin fuerza, sin peso.
>
> PERIODISTA 2
> ¿Qué proyecta Antígona Pérez?
>
> PERIODISTA 3
> Antígona Pérez proyecta levantarse en armas y sembrar el terror.
>
> PERIODISTA 4
> ¿Qué siente Antígona Pérez?
>
> PERIODISTA 5
> Antígona Pérez siente aversión por nuestra noble República de Molina (p. 35).

As Angelina Morfi notes:

> Fácilmente se puede constatar la existencia de una prensa deformadora del sentido veraz de los acontecimientos y ejerciendo presión para que se actúe de acuerdo a su criterio similar al del poder. . . . 43

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And when Creón concludes--incorrectly--that Antígona has changed her position, he insists,

> Los periódicos necesitan enterarse inmediatamente de tu cambiada actitud (pp. 41-42).

His attitude reinforces the vast importance he places on the media, as well as on what others will say, el que dirán. Thus opinions must be predetermined and regulated by Creón.

Sánchez describes Creón as he leaves his impromptu press conference, following his visit with Antígona, "acompañado del pequeño ejército" (p. 50). This choice of words indicates who this "small army" is. They are the members of the press, with words as their weapons, whose goal coincides with that of the army, that is, the mind-bending of the populace. They represent a controlled press. None of them are individuals, but rather they are puppets, not at all interested in what is happening in the world at large, nor to Antígona, who they constantly refer to as "la facinerosa Antígona Pérez." They are devoid of any critical faculties and are merely undimensional mouthpieces for a jingoistic and sensationalist press. In their dark pants and short jackets, they blend in perfectly with the entire atmosphere. Their presence is a fact we accept and it is only through their direct participation in the action, that our attention focuses on them. Otherwise, their dark, tailored clothing serves as camouflage for their omnipresence. Sánchez's political concerns are revealed in Brechtian fashion, through the choice of events that he has the newsmen report. For example:

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PERIODISTA 2
Internacional. Averell Harriman, Embajador Viajero de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica, defiende los gobiernos militares de la América Latina diciendo que son totalmente distintos de aquellos de la época de Trujillo, Batista y Porfirio Díaz.

PERIODISTA 4
Internacional. El presidente de los Estados Unidos, Richard Nixon, extendió a Camboya la guerra asiática.

PERIODISTA 1
Internacional. Exiliados brasileños informaron hoy las horribles torturas de que son víctimas los presos políticos de su país.

PERIODISTA 3
Internacional. El prominente escritor francés Jean-Paul Sartre rechazó el Premio Nobel de Literatura por considerar que la labor creadora no debe estar galardonada por organismo oficial alguno.

PERIODISTA 5
Internacional. El secretario de Estado, Dean Rusk, declaró que los Estados Unidos continuarán interviniendo unilateralmente si es necesario para defender al Hemisferio Occidental del comunismo (pp. 17-18).

As Bravo-Elizondo observes:

> Los periodistas con sus noticias harán más irreal la atmósfera, y con ello el uso del collage alcanza su más alta expresión, pues la utilización de la realidad, anula la realidad misma y produce una desrealización. Las noticias del asesinato de Martín Lutero King, la muerte de Che Guevara, la de Juan Veintitrés y el asesinato del Presidente Kennedy, muestran la lucha absurda del hombre por mejorar un mundo por medio de la no violencia, la violencia, la paz y el entendimiento mundiales, el acercamiento entre naciones, representadas respectivamente por los ya nombrados. 44

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The phenomenon of la multitud (the masses or the common people) is an important one to examine. They appear throughout the play after significant confrontations and always at the same moment as the newsmen. The first time "la multitud" appears it echoes the biased point of view expressed by the press concerning Antígona and the revolutionaries. "La multitud" accepts what it reads and hears; an example of this is the belief that peace, law and order have all been restored because Antígona has been imprisoned:

LA MULTITUD
--La calma se ha hecho sentir.
--La tranquilidad está viva.
--La paz es nuestra.
--El país regresa a la normalidad.
--A las seis es el toque de queda.
--Para proteger los derechos ciudadanos.
--En la cárcel está la traidora.
--La que intentara secuestrar el poder.
--Triunfo de la ley, la mesura y el orden (p. 19).

The next time "la multitud" appears it is after the scene between Antígona and Aurora. The five newsmen have falsified Antígona's attitudes toward the state, her "crime", towards her companions and towards terrorism. Sánchez reminds us of the essentially ritualistic nature of the theatre in his stage directions, "los periodistas inician una danza noticiosa que convierte la escena en plaza ceremonial" (pp. 35-36). With each successive notice of another death or assassination, the crowd responds frantically, emphasizing its disorientation:

PERIODISTA 1
Extra. Extra. Extra. Asesinan a Martín Lutero King.

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(La multitud irrumpe enloquecida congregándose en torno al periodista que grita la noticia.)

PERIODISTA 2
Extra. Extra. Extra. Aboleon al Che Guevara.

(La multitud corre trastornada hasta el Periodista 2.)

PERIODISTA 3
Extra. Extra. Extra. Muere Juan Ventitrés.

(La multitud corre trastornada hacia el periodista 3.)

PERIODISTA 4
Extra. Extra. Extra. De Gaulle renuncia.

(La multitud corre hacia el Periodista 4.)

PERIODISTA 5.
Extra. Extra. Asesinan al Presidente Kennedy.

(La multitud va a correr hacia el periodista 5 pero el impacto es de tal manera que se congela (p. 36).

The repetition of the word "trastornada" establishes the central image of the mob, confused and without direction. The mob exits after the newsmen's coda, "Extra. Extra. Extra," shouted to a monotonous and slow procession accompanied by the same "melodía elemental efectuada a contrabajo" that we are originally introduced to at the beginning of Act I.

"La multitud" reveals the prevalent attitude of condemnation and righteous indignation towards Antígona Pérez. This is evident in their response to the external stimuli of the media in Scene 4. As we see in the following

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quote, they react with a predigested set of conclusions:

LA MULTITUD
--Antígona Pérez quiere nuestra perdición,
--Antígona Pérez quiere entregarnos,
--Los hermanos Tavárez traicionaron,
--Merecida la muerte se tenían,
--A las seis es el toque de queda,
--Dormir, quedarse en la casa,
--No salir hasta que el sol alumbre,
--La culpable es Antígona Pérez (p. 51).

The "multitud" is at once ambivalent and contradictory, as can be seen at the beginning of Scene 2 in Act II where Sánchez demands an atmosphere of "grave teatralidad":

LA MULTITUD
--No confiesa,
--Reta,
--Se perderá,
--Se perderá,
--Se perderá,
--Creón es
--inflexible,
--furioso,
--iracundo,
--Trece días,
--Plantada en el no,
--Investigan,
--Le buscan cómplices,
--Terminará
--dejando su cuerpo
--sobre el paredón,
--Dios nos salve,
--A ella también,
--Ella no quiere a Dios,
--Leyendas,
--Si no confiesa hoy
--la ejecutarán mañana,
--Caída la tarde,
--Nacido el amanecer,
--Antígona Pérez
--Hija de Guillermo Pérez
--Hija de Aurora Marzán,
--Descanse en paz,
--Por los siglos de los siglos (p. 99).

The function of "la multitud" is to interpret and simplify the news disseminated by the reporters on the local level,

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Their's is the untutored opinion of the masses based on the biased information they receive from the press. The conclusions that Bravo-Elizondo draws regarding the theme of social protest in the contemporary Latin American theatre are pertinent to our examination of that direction in Sánchez's own work, in particular, in Antígona Pérez:

> El drama deja de ser intrascendente y adquiere carácter de denuncia. Los recursos escénicos se enraízan con los movimientos vanguardistas de comienzos de siglo, especialmente, del expresionismo y se concretizan en la línea épica señalada por Brecht, que permite un movimiento escénico de gran eficacia en el tratamiento de las imperfecciones sociales reinantes. La historia y los sucesos políticos de los cuales nuestra América ha surgido, o los elementos integrantes de la sociedad pre y post colonial, tales como la iglesia y el militarismo, son temas que gravitan intensamente en el teatro de crítica social. Los autores no pretenden presentar una realidad histórica concreta. La acción puede suceder en 'cualquier parte del planeta', en 'no man's land'. 45

Certainly a literary precedent for Sánchez's character, Antígona Pérez, is playwright René Marqués' indomitable creation, doña Gabriela of La carreta, in whose character "conviven el valor con la ternura, el dolor con el consuelo."[46] Incorporated into Antígona's personality is doña Gabriela's spiritual and moral strength, and her maturity. The resilience and growing independence of Juanita, the daughter in La carreta, the toughness of Matilde, from the slum of La Perla, the stoicism of Lidia, from El Barrio of New York City, are all elements in the composite character

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of Antígona, their spiritual sister. It is her decisiveness, her will to action, and her passionate belief in freedom and in herself, that determines her character and her personal direction. Antígona's integrity lies in her ferocious defense of the truth. In the face of the alternatives that each visitor to her prison suggests, she maintains her sense of purpose and demonstrates an awareness of herself and her relationship to her circumstance, by her firm commitment to continue to struggle for her ideals.

We have previously mentioned the Lorquian overtones that Sánchez reveals in common with Roñó Marqués. That note of "vigorosa protesta, encendida de ese anhelo profundo de salvar y defender la integridad del ser humano",[47] characteristic of Lorquian females, and of Juanita in the final act of La carreta, is also true of Antígona in her dramatic confrontations. Similarly, she demonstrates her solidarity with other women in struggle in the following words to her mother, "(Tierna) Mamá, las mujeres que tú llamas sin clase, sin apellidos, tampoco merecen una condena injusta" (p. 22). Antígona's espousal of feminist values is also found in her strong reaction to Aurora's assertion that she is "nada más que una mujer. Callar y bordar, Antígona" (p. 28). Earlier Antígona sarcastically retorts, "La sumisión sigue siendo una virtud ejemplar" (p. 26). One of her strongest statements of protest, which conveys

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her image as the conscience of America, is the following:

> También las mujeres tenemos que protestar, también combatir lo que sepamos injusto. O es que al momento de sufrir se quedan los hombres con todo el dolor (p. 29).

Thus what has been said of the character development of Juanita in La carreta, can be said of Antígona, whose personality "se robustece, crece hacia adentro, y adquiere una independencia y una sabiduría"[48] as she emerges from each confrontation.

It is revealing to examine the different portrayals of the female and male characters in the play. Greed, status, and the desire for power and material possessions motivate Pilar, the Bishop and the newsmen. Creón is primarily motivated by power; Aurora by fear for her own life, the safety of Antígona, and by el que dirán; Fernando by expediency and self-preservation; and Irene by the same motives as Fernando and also by her love for Fernando. There is a difference in style, however, between the males and the females. The female figures are more intense in their decisions and their preferences. A significant characteristic of the women is their ability to make critical decisions: Antígona to bury the Tavárez brothers, and to die; Pilar Varga, to play the part of the power behind the throne and to advise and influence Creón in all political decisions; Irene, to love Fernando, in effect, to opt for life, rather than suffer martyrdom for upholding unpopular

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beliefs. Thus they confirm an observation made by M. T. Babín about the female figure in La carreta who "dista mucho de ser débil y en la comedia resalta sobre el hombre por su capacidad superior para luchar con las circunstancias adversas."[49]

The male figures have less intense feelings; they are calculating and analytical. Interestingly, there are no sympathetic male characters. In particular, in Creón, the expression of machista behavior[50] takes the form of sexual violence towards Antígona, who his soldiers deflower with the next of a bottle, and towards Héctor Tavárez, who his thugs castrate. Creón uses sex as a form of torture in both cases and as a form of mockery, as on the several occasions when he disparagingly refers to the sexuality of the Tavárez brothers. Perhaps the decision to use sexual violence indicates the recognition on Creón's part, of the life giving principle inherent in sex, along with the fear of sexual energy, dual factors in creating his subsequent need to destroy the sexuality of Antígona and Héctor.

A striking example of the differences in attitude between men and women is seen in the opposite stands towards Antígona adopted by the male and female members of "la multitud." Notice first their physical situation, which reinforced their verbal statements:

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> La multitud empieza a desplazarse por los pasadizos rectangulares. Las mujeres incluidas en la multidud, componen un cuadro plástico en el pasadizo izquierdo. Los hombres incluidos en la multitud componen un cuadro plástico en el pasadizo derecho (p. 101).

The women exhort Antígona to persevere, to remain pure, in essence to accept her role as model; while the men urge her to be realistic, to accept that Creón is the keeper of the law and that she can still change her mind:

> MUJERES
> --Antígona Pérez.
> --no confieses.
> --Descansen los Tavárez en sus fosas.
> --No te vuelvas ahora
> --No te arrepientas.
>
> HOMBRES
> --Bastón con que los enterraras.
> --No des tanto de tí misma.
> --Deja ya esos sótanos.
> --Afuera está la vida
> --Estás a tiempo, Antígona.
>
> MUJERES
> --No cedas tú.
> --Limpia, Antígona.
> --Pura te necesitamos.
> --Es el comienzo.
> --No lo abandones.
>
> HOMBRES
> --Acepta que has perdido.
> --Es una regla del juego.
> --No sigas, no sigas.
> --Creón es fuerte.
> --Creón es el dueño del poder.
>
> MUJERES
> --Antígona, no cedas.
>
> HOMBRES
> --Antígona, no sufras.
>
> MUJERES
> --Antígona, no pierdas.

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HOMBRES
--Antígona, no mueras.

MUJERES
--Antígona, prosigue.

HOMBRES
--Antígona, despierta.

MUJERES
--Antígona, tranquila.

HOMBRES
--Antígona, alerta (pp. 102-103).

Sánchez is ever aware of the theatrical impact of this choral repartee as he emphasizes in his stage directions "la aumentación gradual de la intensidad hasta alcanzar el tope de la emoción" (p. 103). Antígona, who has been listening all the while to the "multitud" finally responds, directing herself to the men. Her speech definitely establishes the fact that she is never just Antígona--a woman, a brave heroine--but rather, in her moral resoluteness and steadfastness, she is America's hope and dream. She says:

> Hasta la esclavitud tiene sus defensores. Hasta la ruina hipoteca de la conciencia. Hasta el juego imposible de ser libre sin serlo. De ahí la definición absoluta se persiga, se procese, se niegue, nuestro siglo es el siglo de la gran persecución. La Salvación no estará en quedarse tranquilos, satisfechos, indiferentes sino en cuestionar una, dos, muchas veces si de alguna manera, nos están echando de nosotros mismos. También yo comenzaré a gritar: América, no pierdas; América, no mueras; América, prosigue; América, despierta; América, tranquila; América, alerta (pp. 103-104).

As González Barja aptly perceives, in the final analysis the

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issue for Antígona is not "to be or not to be," but rather to live with dignity or without it, as her previous speech reveals.[51]

At a time when female actresses are universally bemoaning the dearth of attractive roles, that is, roles rich in interpretive possibilities, the contemporary Latin American theatre has tentatively permitted an examination of the female psyche in certain selected works. Among these works with significant female protagonists are: Isaac Chocron's OK, Animales feroces, El quinto infierno; Myrna Casas' La trampa, María Eugenia Herrera, Absurdos en la soledad, Cristal roto en el tiempo; many of Elena Garro's works, among them La señora en su balcón, and Los perros; Luisa Josefina Hernández's Los frutos caídos, Los huéspedes reales, Los duendes, Arpas blancas, conejos dorados; and René Marqués' La carreta. The female protagonists of Sánchez, Antígona, Angela, Maggie, Tisbe, have consistently had opportunity to explore their own boundaries and become autonomous literary creations. One can find symbolic value in the extrapolation of a universal female role model, from a Latin American prototype, created by a Puerto Rican playwright. Sánchez clearly draws on the traditional strength of character of the Puerto Rican woman for his Antígona creation. Although he has created other important women characters, Antígona represents his most successfully developed personaje. Could he be suggesting in this play that perhaps through

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the Latin American woman, the salvation of the continent can be achieved. For Sánchez, Latin America is a changing continent where the ideas of ancestry and lineage, as well as male dominance no longer prevail as rigidly as they once did. This is manifested in a number of choices that the author makes: he chooses a woman as his protagonist; a young woman at that; who is also "mestiza"; and furthermore, who is comfortable with her identity.

Can we consider her the hope for America, though? Can we interpret her resolve as a challenge to the youth of America, as well as to the youth of Puerto Rico? Can her actions be seen as a mandate for change? And if, indeed, we do consider the play as political allegory, then must we not conclude our analysis on a note of gravity, if not actual pessimis, since Molina, Sánchez's fictitious "republic," in fact, does not change. The newspapers, still controlled by an insidious political system, herald Antígona's capitulation. She chooses death over life. Sánchez establishes his play within a Latin American context in the second part of the title, "crónica americana en dos actos." Among the elements which make this work particularly Latin American in nature are: his criticism of the major political and social institutions in Latin America, the Church, the government, the press; his emphasis on the importance of the mixture of races in Latin America manifested in the creation of a mestiza Antígona, "Antígona Pérez resume en su físico el cruce de razas en que

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se asienta el ser hispanoamericano" (p. 13); also the added symbolism of Antígona's last name, Pérez, a common name in Latin America, like our Smith, which reinforces the fact that she comes from the people; as well as the technical concerns which situate the play in the mainstream of contemporary Latin American theatre, innovative mise en scène, original use of lighting and music, and the use of Brechtian techniques. Notes Bravo-Elizondo:

> Lo que es permanente en la dramaturgia hispanoamericana contemporánea, es la solidaridad del escritor para con la sociedad y la gran receptividad con que asimila e internaliza los acontecimientos que sacuden América Latina y los proyecta en una transposición de la realidad que cumple los objetivos asignados al teatro social, entretener y enseñar. 52

As we have noted, the levels of interpretation of the play are many, including what this author chooses to refer to as the "Antígona-Christ analogy" or the "woman-savior analogy." On the cover of the most recent edition of Antígona Pérez (Editorial Cultural, 1974), Antígona appears with her arms outstretched and her head bowed, unmistakeably identified with the Christ figure. This Antígona-Christ analogy can be further traced throughout the play. The very word pasión, with its religious meaning of suffering, establishes Antígona's experience within a religious, Biblical context. Antígona herself uses the term pasión to signify suffering when she begs Creón not to harm Fernando, "No lo invites a mi pasión" (p. 96). She suffers her calvary, as well as the temptations to be saved from death,

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as evidenced by the exhortations of her mother, Pilar, Creón, Monseñor Bernardo and Irene. Her death can be symbolically interpreted as a necessary martyrdom to awaken her people, to save them from the superficiality of their ways, their adherence to materialistic values and their essential alienation from themselves. Further analogies to Christ include the facts that: Christ was killed by the Roman government, motivated by political exigencies; Antígona was killed by Molina's government, also motivated by political exigencies; Christ was tortured by the Romans, Antígona was tortured by Creón's soldiers; Christ dies with two others; before Antígona dies, the two Tavárez brothers die also; likewise the Irene-Judas analogy is apparent. Alyce de Kuehne points out several other details which reinforce the play's religious motif, "Like Christ she prophesies her own death following horrible tortures which are compared with those suffered by Christ on the cross. Like Him she has but one moment of moral depression--when she learns that her Fernando has abandoned the cause, accepting a military post in Creón's presidential palace."[53]

Antígona Pérez can also be readily interpreted as a parable of the '60s. The play depicts a charged political climate: youth pitted against the Establishment, at the same time revealing a tendency in those same youths to abandon their commitment to fight against a corrupt society (read here Irene and Fernando's abandonment of formerly shared ideals). The Irene-Fernando-Antígona triangle reflects the

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withering away of common ideals, a gradual making of an uneasy peace with the Establishment, in this case "el creonato." We see the revolutionary turned practical, expedient, realistic, "mature" in Irene's words. She wounds Antígona even more deeply though, when she states that she, Irene, is emotionally and temperamentally closer to Fernando than Antígona is. More than ever then, Antígona is a lone voice articulating the values of courage and integrity.

She is never a facile cardboard figure, though, "a pure virgin, defiled." That is because her "passion" is authentic. She is challenged and provoked by individuals and institutions which try to intimidate her, bribe her, manipulate her. She responds humanly, however, with a clever tongue, an "almacén de respuestas" as the Bishop comments, with straightforward guilelessness, and most poignantly, with pain, when she learns of Fernando's betrayals. After Irene's exit, in her last monologue in Act II, Scene 3, Antígona reviews the noble way that Fernando and Irene behaved towards her in the past. As she tries to come to terms with the deep disappointment concerning their betrayal, she reviews the past aloud. Reflected in her statements are the disbelief and resignation that she feels in her soul:

> Es decir, Fernando e Irene supieron rebelarse, llenarse de coraje, oponer su sentido de la fraternidad a la amenaza que sobre ellos levantaría Creón. Finalmente, Fernando e Irene también se retiran (p. 113).

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In her final statement she turns inward to herself--ultimately the most dependable source of strength and hope available to her. Thus she integrates her suffering and disappointment in a way that finally nourishes her, and provides her with the necessary strength to continue being Antígona, that is, to become one with the symbolic nature of her name and consequently to fulfill her destiny. We sense her aloneness even more acutely in the penultimate scene of the play, between Antígona and Pilar Varga, when they talk about love. Varga makes a final attempt to convince Antígona to reveal where she buried the bodies of the Tavárez brothers, and thus, to live. She exhorts her, "pero si tienes quién te ame, vive. Lo demás no importa" (p. 117). Antígona confesses her desolate condition quite simply and affectingly when she says, "Señora Pilar, yo no tengo quién me ame" (p. 118). She chooses death, "Me quedaré con la muerte" (p. 118). For Antígona the concept of giving is crucial. "Importa siempre que haya alguien en disposición de dar. Es el refugio que nos queda" (p. 117). She gave love and loyalty in friendship by fulfilling her responsibility to the Tavárez brothers. Although Pilar Varga exhorts her, "Pero dar vida, amor, nunca muerte" (p. 117), Antígona insists that in choosing death she is still giving, "Morir es dar amor, el más completo amor (p. 118).

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The epigraph by Camus reflects Antígona's actions, "Nada en el mundo merece que se aparte uno de lo que ama más" (p. 7). What did Antígona love most? Not Fernando, not sexual love, but rather an ideal of friendship, an all encompassing definition that includes responsibility, commitment, love and sharing, mutual sacrifice and ultimately the possibility of dying for those ideals. Or can the epigraph be interpreted as a direct contradiction to Antígona's actions? Camus says nothing is worth giving up what you love most; Antígona will sacrifice her love for Fernando, even her desire to live, in order to fulfill her moral obligation to her own ideals, to herself. It is not for the Tavárez brothers that she dies, nor merely in defiance of Creón and his law, but rather, in the existential sense, to maintain her authentic self. The inherent symbolism in her name pertains here. She is doomed to fulfill the myth; to enact the destiny of that classical heroine who dies for a higher code than that of the state.

Antígona is a warning, a voice heard in every generation, a presence that refuses to be silenced; a reminder that corruption, cruelty, duplicity and hypocrisy are not acceptable and never will be. Antígona is the eternal opposition, the strength of the people, the force of change. She is a poet, revolutionary, sister, daughter. friend, lover, advocate, adversary, Catholic, citizen. She is also a voice that is stifled. She does not triumph, or does she?

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She dies, or does she? In the action of the play, she does die. However, we have witnessed her effect upon those who came in contact with her. She touched them and affected them all in some way. Distancing ourselves from the text, and approaching the theatre experience, we find that the collective consciousness of the public was equally affected by the play as it was by the reader-text experience.

As we have seen, the written drama is the springboard which catapults the fictional character to that other dimension of reality, the stage. The moment of truth for the drama is the point where the literary creation ceases to be a collage of words and is actualized by an interpreter, the actor or actress. This can also be the moment of ultimate betrayal and disillusionment, with the playwrights carefully chosen words, images and concepts sacrificed for any number of reasons and by any number of people who collaborate in a theatrical production. If, however, that projected character does "come alive" in a vital way, then the playwright's work is well served, as was the case with the Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre's Spring, 1972 presentation and tour of Sánchez's Antígona, which was presented in English, as translated by Charles Pilditch.[54] The work premiered in the "stunning main altar of the Cathedral St. John the Divine for an audience composed of a striking mixture of Puerto Ricans, Latin and international press, Blacks, children of all ages, regular New York theatre goers /and/ community leaders."[55] The impressive setting intensi-

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fied the theatrical nature of the play and reinforced its origins in the Greek tragedy. Notwithstanding the awesome setting, Karl Eigsti's split level stage and imaginative lighting faithfully recreated the Latin American ambiance, with all the undertones and implications of the Greek tragedy. In counterpoint to the sumptuous Cathedral setting, the actual staging was appropriately stark, which allowed for the requisite emphasis on the dialogue and the interaction among the characters. The split level staging in this instance was particularly successful in creating the feeling of Antígona's dungeon, front center stage, and its supposed distance from the actual palace, on the upper level of the scaffolding where the rest of the acting took place.

After the impact of experiencing the play at St. John the Divine, it did not seem to this writer that she could be further impressed by aspects of the production. However, after being permitted to pore through the private archives of the Puerto Rican Theatre, I discovered the original blueprint set and minute specifications for the production at the Cathedral and was fascinated by the meticulous attention to detail--from platforms that had to be made in pieces in order to fit through the doors, to wall units, rakes, overhead struts and ramps--all needed to compose the striking setting at St. John: the raised wooden platform holding several tiers backed by a skeletal lattice. Eigsti's lighting work was also singled out for having been realized "con sen-

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tido práctico y moderno, desechando las oportunidades barroquistas que ofrecía la ubicación geográfica de la obra y que permitió buenos desplazamientos plásticos."[56] Eigstí's professional credits include set designs for the Bristol Old Vic, Washington's Arena Stage, Lincoln Center, the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre, American Shakespeare Festival Theatre, among other repertory theatres; the scenery for the Broadway musical hit, Grease; John Guare's The House of Blue Leaves and the South African play, Boesman and Lena at Circle-in-the-Square.[57] As Ms. Colón stated, referring to the felicitous idea of presenting the play in a cathedral:

> Se debe a las nuevas tendencias en el arte, que han roto las normas intransigentes que por años tenían atado al teatro . . . y hay obras como ésta que parecen adquirir una dimensión adicional cuando se liberan del proscenio convencional. 58

Pablo Cabrera, considered the most important Puerto Rican director, both in Puerto Rico and New York, made his directorial debut in San Juan with Sánchez's Farsa del amor compradito. He has also staged Sánchez's O casi el alma, and the original Spanish language version of Antígona Pérez, for the 1968 Festival del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. His professional credits include: Strindberg's Miss Julie; Myrna Casas' Absurdos en soledad; Miguel Mihura's Maribel y la extraña familia; René Marqués Mariana o el alba; Lerner & Lowe's My Fair Lady; the international successes, Mart Crowley's The Boys in the Band; Anthony Schaffer's Sleuth; Isaac Chocron's Ok; Rodgers & Hammerstein's The Sound

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of Music produced at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid; and in 1971 he joined the PRTT for their production of A Dramatized Anthology of Puerto Rican Short Stories.[59] His direction of this English language version of Antígona was praised by the New York press: by Howard Thompson of The New York Times, Anthony Mancini of The New York Post, and Tom McMorrow of The Daily News. He succeeded in visually enclosing this large physical space and creating an intimate mood, precisely what the work called for. As Lecnard de Paur, from Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts wrote, "/Cabrera/ was able to accomplish almost camera-like concentrations of focus and attention which illuminated the work perfectly."[60]

His direction was evident in the polished performances of the entire cast: Manu Tupou (Creón), June Adams (Pilar), Mary Bell (Aurora), Peter Blaxill (Monseñor Bernardo), Irene de Bari (Irene), and particularly, as Thompson noted, in the

> restrained, steel-sprung performance of Miriam Colón. . . . The joy of the evening, at first, was her steady watchfulness of the others. About midpoint . . . the play stretches taut in direct confrontations. The writing becomes gripping, the flanking characters all too real. The playwright deftly thrust them against his rockbound heroine. 61

Through the physical description of Antígona, Sánchez reinforces his intention vis à vis the portrayal of Antígona's character, "En la anatomía angular de su cuerpo no hay curvas" (p. 13). Why is she angular, rather than ample, or sickly, or even athletic? We ask ourselves what his intentions

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were in drawing her that way, and conclude that in her portrayal he strove for certain vulnerability, openness, a strong suggestion of youth, rather than a physical solidness which could negate the tentativeness of her emotional stance. Miriam Colón evoked a somewhat different physical type than the one suggested by Sánchez. An examination of her performance, however, indicates that her theatrical tools, her gait, her gestures, the use of her arms, the turn of her head, all communicated Antígona's determined spirit, as well as her essential humanness. Note the following statement corroborating our observation:

> Miriam Colón logró disimular a la perfección los peligros que ofrecía su constitución física, quizá algo pequeña para el personaje que debía representar y creó una Antígona Pérez con dimensiones acorde a sus ideas de lealtad y que la llevaron a la muerte acompañada por un silencio extraordinariamente expresivo, dejando establecida claramente su cualidad de gran actriz. 62

Mancini of the Post admired her "understated conviction and a kind of calm, resolute passion,"[63] and Alberto Alonso of El Diario-La Prensa praised her performance for its "vitalidad dominante del tema."[64]

Manu Tupou, the imposing six-foot-plus Polynesian actor, came to this production from a Broadway run with Ingrid Bergman, in Captain Brassbound's Conversion. He made his Broadway debut in Arthur Kopit's Indians, and has appeared Off-Broadway in various Joseph Papp productions, as well as in television and movies.[65] Mancini wrote that

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Tupou:

> who combines great presence with a beautiful voice and solid talent, was brilliant as the banana republic dictator Generalísimo Creón Molina. The scene in which he tries to convince Antígona to renounce her principle and escape the firing squad . . . is particularly affecting. . . . This is the stuff which transforms a cardboard villain into a three-dimensional character. 66

Mancini's observation supports our previous statement about the multi-dimensionality of Creón as a character.

Consistent with the goal of the PRTT to bring theatre to the people, Antígona was on tour during the entire summer of 1972. The following statement, part of a report about that tour, provides insight into the make-up of the audience, and its reaction to the play:

> Our audiences, which ranged from 300 to 500 in indoor locations (with the exception of the Cathedral where more than 1,000 attended per night), consisted of children and young and mature adults. We were intrigued by the fact that, contrary to the opinion of some of our acquaintances, the play did make a deep impression of the minds and attitudes of our audiences, particularly on the teenage set. In all cases their identification with the character of Antígona was extremely interesting. In some neighborhoods their rejection of the character of the dictator Creón was almost comical. In various instances the actor portraying the role of the dictator Creón was booed and abused verbally during the curtain calls. 67

Recognizing the wide audience acceptance of this play, both in Puerto Rico and abroad, Bravo-Elizondo's comments on the necessity for the active participation of the audience in today's theatre, are useful:

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> Los autores contemporáneos según Brustein /The Theatre of Revolt/ son 'rebeldes metafísicos' más que agitadores políticos o reformadores sociales, pues su posición política nada tiene que ver en su creación, ya que ésta es producto de una condición espiritual. Esta constante es la que manifiestan los dramaturgos hispanoamericanos empeñados en hacer conscientes en los espectadores, los grandes problemas que gravitan sobre la sociedad, más que divulgar posturas ideológicas. Por esta razón es que este teatro revolucionario, comprometido con el ser humano, busca la participación activa del espectador. 68

Thus we see the wide range of reactions that this theatre experience induced, and we include, as proof of this, Thompson's evocative words.

> Last night the play, the players and the very setting of the church merged no less than hauntingly, under Pablo Cabrera's understanding direction. Nothing more was needed. 69

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Notes

La pasión según Antígona Pérez

[1] Some examples of the contemporary development of mythological themes include: Galdós, Electra, Casandra; O'Neill, Mourning Becomes Electra; Giraudoux, La guerre de Troie n'aura pas lieu; Anouilh, Antigone, Medea; Sartre, Les mouches; Cocteau, Les mamelles de Tiresia; Virgilio Piñera, Electra Garrigó; Marichal, Antígona; René Marqués, La muerte no entrará en palacio.

[2] Arriví, "Undécimo Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño," p. 20.

[3] Luis Rafael Sánchez, La pasión según Antígona Pérez (Puerto Rico: Ediciones Lugar, 1970). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[4] Thomas Austin O'Connor, "The Thematic-Structural Approach to the Comedia and the Problem of Poetic Justice," unpublished manuscript, SUNY at Cortlandt, pp. 17-18.

[5] Arriví, "Undécimo Festival," p. 20.

[6] J. B. Phillips, p. 183.

[7] Dauster, Review of AP, Sin nombre, I, no. 4 (1971), p. 85.

[8] Morfi, p. 49.

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[9] Dauster, review of AP, p. 86.

[10] José González Barja, "Reseña literaria: La pasión según Antígona Pérez," Surcos II, No. 2 (1972), p. 42.

[11] Alyce de Kuehne, "The Antigone Theme in Anouilh, Marechal and Luis Rafael Sánchez," in Papers on French-Spanish, Luso-Brazilian, Spanish-American Literary Relations, Seminar 17, MLA, New York, 1970. Published by SUNY at Brockport, p. 63.

[12] Dauster, Review of AP, p. 85.

[13] Morfi, p. 49.

[14] Dauster, Review of AP, p. 85.

[15] Morfi, P. 48.

[16] Bravo-Elizondo, pp. 103-104.

[17] Gassner, p. 42.

[18] Gerald Rabkin, "Rehearsing Latin American Drama," Review, Winter (1974), p. 71.

[19] Juan Luis Marquéz, "Entre Mayas y Cundeamores: 'La pasión según Antígona Pérez,'" El Mundo, June 8, 1968, p. 28.

[20] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 107.

[21] John K. Knowles, "Louisa Josefina Hernández: The Labyrinth of Form," in Dramatists in Revolt, p. 141.

[22] Ernesto Sábato, Hombres y engranjes (Buenos Aires, 1951), p. 94.

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[23] Dauster, HLAS, 34 (1972), p. 527.

[24] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 107.

[25] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 108.

[26] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 56.

[27] Arriví, "Undécimo Festival," p. 21.

[28] Morfi, pp. 48-49.

[29] Juan Luis Márquez, "La pasión según Antígona Pérez," p. 28.

[30] Bravo-Elizondo, pp. 108 and 104.

[31] This condition of violence is presented as the fundamental problem of Spanish American literature by Ariel Dorfman in Imaginación y violencia en América (Barcelona: Editorial Anagrama, 1972).

[32] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 101.

[33] José González Barja, "AP," p. 44.

[34] José González Barja, "AP," p. 44.

[35] Gassner, pp. 624-625.

[36] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 95.

[37] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 154.

[38] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 154.

[39] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 152.

[40] Alyce de Kuehne, p. 68.

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[41] Alyce de Kuehne, p. 65.

[42] Frank Tannenbaum, Chapter 4, "Religion," in Ten Keys to Latin America (New York: Vintage Books, 1966).

[43] Morfi, p. 47.

[44] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 106.

[45] Bravo Elizondo, pp. 58-59.

[46] M. T. Babín, Prologue to La carreta (Río Piedras: Editorial Cultural, Inc., 1963), p. XX.

[47] M. T. Babín, Prologue to La carreta, p. XXII.

[48] M. T. Babín, Prologue to La carreta, p. XXI.

[49] M. T. Babín, Prologue to La carreta, p. XXI.

[50] For a further examination of machismo as it is manifested in male-female relations in Latin America, see Gloria F. Waldman, "Women in Latin America," Tape Lecture for Cassette Series on Women's Studies, Everett/Edwards, Inc., Deland, Florida, 1976.

[51] J. González Barja, "AP," p. 42.

[52] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 60.

[53] Alyce de Kuehne, p. 64.

[54] Rutgers University Professor, Charles Pilditch, has translated Sánchez's . . . O casi el alma into English, A Miracle for Maggie and René Marqués' La carreta, The Oxcart.

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[55] "Report on the Spring Tour, 1972 of The Passion of Antígona Pérez," Document from the private archives of the PRTT.

[56] Anonymous, "La pasión de Antígona Pérez," Latin Show, p. 45, clipping from private archives of PRTT.

[57] Program Notes for The Passion of Antígona Pérez, PRTT, 1972.

[58] Anonymous, "Miriam Colón aparecerá en pieza puertorriqueña," Newspaper clipping, without specific documentation from private archives of PRTT.

[59] Program Notes for The Passion of Antígona Pérez.

[60] Personal correspondence of Leonard Paur, Director, Community Relations for Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, to PRTT, May 22, 1972.

[61] Howard Thompson, "Sánchez Play Given by Puerto Rican Troupe," The New York Times, Sat., May 20, 1972, without pagination.

[62] Anonymous, "La pasión de Antígona Pérez," Latin Show, p. 45.

[63] Anthony Mancini, "'Antígona' Takes to the Streets," New York Post, Thursday, Aug. 10, 1972, p. 21.

[64] Alberto Alonso, "'Arte para el pueblo,' es misión que cumple el Teatro Rodante Puertorriqueño: Amplitud," El Diario-La Prensa, Friday, June 2, 1972, without pagination.

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[65] Program Notes for The Passion of Antígona Pérez.

[66] Mancini, p. 21.

[67] "Report on the Spring Tour." Document from the private archives of the PRTT.

[68] Bravo-Elizondo, p. 155.

[69] Thompson, "Sánchez Play Given by Puerto Rican Troupe," without pagination.

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CONCLUSION

As we conclude this study, we feel a oneness with Neglia's assertion, "El único camino para una verdadera comprensión de la madurez del arte hispanoamericano es el que no ignore el teatro, sino que lo examine como un índice fehaciente del nivel artístico de los países de habla hispana."[1] Corroborating this concept of the theatre as barometer, or index of the times, James A. Collins--a long-time Puerto Rican theatre watcher--observed, "Contemporary Puerto Rican culture is undergoing changes as bewildering as they are kaleidoscopic, but at the still center of all these disturbances is the desire of every Puerto Rican to discover unequivocally his true identity. And both the crises and the anxieties of this quest through torn and often confusing confusing allegiances are perhaps nowhere better reflected than in the theatre of the time."[2] However, to do theatre in Puerto Rico is a passionate exercise in frustration, in self-definition, in social change. Sánchez validates our contention when he asserts that, "para el escritor, el medio puertorriqueño es asfixiante. La ausencia de una prensa alerta, del público lector, de una carrera de escritor como tal frustra en muchas ocasiones proyectos admirables."[3] Nevertheless, in spite of these obstacles, Sánchez has succeeded in creating a body of work worthy of critical consideration.

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It is our intention that this analysis of his work demonstrate why critics and audience alike consider his theatre to be of lasting value. The needs of his characters stem from the human condition rather than from the peculiarities of geography and history. His characters have universal appeal rather than limited nationalistic acceptance. He has been able to achieve his dramatic intention without relying on elaborate visual effects, and at the same time he has incorporated modern staging techniques into his theatre. Whether interpreting an episode from ancient Greece or examining the frustrations of his contemporaries, he always demonstrates a command of the dramatic medium. His work is a prime example of the concept of "playing" inherent in the word for drama, "play": a verbal jocularity and lightness in the banter enjoyed between Píramo and Tisbe; the intensity of the interchange between Maggie and El Hombre; and especially, in the verbal sparring between Antígona and Creón, where the characters "play" for stakes as high as life and death.

His theatre reflects skill, sensitivity, and a broad humanistic background. He is at his best in those plays where he uses the Puerto Rican ambiance to address universal themes and where conflicts and characters explore the problems of identity, both through language and culture. For those reasons and for their consistently high artistic

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level, we consider his plays substantial contributions to the dramatic expression of a Latin American reality. As María Teresa Babín has said:

> Sigo creyendo que la fuente de un teatro puertorriqueño está en la fidelidad a nosotros mismos y no a la servidumbre a modelos extranjeros que adultera y pervierte la imagen que pretendemos captar en la farsa, la comedia, el drama o la tragedia. Nuestros mejores dramaturgos, no hay duda, se expresan mejor y expresan mejor lo puertorriqueño al recurrir a la farsa y la tragedia, los dos extremos de nuestra vida de pueblo. 4

As we have seen, Sánchez deals successfuly with both humor and tragedy. He demonstrates a concern for theatrical form as he manipulates the dual concepts of empathy and distance within his plays, rival, but not incompatible objectives in the staging of modern drama. Says Sánchez: "En lo referente a la técnica de cualquier obra teatral . . . el asunto de la misma impone el formato y el esqueleto que tendrá. Más que técnica, lo que debe conocer cualquier dramaturgo es que todo hecho literario debe ser un experimento en forma y contenido.[5]

It is our contention after examining the origin and development of the contemporary Puerto Rican theatre and appreciating some of its most important dramatic creations, for the very same reasons that Arriví mentions--"porque los redondos y enfáticos entes de ficción Buenaventura Padilla, Mamá Toña e Inés han impresionado profundamente, como expresión simbólico-artística de lo viviente y anhelante

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puertorriqueño"[6]--so do many of Sánchez's fictional creations represent vital symbols of Puerto Rican life: for example, Antígona, for her strength; Píramo and Tisbe, for their essential Latin warmth; and doña Ugo, for her earthiness. These figures are capable of emerging "a tomar vida independiente, afirmadora de sí misma, y con ello hegemonía sobre las otras figuras escénicas que se agitan de acuerdo con sus voluntades preponderantes."[7] This kind of character seizes the audience's imagination and remains with them, even after the play is over. As Arriví says, these figures "se manifiestan por la totalidad del mundo artístico del que emanan."[8] They are not necessarily heroes or heroines, possessing outstanding talent or ability. What they do accomplish is an affirmation of their own identities. The four figures Arriví mentiones, as well as the ones we are adding to the repertoire of oustanding Puerto Rican dramatic creations, whether they triumph or fail, affirm "una esencialidad puertorriqueña."

Throughout his thematic exploration of seemingly disparate problems--problems of religious faith in the modern world, of time, of reality and illusion, of chance, of the clash in cultural values--his theatre nevertheless reveals an affirmation of the human spirit. We witness it in Antígona's struggle and in the ultimate achievement of the freedom of her soul; we witness it too, in Maggie's struggle to retain her inherent honesty, in the face of

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the duplicity around her; we witness it in the tender struggle of Píramo and Tisbe to survive with integrity in a world indifferent to their gentle and open spirits; and we even witness it in Angela, ostensibly broken by the cruelty aroundher, however, who still finds the resources to create a vivid inner world for herself.

One intention of this study has been to situate Sánchez within the wider context of Latin American theatre, and to illustrate the thematic and stylistic affinities that he shares with the present generation of Latin American dramatists. Another objective has been to reveal the rich dialogue on the theatre arts that is taking place in Latin American and in Puerto Rico, in aesthetic, historical, cultural and political terms. We have shown how his theatre is a successful synthesis of realist techniques, as well as innovative use of lights, music, and mise en scène. He combines traditional, popular Puerto Rican themes with universal preoccupations. He participates in the major direction of the new Latin American dramatists, by recreating traditional themes and motifs, while using a personal idiom to express their version of today's reality. The content of his dramas reveals a sensitivity to his fellow human beings while the basic thrust of his work is artistic rather than dogmatic. This is important to ascertain since chronologically, Sánchez belongs to a generation of Latin American playwrights concerned with social change and

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frequently finding its voice in the popular theatre movement. He shares with such writers as Dragún, Buenaventura, Cuzzani, and Triana, a preocupation with social justice; with Carballido, Vodanoviç, Luisa Josefina Hernández, Wolff, Heiremans, Gambaro, and Díaz, a vital concern for language and a desire for structural innovation, as well as a willingness to experiment with older forms, for example his use of the commedia dell'arte genre in Farsa del amor compradito.

Woodyard remarks about this generation of dramatists, "To extract meaning from a chaotic world may appear to be futile, but the attempt at least connotes a guardedly optimistic view. Analysis creates awareness, and throughout Latin America, the playwrights explore the social, political, religious, racial, sexual, psychological, and metaphysical aspects of the Latin American ambiance."[9] The coincidence between Sánchez's attitude toward theatre and other contemporary dramatists can be discerned in the following statement by the Cuban playwright, José Triana, "I am interested above all else in man, man as he shows himself, man as he is produced everyday, always in search of living situations. I look at man in his critical attitudes, in a key position, in the moment of possible transformations or possible cataclysms."[10] As a further reflection of this sentiment, both Chocrón and Sánchez examine national realities in their theatre. In Chocrón's case, it is the Venezuelan reality, which he uses to explore the total human experience: now,

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homosexuality in La revolución; now, love and its possibilities in O.K. and La máxima felicidad; now personal dissatisfaction and frustration in El quinto infierno. Similarly, Sánchez's work also reveals common concerns with Luisa Josefina Hernández's theatre: note the creation of the ambiance through the use of poetic language; the development of national themes; and the generally traditional structure of the plays. Also, both playwrights use humor and love as artistic tools to explore their characters' makeup. His examinations of painful experiences such as old age, poverty and margination in La hiel, and loneliness and exploitation as in Los ángeles, although not treated in the absurdist idiom of Jorge Díaz, Griselda Gambaro or Myrna Casas, do share their use of farcical, satirical and political elements which fuse to create discomfort in the audience; discomfort that seems to say, "Listen, see this in a different way. You may choose to laugh at these excesses, and they may also horrify you. In any case, my exploration of extreme situations will touch you."

Is there, in fact, a new Latin American theatre? We conclude that there is. Sánchez has affirmatively addressed himself to this question by pointing to the more open structure of contemporary Latin American plays, versus the closed structure of the Italian comedy mode. He mentions various theatre contemporaries and their work as substantiation of this new direction: the sophisticated psychological de-

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velopment in La Madre Conchita and El proceso de León Toral; the structural innovation of Cuzzani who, like Unamuno with his Nívola, invents a new genre, the farsátira, to accommodate his own self-expression; Carballido, who adapts traditional elements and eliminates the picturesque and popular; and also the high technical quality and dramatic intensity generated in the works of Triana, Buenaventura, Díaz, Wolff and Heiremans.[11]

He considers the more creative use of the dramatic space as one of the most significant innovations in the contemporary theatre, and has said that "lo físico refleja el mensaje." In support of this statement he cites Leñero's play Los albañiles, with its difficult system of scaffolding utilized in the original production which Sánchez saw in Mexico. In reference to his own work, we have indicated how the mise en scène has served not only to elaborate upon the message, but also to engage the audience in the play. Thus Sánchez is a practitioner of this new Latin American Theatre, and actively incorporates into his own art the greater freedom and flexibility in language, theme and staging which he has observed, written and spoken about in the works of his contemporaries.

If, then, there is no one word that is the key word in a study of Sánchez's theatre, perhaps we can sum up his approach to drama and to his people with Ortega's statement,

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"El hombre no es cosa ninguna, sino un drama-- su vida, un puro y universal acontecimiento. . . ."[12] Thus through the vehicle of the theatre, Sánchez attempts and succeeds in revealing the essential drama in the lives of ordinary people, those who, after all, form the infrastructure of our society. Even more pointedly, in García Lorca's unfinished play, El público,[13] he articulates the challenge, "hacer el teatro o vivir el teatro." As we conclude this study of our author's theory and praxis, we are confident that this challenge poses no dilemma for Sánchez, whose work firmly situates him within Lorca's context of passionate commitment to the theatre.

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Notes

CONCLUSION

[1] Neglia, p. 78.

[2] Collins, "Puerto Rican Theater Today," p. 322.

[3] Ramón Porrata, "La dramaturgia puertorriqueña," El Mundo, August 16, 1970, p. 15-A.

[4] Babín, "Veinte Años," p. 19.

[5] Porrata, p. 15-A.

[6] Arriví, "Noveno Festival del Teatro Puertorriqueño," RICP (1968), p. 15.

[7] Ibid., p. 15.

[8] Ibid., p. 15.

[9] Woodyard, The Modern Stage in Latin America, p. XV.

[10] José Triana, "El teatro actual," Casa de las Américas (Jan.-Apr. 1964), p. 100.

[11] Luis Rafael Sánchez, Remarks made at a lecture at the Graduate Center, CUNY, Oct. 21, 1974.

[12] Ortega y Gasset, La historia como sistema (Madrid: Ediciones Revista Occidente, 1970), p. 63.

[13] The world premiere of El público took place in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Feb. 1978, presented by the Drama Department of the University of Puerto Rico and directed by Victoria Espinosa.

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APPENDIX 1:

Personal Interview with Luis Rafael Sánchez

14 August 1974

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TU HAS CRITICADO EL HECHO DE SER "UN ESCRITOR DE FESTIVALES". ¿COMO LES HA AFECTADO EN PUERTO RICO ESTE FENOMENO?

Yo creo que los Festivales, y aquí me refiero a los Festivales patrocinados por el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueño, tuvieron mérito extraordinario y subsidiaron la creación dramática. Hasta ese momento los escritores tenían que pagar por la representación de su obra u organizar algún grupo, como hizo René Marqués con su grupo "Teatro Nuestro," como hizo Francisco Arriví con su grupo "Tinglado Puertorriqueño." Entonces los Festivales, cuando se iniciaron, se convirtieron realmente en un lugar cómodo, económicamente, donde un escritor pudo estrenar sus obras. Según fueron pasando los años los Festivales fueron perdiendo su impacto y allí parece que hay unas cuantas razones; en primer lugar, la creación dramática se condicionó casi a aparecer en los Festivales; y los escritores ya no escribían por la urgencia de escribir sino porque había un Festival y querían realmente aparecer- -aparecer en el mejor sentido, no en el sentido frívolo. De manera que se hacía una creación dramática en función de los Festivales. Por otro lado como los Festivales estaban subvencionados por el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueño y no había límite en cuanto al gasto en producción, el teatro puertorriqueño se infló en términos de escenografía y montaje, innecesariamente. Muchas obras que pudieron destacarse más, dándole un valor fundamental al texto, se ahogaron en el montaje, hasta el punto que uno pensaba que aquel montaje era realmente excesivo para la obra que se representaba. Es decir, que pudo haberse resuelto por la vía de la imaginación contando con el texto, que es lo fundamental en el teatro, pero se falsificó en favor de un montaje deslumbrante, con grandes luces, con grandes escenografías. Fue la época de las grandes escenografías en el

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teatro puertorriqueño. Y casi cuando uno examina todo el teatro puertorriqueño ve una obsesión en todos los dramaturgos con las grandes escenografías; de allá parece que en menor o mayor grado, eso o falsificó, o desmejoró, o traicionó el hecho dramático. Incluso el otro día yo pensaba que hay obras dentro del teatro puertorriqueño que si se hicieran con menos pretensiones escénicas, sin que el montaje dramático las ahogara, resultarían más asequibles. Entre estos está Cristal roto en el tiempo de Myrna Casas que es una obra cuyo montaje, me parece a mí, desayudó la obra en gran medida. Era tan inmeno el aparato escénico, tan distante las habitaciones de una prostituta a otra, que el texto, que se supone que sea un texto lírico, íntimo, de desgarramiento interior, se perdía; lo devoraba la inmensidad. En mi obra, Sol 13, Interior, cuando se estrenó Los ángeles se han fatigado, recuerdo que sentado yo en la butaca del Tapia, veía que la actriz se perdía como si fuese una muñequita, porque el escenario estaba abierto; el escenario atrás era un ciclorama para que se proyectaran las figuras del recuerdo. La obra realmente lo que necesita es confinamiento, porque es una prostituta que ya la van a llevar al manicomio para que no fastidie más. Cuando se abrió el cuarto a todo lo largo del escenario, la obra perdió dimensión, intimidad; perdió rapport, correspondencia entre el espectador y la actriz, porque realmente la situación de aquella mujer en aquella pieza tan inmensa, era demasiado contradictoria, en términos de lo que la obra proponía. Resulta que ya tenía, no una habitación, sino un espacio inmenso para desplazarse, cuando lo que se debía hacer realmente fue cerrarlo, acorralar al personaje para que las circunstancias le hicieran más dolorosas. Pues en ese segundo sentido, yo creo que los Festivales hicieron a largo plazo, un cierto daño al teatro puertorriqueño.

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Hay algo más, y es que se creó una dinámica de Festivales anuales. Este es un país pequeño y podrá haber cinco o seis dramaturgos significativos, si es que los hay, pero entonces, como había que hacer teatro todos los años, empezaron a hacerse concesiones año tras año, porque todos los años los buenos dramaturgos no tienen una obra; de manera que a lo mejor en un Festival había una obra aceptable y tres obras inaceptables, obras que podían tener lugar en un laboratorio dramático en que el autor bregara con un público crítico más pequeño, pero al montarse en el Teatro Tapia, en un teatro con un público allí exigente, la obra se perdía. En ese sentido ha habido obras como El iniciso hache de Cesar Andreu Iglesias o El cielo se rindió al amanecer de Rivera Alvarez, que si hubiesen sido obras de laboratorio donde los dramaturgos se hubiesen enfrentado a cuáles eran las fallas de la estructura de las obras, cuáles eran los clisés utilizados, dónde estaban los personajes chatos, dónde faltaba crecimiento dramático, en una segunda salida en escena de esas obras, hubiesen tenido una puesta en escena digna. Entonces, en primer lugar existe una dramaturgia que casi se dedicó a hacer teatro para festival; en segundo lugar unos montajes desproporcionados; y en tercer lugar, que en nuestro país me parece a mí temerario, el creer que se puede hacer un Festival de Teatro Puertorriqueño todos los años.

Yo había pensado, y lo he dicho en más de una ocasión, que más que un Festival, debía haber una temporada de teatro. Una temporada puede constar de una o dos obras y si resulta que una obra es excelente entonces esa obra no debe aparecer en las limitaciones de todas las obras, de estrenarse un jueves y cerrar un domingo, sino mantenerse hasta que el público ya no le interese, porque la estructura del Festival ahoga las buenas obras. Todas las obras

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estrenan los jueves y cierran los domingos, independientemente de su éxito; entonces la obra excelente tiene la misma oportunidad que la obra que no es excelente. Entonces el domingo por la noche a lo mejor tuvieras un éxito extraordinario, Los soles truncos por ejemplo, la misma Carreta. Entonces, el domingo el teatro está lleno, la gente entusiasmada, pero siempre se oye, "Pero no me dio tiempo" o "No había boletos". Sin embargo es el domingo y la obra se acaba, sea un éxito o sea desastre. Así que la estructura del Festival impide que una obra que gusta continué hasta que el público ya haya podido asistir al teatro.

Y ESTA NECESIDAD DE VER CADA OBRA EN TAN POCO TIEMPO, ¿COMO AFECTA EL AMBIENTE DE TEATRO?

Bueno, se trata entonces de que la relación que se establece entre el público y las obras del teatro puertorriqueño es una relación festivalera. En cualquier otro sitio uno va a ver una obra, de Buero Vallejo por ejemplo, para citar un autor hispánico, cuando le acomoda, un martes o un sábado, pero cuando tú estrenas una obra puertorriqueña, en primer lugar sólo tienes cuatro días para ir, pero además hay una actitud de competencia que nada tiene que ver con el arte. La gente entonces establece la costumbre de ir los viernes, y después comentar si la del viernes pasado es mejor, y que si ésta es peor. Realmente un dramaturgo tiene el derecho de fracasar; como dice Octavio Paz, "en arte todo es riesgo". Así que a lo mejor buscando un nuevo intento, eso no se logra, pero ha abierto un camino. Pero tal como es, la relación que se establece entre el público y la obra es totalmente artificial.

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Los primeros Festivales fueron de un éxito extraordinario, un éxito social en el peor sentido, social en el sentido un poco municipal. Es que la gente no interesa las obras, sino de ir en traje largo al estreno, cubierta la obra no sólo por el crítico de teatro de los periódicos sino por la página social.

¿HA HABIDO MAS Y MEJOR COMUNICACION CONTINENTAL ENTRE LOS DRAMATURGOS DESDE QUE EMPEZARON LOS FESTIVALES?

No lo hay, es decir, ninguna obra puertorriqueña ha ido a un solo festival de teatro. Este año el Grupo Teatro '60 fue a Nancy y al Festival de Caracas con un espectáculo titulado Puerto Rico Fua, escrito por un argentino que hace tiempo está aquí. Pero esta obra no emana de los festivales de teatro. En este sentido los Festivales de Teatro Puertorriqueño no crearon un dinámico intercambio de manera que una prominente producción puertorriqueña fuera a Manizales, fuera a Nancy, fuera a cualquiera de los festivales, como el Festival de los Dos Mundos en Spoleto, por ejemplo. No, ese intercambio nunca lo hubo.

¿POR QUE TE PARECE QUE HA SIDO ASI?

En primer lugar, siempre se ha dicho que el teatro puertorriqueño es excesivamente nacionalista, es excesivamente local. Incluso yo he oido esto fuera de Puerto Rico muchas veces. Es un teatro que tiene un interés capital para nosotros, los puertorriqueños, porque intenta dilucidar nuestros conflictos como pueblo; pero a veces este acto de dilucidar los conflictos

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es tan local que a otra gente realmente no le interesa. Por otro lado, es un teatro aparatoso. Realmente, cuando se va a un festival se tiene que ir con una obra que se pueda poner es escena prácticamente con nada, porque en los festivales generalmente no hay ni siquiera garantía del escenario. Así que la obra de alguna manera tiene que adaptarse a más o menos un mínimo de escenario, pero no se puede. Hay obras en Puerto Rico que están hechas en función de la escenografía. Así que el teatro que realmente podría ir, además que podría ser significativo para un colombiano y para un venezolano, es un teatro menor en cuanto a número. El teatro puertorriqueño ha sido escencialmente nacionalista, y por otro lado, tiene que serlo; porque en Puerto Rico hay un problema político que no se acaba de resolver, y como una parte fundamental de la intelectualidad es separatista, es independentista, el tema que siempre examina escénicamente es el de la desaparición de nuestra personalidad como pueblo, es decir la transculturación, el problema de los puertorriqueños en Nueva York como minoría oprimida, la participación de los puertorriqueños en los conflictos que les atan a los EEUU. Entonces nuestro teatro realmente se lo acusan en varias ocasiones de ser un teatro excesivamente local, pese a que algunas obras puertorriqueñas, como La carreta, como Los soles truncos, como Vejigantes, como La pasión según Antígona Pérez, como La hiel nuestra de cada día se han hecho en distintos sitios fuera de aquí.

Cuando uno compara el teatro puertorriqueño con el teatro de Osvaldo Dragún, o con el teatro de Enrique Buenaventura, o con el teatro del chileno, Luis Alberto Heiremans, pues ve que las obras escénicas de ellos sirven para el

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hombre en cualquier circunstancia y nosotros estamos empeñados en el desarrollo de un teatro que destaque nuestro drama colonial. De alguna manera yo he querido crear un teatro que sigue siendo puertorriqueño pero que sea también un teatro de afirmación hispanoamericana- - porque me parece que eso es el vínculo natural de nosotros como pueblo. Y justamente cuando escribí La pasión según Antígona Pérez lo que intentaba era romper esta trampa. Creo que nuestra afirmación hispanoamericana, en primer lugar, es la sensata por nuestra posición geográfica. Pero también, me parece que nuestra incorporación al mundo hispanoamericano puede resultar en un beneficio profundo para nuestro pueblo; por "pueblo" me refiero a nuestra gente, que siempre mira Hispanoamérica con una gran desconfianza, porque se le ha educado para eso. En muchas ocasiones el puertorriqueño siente un gran desprecio por el hispanoamericano porque cree que el hispanoamericano es inferior en calidad y tampoco tiene el estilo ágil de los norteamericanos- -y en cualquier momento los sinvergüenzas dan un golpe de estado y tumban a un país. Hay una versión de Hispanoamérica como si fuese realmente una zarzuela, un mundo de relajo.

¿TE PARECE QUE LAS INFLUENCIAS DE LA VANGUARDIA Y DE DRAMATURGOS COMO PIRANDELLO Y BRECHT HAN ABIERTO LA TEMATICA PUERTORRIQUEÑA, O LA MANERA DE ESCRIBIR DRAMA EN PUERTO RICO?

Tal vez más que Pirandello o Brecht, yo creo que aquí, sobre todo en el caso de escritoras como Myrna Casas, ha habido influencia de los "absurdistas", pero los absurdistas que descomponen la realidad; gente

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como Ionesco; un poco menos Arrabal, que siempre me ha parecido un dramaturgo sobreestimado; gente como Kopit, el de Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mother's Put You in the Closet and I'm Feeling So Sad; gente como el Albee de su primera obra The American Dream, The Death of Bessie Smith, ya menos en Zoo Story, que es un poco existencialista y más que nada parece un replanteamiento de los postulados de Sartre. Y en ese sentido Pirandello y Brecht no han influido capitalmente en el teatro puertorriqueño. Habrá alguna que otra obra, verdad, en la que tú digas, "Bueno, tal vez algunas de las exigencias del teatro de Brecht o del teatro de Pirandello aparecen, o se utilizan." Pero el teatro puertorriqueño en ese sentido no ha sido un teatro esencialmente investigador de la escena. Encuentro que en el caso nuestro nos ha faltado un poco el ánimo de replantear el fenómeno del espacio dramático. Y a mí me parece que eso tiene que ver con el hecho mismo de que la palabra "experimental" en Puerto Rico es una palabra vista con sospecha. En todos lugares de Francia el teatro experimental es el teatro que abre caminos. Lo es en Berlin y lo es en Paris y lo es en Nueva York. No vamos a hablar sólo de Open Theatre, del American Theatre, sino del Living Theatre y algunas de las cosas que luego ha hecho Joseph Papp en el Public Theatre del New York Shakespeare Festival, ya no sólo experimentación de formas, sino experimentaciones para ver hasta que punto los actores negros pueden interpretar a Chekhov, como hizo Papp con El jardín de los cerezos en '74. En Puerto Rico la palabra "experimental" es una palabra que la gente mira con desconfianza porque cree que "experimental" quiere decir que se trata de una obra que no está lograda.

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Claro, todo el teatro en el mundo es "teatro experimental" en este sentido porque no hay certeza ninguna de cuál es la reacción del público. Y el mejor ejemplo es el de Esperando a Godot. Su primer estreno era un fracaso absoluto, total, y luego se volvía a hacer sin que Beckett añadiera una sola línea, y era un éxito deslumbrante. Lo que quiere decir que siempre que un dramatrugo y grupo de actores van a un escenario, lo que hacen es tomar un riesgo. Lo que pasa es que la palabra "riesgo" significa riesgo de búsqueda, método de expresar la verdad escénica, investigación del espacio. Esos planteamientos siempre se ven con sospecha, y en ese sentido nosotros somos, o digamos nosotros no, lo que podríamos llamar la dramaturgia del establishment, es poco dada a la experimentación.

¿COMO DEFINIRIAS LA DIFERENCIA ENTRE CRITICA LITERARIA DE UNA OBRA DRAMATICA, Y CRITICA DE TEATRO?

Yo no sé si los términos sean exactos. Yo pienso que tal vez la diferencia estriba en la crítica periodística, la que se hace inmediatamente que se ve la obra en escena, en que el crítico pasa juicio sobre lo que se ve allí sobre la puesta en escena. Generalmente si es un estreno pues no tiene el texto y no lo conoce, con tal que no sea un clásico; pues todo el mundo conoce Hamlet, todo el mundo conoce Las troyanas, todo el mundo conoce Casa de muñecas. La crítica periodística lo que realmente debe interesarse, es en el hecho dramático que ocurre en la escena, sin siquiera pensar en qué es lo que el autor escribió y qué suprimieron en el texto, etc.; eso a él, no le importa. A él lo que le debe de importar, me parece a mí, es el producto que allí se le ofrece. Entonces como parte de la crítica

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literaria puede objetar al planteamiento que haya hecho el director del texto, la manera como los actores hayan iluminado ese texto, las limitaciones de la obra, si las tiene, hasta qué punto lo que el autor ha propuesto en el texto está recogido en la puesta en escena, y sobre todo—y a mí me parece que es la pregunta fundamental de toda crítica—ver si el montaje escéncio tiene una propuesta. Yo siempre que voy al teatro me parece que el montaje escénico tiene que haber una reinterpretación por parte del director del texto. El director no puede restringirse a servir la obra sin él mismo reinterpretarla, sin él mismo ayudar a crearla. Entonces en ese sentido la crítica periodística es la crítica que se hace un poco el mismo día de la representación.

Ahora, la crítica que hacen los especialistas es una crítica que es más rigurosa en el sentido de bregar con el texto. Así como el crítico periodístico brega con aquello que es de paso, una puesta en escena, quien se enfrenta a un texto para hacer una crítica profunda, en primer lugar tiene que ubicar al escritor en un momento; tiene que conocer realmente cuál es la sensibilidad epocal que el escritor comparte, porque, a lo mejor, un hombre en Alemania está pensando lo mismo que yo estoy pensando, o un hombre en Paris está pensando lo mismo que yo estoy pensando, sin ninguno saber que el otro existe. Aquel crítico tiene que saber de qué manera el escritor elude o se enfrenta a la problemática del mundo de nuestros días. Si lo elude, ¿por qué? Es decir, no es gratuito. Tiene que tener una razón real. Si lo enfrenta, ¿por qué lo enfrenta? ¿Hasta qué punto es este teatro efectivo?

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Porque puede que el problema sea relevante, y la manera suya de tratarlo no sea la mejor. Cuántos autores tienen grandes penas, grandes problemas y con eso no hacen nada, y a veces con un problema realmente menor se puede hacer una gran obra.

Yo acabo de leer, hace ya como un año y medio, una novela que me fascinó de Henrich Bölls, Group Portrait with a Lady, una novela fascinante porque la estructura de la novela es una larga entrevista, una serie de entrevistas, pero realmente se convierte en una entrevista magna. Va construyendo a través del personaje principal, Leni, una visión de la Alemania nazi, pre-nazi, y pos-nazi. Logró crear un documento deslumbrante sobre la Alemania de su tiempo. Así que el tema realmente no era fundamental. Todo esto me parece que tiene que ver con la manera en que el crítico se enfrenta con el hecho dramático, de qué manera parece en el texto la época del autor, sus fantasmas, sus demonios.

Es que yo creo que el crítico literario tiene realmente un trabajo más extenso, porque es un trabajo más definitivo. La crítica periodística cumple con dar la información de lo que se hizo. El crítico periodístico tiene que tener una extraordinaria sensibilidad porque tiene realmente sólo una puesta en escena para su impresión, entonces tiene que tener la sensibilidad para entender si en aquella puesta en escena, aquello, el texto dramático, ha sido traicionado, o si ha sido iluminado, mientras

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que un crítico literario realmente puede reflexionar continuamente sobre su texto. Son cosas totalmente distintas.

EN LA CONFERENCIA QUE DICTASTE EN EL CENTRO GRADUADO DE LA CIUDAD UNIVERSITARIA DE NUEVA YORK EN OCTUBRE DE 74 DIJISTE QUE LOS DIRECTORES HAN MALOGRADO MUCHAS OBRAS. TAMBIEN SE HA DICHO QUE HOY EN DIA EL TEATRO ES DEL DIRECTOR, O SEA QUE EL DIRECTOR ES EL VERDADERO CREADOR. ¿QUISIERAS COMENTAR SOBRE TU CONCEPTO DEL PAPEL DEL DIRECTOR?

Cuando yo dije que algunas obras habían sido malogradas por el director, justamente lo que estaba señalando es que la labor del director es una labor fundamental, es importantísima; que realmente el director, lo que tiene que hacer es replantear todo el mundo dramático que propone el dramaturgo. No es traicionarlo, es enriquecerlo, es iluminarlo. Y te dije que muchas obras dramáticas del teatro puertorriqueño han fracasado porque el director, lo único que ha hecho es ir cada noche a decir " a la izquierda," "más bajo,""más alto;" "no se oye," "mañana de memoria". Entonces, claro, no ha hecho una propuesta dramática de la propuesta que le da el autor. Realmente el director extraordinario es aquel que coge ese texto y lo ilumina; lo ilumina con su interpretación; lo ilumina con su genio. Bueno, hace tiempo eso viene de Stanislavski. Pero últimamente, en los últimos veinte y cinco años, ha habido un replanteamiento del <u>role</u> del director. ¿Qué es <u>Marat Sade</u> independientemente de lo que haga Peter Weiss, sino una puesta en escena extraordinaria? Y realmente si el director fracasa no hay manera de que <u>La persecución y asesinato de Marat Sade</u> conmueva al espectador por más buena obra que

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sea como texto dramático. Y Our Town de Thornton Wilder, que es una obra tan hermosa, pero así como es hermosa cuando uno la lee, si el director no le da la poesía que necesita ese escenario vacío, y esta despedida de Emily de su padre, si el director no entiende aquello, la obra se viene totalmente abajo. El director tiene una responsabilidad capital, lo mismo con la última obra de Buero, La Fundación, en que los personajes creen que están trabajando en una fundación y están en la cárcel. Es una obra que necesita una puesta en escena excepcional. Todo el teatro de Pirandello, Seis personajes en busca de un autor, Los gigantes en la montaña, esas obras necesitan una puesta en escena que demuestra que el director entienda lo que Pirandello quería hacer y lo enriquezca. Los textos de Pirandello permanecen, pero un director puede destrozar el Seis personajes en busca de un autor.

En el teatro puertorriqueño yo creo que hay obras como El apartamiento de René Marqués, como Coctel de don Nadie de Francisco Arriví, que merecen otra vuelta de escena con otra concepción totalmente distinta. Yo creo que en ambos casos la concepción traicionó el texto. El director interrumpió al autor; la gente vio lo que no tenía que ver. Cuando yo vi las obras (yo las conocía como textos), me decía, "Esto no tiene nada que ver con lo que los autores escribían." Así es que también los directores traicionaron ambos textos.

El apartamiento es una obra que hay que hacer un poco entre estilo

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expresionista, falta de emoción. Ya son seres que realmente hace años están acostumbrados a su rutina. La puesta en escena en Puerto Rico le dio emotividad a eso. La mujer, cuando contaba cuánta cinta tenía, decía, "Uno, dos, tres" y cargaba de tristeza el hecho de contar. Y si una mujer está encerrada diez años haciendo eso todos los días, ya no la angustia, porque el hecho angustioso se ha incorporado al hecho cotidiano. Ya ella está mecanizada; ya está libre de sentimiento. El apartamiento lo que ha hecho es reducirlos a máquinas, a números, a seres sin riqueza interior. Entonces que ser, "Uno, dos, tres" seco, muerto. Ellos ya no tienen ninguna emoción para conmoverse por su situación. Desde que los actores empiecen a conmoverse, la obra resulta falsa, totalmente. Si están conmovidos, pues ¿por qué luego resulta que no tienen recuerdo, ni tienen pasado si justamente lo que René Marqués quería decir es que se trata de unos personajes que por no tener sentido de tradición, sentido de pertenencia, sentido de que vienen de otra cosa, se han visto reducidos al más horroroso apartamiento. La palabra "apartamiento" él la utiliza en dos sentidos: "apartamiento" porque la obra se desarrolla en un apartamiento cerrado, y "apartamiento" porque ellos están apartados de su pasado, del recuerdo, del amor. Así que ningún personaje en aquella obra podría contar emotivamente. La emoción tiene que surgir cuando llega una imagen del pasado, pero desde el principio cuando el director pone a los actores a quejarse de su situación, "Uno, yo corto la cinta," entonces el texto está totalmente falsificado.

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ME RECUERDA LA OBRA DE MARUXA VILALTA, ESTA NOCHE JUNTOS, AMANDONOS LOS DOS, DONDE LOS DOS PROTAGONISTAS, LA MUJER Y EL HOMBRE, VIVIAN APARTADOS, SOLOS EN SU APARTAMIENTO, SIN CONTACTO NINGUNO CON EL RESTO DEL MUNDO.

A mí me han dicho que se parece también a una obra de Pedrolo, el dramaturgo catalán, Hombres y No.

TANTO EN LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS COMO EN HISPANOAMERICA EXISTE EL FENOMENO DE "LA CREACION COLECTIVA". EN VENEZUELA TIENE CHOCRON, CHALBAUD Y CABRUJAS; EN COLOMBIA, BUENAVENTURA Y EL TEC; EN GUATEMALA, JOSE MANUEL ARCE. ¿CREES QUE HAY UN FUTURO EN ESO? ¿SIGNIFICA ACASO QUE NO HAYA BUENOS DRAMATURGOS?

Yo creo que la creación colectiva surge de la necesidad de ciertos grupos de enfrentarse a ciertos problemas escénicos. No tiene que ver, creo yo, con la presencia o la ausencia de dramaturgos buenos. Tiene que ver con que hay grupos que quieren plantearse colectivamente el hecho dramático, generalmente sin la ausencia de un dramaturgo o una persona de una cierta sensibilidad que recoja el material que se organiza colectivamente y le dé forma. La acaba de hacer el coreógrafo americano, Michael Bennett con A Chorus Line, un éxito en Broadway. Y aquí en Puerto Rico Gilda Navarra ha hecho cosas muy buenas pidiéndoles a los actores que improvisen, pero luego ella pasa juicio sobre la

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improvisación y selecciona la mejor material. De manera que el teatro colectivo requiere siempre una sensibilidad, si no superior, que por lo menos se coloque por encima y pase juicio sobre lo que se produce colectivamente, porque colectivamente se puede producir una porquería.:

De manera que lo que se necesita realmente es que todo el mundo haga unas aportaciones y después una persona haga un gran libreto general y en ese momento se decide si el espectáculo tiene éxito, cuando aparece esa persona con la capacidad o la sensibilidad para entender que es lo que debe dejarse. Es una especie de vuelta a lo mismo, al dramaturgo formidable, y en muchos grupos donde este dramaturgo, donde esta persona sensible o esta persona vanguardista o alerta no existe, la creación colectiva no pasa de ser un clisé de movimientos, de gritos, todo dentro de la concepción de la escena del "Living Theatre." Con todo esto lo que quiero decir, es que a mí me parece que el dramaturgo, y lo ha hecho Grotowski con su Teatro Pobre, que el dramaturgo sigue siendo una figura fundamental, incluso en los grupos llamados "colectivos." En Puerto Rico hay un grupo Colectivo Nacional donde se hace una creación colectiva; pero esa creación colectiva al final está tan izada por la sensibilidad de una especie de Dios mayor que dice, "Eso no sirve," "Esto es excesivo," "Esto va," "Esto no va." Es un intento; yo no creo que sea por la ausencia de escritores, de dramaturgos, yo creo que el problema es que hay mucha gente intentando hacer cosas en nuestros países,

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en nuestros países pequeños. Por ejemplo en Venezuela donde yo estuve el año pasado, vi dos espectáculos colectivos, Caracas urgente y Venezuela erótica; fui con Isaac Chocrón quien me invitó. Ambos espectáculos intentaban funcionar colectivamente, pero era falso porque al final había un regidor de escena que pulía y decía qué servía, y qué no servía; de manera que la creación colectiva era la aportación general pero siempre había una especie de Dios fundamental, de dramaturgo en ciernes, que decidía qué servía, o qué no servía. En Puerto Rico el llamado "teatro colectivo" no ha dado frutos fundamentales. Hay gente que intenta hacerlo pero yo creo más en un dramaturgo trabajando para un grupo, como Bertoldt Brecht con el Berliner Ensemble, y Pirandello con su compañía, o sea, tener una serie de gente para quien escribe el dramaturgo.

Lo hace, además, Buenaventura para el Teatro Experimental de Cali, el TEC. Todas sus obras las representa aquel mismo grupo. Lo que ha ganado Buenaventura con ello es que ya los actores conocen su estilo teatral; conocen cuáles son sus aspiraciones. Hay una compenetración profunda entre el texto y los actores que lo van interpretando. Saben incluso qué es lo que le importa a Buenaventura como dramaturgo. Conocen cuál es el énfasis dramatúrgico de Buenaventura, de manera que realmente él tiene como ventaja que los actores no desconocen, no ya el texto, sin su sensibilidad, su mundo interior. Yo he visto algunas cosas del TEC aquí, muy buenas, como Los papeles del infierno. ¿Cuál es la desventaja de una situación como la de Buenaventura? Que su teatro está siempre interpretado de una misma

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manera; es decir, que ya el grupo tiene una manera de enfrentarse al hecho teatral. Se trata de gente muy imaginativa, pero yo pienso que Buenaventura debía exponer sus textos a otra gente que los interpretara.

QUIZA, PERO RECUERDA LA SITUACION CON INGMAR BERGMAN Y SU EQUIPO ULLMANN, ANDERSON Y VON SYDOW, Y MIRA EL RESULTADO CUANDO METIO AL ACTOR AMERICANO, ELLIOT GOULD EN SU PELICULA, THE TOUCH.

Sí, era un desastre.

TU ERES PROFESOR Y ESCRITOR, UNA SITUACION BASTANTE CORRIENTE EN PAISES DONDE EL ESCRITOR NO PUEDE VIVIR DE ESCRIBIR. RECUERDO QUE JUAN GOYTISOLO DIJO UNA VEZ QUE LA VENTAJA DE ENSEÑAR ERA QUE LE FORZO A INTEGRAR CIERTAS TEORIAS LITERARIAS PARA EXPLICARLAS MEJOR A LOS ESTUDIANTES. ¿CUAL ES TU ACTITUD HACIA ESTA DOBLE VIDA QUE LLEVAS?

Yo soy profesor porque en Puerto Rico no hay la menor manera de vivir de escribir, como no la hay en casi ningún país del continente. Bueno, no me gustaría ser profesor, pero lo soy. Entonces dentro de eso lo que he hecho es dar cursos de mi preferencia; literatura hispanoamericana y cursos de teatro. Yo doy un curso sobre "El drama contemporáneo," que me permite enriquecer una cultura teatral

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y pasar juicio sobre los grandes innovadores de la escena. En ese sentido pues, la Universidad por lo menos me da esta libertad; pero realmente yo quisiera hacer teatro, algún teatro en el que yo pudiera dirigir. Me entusiasma vorazmente dirigir. Por ejemplo yo he visto recientemente una obra inglesa que se llama Home de David Storey, que se hizo en Broadway con John Gielgud y Ralph Richardson. Se trate de una casa de descanso para alienados, pero no alienados violentos, sino de estos neuróticos, esquizofrénicos que pueden convivir. Me fascinaría dirigir esa obra. A mí me fascinaría dirigir por ejemplo, una obra de Tennessee Williams, como Sweet Bird of Youth. Yo vi algunos montajes muy bien hechos por Elia Kazan hace años. Me gustaría mucho hacer algo como El apartamiento de René Marqués, cambiando totalmente el tercer acto, que me parece un acto disparatado.

Mi trabajo de especialidad en la Universidad de Puerto Rico fue drama. Pero al margen de eso yo creo que tengo una sensibilidad especial para dirigir que esto suena muy soberbio, pero creo que es lo único que sé más que escribir. Incluso creo que yo podría ser mejor director que escritor. Me gustaría además dirigir algunas cosas mías, como mi nueva obra, Necesitamos a Marlon Brando. No sé si hay un riesgo terrible, y es que un director si es bueno, se convierte realmente en crítico. Pienso que el director cumple una función extraordinaria en su relación con el autor porque el director, si es un director inteligente y penetrante, puede pasar juicio crítico frente al autor. Yo siempre digo que llega un momento en que de

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alguna manera el autor se envuelve emocionalmente con lo que está haciendo. Tiene siempre que dejar una buena grieta en la que tiene que colocar su espíritu crítico, porque el escritor que no tiene espíritu crítico no puede realmente hacer nada. Tiene que tener un rigor para enjuiciarse. Pero el director puede incluso ayudarle a valorar lo que sirve escénicamente. No es que el escritor no lo sepa, si no, no sería dramaturgo, pero incluso con su ventaja de distancia de la obra, el director puede sugerir interpretaciones originales, novedosas, a insistir, enfatizar, en algún momento. De cualquier manera creo que lo voy a intentar.

¿HAS DIRIGIDO OBRAS ANTES?

Yo he dirigido algunas cosas como Cándida de George Bernard Shaw en la Universidad; Pasos de Lope de Rueda y también una traducción de una obra francesa. Otra experiencia era en el '62 cuando intentó un grupo de personas jóvenes, importantes en la escena puertorriqueña, Pablo Cabrera, Dean Zayas, Soledad Romero, Miguel Angel Suárez, hacer una especie de laboratorio al estilo de lo que se estaba haciendo en Nueva York en el ANTA theatre cuando hicieron After the Fall. Pero eran tantas personalidades efervescentes, que realmente no se pudo hacer mucho.

¿QUE OPINAS DE LA CALIDAD DE LOS ACTORES Y ACTRICES HOY EN DIA? ¿CONCUERDAS CON LA OPINION DE MUCHOS QUE EL TEATRO HISPANOAMERICANO HA PECADO POR

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INTERPRETACIONES EXAGERADAS EN EL PASADO?

Déjame decirte que comparto tu objección. Yo creo que a nuestro teatro le sobran actores excesivos. They overstate all the emotions. No pueden producir una limpia y sencilla emoción porque se creen que no la comunican. Nosotros lo habíamos heredado de la tradición española de finales del siglo y principios del siglo que nos llegó por la vía de las Compañías Españolas que viajaban por todo el continente, Margarita Xirgu, María Guerrero, María Fernanda, Catalina Bárcena. En algunos sitios esa tradición se ha superado. Hay nuevas corrientes de interpretación que yo he visto en México, por ejemplo. La obra Home, de que te hablé ahorita, yo la vi hecha en México por un gran actor mexicano, Ignacio López Tarso; hecho con una limpieza interpretativa, con una economía de recursos, con una verdad interior tan profunda y conmovedora que me devuelve la fe en un teatro hispanoamericano, ausente de trucos.

En Puerto Rico hay toda una nueva corriente de interpretación valiosa donde los actores se enfrentan al texto de manera más profunda. Justamente por ser menos rebuscada, menos gritada, menos chillona, es más profunda. Estoy pensando en actores como Minera Rodríguez, Miguel Angel Suárez, Samuel Molina, Sharon Reilly, que son de las nuevas generaciones que no manifiestan esos gustos por el exceso, por el grito, por el gesto inútil, por recargar la emoción que todavía aparece en muchos teatros de nuestro continente. Te doy otro ejemplo. Yo fui invitado a Costa Rica y a Guatemala; en

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Guatemala había un grupo de teatro que estaba haciendo una obra del dramatrugo chileno, Jodorovsky, El juego que todos jugamos. Su manera de interpretar el texto era totalmente fresca; era realmente de una construcción interior donde primero los personajes se descubrían en su interioridad y luego se proyectaban sin afectismo absoluto. En Costa Rica igual, de manera que yo creo que en el teatro hispanoamericano hay un nuevo ímpetu hacia la interpretación. A la par con esa nueva actitud se sigue dando los ejemplos a los que tú haces referencia, y eso no lo discuto porque también yo he visto teatro en México malo, malo, malo. Vi cosas muy mal hechas, pero vi cosas muy bien hechas con un nuevo acercamiento al fenómeno de actuar y a la dramaturgia.

En México hay un dramaturgo, no quiero decir que es importante, pero quiero decir que es interesante más que importante, que se llamaVicente Leñero. Cuando yo estaba en México yo veía una obra suya de teatro documental titualdo El juicio de León Torral y la madre de Conchita, basada en la Revolución de los Cristeros en Mexico en 1928. Realmente la puesta en escena era novedosísima. Era una recreación del juicio, de manera que todo el escenario era el jurado. Los personajes iban al centro y mientras testimoniaban ante el jurado o ante el juez, rememoraban el acontecimiento y todo esto hecho con una gran limpieza de recursos; simplemente la silla, una luz en foco que caía, yendo a lo esencial, al puro hueso del drama que realmente era importante.

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A propósito, ¿tú fuiste a ver la representación de Los ángeles se han fatigado que hizo Mila Conway? Me han dicho que fue extraordinaria.

SI, EFECTIVAMENTE, YO LLEGUE A VER DOS VERSIONES DE LA OBRA HECHAS POR DOS DISTINTAS COMPAÑIAS, UNA EL HENRY STREET SETTLEMENT, LA OTRA, EL TEATRO RODANTE PUERTORRIQUEÑO. RESULTA QUE LA REALIZACION DE LAS DOS PRODUCCIONES ERA TOTALMENTE DISTINTA. LAS DOS ERAN MUY BUENAS, PERO LA SEGUNDA TENIA AQUELLA ATMOSFERA CLAUSTROFOBICA QUE REALMENTE NECESITA, COMO TU MISMO HAS INDICADO. EN EL TEATRO RODANTE PUERTORRIQUEÑO, UN LUGAR SUMAMENTE PEQUEÑO, TODA LA ACCION GIRABA ALREDEDOR DE LA CAMA, CON UNA ATMOSFERA, UN AMBIENTE RECARGADO CON LAS MUSARAÑAS Y LAS PASIONES DE LA MENTE DE ELLA. CONWAY INTERPRETO EL PAPEL DE LA PROSTITUTA, ANGELA, DE UNA MANERA QUE LA GENTE SE REIA, CON EMPATIA, PERO SE REIA. ESO ME SORPRENDIO AL PRINCIPIO; ME CHOCO. LA OTRA VERSION DE CARLA PINZA ERA MAS SOMBRIA, LLENA DE DRAMATICIDAD, PERO NO EXAGERADA; REALMENTE UNA INTERPRETACION DESGARRADA QUE CONMOVIO MUCHO AL PUBLICO, MIENTRAS QUE LA VERSION DEL TEATRO PUERTORRIQUEÑO LLEGO A LA MISMA META--LA DE CONMOVER AL PUBLICO--PERO LA ACTRIZ OPTO POR LA COMEDIA EN SU INTERPRETACION. BUSCABA MAS LA RISA.

Sí, eso me han dicho.

SUS GESTOS ERAN ABRUPTOS; PARECIA QUE NO TENIA HUESOS; REDOBLABA EL CUERPO COMO UNA BAILADORA. ERA HISTERICA, DESCONTROLADA, PERO AL MISMO

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MOMENTO TOTALMENTE EN CONTROL.

Me decían que era un trabajo de interpretación deslumbrante. Eso sigue siendo algo fascinante, que cada nuevo grupo puede aportar una interpretación tan distinta. La semana pasada aquí se hizo en Puerto Rico Los ángeles se han fatigado con dos actrices, una, una noche, y la otra, la otra noche. Yo no fui todas las noches porque a mí me aburren mis obras; yo sólo fui por respeto, una noche. Y el crítico del periódico La hora me dijo, "Qué lástima que no hayas ido anoche, porque la actriz de anoche ha hecho un servicio tan espléndido al texto." Así que con el mismo texto, la misma dirección, de Victoria Espinosa, el mismo montaje, el mismo escenario, la misma concepción, la interpretación de una cogió y realmente orientó el personaje de una manera distinta.

PUESTO QUE TE HAS DEDICADO A MAS DE UN GENERO LITERARIO, ¿COMO DESCRIBIRIAS LA DIFERENCIA ENTRE ESCRIBIR OBRAS DE TEATRO Y ESCRIBIR CUENTOS Y NOVELAS?

Bueno, lo primero que quiero decir es que el teatro realmente es terriblemente difícil. La técnica de exponer para que se represente es excepcionalmente difícil porque no es escribir de manera que aquello se quede con expresión de mi persona, como puede hacer un novelista cuando es un narrador omnisciente, sino que es hacer un diálogo y

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cada línea tiene que responder a una personalidad distinta. De manera que línea tras línea es el trabajo exhaustivo de ver si esa línea define y recoge la manera de ser de la persona, y además de recoger la manera de ser, si es eficaz para el momento. En el teatro hay algo realmente terrible, y es que el dramaturgo tiene que recordar todo el tiempo que los espectadores sólo tienen una ocasión para oir aquello, cosa que no ocurre en la novela. Si no entiendes un texto dices, "Bueno, déjame volver a estö" o "Déjame releer eso" o si en la página 80 dices, "Ah, ahora entiendo la página 24." El dramaturgo es un hombre que trabaja contra el tiempo. No puede perder una sola línea porque en cada línea hay una nueva revelación de la persona, de la anécdota dramática, del ambiente, de la atmósfera, de la tensión. Tiene que trabajar a la vez con todos los elementos. De manera que como creación, el teatro realmente es un género de una exigencia capital, monstruosa. Además hay más limitación de tiempo y de espacio, independiente de lo que hace O'Neill en Strange Interlude, una obra de nueve actos, pero por eso es una locura. Pero en una obra tradicional de dos o tres actos, tú sólo tienes hora y media, dos horas, tres horas como mucho, para levantar el mundo, para caracterizar a una gente, para darle crecimiento, "dramatic growth"—un concepto fundamental en la dramaturgia—para que esos seres se iluminen, para que cambien su vida o no la cambien, pero todo eso en un espacio de dos horas. Realmente es agotador, y en aquel sentido, escribir teatro no es más difícil, sino más exhaustivo, una verdadera tarea de sudor.

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A mí me encanta el cuento. El cuento no es otra cosa que sorprender un instante, que tal vez sea la diferencia capital entre el cuento y la novela. En la novela uno tiene que agotar una psicología, siquiera una, si los demás personajes no se agotan, bien; pero siquiera en el personaje principal hay que agotar el rebuscamiento de todas las gavetas interiores de ese ser, o por lo menos entender cuál es su símbolo, cuál es su destino. Mientras que en un cuento lo fundamental es sorprender un momento: un cuento no es otra cosa que una especie de ráfaga vital. Pensemos en el cuento de Cortázar que a mí me encanta, "Una flor amarilla", Pues es ese cuento lo único que importa es apresar un momento. Pensemos en el cuento "En el fondo del caño hay un negrito" de José Luis González, que es un cuento magistral, de una estructura clásica, perfecta, donde la fascinación del niño con su imagen se revela entre un ambiente de cruda crítica social. Es también una especie de replantamiento del mito de Narciso. El cuento en ese sentido es un instante, pero un instante significativo; no es un instante pasajero, sino un instante capaz de transformar toda una vida. El cuento ofrece esa dificultad, buscar el instante cuando una vida puede alterarse totalmente. Lo fundamental en el cuento es descubrir esa anécdota capaz de sorprender a todo un mundo en un instante, como un soneto. Por eso se ha dicho que el soneto y el cuento se asemejan, porque son géneros apretados que quieren dar una visión del mundo en una ráfaga.

Ultimamente yo he intentado hacer cuentos más largos, cuentos que

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tienden a lo que los franceses llaman "les nouvelettes", algo más elaborado, que ya no es nuestro cuento tradicional. También he escrito una novela, La guaracha del macho Camacho. Me agotó tanto que por lo pronto voy a volver a mi amor por el teatro. Pero yo creo que el hecho de que una persona escriba novelas, o que escriba teatro, o escriba cuentos, revela que esencialmente le interesa la literatura, y que los géneros pasan a ser formas sucesivas en las cuales expresar sus ideas. Pese a que el género sea distinto, uno descubre unas mismas preocupaciones que atraviesan los géneros y que dan la clave de toda su obra. Los géneros pasan a ser opciones que toma el escritor porque encuentra que hay cosas que se corresponden mejor, que resultan mejor dichas, más ricamente dichas a través de un género. Sobre todo la novela, que es el género de la libertad por excelencia, donde se puede realmente decir todo. Por eso lo ideal sería hacer una obra teatral donde el escritor contara con este escenario infinito con que cuenta el novelista; sería extraordinario.

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APPENDIX 2:

Personal Interview with Isaac Chocrón

26 January 1975

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The perfect setting for a teatrero, a "man of the theatre" as Isaac Chocrón describes himself. Upstairs at New York's Spanish Theatre Repertory Company. A small sitting room, almost a drawing room lifted from a Victorian play itself (but really the antesala of the Ladies Room). Dim and quiet, punctuated with the sounds from the Sunday matinee audience filing out after seeing Chocrón's provocative play dealing with a menage à trois, OK. Later, sounds from the actors themselves, already in rehearsal for the group's next production.

Smiling, totally comfortable, as at home in English as in Spanish, Chocrón is theatre: his gestures, his emphatic enunciation, in effect, his "delivery" belie the actor, while his spontaneous, but marvelously quotable answers reveal the writer. He says he is a writer first.

Chocrón says he has been writing all his life and so it is not a habit for him but rather a way of life. Chocrón points out that he lives the ideal situation for a playwright, total involvement in the theatre. He is president of the theatrical association "El Nuevo Grupo" and he writes for the theatre as well. Consequently, his works are many and have been presented in New York, Madrid and Frankfurt as

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well as throughout Latin America. Chocrón's plays include OK, Mónica y el florentino, La última felicidad, El quinto infierno, Animales feroces, Asia y el lejano oriente, Una mínima incandescencia, Alfabeto para analfabetos, Amoroso, A propósito del triángulo and Tric Trac. He has also written three novels, Pasaje, Se ruega no tocar la carne por razones de higiene and Pájaro de mar por tierra. Presently he is working on a fourth novel called Rómpase en caso de incendio (Break in Case of Fire).

Chocrón seems especially attached to his works which have received scandalous receptions, particularly Animales feroces and La Revolución. His eyes light up as he animatedly describes the circumstances, twelve years ago, before Animales feroces opened. The Jewish establishment heard that Chocrón had written an anti-semitic play and their vociferous protests all but suspended the opening, but María Teresa Otero, President of the Ateneo of Caracas, insisted that the play be presented. Chocrón did, however, include a leaflet in the opening night programs explaining that he is Jewish and that it is his artistic right to examine the bitter passions that can wrack any family, including the Venezuelan Jewish one in this particular case. A similarly volatile atmosphere surrounded the opening of

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La Revolución, which the Spanish Repertory Theatre Company presented in New York during 1974-1975. La Revolución depicts the bitter, sordid, yet affectionate relationship between an aging transvestite and a third class waiter.

Chocrón is enthusiastic about the general direction of Latin American theatre. He insists that Latin America belongs to the future and that Latin American theatre, as an embodiment of that future, generates interest precisely because it is not so traditional in its use of language and ideas, not so inexorably tied to the past as European theatre is. Just as the United States is present-oriented, he describes Venezuela--and, by analogy, Latin America--as having "Everything to do and everything to be done."

DOES THERE EXIST A CONTINENTAL SENSIBILITY TOWARDS LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE? FOR EXAMPLE, CAN YOU DO A PUERTO RICAN PLAY IN VENEZUELA OR A MEXICAN PLAY IN GUATEMALA?

Very much so, very much so. Right now we are presenting Talesnik's Los japoneses no esperan and Gorostiza's Juana y Pedro. We have done Brazilian, Colombian and Chilean plays. There is quite an interchange. As a playwright, I am produced in practically all the capitals of Latin America.

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THE PUERTO RICAN PLAYWRIGHT, LUIS RAFAEL SANCHEZ, HAS POSED THE PROBLEM OF PLAYS THAT DON'T "TRAVEL WELL". HE MENTIONED THE EXPERIENCE OF SOME ARGENTINE THEATRE COMPANIES THAT "JUST DON'T WORK" IN PUERTO RICO.

I believe that whan cannot work are idiomatic things. But that can be arranged. For instance when my plays are done in Buenos Aires, on the contrary, I encourage the director to change things; not change the meanings, but to change words and to introduce Argentine idiomatic expressions which give the play an immediacy that is very favorable.

WOULD YOU SAY THERE IS A NEW LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE? IS SOMETHING DIFFERENT HAPPENING?

I don't know; I could not really properly say. I believe that in Venezuela it is happening because in Venezuela there is a great development of the theatre: new theatres, new companies and groups, and more and more playwrights. But to say that there is a new Latin American theatre would imply that there is a new tendency and I really don't feel confident in saying that.

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HOW IMPORTANT IS THE THEATRE TODAY IN VENEZUELA?

The popularity of the theatre is growing. However, we still need to create a theatre audience and to cultivate it. I am president of "El Nuevo Grupo," a non-profit theatre institution. We have two theatres: one seats 200 and the other seats 130. Since we began eight years ago, we have toured all over the country, giving numerous performances on a very tight schedule in all kinds of makeshift "theatres," often in school gymnasiums. . .I have often thought about the parallels between the Latin American theatre and Shakespeare's theatre, in regard to the demands made on the viewers' imagination. And they do respond.

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT THE MOST IMAGINATIVE WORK IN LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE IS BEING DONE BY DIRECTORS AND NOT BY WRITERS.

Well, you know, not only in Latin America, but in the world, I'd say that from 1950-1960, and until very recently, the director was king of the theatre. After the war in America,

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there was Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and a few other minor writers after them, and then there was a great renaissance of the playwright, and then all of these experimental tendencies: the Living Theatre, the Actors Studio. As a consequence, all these different tendencies put the director in a main role in the theatre. I think that is true of some of the countries in Latin America. In Brazil, for example, I understand that the real luminaries, the real stars of the theatre, are the directors. In Latin America we don't have that many professional actors and actresses and no performer, even in Buenos Aires or Mexico, can earn a living exclusively from the theatre. He or she has to do television and radio or other things. This means then that there are quite a number of theatre groups where the director is really head of the group and they often prefer to take young actors or people without any theatrical training and rehearse them for a production. Of course that means the director is of crucial importance. But I think in the last four or five years, not only in Latin America, but all over the world, the theatre of text is coming back. In the next few years we are going to witness a renaissance of the playwright. I have that feeling.

WHAT ABOUT "COLLECTIVE WORKS" IN THE LATIN AMERICAN THEATRE?

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DO THEY MEAN THERE ARE NO GOOD DRAMATISTS? OR IS IT A NEW DIRECTION?

I think collective works are interesting but I think they are interesting as experiments, as spectacles, as "theatre-theatre". I think it is better when you have a good text and you are disciplined by the intentions of that text. But of course I am speaking as a writer. I suppose a director might say that he doesn't need me.

SINCE THE ADVENT OF THE THEATRE FESTIVALS IN CUBA, MEXICO, VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA AND PUERTO RICO, DO YOU SEE A REAL GROWTH IN COMMUNICATION THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT?

Frankly, I haven't been to that many festivals; the only ones that I have attented are the two in Caracas. For me, going to the theatre is very boring. It's really a trial. I rarely go because I am in the theatre all day long. I have to go to innumerable rehearsals, I have to read innumerable plays and I have to see innumerable actors, so by the time of the performance, no matter where it is, I really don't feel like going to the theatre anymore. I just want to escape. I would rather have a drink with some friends.

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Getting back to your question though, it does seem to me that the festivals have made some very significant contributions to experimental theatre groups in Latin America. Also it's interesting that you mentioned collaborative efforts, because most of the groups that go to Manizales are avant-garde theatre groups. In the last two years however, it has become very much like a political arena, even more than a theatrical experience, which I think is a shame. If you want to do politics, there is a real need for good politicians; or if you want to do sociology, then you should be a good sociologist, but if you want to do theatre you should do theatre, and not use it as a springboard for anything else.

SOME WRITERS IN CHILE, FOR EXAMPLE, OR PUERTO RICO, FEEL THAT THEIR SITUATION IS SUCH THAT THEY MUST EXPRESS THEIR ANGUISH AND PROTEST IN SOME CREATIVE WAY.

All good theatre is political, But that is different from using theatre as a platform, or the theatre of demagogy. I believe theatre can make political statements but should not be a political poster.

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FERNAN SILVA VALDES SAID THAT A DRAMATIST SHOULD WRITE THEATRE RATHER THAN LITERATURE. DOES SUCH A DICHOTOMY EXIST FOR YOU?

I guess what he means is that when you write for theatre you have to know that it is going to be performed by actors and it has to have a certain rhythm and a certain style of language; but if you are going to write your plays with metaphors, well, it might be poetry, but it will not be very effective theatre. Now, I have never stopped to think whether theatre is literature or whether literature is theatre. One vital truth about the theatre is that once the play is written, that is when it begins. You finish a play, but is has to be performed in order for it to be a play.

LIKE MOST LATIN AMERICAN DRAMATISTS YOU HAVE COMMENTED ON THE LACK OF SERIOUS, PROFESSIONAL THEATRE CRITICISM. DO YOU THINK THAT SITUATION IS CHANGING?

I don't think it has changed very much. Unfortunately most of the critics that I know are reviewers, more like social commentators, and criticism can only really be useful when it is done in depth. I know for instance that Círculo de Lectores, the publishing house in Spain, has just published

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a volume of my two plays, Animales feroces and OK, with a critical introduction to my work by the Spanish critic Juan Merino. I quite enjoyed reading it and I was curious to find several observations and conclusions that I never noticed.

THAT BRINGS ME TO A QUESTION ABOUT AUDIENCES. QUINTO INFIERNO IS BOTH A LOVING AND SCATHING INDICTMENT OF CONTEMPORARY VENEZUELAN SOCIETY. ISN'T IT TRUE THAT PRECISELY THE PEOPLE YOU ARE CRITICIZING, THE MIDDLE CLASS AND THE INTELLIGENTSIA, ARE YOUR AUDIENCE?

Yes, it's true, but I think a writer is a witness. There are not many writers, there are not many witnesses as writers; and audiences, just like readers, want to hear the opinion of the witness. In the case of Quinto infierno, Asia and La Revolución, I think the audience liked to be confronted by my thoughts and provoked to examine their own attitudes.

THE PUERTO RICAN DRAMATIST, RENE MARQUES, CRITICIZES PRECISELY THAT FACILE PRACTICE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS: TO GO TO THE THEATRE, IDENTIFY WITH THE PORTRAYAL OF ITS OWN IMPOTENCE AS A POLITICAL GROUP, IN EFFECT EXORCISE ITS CONSCIENCE AND ITS RESPONSIBILITY, AND THEN LEAVE THE THEATRE PURGED, HAVING EXPERIENCED A CATHARSIS WHICH HAS LED TO COMPLACENCY, RATHER THAN TO ACTION.

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But I have never written a play with the intention of shocking people, or with the intention of showing people that they must change or act in a certain way. I write a play because a situation is provocative, and that situation begins obsessing me, and when the situation becomes an obsession then I sit down and start writing a play. My plays are about people; the theatre is people. Of course, they are people who move in our society, so that they have to reflect values and situations in our society. After all, any serious work of creativity necessarily is a reflection of the society it comes from. But I don't start a play saying, "Well, this play I am going to write in order to make sure that everybody doesn't wear shoes." When I start a play, I know where I am going to be at the end, but I don't know what's going to happen in the middle. I think the most important thing is the passage; I mean if I go from New York to Washington, the most important thing is not to get to Washington, but rather what happens from New York to Washington--the process. That's why I like writing; it's exciting, it's difficult. And the fact that as academicians, or professors, or lovers of the theatre, you see certain themes, is very good. It is very good for you to see them, but if I saw them beforehand it would never work, because I would not be a writer, I would be an IBM

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machine that catalogues things like, "Now I'm going to write about red blouses." I suppose commercial writers do that: they realize that Women's Liberation is a hot idea right now and they say, "I want to write a play about Women's Liberation." I have never done that, because for me, writing is like doing a striptease.

IN THE PUBLICATION, "THE NEW VENEZUELAN THEATRE" DISTRIBUTED BY THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF INFORMATION, YOU MAKE A POINT OF MENTIONING THE WOMEN PIONEERS IN THE VENEZUELAN THEATRE, ANA JULIA ROJAS, JUANA SUJO, MARIA TERESA OTERO, JOSEFINA PALACIOS, AND THE GROWING NUMBER OF FEMALE PLAYWRIGHTS, IDA GRAMCKO, ELIZABETH SCHON, ELISA LERNER, MARIELA IBARRA. ARE THEY FULLY INTEGRATED INTO THE MAINSTREAM OF THE THEATRE WORLD, OR ARE THEY PERIPHERAL?

Not really. They are a minority compared to the men. It's a shame. In some instances the women write one or two plays and then they don't write again. That is the situation with some of the women you have mentioned. So many of the women playwrights have been basically poets and they have gone back to poetry. They have taken a voyage to the theatre and that is a voyage to Hell. There are not many people who stay. Like novelists who write plays or poets

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who write plays. They write one, or maybe two plays and they go away scared from the theatre. The theatre is awful; it's very difficult. As I said before, it's like a hell. It's such a mystery whether the thing is going to come off or not. Truly it's a disease; a terminal disease. . .

I'M VERY INTERESTED IN YOUR FEMALE CHARACTERS. TWO WHO I THOUGHT WERE VERY STRONGLY DELINEATED ARE BETSEY IN QUINTO INFIERNO, AND MINA IN OK. THEY SEEM TO EMBODY THE STRUGGLE AND ANGUISH THAT WOMEN ARE EXPERIENCING IN DISCOVERING THEMSELVES. I KNOW THESE PLAYS WERE WRITTEN IN '61 AND '69. HAS THE CONTEMPORARY MOVEMENT FOR FEMALE LIBERATION AFFECTED YOUR WORK?

Not really. I have met women before the Liberation Movement and after the Liberation Movement who have influenced me.

THERE ARE THE "AURORAS," THOSE INSATIABLE WOMEN IN AMOROSO, WHO "REVEAL FACETS OF EXTRAORDINARY CRUELTY" AS THE VENEZUELAN CRITIC SUAREZ RADILLO COMMENTS. . .

The trouble is that I did not write all of those women simultaneously. I wrote them over fifteen years.

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HOW HAS AN ESSENTIALLY AMBIVALENT ATTITUDE OF BOTH PROTEST AND IMITATION TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES AND ITS CULTURAL FORMS AFFECTED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEATRE IN VENEZUELA, AND IN LATIN AMERICA IN GENERAL?

The colonial condition is expressed in all Latin American theatre, not only in the theatre that is openly political and that used theatre as a political platform. It is very difficult at the present. I believe that now there might be a new wave of American cultural aggression in Venezuela, due to the latest developments in the oil situation.

YOU SITUATE YOUR OWN PLAY, QUINTO INFIERNO, IN NEW JERSEY. OTHER PLAYWRIGHTS, RENE MARQUES IN EL SOL Y LOS MACDONALD AND WALTER BENEKE IN FUNERAL HOME, ALSO USE NORTH AMERICAN SETTINGS. DOES AN AMERICAN SETTING AFFECT THE PLAY'S RECEPTION IN ANY VISIBLE WAY?

No, not at all. Quinto infierno was my second play. It was really the play that established my career, not only because of the interest of theplay itself, but because it had a goodproduction and a fantastic protrayal by Juana Sujo. She was brilliant in her portrayal of Betsy. Really, the few direct allusions to New Jersey are not enough to disconcert the audience.

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I WONDER IF YOU FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE GOING IN THE MORE EXPERIMENTAL DIRECTION OF ASIA AND TRIC TRAC, OR THE MORE REALISTIC DIRECTION OF OK OR LA REVOLUCION.

I'm not really confortable answering that. You know, in Merina's introduction he gives what I consider a logical response to why I have moved in these different directions. He says I am looking for my own style and that in Asia I found it and that the subsequent plays, you can see that they are mine. That's something a writer always likes.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE FOR YOU BETWEEN WRITING A PLAY AND A NOVEL? FROM THE WAY YOU DESCRIBE THE THEATRE, IT WOULD SEEM TO BE A LESS ANGUISHED EXPERIENCE FOR YOU TO WRITE A NOVEL.

My first novel was Pasaje and then I didn't write another one until I wrote Se ruega no tocar la carne por razones de higiene. I found it so delicious to write novels and to know that it was a long work and that I could write it slowly and I could polish it to the maximum because I didn't have rehearsals--even though I hate to polish. I didn't have to deal with anybody. And then I sent it to an editor without my name to see what the reaction would be and the

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editor answered that they were interested in publishing the novel and they thought the novel was written very much in the style of Chocrón. He guessed that it was me and they asked me to do another novel and so I wrote Pájaro de mar por tierra. And now I am finishing a novel called Rómpase en caso de incendio. I very much enjoy writing novels. It's a very lonely task though. It's not as amusing as writing for the theatre, but I think it's good to get away.

ARE YOU WORKING ON SOMETHING ELSE NOW?

I am going to work on a translation into English of OK. When I came to New York we were thinking of several people who might do the translation, but then Clive Barnes suggested that I try it myself. So I plan to.

ONE FINAL, LOADED QUESTION: I CAN'T HELP NOTICING THE VIOLENCE, THE FRUSTRATION, THE ANGER AND DISAPPOINTMENT THAT YOUR CHARACTERS EXPERIENCE IN THEIR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THE PESSIMISTIC STATEMENT YOU SEEM TO BE MAKING ABOUT MODERN HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS.

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I don't think it's pessimistic. I think it is a realization that love is a very painful business and happiness is not a reality. There are relative degrees of complacency but that once you love, it's because you suffer. It's not a masochistic sort of thing. You feel very happy loving, but it is not a happy business. I think that's the exciting thing about living, and what I'm trying to communicate in my plays, are my experiences with trying to live with this realization.

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