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Mollinedo, Maria Teresa, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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RAÚL SALMÓN: PLAYWRIGHT OF THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE

by

MARIA T. MOLLINEDO

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

1991

1991

Maria T. Mollinedo

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

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Abstract

RAÚL SALMÓN: PLAYWRIGHT OF THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE

by

Maria T. Mollinedo

Adviser: Professor Stanley A. Waren

This study examines three broad categories of Raúl Salmón's playwriting--plays of social realism, historical plays, and those containing universal themes. Generally, the Bolivian playwright writes about Bolivian problems and customs. His themes are indigenous even though he uses such European forms and styles as realism, melodrama, expressionism, and most recently absurdism. Salmón's plays are popular with the "masses," making him a populist playwright, who founded his Theatre of Social Protest in 1943.

From interviews with Salmón, Julio de La Vega, a Bolivian critic, and Agar Delos, a leading actress in Salmón's theatre group, analysis of the plays and other theoretical writings, the study provides insights in influences on Salmón's thinking and the principles and techniques he uses in writing his plays. To a lesser degree it reveals the approach Salmón used to acting and directing. The entire study is related to the social and political history of Bolivia.

PREFACE

Next to the plays, the most significant source in this study is the series of personal interviews with Raúl Salmón. Despite his busy schedule and failing health, he found time to meet and to answer my many questions without hesitation, thus making me cognizant of his giving and generous nature. Other interviews with Bolivia's foremost critic, Julio de La Vega and with the actress-director Agar Delos proved very helpful. The first made me aware of the intellectuals' perception of Salmón's work, and the latter indicated both the acting styles and Salmón's approach to production, particularly in his early plays. In addition to the plays and interviews, theoretical articles and books on theatre as well as texts on Bolivian history were used. The Bolivian archivist, Alberto Crespo was most helpful with the latter.

The plays analyzed in this study have been published and all the translations are my own. My criteria for selecting the plays were the following: First, the plays were published and available. Second, the plays were of seminal value. Third, the plays had dramatic and theatrical significance. Fourth, the plays represented broad categories of Salmón's writing, e.g., social realistic, historical and universal theme plays.

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Stanley A. Waren, chair of my dissertation committee, without whose guidance and patience this work would not have materialized. I wish also to thank the other members of my dissertation

committee, Drs. Charles Gattnig, Daniel C. Gerould, and Luis Diez for their observations and suggestions.

Many family members and friends should be thanked as well, too many to name. They encouraged me to go on, when at times it seemed almost impossible to acquire materials needed for the study.

Finally, I wish to thank two special people, my mother, Mercedes Molina v. de Mollinedo and Humberto Choque Gomez. She gave me constant encouragement and it was she who found some of the plays which had been removed from library racks and book stores for unexplained reasons. Humberto Choque Gomez made me further aware of the need for this study. He made me recognize the importance of analyzing the plays of Salmón, who gave voice to the dignity and the sense of honor of his cholo society.

Sadly, I am grateful to Mrs. Elvira Llosa v. de Salmón who, after my completion of the body of this dissertation, took the time to write and to give me the news of her husband, Raúl Salmón's untimely death on September 24, 1990. She kindly offered to help me with any further information I needed. Therefore, statements interspersed in the study referring to Salmón's continuing to work must be read in relation to this recent news of his death.

To the memory of my father,
Dr. Alfredo Mollinedo Imaña,
a dedicated fighter for social
justice

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

At a time when interest in Latin American arts and culture is escalating in the United States, the average United States citizen appears to know little about Bolivia, a small land-locked country in South America. About theatre history, to my knowledge, there are only two books written, in Spanish, plus some short notations contained in various Latin American theatre surveys. I believe it would be fair to say that many theatre professionals might even doubt the existence of a Bolivian theatre of any significance. There is a need to become familiar with Bolivia's social and cultural history if we desire a better understanding of its people, and theatre plays a significant role in this history. This study will center on Bolivia's foremost playwright, Raúl Salmón.

As of the last census (1973), Bolivia's population consisted of 4,250,000 inhabitants: 52% Indians, 27% Mestizos (a mixture of Indian and Spanish), 13% Spanish and 8% others.[1] As might be expected with this ethnic mixture, Bolivians' social customs and relationships are not only interesting but they lend themselves easily for use in dramatic writings. Bolivia, itself, is a country undergoing dramatic social change. Many Bolivian playwrights have written about social change, but the playwright whose work most embodies Bolivia's contemporary socio-political development is Raúl Salmón.

Salmón is not only a playwright, but also a critic, producer, radio owner, and politician (twice elected mayor of La Paz). His first play was published in 1942; in 1943 he founded the Teatro Social (Social Theatre) where he presented plays which exposed and denounced society's vices. These plays were written simply, often using colloquial language, for presentation in a realistic style so that the common man would understand and identify with the themes and subject matter and perhaps be persuaded to change.[2]

Salmón presented cholas (half-breed women), pimps, and other lower-class types, along with better educated and more cultured characters who were usually rich and of Spanish ancestry. Salmón's objective was to attract the popular audience, to make them identify with the action in his plays and to become less intimidated by the process of theatre.

He was very successful. The demand for tickets was so great that he had to move his plays outside to a stadium-like arena so that eight thousand people could attend at a time. From the 1940s to the present day, his plays are the most popular in Bolivia.

The result of Raúl Salmón's venture was exciting. His plays were viewed by thousands of people who had not previously gone to the theatre. For the first time, Bolivian theatre audiences were derived from the entire populace, and theatre was no longer an elitist event.

Once this transition became apparent to Salmón, he started writing history plays to introduce his public to some of the country's past heroes. He taught history and

made it relevant by placing his characters in modern settings. Finally, in his last group of plays he deals with more abstract and universal concepts, such as how technology smothers man at work. No longer does he deal only with Bolivian situations, but he sees Bolivia's problems as universal problems, e.g., man's alienation from his environment.

At this writing, Salmón is still writing and producing his plays. In addition, he directs and manages his Radio Nueva America in La Paz. Perhaps the most important factor of Raúl Salmón's theatre is, as stated above, that it continues to attract a broad spectrum of society. Unlike contemporary live theatre in many other Latin American countries, Salmón's remains non-elitist. His productions continue to be presented in large outdoor theatres as well as at the Teatro Municipal (the equivalent of a Broadway house) for audiences made up of Indians, Cholos, as well as middle-class Spanish people.

Up to this writing, thirty of Salmón's plays have been produced. The work may be divided into three periods: first, plays of "Social Protest," starting in 1942 and lasting until approximately 1952; second, "Social Historic" plays written from 1952 to 1975 in which he presents his historic characters in contemporary settings; and third, "Universal Theme" plays created most recently, from 1975 to the present. Salmón, at the request of various

organizations, currently helps to produce plays from all of these periods.

When he founded the Teatro Social, Salmón stated that his objective was to offer plays with "more content than form . . . representing the social problems that engulf the country."[3] His goal was "to expose and denounce." These early plays seem to have a heavy Brechtian influence; one also detects Zola, Ibsen, and Strindberg resonances. From interviews with Mr. Salmón, readings and analysis of the plays and other theoretical writings, I hope to gain insights into influences on his thinking, and the principles and techniques he subscribes to in writing his plays. This, in turn, will be related to the social history of Bolivia.

Further, Salmón's theatre of Social Protest is mainly realistic, but as is the custom in much of Hispanic and Latin American literature, realistic events and language may have additional symbolic meanings. In his plays, the Bolivian everyman uses language which becomes multifaceted. Some meanings are derived from Indian dialects, some colloquialisms are derived from Spanish forms. This issue needs to be explored.

As mentioned earlier, Salmón's characters belong to all social strata. Inter-action among these characters presents a vivid picture of what Bolivia's social background was and is. The characters may be highly theatrical in dress and manner. For example, in Mi Compadre el Ministro we must recognize and understand the cholitas, half breed women whose habitual dress is very elaborate and colorful.

Cholitas wear six or eight skirts concurrently and sport derby hats. Their walk and many of their movements appear stylized as a consequence of their attire. Cholitas' vocabulary reflects a mix of Spanish and Quechua and Aymara (Indian dialects) colloqualisms. They express themselves brazenly, boldly, and with great comedic sense.[4] In fact, Raúl Salmón has helpfully published a text of definitions of the specialized vocabulary used for the assistance of those who are not used to the "Bolivian semantic ambience."[5]

In this first period, in dealing with the social customs of Bolivia (Costumbrismo), Salmón makes use of naturalistic subject matter, such as, syphilis, hunger, opportunism, poverty, and blackmail, among others. For this trait in 1944, he encountered negative criticism and was called grosero, inculto (immoral, unrefined).[6] However, while the critics rejected this early work, one of his plays, Conde Huyo o La Calle del Pecado, has had a run of 1623 performances. The play holds the record for the longest run in Bolivian theatre history. Since 1949, this play has been produced yearly to capacity audiences. The play's action takes us to Conde Huyo Street, where we can observe everyone mingling at night, members of government as well as the governed workmen, all looking for love (heterosexual or homosexual). This basic need knows no social barriers; immorality recognizes no class barrier.

These two plays alone--Mi Compadre el Ministro and Conde Huyo--make the reader aware that class consciousness, still prevalent in Bolivia, is unjustifiable, for we remain

brothers "under the skin." Salmón not only gives us his theatre of social protest but he also shows us a highly "theatrical" society where the characters' lives are expressed in a "larger than life" manner. Such characters' emotions range from the comical to the dramatic within a single sentence.

Salmón's second period (1952-1975) takes place after the revolution of 1952. There were social reforms taking place in Bolivia, but there was also much political tension, to the extent that the Teatro Municipal, the largest theatre in Bolivia, and others were closed. During this period, Salmón wrote his history plays, such as Viva Belzu!, and Juana Sanchez. One critic in Aconcagua, a Spanish magazine, writes that the playwright was creating a "living and authentic theatre which reflects historical moments in Bolivia."[7] Characters, drawn from the pages of history, comment on the contemporary scene from their point of view, a view out of the past. Salmón explores the element of time, and the structure of his plays in this period is not linear. He places his characters in various times and makes use of flashbacks. In Los Tres Generales, produced in 1971, Salmón virtually gives a history lesson, recreating episodes in the government of three generals: Santa Cruz, Belzu, and Melgarejo. Professor Eleanore Maxwell de Dial in an issue of the Latin American Theatre Review states that Salmón, through his historic characters, "wants to create a national awareness . . . showing that history repeats itself and that

Bolivia is a country where power is transitory since revolutions are inevitable."[8]

Finally, in the third phase starting in 1975, Salmón wrote La Computadora Parlante, an Absurd play in four parts. This play marks a new departure. From this time on he focuses on more universal themes. This play, for example, shows the dehumanization of modern life. (In English, the title becomes The Talking Computer). The computer makes possible a world in which a person's Social Security Number becomes more important and valuable for identification purposes than one's own name.

Lastly, in this study, we are analyzing Raúl Salmón's plays not only for form but because they give us a vivid portrayal of Bolivian social and political life, and other customs as well as insights into Bolivian history. These are plays that have been well received by a public eager to understand themselves. Because of Raúl Salmón, theatre in Bolivia became popular once again. Salmón's plays remain attended by all segments of society. His theatre is not intended only for the elite or the well-educated. Critics in Spain, as well as other Latin American countries, such as Colombia, believe that a playwright such as Salmón is "not commonly found" and that his "mastery in dramatic structure and theatrical sense is uncommon in terms of color, dialogue, and movement."[9] Salmón, throughout his plays, presents the relationships and inner conflicts of a people changing culturally, while the country is emerging and striving desperately to be acknowledged. The characters in

his plays emerge from a repressed society to an encounter with a freer world, where for the first time they may ask themselves who they are and where they are going. Through his drama Raúl Salmón makes us understand Bolivia's "slow" social and cultural development.

In the next two chapters, I will give a brief description of the major developments in Bolivian theatre history, and of the influences found in Raúl Salmón's personal background. This will be followed by examination and study of the plays of the three periods. Analysis of themes, setting, characters, and dramatic structure will be related to specific times and events in Bolivian history. Each period will constitute one chapter, and the last chapter will be the conclusion. Finally, I hope that this study will not only give the reader a clear analysis of Raúl Salmón's work, but a sense of what the playwright had to endure in order to present his plays. At the same time, this work should provide some small insight into Bolivia's modern and contemporary social and political history.

CHAPTER TWO

BRIEF THEATRE HISTORY OF BOLIVIA: PLAYWRIGHTS AND THEATRES

According to Edgar Avila Echazu, author of Historia y Antologia de la Literatura Boliviana, during the thirteenth century, the learned men of the Quechua in the Inca Empire, who lived in the area which is now Bolivia and Peru, presented "melodramas," similar in structure to Medieval mystery plays. (He defines melodrama as comedies accompanied by music. They do not adhere to the European notions of the term).[1] These year-round productions were given throughout the Empire and were especially popular during religious festivals. They were produced in temples and palaces as well as outdoor stadiums. The productions had minimal scenery, such as platforms and steps, and the actors stood at both sides of an "assumed" stage area until it was their turn to speak. Each actor then walked to center stage and delivered his speech directly to the audience.[2] There are no extant plays of the period.

One of the earliest plays is Ollantay; this play, written in Quechua, was most likely written by a Spanish priest in the Colonial era, possibly in the sixteenth century. To this day, a question remains about the authorship, but most historians credit the play to Antonio Valdez, a Spanish priest. One exception is Jesús Lara, who thinks that the play may have been written by an Inca, since the Quechuan belief in sun worship, never used by the Spanish before, plays an intrinsic role in the play.[3]

Ollantay is noteworthy as the earliest play found in the region which now consists of Bolivia and Perú.

The play demonstrates European influences. It is divided into scenes and acts, and the monologues use hyperbolic language containing metaphors and similes. The characters belong to the age of the Inca Empire. A heroic warrior, Ollanta, loves the daughter of Pachacuti, an Inca elder, who does not allow him to marry his daughter. The warrior rebels but due to the cunning of an Incan chief named Ruminahui, he is exiled. Once the elder man dies, however, Ollanta is allowed to marry his loved one. The plot is simple and the play ends happily.

In addition to Ollantay, there is an extant dramatic, poetic elegy which is believed to have been written at the time of the Spanish conquest (c. sixteenth century). The title of the poem is "La Tragedia del Fin de Atahuallpa." ("The Tragedy of the Dead Atahuallpa").

There are also narratives, written as monologues, which speak of the origin of man and of man's relationship to the Gods. According to Echazu, these are written in "pristine simplicity, with a great sense of morality and an ingenious sense of narrative, requiring a spontaneity of action which few or no performers of our time can deliver. These poems were performed as dramatic pieces."[4]

Unfortunately, other than the above-mentioned works, I have not been able to find any true dramatic works from the fourteenth to the seventeenth centuries. There are poems which reflect the oppression and suffering of the conquered

Quechuas and Aymaras. For example, "Manchay Puito," is a famous poem with accompanying music. Jesús Lara in his La Literatura de Los Quechuas writes that this poem was well known and popular in the seventeenth century.[5] The theme is the suffering and sorrow of colonial life. Lara feels that this poem reveals the Quechuas in their highest form of aesthetic expression. The author is believed to be a priest of Indian descent born in Potosi, a Bolivian mining center.

The Alto Perú (as Bolivia was known until the nineteenth century) achieved its independence from Spain in 1825. Although the war for independence was mostly won by the mestizos and criollos (sons of the Quechuas and Aymaras) once Bolivia became a Republic, the political and economic power remained in the hands of the bourgeois colonialists of Spanish ancestry. These were professional men, businessmen, and military officials. The oppressed classes did not improve their lot economically and to this day conditions are mainly the same. As a result, much of Bolivian literature is written by the offspring of the colonialists.

The first signs of romantic writing appear in the Romantic poetry published in 1877 in a bi-weekly magazine titled Círculo Literario. Orators interpreted these poems aloud to audiences. This may be viewed as the forerunner of the theatrical performances of today, because until this time, much of the poetry was merely read. There is even a question about whether or not Ollantay was performed as a theatre piece. As Edgar Avila Echazu states, Bolivia does not have a tradition of producing or writing "theatrical

plays."[6] Plays centered on the written word and did not seek out visual or theatrical elements such as, scenery and physical action. However, the development of Bolivian theatre preceded that of the Bolivian novel, and contemporary plays are highly theatrical.[7]

The first real play produced after Bolivia's independence was a satiric comedy in four acts written by Mariano Mendez, a professor in Cochabamba.[8] Students at a school for orphans presented his Aviso a Las Solteras (News for Single Women) in 1834. The play was published that same year by the Colegio de Artes in La Paz, but unfortunately there is no extant copy.

Other plays produced in the nineteenth century also were satirical. For example, Professor Felix Reyes Ortiz, a popular writer who was influenced by European melodrama wrote the satire, Odio y Amor in 1875. That same year he wrote Los Lanza, a history play, which was published in 1885. The play is based on the actions of two guerrillas fighting for independence.

According to Knapp Jones, Reyes Ortiz's history play was followed by at least sixty history plays written in the next forty years. One such noteworthy history play is Pol Terrazas' Atahuallpa, a five-act tragedy which was produced in 1869 and published in 1887. Knapp Jones mentions that critics today find its dramatic technique excellent "full of suspense . . . and evidence of the dramatist's acquaintance with psychology."[9] Other playwrights, such as José David Berrios persisted in the belief that verse was the only form

to be used in drama. His Huascar y Atahuallpa written in 1875 was considered "short in dramatic power, inept in character portrayal . . . and monotonous in the poetry." The North of Bolivia was well represented by José Mariano Duran Canelas of Santa Cruz, who wrote La Batalla del Pari, (The Battle of Pari). About the proliferation of history plays, Eduardo Guerra is quoted as having stated that plays of that period would have been more interesting if playwrights had written more about the customs and social problems of the country rather than about historical personages and events which were most often repetitive and lacking in color.[10] This criticism is valid. I, too, noted how often the tragic life and death of Atahuallpa remains the theme of too many plays.

The first Bolivian to become a member of the Royal Spanish Academy, a high honor, was Ricardo José Bustamante who wrote novels and poetry and is known for his three act comedy in verse entitled Mas Pudo El Suelo Que La Sangre, written in Sucre in 1869. The play develops the idea that environment influences human behavior more than heredity. Interestingly, the play was published in Bolivia one year after Emile Zola's naturalistic play Thérèse Raquin.

In the late nineteenth century, Nataniel Aguirre wrote Condehuillo o La Calle del Pecado, which was made into a movie in 1952. One of Raúl Salmón's most popular plays is known by the same title. Condehuillo Street appears to have been a street capable of providing the kind of events and characters on which to base a Naturalistic play.

In the early twentieth century, many playwrights continued to write history plays in verse such as, Patria Libre (Free Country) by Romuldo Romero in 1909 and Ricardo Mujia's Bolivar en Junin, and Ricardo Jaimes Freyre's Los Conquistadores written in 1928. Unlike most early twentieth century plays, Isaac G. Eduardo's Contra el Destino (Against Fate), a play written in prose, uses the Pacific War as its theme. The play was very popular when published in 1900. Diez de Medina, a writer and critic notes that most early twentieth century plays were written in the attempt to restore theatre but the plays were mostly weak and unfinished.[11]

Some playwrights did write about social problems in the early twentieth century but they mostly preached. Octavio Salamanca published "two temperance preachments": Borrachin-Borrachona (Drunkards), and A Hombradas. He also wrote a drama about a traitor, and two plays aimed at the vices of the younger generations. One critic complains that Bolivian literature was more "against something than for something." Bolivian theatre was trying too hard to teach and reprimand! Later, some writers were influenced by the naturalism of Ibsen. Enrique Baldivieso, for example, wrote Lo Que Traemos al Mundo (What We Bring Into the World) which deals with inherited weaknesses much like Ibsen's Ghosts. Other realistic plays such as Nicolas Ortiz Pacheco's 1915 play Aniversario de Boda was hissed at by the audience, who tried to stop the performance because they thought the characters on stage resembled them. Pacheco tried again in

1916 with Pliegues del Honor and a violent demonstration ensued. Finally, he left for Chile where he lived for twenty years.

Alberto Saavedra Perez wrote approximately forty plays starting with his patriotic drama Sangre y Gloria in 1918 and followed with costumbrista plays such as, Las Cholitas del Amigo Uria in 1922. Zacarias Monje Ortiz wrote Zupay Marca in Aymara (one of the Indian dialects) which means City of Monsters: a phrase used by the Indians for a city inhabited by Spaniards. He also wrote costumbrista plays (plays based on the customs of the country).

Still other dramatists continued to deal with Inca themes. Raúl Botelho Gozalvez wrote Tupay Katari, set in the jungle. Antonio Diaz Villamil, one of Bolivia's most important and popular playwrights in 1922 wrote the three act drama entitled La Voz de La Quena (The Voice of the Quena),[12] and in 1923 the four act play, El Nieto de Tupaj Catari. Both of these plays also had Indian themes showing their honesty and strength. For a while there was such great interest in Inca themes that the Tiahuanaco Dramatic Company was founded in La Paz in 1929 dedicated to "indigenous drama."

La Rosita written in 1924, became one of Villamil's greatest successes. This play showed the dignity of a chola. Another successful play which did not use Indian themes was La Hoguera (The Bonfire), which deals with Chilean and Bolivian relations as represented by two families. In the latter, an army man having led Bolivia to

victory against Chile is forced to decide his father's punishment as a Chilean spy. The play was very popular in 1924 and ran 500 performances. Diaz Villamil founded "La Sociedad Boliviana de Autores Teatrales" in 1923 and "El Ateneo de la Juventud" in 1924. Both societies produced and published plays. In the 1920's, drama in Bolivia was indeed active and flourishing.

In 1930, Joaquin Gantier wrote an ambitious history play, Charcas. The play deals with the Inca period, the Colonial period, and the era of the Republic. This play is said to have been written in Quechua but there are no extant copies available. The output of plays was slight after the Chaco War in 1932. Few writers wrote about this war with Paraguay, but Ansiada Paz (Longed for Peace) written in 1937 by Gantier deals with an exchanged prisoner of that war who only in death finds his longed for peace.

Mario Flores wrote plays with European flavor such as, A Paris, Muchachas in 1921 and Una Noche en Viena. These were popular and had near to a thousand performances. Knapp Jones believes that his Veneno Para Ratones produced in 1950, is probably one of the finest of Bolivian plays. This play is a psychological and sociological drama in which the audience is asked to answer the question: who is to blame for the ills of society? Knapp Jones indicates that it is impossible to find a copy of the play and, therefore, he is relying for his comments on Diaz de Medina's critique.[13]

After the Chaco War of 1932, Guillermo Francovich, a philosopher and one of Bolivia's most respected essayists,

wrote dramas based on history and legends. A unique play, El Monje de Potosi written in 1954 is still popular. The play concerns a priest who is considered a saint, but who secretly carries, in a box, the head of a man he murdered. Francovich attempts to show that nothing is as it appears to be: "nothing is real but death."[14] Juan Quiros, a critic, says that this play is exceptional because of its universal theme. It is different from much of Bolivia's drama since it goes beyond the historical and costumbrista work. Guido Calabi is a young author who also has written plays, sometimes considered absurdist, containing universal themes. His play La Nariz, written in 1967 won Bolivia's Literature first prize the same year. It deals with the concept of man attempting to understand himself, his nature and values. This playwright who until 1988 taught theatre at the Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, exemplifies a new generation of playwrights who is once again influenced by European styles, particularly, the writings of a Beckett or an Ionesco.

In later chapters, the work of Raúl Salmón, whose first play was produced in 1942, and who first writes history and costumbrista plays but then turns to universal themes, will be seen to encompass all the styles used in Bolivian drama.

Accounts indicate that in the eighteenth century, theatres were built expressly to produce plays. In 1786, a "Casa de Comedias" (Theatre House) was built in Calle

Mercado in La Paz. Here plays were presented to show the virtues and vices of society.[15] In 1796, a new theatre house or "Nueva Casa de Comedias" was opened also near Calle Mercado, close by San Augustin Church. These theatres may or may not have been leased by special groups, but it is assumed that many different groups or companies did lease them. There is no extant information about their architecture.

In 1834, Mariscal Santa Cruz, then President of the Republic, began building a theatre in La Paz. This building was finished in November of 1845 and it is in use today under the name, Teatro Municipal.[16] It is the most celebrated and popular theatre in Bolivia and may be considered "the Broadway House" of La Paz. It has 782 seats, an orchestra area plus three balconies. It is where most foreign companies perform and today it is leased by various professional groups. It is believed that the National Anthem was played for the first time at the opening of this theatre. Mario T. Soria tells us that this theatre has been used for concerts, ballets, political seminars, films and finally as a funeral home in March 1968, when an actor died on stage while playing in El Castillo de La Vieja Huayronko (The Old Lady Huayronko's Castle).[17] The building was renovated in 1975 and it reopened at the end of 1976 with a play by Raúl Salmón. In the late nineteenth century, the Teatro Princesa opened in La Paz and competed with Teatro Municipal but since 1929, this building has been used

as a movie house. It is almost half the size of the Municipal with only 355 seats.

Most of the other large cities in Bolivia also built theatres. In Cochabamba, the Teatro Achá was finished around 1904 and it still bustles with theatrical activity. Around the same time, the Teatro del Gran Mariscal Sucre was built. In the beginning these theatres were leased almost exclusively to foreign theatre companies. At the beginning of the present century, however, Manuel de la Quintana founded an acting school named the "Academia Quintana." He began producing plays in the Teatro Municipal. Many national productions followed with actors such as, Moisés Ascarrunz, José Vicente Ochoa, Eduardo Allende and others. José Saavedra founded the "Grupo Teatral Saavedra," in the early part of this century, and presented plays on national holidays such as July 16, and Independence Day, August 6.[18] Most probably these plays had historical themes but there is no evidence available to confirm this.

Around 1905, Wenceslao Monroy, an actor, founded a company named "Tiahuanacu." He went to Argentina to work and when he returned, he married. His daughter Maruja Monroy became an actress and she took national plays abroad. She has been credited with getting Bolivian plays such as Bustamente's Mas Pudo el Suelo que La Sangre and Terraza's Atahuallpa, known throughout Latin America. Her relatives, the Cervantes brothers also formed a group and were equally successful.

In the 1920s, theatrical activity flourished in Bolivia. Many theatre groups were formed and theatre festivals were set. Some of these societies, such as, "El Ateneo de la Juventud," "Los Amigos de la Ciudad," the "Academia Aymara," and the "PEN Club" still exist today.[19] In 1923, "La Sociedad Boliviana de Autores Teatrales" was founded. Members read plays, criticized them and decided which plays were to be produced either at the Teatro Municipal or Princesa.[20] This society produced at least fifty plays. Authors belonging to the group are known as the "Generación del 1921." The group helped develop and publish plays of social and political themes and produced the Festivales Julianos and Juegos Florales (Festivals).

In the decade of the 1930s, there were few plays written and few theatre performances due to two main factors--the economic depression and the Chaco War. Then, in the 1940s Raúl Salmón formed his group the "Teatro Social." Other authors such as Diaz Villamil and Isaac Portocarrero also produced plays. Most of these plays had social protest themes and many were rejected by the so called "literatos" (literary men) and high society members who called the plays vulgar.[21] However, from 1944 to 1952, Raúl Salmón's Teatro Social became the predominant theatre group, producing plays all over the country. This group or company was soon considered "the voice of the people." After providing a biographical sketch of Salmón, later chapters will study the substance and form of Salmón's plays.

CHAPTER THREE

RAÚL SALMÓN

Raúl Salmón was born on June 30, 1922 in La Paz, Bolivia, the son of a low-income couple. He had to start working at a young age. His father was a paramedic and one of his uncles was a journalist. As a teenager, he was a copy boy on La Republica, at the time, a popular newspaper. One of his duties was to correct the spelling of the news to be printed, an experience which started him in journalism. Now he recalls, however, that for a sixteen-year-old boy the hours were strenuous, his working schedule extending from 9:00 P.M. to 6:00 A.M.[1] At the same time, he was also trying to finish high school at Ayacucho Night School.

One evening, the La Republica's movie critic became ill and Salmón was sent to replace him. Thus, his professional writing days began in earnest. He continued to review movies for the Roxy Theatre, a main line movie house, for many years. Mr. Salmón recalls with nostalgic warmth that his professional activities were always interwoven between writing for and about the theatre or cinema.[2]

Graduated from high school, he studied and got his degree in Social Science at La Universidad Mayor de San Andrés in La Paz. Among his professors was Antonio Diaz Villamil, the earlier mentioned respected Bolivian playwright, who wrote costumbrista plays (plays based on the customs of the country), certainly an influence on Salmón,

whose plays, for the most part, also deal with Bolivian social customs.

Salmón's ever increasing curiosity and search for knowledge led him abroad. At one point, he studied sociology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. Later, he studied journalism at the Universidad de La Plata in Argentina. As a journalist in the 1950s, he had the opportunity to travel and journeyed to many countries in South America as well as to Africa and Asia. While working on the newspaper, La Noche, he was invited to India, Egypt, Lebanon, Greece, Israel, Hong Kong, Turkey, Syria and Nepal. His articles were written from a social and ethnographic point of view.

It is clear that some of his experiences abroad made a lasting impression on him. He mentioned to me that he was never so moved as when he saw men dying of hunger on the streets along the Ganges in India in 1960. He spoke vividly of men without enough energy to lift their hands to brush flies and other insects from their faces. He says, he felt then "that the only solution for this social injustice could be to get a machine gun and revolt in the name of social justice."[3] On the other hand, he proudly said that even though Bolivia is a poor country, no one as far as he knows, has died of hunger: "Some people have died of alcoholism brought on by frustration but no one of hunger."[4] Social injustices seen all over the world influenced him to keep writing about the state of the lower classes in the country he knows so well.

Raúl Salmón founded his Social Theater of Protest in 1943. Forty odd years later, one can still feel his passion for denouncing social injustice. This theme has remained controversial in discussions of his plays. Class distinctions are pointed in Latin America. The "white" or Spanish class feels that its members are the highest in society. Only approximately 14% of the population in Bolivia, this group and the Mestizos (mixed Spanish and Indian citizens) who make up about 27% of the population criticize and denounce Salmón for writing plays which contain <u>cholos</u> (richer Indian descendants) and poor Indian characters.

The Spanish and the Mestizos believe the "lower classes" should not be represented in the theatre. Theatre is, for them, a "cultural" event meant to be presented for the upper-bourgeois classes. Interviews with some citizens and also with Salmón, made me aware that the upper classes are concerned that the outside world reading or seeing these plays would think of Bolivia as being totally an "Indian country."[5]

The concept of culture expressed follows the myth of the European elite, namely, that the Spanish personages are superior or more cultivated than the South American ones. They tend to demean the values of the Inca and Aymara civilization. Bolivia's stated population as of 1976 was made up of approximately 52% Indians (Quechuas and Aymara) but questions remain as to whether a Bolivian Indian is a citizen worthy of representation in its plays.[6]

Nevertheless, Raúl Salmón wrote and produced thirty-two plays and many more radio dramas based on his observations of the various persons, environment, and customs of the country. Born in La Paz, he knows the paceño indigent well and most of his plays have characters who belong to that social group.

To sustain his attempts at playwriting, Salmón continued to work as a radio journalist, reporting on various daily events and giving his views of them. In the 1940s, he was offered an opportunity to work in Argentinian radio, which gave him an opportunity to work in many Argentinian theatres as well. He acted as well as directed theatre.[7]

Returning to La Paz, Salmón worked at Radio Continental and continued to write plays. His first play, written in 1942, was entitled El Canillita and was his first protest play. The press categorized or described this play as a children's play because the protagonist is a young shoe-shine boy. Poverty stricken, this Canillita (a nickname given to shoe-shine boys) is tempted and becomes an accomplice in the robbery of a jewelry store, located in front of his shoe-shine stand. During the play, he is given a chance to mend his ways through the help and advice of a generous man, but only after he has committed a crime.

Salmón opened his Teatro Social (Social Theatre) with El Canillita. This group was known as "theatre of protest" (against social injustice). Members of the original company were actors such as Lucho Espinoza, Hugo Roncal, and Elvira

Llosa, who later married Mr. Salmón. During this time, Salmón acted in and directed his plays.

Some critics in the press called Salmón a plagiarist because the story of a poor boy had appeared elsewhere; Salmón answered, "I am curious how I could have plagiarized the characters in the play for they exist in my heart and my life."[8] Another critic summarized the play as follows:

> It presents a crude and realistic environment. This crude or raw environment is not vulgar since among the violent, social setting one observes a tender and melancholic beauty of a people who is unnourished yet intelligent, searching for means to better itself.[9]

The above are examples of how certain circles receive Salmón's work. Some, as the first note suggests, want to give him no credit at all, while others see some positive values. These trends are found everywhere among Bolivian audiences. Either Salmón's work is negated and called trivial or it is admired as the work of a dramatist who captures the "people's heart and soul."[10]

Unfortunately, copies of the Canillita script had been lost or destroyed during the years when Salmón was out of the country. He had to leave the country on a ten-year, self-imposed, exile after the revolution of 1952 because he was being pressured by the government into "officialising" his work, meaning that he would have to affiliate himself and his work with the government, an action he was not prepared to take.[11] Instead, he went to Perú and Colombia to work in radio, writing radio-dramas. In Perú, he worked

at the Panamerican Radio Station where the famed writer Vargas Llosa also worked. Many years later, Llosa mentioned that he knew a Bolivian writer whose radio dramas were so popular in Perú that "even the stones tuned him in."[12] His radio drama was never surpassed in popularity in Perú or later in his native country.

Away from Bolivia for ten years, Salmón returned in the 1960s to start all over again. It was then that he discovered that many of his manuscripts were lost. However, he says: "Some loyal, good friends had managed to keep and salvage some others."[13]

Salmón has rewritten some of his plays but he feels that El Canillita cannot be rewritten because now it would seem dated. The term "canillita," he says, is no longer used as it was in the 1940s. Perception of shoe-shine boys has also changed, today, they seem less naive. However, he is very proud of and believes that his Teatro Social was the first theatre of protest in Latin America. "We existed and worked in this field even before the Mexican theatre of social protest."[14] Members of his company had to defend themselves not only against verbal assaults but against physical ones in the streets of various cities where the plays were presented.[15] To date, however, his plays are well received and sold out.

Once Mr. Salmón felt that his mission had been mostly accomplished, he dedicated himself more to his radio commentaries and to the direction and management of his newly bought Radio Nueva America (1961). He is continuing

to write new plays and to rewrite some of the ones which were lost. He indicated to me that he must be careful that the radio work does not kill the writer in him. He has also found time to run and be elected twice as the Mayor of La Paz, in 1979, and in 1987. While he was in office, the city of La Paz made progress on its roads, its parks, and general city maintenance.

To date, Salmón has received the following significant awards: The Cámara Venezolana award in Venezuela in 1977, for pioneering freedom of expression; La Condecoracion del Condor de Los Andes in Bolivia in 1981, for the renovation and building of the city of La Paz, (the highest award given in Bolivia); La Grande Medaille de la ville de Paris in France in 1984, citing his works as Mayor of La Paz; La Ville de Verdum Medaille in France for his work in promoting peace and understanding among people; The Rio Branco award in Brazil for defending freedom of expression; Premio Mundial in Spain in 1986, given by Ondas de España for defending freedom of expression, and Premio Ondas for writing Testigo de Cargo, a radio drama.

A candidate for Senator in 1989, he lost. On seeing the many awards in his study, I congratulated him and half smiling he said: "I have been successful in everything I sought to achieve except politics. Perhaps you have to be born with talent for that."[16] He seemed serious and somewhat frustrated that an opportunity to work for the people and the city, which he loves, had been lost. In the

Senate he would have had the opportunity to press for social change.

Salmón mentions that he is not really political because he does not belong to either a left or right-wing party. He says he belongs to "the party of saving the human condition."[17] Other labels, he believes, are antiquated and irrelevant: "This is a time when we must think of saving ourselves, all humankind, from hunger and poverty and find a way to be less greedy while trying to bring well being throughout the world."[18] He feels he has tried and is continuing to advance this type of behavior. It is interesting to note that at the time of my interview his son, after much emotional turmoil, seemed to find solace and was to take his vows for the priesthood. Mr. Salmón proudly told me of this coming event.[19]

At the present writing, Salmón is still managing and directing his radio station Radio Nueva America and writing scripts for possible production on Mexican television or in his own studios. According to Mr. Salmón, his new radio station building, built in 1981, is the first construction in La Paz equipped especially to produce radio and television.

Now, sixty-four years old, after forty-six years of working in radio and theatre, and suffering from a severe case of hypoglobulin (an illness which at times causes him to use his portable oxygen equipment), Raúl Salmón is still working hard and looking towards new horizons, searching to extend his communication with people. He still feels that

his main objective in life is to expose social injustice and to communicate the possibilities for change.

CHAPTER FOUR

PLAYS OF SOCIAL PROTEST

In the first phase of his work (1943-1952), Raúl Salmón gives a vivid portrayal of a segment of Bolivian society, writing about the life of the lower, poorer classes, relationships among themselves and with outsiders. The latter believed themselves to be superior since they are from a higher economic level. Salmón seems to follow George Bernard Shaw's concept that "every social question, furnishes material for drama."[1] Salmón's plays demonstrate moments of conflict in the cholo's life (a half-breed's life), revealing objectively the nature of these people; the characters' weaknesses and strengths. Sometimes, some traits, gestures and colloquial language are regional and offer difficulties in translation. In this chapter, the themes, settings, characters and dramatic structure of five plays, representative of Salmón's plays of Social Protest, will be analyzed.

Conde Huyo: La Calle del Pecado (Conde Huyo: The Street of Sin) written in 1944 was and still is Salmón's most popular play. It is a play written in the naturalistic tradition, in which Salmón presents his observations of an environment and the resulting effects on the inhabitants. Interested in showing and exposing social injustice in Bolivia, he describes atrocities which poor, young men and women must endure in order to survive. At the time this

play was written, Conde Huyo Street was a street in La Paz known for both its vices and the "sinful behavior" of the people who frequented it.

Maruja, the protagonist of the play, an orphaned young girl is introduced to the owner of a brothel and is quickly forced to become a prostitute. Offered a job, she does not realize the nature of the work. After accepting the job with Doña Julia, she is locked in a room with a customer and raped. She is forced to work there until she contracts syphilis. Afraid of the health authorities, Doña Julia hides her in a dark room in the back of the house. Near the end of the play, Maruja's brother, a physician and inspector for the Health Department finds her there, moaning and lying next to a similarly diseased man. The disfigured and sore laden faces and bodies of Maruja and the man are vividly described.

This establishment located on Conde Huyo Street was well known to the authorities who Doña Julia paid off to remain in business. The play concludes with Maruja's brother, Dr. Vera, stating that it was poverty that brought the girl to this place. He admits having believed that this street was inhabited only by those who sinned for pleasure but now realizes that: "Here live orphans who do not receive one word of encouragement. Young humble girls who need to eat."[2] In an aside, he asks the audience: "Where are those who call themselves protectors of the weak? Where are the authorities who should care for the needy?"[3] He declares: "Conde Huyo is not the Street of Sin! It is the

Street of Pain!"[4] These last lines of the play, make clear that Raúl Salmón is publicly challenging Bolivian authorities on their lack of care for the poor and helpless.

Salmón, in a personal interview, said that he is very proud to have been among the earliest, Latin American playwrights to write and produce Theatre of Social Protest, at a time when it was very unlikely that this type of drama would be allowed to be performed.[5]

To suggest the visual appearance of the environment, the playwright gives a detailed description of the setting for the action. At the beginning of the play, he states:

> It is 10:00 P.M. At Stage Left, there is a room of a cheap dirty eating place. There are many cases of liquor with various liquor bottles on top of them. The furniture consists of wooden benches and an old chair or two coming apart. Upstage, there is a doorway where a dirty curtain hangs instead of a door. (Such curtains are used to separate rooms). At Stage Right, there is a long, narrow alley with badly painted, one floor houses.[6]

Extra characters add to the ambience: a woman selling food, couples speaking in low voices, two policemen, and a dazed woman sitting near a doorway. The detail illustrates Zola's desire to present plays where human behavior is to be observed within a realistic setting and enhances Salmón's bleak and corrosive subject matter, such as prostitution and venereal disease. Salmón here uses realistic/naturalistic environments and themes to express his revulsion and to protest against social injustice.

Seven characters are given dialogue and, though many others do not speak, they all appear to represent social entities or groups. For example, Doña Julia, the brothel's owner, represents the Capitalist or business person who both entraps and uses the weak and poor, as represented by Maruja. Doña Julia profits from the work of the poor. Dr. Vera is the young physician and brother of Maruja, who works for the Health Department and is at first prejudiced, believing that only depraved people frequented Conde Huyo Street. It is Dr. Vera, who questions the callousness of the authorities in relation to the poor. Dr. Chirveches is another young physician who works with Dr. Vera, doing what he can to help the sick. Gazaco is a homosexual who serves as Doña Julia's errand boy. Only in this environment, does he feel safe to practice his sexual preference. Don Humerez is a lawyer, the syphilitic son of a Duke and grandson of the Marquis of Monsalvan. He is the "pure" Spanish blooded. He frequents Conde Huyo establishments where he has contracted syphilis, but goes to this area whenever he wishes to satisfy his desires. He represents the decadent, higher society. Gomez is a violent man, who rapes Maruja and is later infected with a venereal disease. Some moral justification/retribution is offered for this man's suffering: he pays for his violence. Other extras - women, men, sickly persons, drunks, vendors - fill the alley way of Conde Huyo Street. These personages, to Salmón, represent society's outcasts.

The play is written in three acts, each act consisting of many short scenes, the customary style of Raul Salmón's plays. Act 1 has twelve scenes, with most scenes as short as two pages. The second act takes place two years later and has eight scenes, the same number as the Third or final act. The play is linear in structure, the various scenes proceeding logically to the last act, where Dr. Vera, Maruja's brother, recognizes his once innocent sister as the dying prostitute. With new wisdom he now questions the lack of care for the poor and relabels Conde Huyo Street, the "Street of Pain."

Mr. Salmón writes such short scenes, according to him, because he believes that each time a character comes into a scene, another scene starts. Each character brings with him or her something new which develops into a new scene. To me, some of the scenes seem cinematic rather than theatrical in structure. They are presented as if scenes consist of short pictures which lead to the development of the whole. For example, in scene 6 of act 2, the entire dialogue consists of the following few lines:

Dr. Vera: When you hear their stories you will be convinced I am right.

Dr. Chirveches: Just because the people get infected in those houses in Conde Huyo Street does not mean they are depraved.

Dr. Vera: The most naive person knows that those places are infected and are dangerous, but those people keep going there day and night.

Dr. Chirveches: I don't agree with you.

Dr. Vera: You will see. Let's continue examining the other patients. Let them come in.

Dr. Chirveches: (From the open door) Come in. (End of scene).[7]

In this short scene, the dialogue is not developed fully. There is no real attempt to develop an argument between these two doctors. We do not see the basis for their differing opinions. Little dialogue is thoroughly worked thru, with the exception of the last, final scene. Nevertheless, this play did capture audiences.

In Joven, Rica y Plebeya (Young, Rich and Plebeian) written in 1949, Raúl Salmón addresses the conflicts and struggles for survival which the chola or half-breed (Spanish and Indian mix) woman has to go through to find and hold onto her place in Bolivian society. This is a most important theme in his plays since she represents the family's strength. In this cholo society, the woman is the one who establishes the family's values and morals and plays a pivotal role in the society's survival, evolution and expansion. The chola works hard at home and usually has a job outside the home. She is a strong woman who speaks loudly and is generally afraid of nothing. Always trying to dress well, she wears many skirts at the same time plus embroidered shawls of rich textures. Her many skirts are made of silk, brocade and velvet. Her blouses, too, are often embroidered. She stands poised, often wearing high heeled boots and a derby hat. In short, she projects pride and tries to give herself an air of respectability by

wearing much jewelry, such as, gold brooches and gold earrings with precious stones. Often these bejeweled women sell meat in old, dusty market places. Many have become wealthy yet since differentiation of social class in Bolivia is based on ancestral lineage, rich cholas and their families are still looked on as belonging to the lower class. The men in the chola's world often suffer from frustration and feel unable to better themselves economically. Moral values are lost and sometimes, the men become alcoholics and degenerates.[8] Salmón illustrates this slice of life in his plays of social protest.

In this play, a rich chola woman, Faustina, sends her daughter Mary to a private boarding school where the students are daughters of the upper classes. On visiting days Mary pretends her mother is her servant because it is obvious to her classmates that the visitor belongs to a lower class, for she dresses in her traditional manner. In the school, Mary learns to lie and to pretend. She lies about her social position and pretends that she belongs to the "higher classes." Often, young boys climb the school's garden walls to visit or see the girls during their recess periods. On one such occasion Mary meets Willy, the son of a middle class family, whose father is a white collar public employee.

Mary's mother made her fortune running a quinta (a bar restaurant) which serves "country food." Although the middle classes frequent this type of establishment, they classify the owners of such places as lower class because

they merely "cook for a living." Mary is attracted to Willy and they fall in love. During vacations from school, Mary returns to her mother's place and, since it is a popular bar-restaurant, Willy goes to Faustina's to eat and discovers that Mary is the chola's daughter. He asks her what she is doing in such a place and Mary tired of pretending bursts out in what I consider to be the catharsis of the play:

> I no longer want to hide it and I shall tell you the truth. I am the owner's daughter. I pretended to be from a distinguished family. All my life is a lie and the only truth is that I love you, in spite of our social differences.[9]

Mary continues:

> I only pretended to be someone else to gain your love and not because I am ashamed of my beginnings. My love for you is my pride and joy. In school I learnt the vocabulary of the heart, if nothing else.[10]

At first, the shocked Willy rejects Mary but he later realizes that he loves her and wants to marry her. Willy's parents are strongly opposed because of the class difference. Even though they are not well off economically, they are proud to belong to the middle class. In fact Willy's parents are about to lose their house and through their lawyer, and not knowing, they get a loan from Mary's mother. Meanwhile, the two lovers run away and Faustina looking for her daughter, goes to see Willy's mother, Elisa. At that moment, the lovers return and Willy has a long speech in which he says he will tell them all the truth of their situation, as he sees it. The themes of hypocrisy and

pretense are brought out, conditions under which some of the upper middle class still live in Bolivia. Economic problems cause many families to go bankrupt yet they pretend to be doing well. Such a family is Willy's. Willy says to his parents, in the last scene of the play:

> We must be reproached for living a lie in a world which does not belong to us . . . We appear to have a position which we do not have. I want to leave college and go to work . . . I wish I could have been a shoemaker or bricklayer, free of intrigue and humiliation . . . When I go to work I will pay the house's mortgage.[11]

He asks his mother to give her approval and to help him to be a man. His mother is still against his union with a chola's daughter but Willy tells her: "The new youth wants to destroy the lies and old traditions. We want to give back to man faith and dignity."[12] At this point, Willy's father Guillermo embraces his son and tells him: "You spoke as I would have liked to speak to my parents and to your mother so I could make them understand."[13]

The play ends with Willy's parents inviting Mary's mother to eat in their home. Salmón's stage direction indicates that this gesture has "transcendental meaning."[14] The "higher class" is accepting the "lower" one to share a meal in their home. The younger generation, as is often the case, brings about social change. The upper middle class parents accept the cholos company to the point that they are seen going in to dine together. This kind of episode is not uncommon in Bolivia at the present time, but when Salmón

wrote the play in 1949 this type of event would be most uncommon.

Salmón, through Willy's character, is stating that it is the younger generation that must change social conditions and give equality or "dignity" back to all men.

The play was written three years before Bolivia's 1952 Revolution when the government nationalized the mines and returned many farms to the Indians. After 1952, many Indians came to live in the cities and the cholos were more easily accepted than before. The new "outsiders" since that date became the Indians. Now, it is the cholos who have trouble accepting the Indians.

Salmón sensed, in 1949, social change coming and voiced his perceptions by means of Willy. Social changes have come about. Today, in 1990, in La Paz, there is a chola who is a member of Congress and who goes to Congressional meetings wearing her accustomed apparel. She is an eloquent speaker and is very popular. She speaks both Spanish and her own dialect, Aymara. Raúl Salmón, some forty-one years earlier, had realized that the "cholos" would one day be accepted as respectable members of society.

The characters in Joven, Rica y Plebeya are: the Mother Superior, the one who sets the rules of behavior, and who represents the systemized state of affairs. Lula, Charo, and Mimi are carefree, convent school girls, the daughters of the middle class who talk only of boys and parties and seem frivolous, usually breaking the Mother Superior's rules. Mary, is the protagonist, who, wanting

to be accepted by the middle class, pretends to be one of them but realizes her error and tells the truth. Willy, a young son of middle class parents, who loves Mary, stands up to his parents and makes them understand the value of Mary and her mother, and in doing so, helps to change their minds. He represents a new generation who has to try to point out the erroneous judgments of the middle class and to alter the arrogance and prejudice which exists in Bolivia's middle class society. Elisa and Guillermo are Willy's parents who belong to the middle class but are going bankrupt. Elisa accuses Guillermo of being "too honest;" she claims he should have accepted bribes just like all government workers in order to avoid their present economic condition. She is the voice of the average Bolivian citizen, who knows he must bribe city workers to get something done. Guillermo represents the honest middle class man who tries to live according to the law but cannot get ahead in a country where bribes and unlawful acts prevail. His wife Elisa is an ambitious, prejudiced person, who is forced to resign herself to accept the <u>cholos</u> because of her own economic shortcoming and her love for her husband. For example, after Willy, Elisa's son, tells her that she will marry a rich <u>chola</u>'s daughter, the following dialogue takes place in act 3, scene 6:

> Elisa: They influenced you son! Tomorrow you will change your mind.
>
> Willy: Mother, if you want me to be a man, you must approve.

Elisa: No! That never! A woman like that will never be part of my family. These ideas are crazy! You are a bad son.

Willy: These are ideas of the new generation.

One speech later, Guillermo, her husband, tells her:

> We, of the older generation must wish our children well. We have no right to take away their right to love. We are wrong, Elisa.[15]

Elisa does not answer, she just places her head on Guillermo's shoulder. Rigucho is a poor cholo young man who loves Mary but loses her to the higher class. He ends the play, crying and cursing the hour that Mary entered the school which led her to Willy. When he learns that Mary will marry Willy, he has the following reaction:

> Rigucho cries. He wipes his eyes with the end of his sleeve and suppressing a sob, repeats: "Mary! I curse the hour when they took you to that school."[16]

He represents what usually happens to young men from the cholo society. The chola's daughter seems to be able to get ahead and be accepted by the middle class more readily, often leaving her old friends behind. Through these characters, Salmón has dealt with problems that exist at the core of social changes in Bolivian society.

The play has three acts, act 1 taking place in the beautiful garden of the Convent School. There is a grotto of Our Lady to indicate that this is a Catholic owned school. The second act is a contrast to the first. The "Bar-restaurant" or Quinta which belongs to Faustina (Mary's mother), is rustic. The dining room walls are adorned with

Indian motifs, such as: pictures depicting "country" parties and tapestries which show the rich colored weaving of the Indian and Cholo art design. Salmón, in a note, states that this criollo or folk setting should be very different from act 3.

The third act setting consists of the elegant living room of Willy's parents. It seems almost caustic, that Salmón indicates that all the furnishings in this set "should show the refinement and good taste" of the people who live there. Indeed, it is surprising, knowing the usual social preferences, to see that Faustina and Mary are finally welcomed in such a setting. Pictorially, this is a strong visual juxtaposition (from a Bolivian social viewpoint): seeing the cholos invited to dine in this middle class environment.

The structure of the play is linear, the involvement of the lovers growing as the acts progress. Mary is the protagonist and her cathartic confession of her true identity takes place in the second act. The resolution to the conflict between the two families is worked out in the last or third act and the play ends on a positive note. The exception to this happy ending is Rigucho, Mary's cholo admirer, who loses her to Willy and curses the day she was introduced to a better social world.

In La Doctora Zaconeta, a comedy in two acts, written in 1950, the protagonist, Marysol Zaconeta, is a lawyer, an active politician, who fights for women's rights. In

Bolivia, lawyers are addressed as Doctor, which explains the title of the play. In the beginning, the audience hears Marysol's voice on the radio, urging women to "fight from men's oppression."[17] Her fiance, Alvarito and her aunt Clarines are sitting in her living room, listening to the speech and are dismayed. Alvarito says that he cannot stand his friends' jokes about Marysol's political activities. A woman belongs in her home. Aunt Clarines, a member of the older generation, is supportive of him and ashamed of her niece's behavior. When Marysol arrives, there is a quarrel. Alvarito will not return until Marysol "acts like a woman: knitting and doing the household chores."[18] To keep Alvarito's love, Doctor Zaconeta symbolically puts away her diploma and learns to be a home maker. Once she takes this step, her father invites Alvarito to visit and it is planned that when he comes, Marysol will be found sitting, knitting in the living room. Alvarito is somewhat changed in appearance: he is dressed elegantly, just as Marysol had wished. After observing her knit, he exclaims that Marysol is now dealing with reality, dedicating herself to the home, and qualified to be a housewife. The play ends with both lovers adopting a facade or mask and role playing as the other wishes him or her to be. This play reveals the machismo that many Hispano-American men are supposed to feel. In this comedy, Salmón is concerned mainly with stereotypes.

The characters in the play seem one-dimensional caricatures of how members of society, play set roles. The

play is a satire. This "liberated woman" (a lawyer, involved in politics) is willing to return to the traditional role of housewife in order to be able to live with the man she loves. It is interesting that in cholo society it is the woman who is the leader, as seen in Salmón's earlier plays, whereas in this middle class setting the woman has to remain the docile being, following the man's lead. For example, in scene 5 of the second act of La Doctora Zaconeta, Marysol (the doctora) has the following dialogue with Alvarito, the man she intends to marry:

> Alvarito: How are you doctor?
>
> Marysol: Very well, but I am no longer practicing law. I retired from the profession.
>
> Alvarito: Why? You were so well prepared, impetuous, fiery.
>
> Marysol: Yes . . . but I decided to be a homemaker.[19]

In the next scene to show Alvarito that she means to be a good "homemaker," she knits a sock while he is visiting and she tells him the following:

> Excuse me, I am knitting socks. They are for my father. I learnt to knit. I enjoy it! I also cook, wash and I like to iron men's suits. I pass the time doing these simple tasks.[20]

Marysol is the middle class lawyer who must become more docile and traditional, staying home doing household chores to get her man. Not so, in the chola's world. For instance, in Joven, Rica y Plebeya, Faustina, a chola who owns a bar-restaurant, and manages it alone, tells her daughter:

> Thank God we are doing well. I have bought you a house in your name in Villa Victoria . . . then I have loaned some money and invested other sum. I am doing all this for you. Because after all, we must leave something to our children. . . . I am already old but as your father used to say: 'The money we make with the sweat of our brow is for our daughter.'[21] (act 1, scene 10).

We can see clearly the difference between these two women. Faustina is the bread winner who provides for her daughter's future and works hard, competing with men in the business world. Salmón reflects accurately the perceived roles of men and women in middle class Bolivian society. Outwardly, the middle class woman bows to her husband's will because of her fear of scandal and her concern of how she would be seen by other members of her society.

After reading Mr. Salmón's earlier plays, it appears that the chola lives a more honest and productive life, expressing herself freely. In this play, the playwright reveals the hypocrisy which permeates the middle class in Bolivia. Even "private affairs" of the middle class seem to be guided by society's "masked" norms. In Bolivia, it is difficult to find the "real" feelings that lie or exist behind traditional "masked" behavior, and that is what Mr. Salmón is here trying to expose. Doctora Zaconeta, at the end of the play behaves as others want her to behave. She wants to be loved and accepted and, therefore, she must role play.

The action takes place in la Doctora Zaconeta's living room, a middle class setting: ". . . elegant, it has two

doors, one on each side of the stage, and a large window upstage through which we can see a garden. In the room there is a large radio and record player set. The furniture is elegant and the room is well kept."[22]

The dramatic structure follows a linear logic. In the first act, the two lovers have a problem defining their social roles. Alvarito wants Marysol to be a docile home maker; she protests. In the second act, urged on by her father and Aunt Clarines, in addition to Alvarito's ultimatum, Marysol appears to change and is found knitting socks. She is seriously seeking Alvarito's acceptance, and going through a seeming reversal. The outcome or resolution of the play is not clear. After having been an active politician, will Marysol be able to live her life as a homemaker? Alvarito assumes she will and decides to marry her. Marysol, herself, does not make any pronouncements. She simply smiles and one is left with the sense that the play may be open ended.

Redencion (Redemption) a drama in four acts, also written in 1950, takes place on the Island of Coati, located in Lake Titicaca. This is the island where in past years political dissidents were actually imprisoned. The action of the play takes place mainly in a rustic classroom with a thatched roof and stone seating areas. Salmón describes the environment as a prison for young delinquents and adult politicians.

As the play starts, young inmates are seen wearing old, dirty, dilapidated clothing. The prison Director is shouting that he will go crazy because nobody obeys his orders. A young man nicknamed "Kena-Kena" faints because he has not eaten in two days. The others are ordered to throw him in the lake to wake him up. It is revealed later that the boys only wet the boy and pretended that they had thrown him in. They laugh, happy to have outsmarted the Director. The play addresses first, the cruel treatment given these young boys and their response to it, and later, their rehabilitation or redemption through the understanding and humane treatment given to them by a new "teacher."

Even though the play deals with a serious subject, there is much humor. For example, the students are hungry, yet jokingly ask a heavily built boy to give them his leg so they can "cook a juicy steak."[23] The Director, who is a Captain, calls them sarcastically "angels." In a very comical scene he attempts to teach them to read (act 1, scene 4), and no one pays attention. The young boys make inside jokes about the shapes of the various vowels. At this point, a new teacher, Professor, arrives with new plans to teach these young men. The Director warns the newcomer not to be fooled. He says that he also came with good intentions but these "savages" stole his soul and made him "a brute." Now, he says: ". . . they also want to steal my body since my health can no longer bear it."[24]

Salmón seems to take no sides in this play. He shows the cruelty of both the Captain, the captor, and the

students, the captives. For example, in act 1, scene 6, the Captain says to the Professor: "I swore to defend my profession because I believe it to be honorable. To protect, and defend society is as helpful as writing books."[25] He explains that in this place he too is deprived of liberty. He has to endure wind, cold and the ever present sound of the waves against the rocks, a sound which tortures him.

He would not mind the work, if people would understand that dealing with these delinquents is worse than a curse to him. He must also live away from his family which he misses very much, and to add to his misery, the boys have stolen his family pictures.

The Professor tells him that if he would listen to others, he would realize that his troubles are not as grave as theirs. The boys can be violent and get into bloody fights but the teacher is not frightened. At the start of the second act, a student nicknamed "The Terrible" plans to make the Professor more crazy than the Director. As the teacher enters, one of the young men trips him and he falls down; he gets up, goes out and comes in again, while students laugh. He is tripped once more and again falls down; goes out for a second time and on the third try, while on the floor, smilingly asks them if they are tired. He explains that somebody has to get tired first. On the fourth try he makes it to the front of the class and greets them.

He now realizes that one of them has stolen his watch. He asks them to teach him how they "picked" his watch and to talk to him like a friend. One of the students tells him about his experiences as a thief. The Captain comes in and recommends punishment for the students. Instead, the teacher talks to them about hate, loyalty and cowardice. He tells them that in this place everyone dislikes each other and walks alone with his pain. "Terrible" tells the teacher that nothing will change them; they are what they are and they are marked for life.

Salmón attempts to show the improbability of rehabilitation in jails with such cruel and inhuman environments. For example, at the end of act 2, scene 5, the teacher is punched by the students while he sits down without defending himself. The students throw the blackboard to the floor and run out of the room. However, in the next scene, Kena-Kena, impressed by the teacher's behavior, returns to ask him for help. He wants to learn to write, so he can send a letter to his mother who is in the hospital. Although this scene seems melodramatic and sentimental, the point is made that the teacher's gentle (or passive) behavior has gained at least one follower.

Next, Salmón turns to a melodramatic pattern, filled with sentimentality. Two other students come in, they want him to remain as their teacher. In act 2, scene 9, Terrible comes in and the teacher asks him to fight in private, without onlookers. The student accepts and is beaten by the Professor. Terrible now respects the teacher and reveals to

him a large scar on his face, which he always hides with a cloth. It is a scar from a burn which he received when he was very young. His stepfather wanted to beat his mother and when Terrible tried to stop him, a pot of boiling water fell on him, burning one side of his face. Since his face is so frightful, he could not get a decent job and had to turn to crime. The Professor tells him not to hide his scar again.

> There are some beautiful looking people who have an infected soul, while there are others who do not have beautiful features but project or radiate goodness . . . The human mirror is not exterior, it comes out from within. You must change.[26]

At the end of this scene Terrible smiles for the first time.

In the third act, the same room begins to show signs of progress. On the walls there are maps, drawings and other projects made by the students. The place looks like a classroom. Everyone seems to have changed for the better. Terrible is combed and shaven. His face is no longer covered by the piece of old cloth. Each student has some chore, such as sewing, dusting, etc. They still have some minor vices, such as stealing cigarette butts, but their behavior is more humorous and less cruel. For example, Ojitos, one of the students, hides a lit cigarette butt in his mouth which makes him grimace; he pretends to be sick.

In act 3, scene 12, the teacher asks the students to write a letter to someone they trust. He tells them: "In life one must have one person to trust . . . you cannot shut yourself in."[27] They start to trust each other more. In

this same act, the teacher converts the Torreon, a site of punishment, into a sports area. "Instead of a place of fear, we now have a sports arena," he tells the Governor, who comes to inspect the place.[28] The Governor seems also involved in the change for he has his wife write letters to one of the inmates who does not have friends or relatives.

The fourth and final act takes place in the same setting but the environment seems more pleasant. There are colorful pictures on the walls and some small sculptures created by the boys. Through a window we can see uniformed boys singing a patriotic song while the flag is being raised. There is the sound of bells. The young boys are now "ready to go out into society, like good men."[29] They are rehabilitated. Nina-Nina, one of the ex-thieves, for instance, returns the Director's photographs he had stolen. We also learn that this group of boys has become the camp's soccer champions.

Before leaving, the boys line up and present the teacher with wild flowers they had gathered in the camp. Perhaps, Salmón meant them to be a symbol of the young students' own wildness, now reshaped into a socially accepted behavior. Terrible tries to give a speech of thanks and breaks up, crying; all he can say is: "Thank you, Sir."[30] Each of the students embraces the teacher and is very emotional. The Governor has arranged that these students are guaranteed to be treated without suspicion. Their progress now is up to them. Nina-Nina, one of the most verbal says: "Yes, my Captain, we have changed."[31]

The boys leave singing a telling song which says: "We must fight to win and get an exemplary future."[32]

As the first group leaves, another group of young delinquents enters. Their expressions are a mirror reflection of the first groups of act 1. They make a mess of the classroom. The play has a circular structure; the action is the same as act 1. When the teacher enters to collect his books, one of the boys trips him and he falls. The teacher gets up and looks at the boys; he decides to stay on. (In act 3, it has been revealed that he is a political prisoner and has been given his freedom for his work with the students). At the end of act 4, the Professor tells the Governor that he realizes now that his place is teaching these young men to become better citizens. He asks only for room and board as payment for his work. The Governor says to him: "This seems like a dream," and the Professor answers: "We all dream. We only need courage and will power to convert our dreams into reality."[33]

The play ends with the voices of the freed boys singing their song of triumph. The playwright seems to be urging the middle class, represented by the teacher, to help the helpless and needy, who often cover over their weakness and insecurity with a facade of toughness and cruelty. As usual, Salmón's message is clear in this, one of Salmón's most positively concluded plays.

While Conde Huyo Street, as discussed earlier, contains a sense of the pessimism and hopelessness of the lower, poorer classes, this play offers the possibility for

change or redemption of the "evil doers," or delinquents, who have been driven to commit crimes by poverty and lack of guidance. The Professor recognizes his true calling and obligation to social duty within the confines of his prison camp. In this camp, he deals with human problems directly without the interference of the bureaucracy which political life often brings to the fore.

The characters in this play are as follows: The Governor, Captain and Director of the Island of Coati who represent the system or the rulers of this society. (The same character is called by these three different names). Towards the end of the play, he does become more committed to the students' rehabilitation. The Professor is a political prisoner, who is also a humanist. He truly wants to help and contribute to the betterment of this society. He allows himself to be abused by the young men in order to win them over. He is a Christ-like figure in the play. Kayita is a delinquent who is afraid of being punished and is always on guard. Ojitos (small eyes) who claims to have poor eyesight, as his nickname implies, is always aware of what is going on and makes gestures and funny remarks in response to what he sees. He is often in trouble because of his sense of humor and his sarcastic remarks. For example, when Kena-Kena faints, he remarks that his movements while fainting were those of a goal keeper (who often falls down in an effort to block the ball). He says Kena-Kena may be rehearsing to be a goalkeeper. Kena-Kena is the weakest physically; he faints from hunger, but he is also quite

verbal. What he lacks in physical strength, he overcomes with his quick verbal responses. Terrible, as his nickname implies, is the worst of the trouble makers. However, it is revealed that his insecurity stems mainly from his physical deformity (his burnt face). He has been hurt both physically and emotionally because of his badly scarred face. His character evolves the most. At the end of the play, it is Terrible who attempts to be the spokesman for the group and gives a Speech of Thanks to the Professor. In the last act, many other young men enter as new inmates, among them Piojito and El 14, who steal some of the classroom objects. El Duro (The Tough One) is a new Terrible. These and the other young men represent the many other young delinquents who have been sent to this Island of punishment. Since the Professor has achieved positive results with the first group, the play gives hope for the new group, and the group after that.

The setting is compact; the action takes place in a classroom which changes according to the progress shown by the students. As the students behave better and become more interested in changing their anti-social behavior, the classroom becomes brighter and more colorful, containing paintings and sculptures created by the students. Salmón wants the setting to reflect the emotional development and change of the students, as well as that of the "Professor" or teacher.

Only at the end of the play is there some action outside a classroom window. The action symbolizes victory

and celebration; students stand as the flag is raised and the sound of bells is heard. The sound of the bells underscores the victory of the original group of students in obtaining their freedom and gaining self-esteem and sense of honor. The play ends with the sound of the students' voices singing a song which expresses the need to fight or struggle "for a better or exemplary future for the race."[34] As the title of the play suggests, these students are redeemed.

Salmón seems to propose that in correctional institutions there must be someone who is capable of giving hope and envisioning a better, more valuable future for the prisoners. Even the "tougher" or Terrible youngster can be rehabilitated. Most correctional institutions in Bolivia do not show positive results, and the play may be suggesting that the fault lies with the administrators of such places, who lack understanding of their inmates. Once again, Salmón is saying that the unlawful behavior of these characters is due to an unfair social structure. In other words, the behavior of these delinquents is created by poverty and injustice.

Mi Compadre, El Ministro (My Godfather, The Minister), written in 1952, is a one act Comedia Criolla (a Folk Comedy). As usual for Salmón, he writes many short scenes--twenty-four, very short scenes--for this play. The Minister's visit to Eufronio's home is the catalyst for the play's action because Eufronio wants to impress him. He wants a promotion. The simple plot is fast paced and very

humorous. The entire action takes place in the kitchen and even though the Minister has arrived, he is in the living room off-stage and does not come on stage until the last scene. Though there is very little to buy in the market at this time, Catalina, the lady of the house, is desperate to impress the Minister and to give him special treats. This leads to a comical first scene. Catalina raises her voice to the cook and the cook starts crying loudly, calling for God's help. Catalina leaves, holding her head. Faustina, the cook, will cook what she has decided to cook and not what her employer had indicated. As Salmón knows, most ladies of the Bolivian middle class have domestic help and do not cook themselves; they often have to adjust to the mood of the hired help, as Catalina finds herself doing.

When Eufronio, the host, comes into the kitchen and is alone with the cook, he often pinches her and makes insinuating remarks, such as "you bother my tranquil temperament,"[35] meaning that she excites him. Faustina is the sounding board for her employers. Sarcastically, Faustina agrees with Catalina that Eufronio is very rigid and strict, which is the antithesis of his behaviour when he is in the kitchen with the cook.

To add to the anxiety of the hosts, the Indian who carries the food from the market gets drunk and takes away all the products bought for the dinner. Manucho, an admirer of Faustina and a transit policeman, happens to come visiting and is asked to go look for the "stolen goods." In a humorous manner, he goes looking for the thief, walking

very slowly and singing a popular song. He is in no hurry to find the thief.

Soon, Faustina's husband, Justo, comes home after having been away for "days." He claims he was in jail because of a traffic accident (he is a bus driver) but the cook does not believe him. He has returned that particular day, he says, to help with the activities, but the first thing he does is ask if there are any cocktails. It is obvious he has been drinking. Salmón seems to be pointing out, in a comic manner, normal, typical behavior of some hired help in Bolivia.

On learning that the food has been stolen, Catalina comes into the kitchen and starts yelling and crying loudly. Her husband follows her and asks her to keep quiet for the Minister must be thinking she is having an attack. Salmón makes us aware of how highly regarded members of the government are. Everyone in the household is overwhelmed by the Minister's visit.

When Manucho comes back without the thief, Justo gets jealous because he believes his wife is flirting with him and he hits her on the head. She falls to the floor, screaming that he is killing her. To defend her, Manucho hits her husband. Faustina gets up and instead of thanking Manucho, insults him and tells him that they are from a higher class, and he should not dare touch her husband. When I asked Salmón about this behavior, he--as well as others--mentioned that this is typical of behavior by a <u>chola</u> wife when her husband is attacked. Regardless of the

situation, she will defend her husband physically. This scene is altogether farcical (scene 17). Catalina, hearing the commotion, enters the kitchen and blames Faustina for the melee. Faustina quits and insults Catalina. The scene ends with the boss crying and the cook leaving and shouting that she will submit a complaint to the Cooks' Union.

Salmón, at this point (scene 18) may be commenting on the newly acquired unionization of domestic help. Years before this play was written, domestic help was treated poorly; some worked only for room and board and were expected to work day and night. About the time this play was written, 1952, various groups of workers, domestic help and others, started to unionize.

In scene 20, after having been insulted by Faustina and her husband, Catalina is crying but her husband refuses to confront the cook's husband. His excuse is that he does not want to dirty his hands hitting him since he knows that drivers are always covered with oil. Instead, he puts on a smock and attempts to read a recipe book in order to cook some dish for his guest. The difference in the behavior of the two husbands is pointed up by Salmón. The driver defends his wife with pride and tries to protect her from the insults of the lady of the house, while the lady's husband tries to appease his wife so as not to have trouble with his guest. The host must get along with the social amenities, whatever the circumstances because the Minister may give him a better job. His action, of course, is seen

as weakness by his wife, Catalina. She asks herself: "What kind of man do I have for a husband?"[36]

In the final scene (scene 24), the Minister comes into the kitchen. He had been listening to the goings on and considers Eufronio foolish; he fires him from his position. He takes a pot and places it on Eufronio's head. Catalina, unlike her husband, tries to defend Eufronio and in turn takes a basket and covers the Minister's head. She acts on impulse and follows through with an honest reaction, regardless of the consequences. The scene is farcical and to make it more so, in an ironic twist, realizing his mistake, the "thief" brings back the food he "stole." The previous actions now appear ridiculous.

The aim of the playwright seems to be to show the absurdity of the middle class life-style. The middle class couple is helpless without the domestic help, and their values are distorted. They put too much emphasis on appearances, wishing to be accepted by more powerful figures, such as the Minister. All of Eufronio's actions were absurd; they served no purpose. The Minister does not recognize his efforts to please him, firing him for being an incompetent and foolish host. The stolen food, which resulted in so many problems, appears after it is no longer needed. It is now too late to apologize to the Minister. However, Catalina, having thrown the basket over the Minister's head, feels liberated from the hypocrisy of catering to someone in power. In her own way, she has rebelled against the customary social mores. The play is

filled with much activity and is fast paced; it is a farce, with the usual absurd and exaggerated physical business and behavior of the characters.

The entire action of the play takes place in a kitchen with two doors: one to the rear and the other to one of the sides. Through these doors, characters exit and enter with the great speed and frequency of farce. The kitchen has many pots, pans and other utensils. On a table there are oranges "ready to be squeezed" next to some glasses. As the play starts, the maid is eating an orange while the lady of the house gives her instructions for the day's activities. Every object adds to build the environment and may be later used farcically. The dialogue reveals that the Minister has been invited to lunch. The action takes place in a few hours and in this one room.

There are seven characters. Catalina is the lady of the house who tries first to be a gracious hostess, but ends fighting with the cook and defending her husband, hitting her guest, the Minister, with a basket. Faustina is the boisterous cook who does not follow any of her employer's orders and quits. Sebastita is a young girl who attempts to help the cook. Manucho is a traffic policeman who comes from peasant stock and, like many other policemen, does not speak Spanish well. He symbolizes the inefficiency of the police, failing to catch the person who "stole" the food. Eufronio is Catalina's husband who wants to impress his guest, the Minister. He turns out to be a coward and a fool. Justo is Faustina's drunken husband who, on hearing

of the day's festivities comes to partake of the drinks. Changador is the bundle carrier who brings in and then by mistake takes back the food needed for the lunch, destroying the day's planned celebration. Finally, the Minister, the guest who makes an appearance at the end of the play is caught in the middle of the domestic quarrel and catches the brunt of Catalina's anger. He fires Eufronio on the spot. Salmón is farcicaly employing his characters to point up the inter-personal relationships between employers and employees.

This play is a one-act comedy which has twenty-four scenes. In Salmón's customary dramatic style, the scenes are again very short. Every time a character enters, there is a new numbered scene. In fact, some of the scenes are only three lines long. The Escena Final (Final Scene) has only one line. The bundle carrier brings back the food he has taken by mistake and announces: "Here is the food," the final line of the play.

Since the main action of the play is simply to prepare the lunch for the Minister and the dramatic structure follows the development logically, Salmón's fragmentary scenes must flow more quickly in the playing than the reading. The characters' activities mount towards a crescendo under pressure of the impending lunch hour. Nevertheless, the play is still great fun to read and one can imagine how much amusement it must bring to audiences. In this comedy, which may be considered a farce, Salmón cleverly mocks the hypocritical and absurd behavior of the

middle class as represented by Catalina and Eufronio, the couple who invite the Minister to lunch.

In Los Hijos del Alcohol (The Sons of Alcohol), written in 1950, Salmón depicts the ravages caused by alcohol. Once again, at the beginning of the play, in scene 1, the playwright introduces poor, downtrodden characters who, in this instance, are alcoholics. Men of all ages and women with children enter and leave bars set on both sides of the stage. To show the degree of this society's degeneration, Salmón presents poor people stating that they are spending their last cents on drink. A mother, holding two small children, goes into the main bar named Copita and begs for a drink. Likewise, a bundle carrier and two beggars, after having acquired some money, enter the same bar and spend their money, drinking. These activities take place in the first six scenes with many of the characters given one, or two lines of dialogue; enough to get their drink.

In the seventh scene, Dr. Ramirez, a physician who is campaigning to close the bars, enters the "Copita" bar and has a dialogue with Quiroga, the bar owner. He tells him that alcoholism is making the society weak. To develop this idea, he says: "As a consequence of alcoholic fathers who cannot hold a job, the sons have to quit school, so that they can start to work and provide for the family."[37] Quiroga had been Dr. Ramirez's classmate but had to drop out of high school because his father was an alcoholic. Salmón

implies that Quiroga might also have become a professional, if given the chance. At this point, Saluca, Quiroga's wife, interrupts. She wants to bribe Dr. Ramirez to make him stop his campaign against drinking. The doctor refuses and the couple plan to ask a member of The House of Representatives to intercede on their behalf. The politician owes them a lot of money, which they had given him to promote his election. Act 1 ends on this note.

The second act takes place in the same bar, on the next day. The place looks like a liquor store; tables and chairs have been stacked in a corner and they are only selling bottles of Pisco, a cheap alcoholic beverage made in Bolivia. Two people are sitting on a bench against a wall. In the narrow alley, to the side of this store, there are two beggars: a blind man and a lame one. The lame one receives a hand-out and goes to the liquor store, followed by the other man. In the store, we discover that both of them were faking their disabilities. Another peasant, who works as a bundle carrier also comes in for a drink. Chingulapis, is yet another type of drunk, described as a poet who is a university graduate. He enters wearing no shirt and his dark skin can be seen through a thin jacket he is wearing. The poet describes himself as an "intelligent alcoholic" meaning that even though he drinks, he can still think, remember and write. The others drink to forget. By introducing this character, Salmón seems to be trying to demonstrate that alcoholism is affecting all social circles in this city, including "intellectuals."

In the same act, Dr. Pacheco, the corrupt politician, comes in to inform Saluca that he has stopped Dr. Ramirez' project. The bar will not be closed and Dr. Ramirez will lose his job with the Health Department. Dr. Pacheco also mentions that he is looking for "killer types" to join him because he believes he will have to win the coming election by force.

The third act takes place in a clinic. It is a rainy evening and there is lightning and thunder. As the lights go up we see that things are packed and ready to be moved out. Dr. Ramirez's clinic will be closed due to bankruptcy. He wanted to rehabilitate alcoholics but now sees that most people are not interested. There are only six patients and these have been picked up off the streets. One of the patients, Salinas, comes in to be discharged, but when left alone, he sees a bottle of "pure alcohol," and after much trepidation, opens it and drinks it. This action provokes an attack; he writhes on the floor, his mouth foaming, while the lightning and thunder continue. In a directorial note, Salmón writes that Nature reflects the man's feelings.[38] The playwright is attempting to use audio and visual elements theatrically with the storm paralleling the feelings and physical state of the drunk.

Dr. Ramirez finds the grotesque Salinas and places him on a couch, calling the nurses to take the patient away to his room. Near the end of the play, in the sixth scene of act 3, Dr. Ramirez writes an article which is published in one of the newspapers. In the article, he insists that

placing alcoholics in jail does not solve any problem because these alcoholics are ill and need help. He states that: "To cure this illness the city needs the cooperation of all: doctors, intellectuals, businessmen, each one helping in his own way.:"[39]

Because such articles would hurt Quiroga's business, Pacheco and Quiroga come to Dr. Ramirez's clinic to try to bribe him. They ask the doctor how much money he would require to keep silent about the liquor business. The Doctor answers: "It will cost my life."[40] Quiroga threatens to kill him and Pacheco accuses him of being a traitor to the nation.

In a last attempt to make the men realize the error of their ways Dr. Ramirez asks Martha, a co-worker, to bring in the patients. The patients are brought in and their ailments are vividly described: a man enters with paralyzed arms, purple nose, face and lips, and is trembling; he cannot stand or sit still. A second patient drags one of his feet and drools making guttural sounds when attempting to speak; next, Martha brings the sick child. He has an overgrown head which is shaved, and salivates, hanging his head like a doll's, without control. The child is Quiroga's son and Dr. Ramirez introduces him to his child. He tells him: "This is what your son inherited from your father."[41] Quiroga's father had died from alcoholism. It is too late to cure the boy, but in a climactic moment, Quiroga embraces his son and says: I want a healthy child. I gave poison to drink and destiny has poisoned me."[42] These are the last

words of the play. Almost, as in a morality play, Quiroga recognizes his sin and accepts his punishment.

Some of the events in the play are melodramatic. There are quick reversals, such as Quiroga's change, and much sentimentality, which Salmón employs to hold the audience's attention. The plot is simple, direct, and the action is realistic. Salmón claims he uses realism here so that the majority of the people may understand the message.[43] Like Ibsen's work in Ghosts where Osvald pays for his father's sins, here Quiroga's child inherits and suffers the consequences of his grandfather's alcoholism. Unlike most of Salmón's plays, however, this play has little humor in it. He seems to want to impress upon the audience the seriousness of alcoholism in this society. Many people in Bolivia consume great quantities of alcoholic beverages at social gatherings; many drunks are seen on the streets, in the poor sections of the cities. Drunkenness is present in all social strata but appears to be more prevalent in the poor only because the poor do not disguise or hide their drinking as others do. There is still the popular notion that "if you are a man, you can hold your liquor." Therefore, "a man" drinks quite a lot. Salmón's attempt to address this problem was very much needed. Unfortunately, the problem still exists today, some forty years after he wrote this play.

The first act occurs at night, and again, in a poor area of the city. The street has several bars lit by brightly colored neon signs. Most of the action is

concentrated in La Copita bar which has red lights and is at stage left. The red color is used stereotypically, as in "red light districts." There is much activity: people come in and go out of the bars. On the street, some drunks have a quarrel and one cuts the face of another; there is a lot of yelling. A man hits his wife; both are drunk. In La Copita some intoxicated people are barely able to walk. Saluca, the Copita's bartender holds a sick child in her arms and yells for quiet.

The rest of the action of act 1 takes place in La Copita (The Small Glass), but in contrast to this violent and noisy setting, act 2 takes place entirely in La Copita, on the next day when it functions as a daytime liquor store with the tables and chairs stacked against the side walls. Most of the action is around the counter, with people coming to buy liquor. This act is less noisy and is peopled by the main characters discussing the play's conflict.

The setting of act 3 is the admission office of a clinic which is about to be closed. Boxes, objects, papers are stacked, ready to be moved out. There is a desk with bottles, one of them containing pure alcohol used as a disinfectant. It is early evening; it is raining, and there is lightning and the sound of thunder. These sound effects seem to foreshadow future dramatic events. The sound of thunder and the lightning seem to underscore the action. In this play, more than in any of the others analyzed, Salmón attempts to use light and sound as part of the dramatic action. In the first act, the neon lights emphasize the

active goings on at night, while in the third act the thunder and lightning punctuate the painful and shocking circumstances of the patients in the clinic.

There are six characters who are directly involved with the action of the play: Dr. Ramirez is the Health Department official who tries to rehabilitate the alcoholic patients, attempts to make the populace aware of the consequences of alcoholism, and tries to get the government to close the bars. Quiroga and Saluca are the couple who own La Copita bar. They bribe those in authority so they can keep their bar open. They have a child who is retarded and seriously ill; this child, who remains nameless, is the victim who inherits his grandfather's illness caused by alcoholism. Chungulapis is a poet who has surrendered to alcohol. He is a character who is introduced to show or represent those who were more fortunate and were able to get an education yet nevertheless become alcoholics due to some frustration. Pacheco represents the corrupt politician who not only profits from bribes, but also uses the poor for "dirty business." Three nameless adults, alcoholic patients, add to the dramatic effects of the third act. These patients along with Quiroga's child are the "children of alcohol," the basis of the title of the play. Many other characters come in and go out of the bars, fight in the street, and add to the atmosphere and environment.

The first act has nine scenes. It both explains and describes the situation, presenting the various types of characters who use alcohol as a panacea, and showing those

who reap profit from the situation. The act introduces the man who attempts to rehabilitate this society. The second act has eleven scenes. Sick characters are introduced to show the consequences of alcohol; the corrupt politician is revealed who adds to the decadence of this society. The third act has ten scenes demonstrating how Dr. Ramirez's effort to rehabilitate alcoholics and close the bars have failed due to the corrupt politician's intervention and the greed of the alcohol profiteers. However, since the effects of alcohol directly affect Quironga's son, he finally recognizes the evil consequences and repents in a climactic moment at the end of the play. The play, therefore, ends on a note of hope; there is an indication that at least this bar owner will not continue "poisoning" people.

Salmón has attempted to give his views on social injustice in Bolivia through the characters of his plays. The period between 1944 to 1952 is rightfully called his Social Protest period. He has taken up specific problems that he found in his society and dealt with them, allowing some characters to protest and voice possible solutions. Salmón is a positive man who uses his creativity and talent constructively making audiences aware of their power to change for the better. To achieve this aim he uses simple language and simple, but dramatic situations which can be readily identified by his audiences. However, even though his aim is to protest against social injustice, he does not forget that audiences come to be entertained. He avoids,

for the most part, being didactic and uses colloquial language and much humor in situations which can be easily understood by all. He presents such situations mostly in a realistic manner, using melodrama and occasionally farce.

CHAPTER FIVE

HISTORY PLAYS

After the success of his social realistic plays which brought so many of the people to see his theatre productions, Raúl Salmón decided to write history plays which would instruct or make the "people" aware of the country's history. Earlier, in 1944 he had written Busch, Hero and Victim, a play in three acts based on German Busch's presidency. However, at that time he was still preoccupied with "taking the public out of the movie houses and bringing them into the living theatre,"[1] and he depended on social realistic plays for that. Therefore, he did not write any more plays based in history because he was not sure that this genre would prove popular. Eight years later, however, having met his stated objective, he decided to concentrate on historic characters which he could relate to his social consciousness. It appears that Mr. Salmón understood then what Herbert Lindenberger reported some twenty three years later (1975), namely, that historical drama "is an ideal medium for the understanding of politics."[2]

Salmón started with Viva Belzu, a history play in four Acts. President Manuel Isidoro Belzu is the first President who was popular with the lower classes. They called him "Father Belzu." It is understandable therefore, that Mr. Salmón decided to write a play based on his Presidency without turning away from social justice. In fact, when he

began to write history plays he said that he "wanted to lead the public toward new forms of expression without overlooking the social question."[3]

Although most critics consider Raúl Salmón's history play period to have started in 1952, as mentioned previously, in 1944 he did write Busch, a play which represents an interesting study of the character of German Busch, a popular Bolivian President. The play also provides insight into the nature of a hero who is also a victim, as the title of the play indicates. Salmón did write this play much earlier than his other history plays, but it seems to have planted the seeds for the history plays to come later. Following my format I will study the themes, structure, setting and characters of the plays. First, however, I shall give a brief synopsis of the historical character's work and standing in Bolivian history needed for further background and understanding of the events on which Salmón based his plays.

German Busch was born in 1904 in Santa Cruz, a Northern city in Bolivia. He had a German father and a Bolivian mother. He was an officer in the army and became the hero of the Chaco Boreal War fought against Paraguay (1932-1935). This was one of Bolivia's biggest wars; its motive was to settle the boundaries of the Chaco with Paraguay. At the time Bolivia had less than three million inhabitants; 52,397 Bolivians were killed in action and 21,000 were taken as prisoners of war. Even though Bolivia lost the war "Busch's actions in the war became legend."[4]

He is reputed to have been a fearless officer who led some battles to victory.

After the war, Busch was hailed as a hero and became the idol not only of young officers but of the populace at large. In 1936 he became Chief of State in David Toro's government, and when the workers expressed dissatisfaction with the Toro government he resigned to show his support. Due to the high rate of inflation that occurred after the Chaco War people were seeking out new ideas in order to better their living standard. A coalition of socialists and "republicans" named Busch as their leader.

In July 13, 1937 Busch sent an emissary to President Toro asking him to resign. Toro, realizing his position was precarious, resigned and took asylum in the Chilean embassy. In this manner "Busch without a gun shot" became the new President at the age of thirty two.[5] He is described as a good looking man: "he had light hair, a strong forehead and light eyes with a child-like expression . . . the expression of awe that children have when they encounter new experiences."[6] At the same time he was "a man full of glory and possessor of a personal magnetism which great leaders have."[7] Foremost, however, he was a military man, who lacked political experience and while he favored the working class, his cabinet belonged to the upper class. From the start, therefore, his government was afloat with paradoxes which Fellmann Velarde, a historian, believes projected a "tragic sign . . . Busch seemed a prisoner of those who surrounded him."[8] Nevertheless, in November 1937, five

months after he took the Presidential oath, he proposed elections for March of the following year and in 1938, he easily won the election.

During Busch's Presidency many interesting events took place. The Railroad Construction Treaty between Brazil and Bolivia was signed which resulted in the petroleum exploit between the two countries. Immigration became available for people coming from Europe to escape Hitler's armies. August 2 was declared as The Day of the Indian. He proposed to Congress to legislate Social Welfare Acts. To help Bolivia out of its economic dilemma, in April 1939, he signed a treaty which obliged the mine barons to report their profits from mineral sales to the State. In turn the Government would give back to them what it considered reasonable and the remainder would be invested within the country. In this way he might alleviate the housing problem and create jobs. Busch felt that Bolivia could grow only if the money from mining profits would be invested in the country and not be removed to Europe and North America, as was the custom.[9] Needless to say, his action did not sit well with the mining company owners and the President feared retaliation. Many politicians would be only too willing to turn against him, if they were promised money for their help in overthrowing his government. Therefore, to take matters in hand and to control various agencies, he declared himself a dictator in April 1939. It is believed that his frustration in not being able to help the lower classes led to his shooting himself in his study on the morning of August 25, 1939. At

the time, two of his aides were with him. These two men, Goytia and Carmona, reported that he shot himself in their presence.

This event shocked the nation and the working classes never believed that he had committed suicide. According to José Fellmann Velarde, the accounts of President Busch's death remain a mystery.[10] With his death, the working classes became discouraged; they felt they could not count on another statesman likely to be as understanding of their plight as this President. According to Charles Arnade, "Busch became the precursor of the Great Revolution."[11] The Great Revolution resulted in the nationalization of the mines and the expropriation of farms from their owners with the land being given back to the Indians in 1952.

Busch, Hero and Victim begins at the time when President Busch decides to become a dictator and the tin barons control the mining profits. The Chaco War has already been lost, inflation is high and many people are out of work. The action in the first act takes place in a meeting room of the Presidential Palace. Salmón presents this President as a religious and patriotic statesman, a man who seems obsessed with "saving the country from economic humiliation." Before the meeting starts, the President asks his Cabinet to stand and say a silent prayer for the country. He tells them to think daily of the country's needs so that they will realize what they must do. One action he proposes is the distribution of the mining profits by the State. Busch considers the tin barons unpatriotic.

They look out only for their own gains and invest their profits in Europe. The President is certain that his actions are the only correct ones, regardless of the dangers they might bring.

Minister B: Once more, I must tell His Excellency that you are taking new steps too abruptly and they may break our links with others; you must not forget that redemption of those committing these unpatriotic acts may come about slowly . . . sensibly.

Busch: You are insinuating . . .

Minister B: That you are taking too many risks. You must think of the power of those who see our work in a negative way, like a . . .

Busch (interrupts): They see my actions as going toward a dictatorship.

Minister B: Not as much as that.

Busch: Dictatorship Yes! Mr. Minister, that is the truth and we cannot hide it. When a country functions morally correct then we can afford a democratic regime but when anarchy takes over, as is the case in our country, a dictatorial action is needed. I have not taken this step to oppose the rotten European tendencies but to work to free the country from slavery. How long are we going to be servile? How long are we going to bow our heads in resignation? We have the great opportunity to work and fight!

Minister B: We must fight carefully with restrained steps Mr. President.

Busch: With restraint! Is the appetite of those who steal from our treasury restrained? Do they have a limit, those who get rich at the cost of the miners' work who get lung diseases in their mines? Aren't Hochschild, Aramayo and Patiño (the tin barons) who live abroad at the expense of the pain of our people, a group of criminals?

Minister C: We understand your patriotic feelings Excellency, but we must carry on with care. A dictatorship is exposed to many risks, which put even our lives in danger.

Busch: No doubt. I am not unaware of that but I have faith in the future. Because of today's struggle we will have the joy to see tomorrow a nation of men who know how to be strong and free.

Minister D: The President is right; the people's destiny is in our hands and we must be loyal and honest with them.[12]

In the play, one of the first actions President Busch undertakes is to declare that the State will control how the mining companies' profits will be utilized. In scene 3 of the first act Salmón deals with this decree.

Busch: To die or to live. I know. We shall fight against one and all. Here is a historic revolutionary step which I must announce to you: The minerals extracted from the soil contain Bolivia's riches yet we Bolivians do not benefit from them. These minerals are sold and the money is spent in North America and Europe. We shall start a system whereby we shall demand that the State control the profits from the sales and invest it in Bolivia, therefore, this money will be utilized to fight the economic crisis. The Government will give shares to the mine owners, according to their needs . . . . From now on it will not be the mining company who will distribute the wealth, but the State.

Everyone: What! How!

Minister A: Against the mining companies?

Minister B: To fight against such strength?

Minister C: Impossible!

Busch: We will do it, or I'll do it alone!

All: No. No!

Busch: Our duty demands that we define ourselves in this manner. I repeat: It will take place and tomorrow June 7, it will be made known to the general public. Any interference which attempts to stop this action will be blocked severely. We will shoot those who oppose us, if need be. It will not be a crime to save the nation with bloodshed. You may go now. I expect you to sign the Decree this evening. (On this note Busch exits).[13]

Everyone remains perplexed, they look at each other in wonder and there is silence as the scene ends.

As mentioned earlier, Busch's attempt to control the mining companies' profits made him known historically as a courageous President who attempted to stabilize the country's economy even when taking risks against his own welfare. Indeed, many citizens today believe that the mine owners paid one of his aides to kill him. Salmón shows that Busch was also willing to kill in order to meet his objectives.

To demonstrate this President's kinder side, the playwright describes various social services which he undertakes. In the sixth scene of the first act, Busch increases the pension of the widows of those who died in the Chaco War. In the same scene, he has a meeting with an old veteran of an earlier war and requests his secretary to write a note to the mayoralty to be sure to care for the welfare of the elder veterans. To this particular old man, he promises to give clothing and tells him to come back, if his situation does not improve. Salmón has many different

groups of people come to Busch for help in scene 6, and introduces some needed humor in the following scene.

Matty, Busch's wife comes in disguised as a widow, with a black veil covering her face and asks the President to "order husbands to comply with their matrimonial acts."[14] She reveals her identity, when an aide attempts to throw her out of the room. In this scene a hint of the couple's relationship is given when the President laughingly mentions that his wife is "always in a good humor" enlivening his life. In fact, Matty is presented as a wife preoccupied with her husband's well being. After she reveals her identity she says: "Forgive me gentlemen, if I have made a mistake. I only wanted to entertain my worried husband."[15] This statement causes all to laugh, including the President.

In scene 8 of act 1 Salmón argues the need for redemption. This theme is also found in his social realistic play, Redemption. In Busch there is the following dialogue:

> Busch: There are so many problems to care for . . . if only the hundreds of wealthy people would see the problems of the needy and give small amounts of money to build hospitals, and low income housing, these unnourished and sick people would become useful workers.
>
> Matty: Poor dreamer, poor romantic.
>
> Busch: I see the needs of the people.
>
> Matty: And the people see in you their redeemer.
>
> Busch: Yes. This country must be redeemed! It must become a nation without chains.[16]

Salmón states repeatedly that people's attitudes and behavior can be redeemed, if given the chance. According to

him, opportunity for redemption may occur economically, the same notion stated in Redemption. However, Busch believes that some of the politicians are beyond any possibility of change. In scene 9 of this same act, Busch states that: "the history of Bolivia is a history of traitors . . . there is always a villainous traitor among the politicians."[17] In the final scene (scene 10) of act 1, Busch adds that "Bolivia is like a single mother with bastard children."[18] He sees himself as its savior. At the end of the first act the following dialogue takes place:

> Busch: My duty as a soldier tells me that I must save the country and as a man of faith I must struggle to see my hopes for the country realized. I shall give the people its rights or I shall end my life before this country prostitutes itself!
>
> Matty: (Shouts) German![19]

On this line the curtain descends quickly. Salmón here is foreshadowing Busch's suicide, building this expectation for the audience. After all, Bolivian audiences knew how Busch's life ended and Salmón reminds them of what is to come.

The second act takes place in the living room of President Busch's private home. The first scene begins at 7 A.M., with Busch signing documents at his desk. His wife, Matty enters and tells him that he should not stay up all night. He answers that Bolivia demands his struggle and he apologizes for not thinking of her and his children. Salmón is pointing out that this man's first priority is his responsibilities as a statesman; his family comes second.

Later, in scene 4, Busch wants to communicate with the people directly and asks his guards to leave. He says that he is not a king; he is a plain citizen and he will walk to the Palace, he will not be driven in a luxurious car surrounded by guards. He comments: "All this pomposity and honors given me while the country is in misery."[20] Here, the character empathizes with the common folk, dedicating himself to better the country's lot even though those around him, such as his guards, do not understand his objectives, and others remain "traitors." Left alone, in scene five of this same act, he despairs, places both his hands on his head, and says: "Traitors. They do not want to understand me!"[21] This President believes that those politicians around him are not to be trusted; he feels he is surrounded by ambitious men eager to get ahead at any price. He wants people in government to sacrifice and work for the country. Mr. Salmón reveals a Busch who is fanatical in his quest to better the country's economic position. The playwright attempts to justify this President's dictatorship. He has Busch state in the first act that: "A country in anarchy needs a dictator."[22] Salmón now shows Busch's insistence on "justice for all." In scene 7 of the second act, the President has a monologue in which he reads a letter to his wife explaining how he has struggled to give the people the economic help they deserve.

> Busch: Matty, you have seen how I struggled so that my government would allow the people to regain possession of their hopes. I wanted decent and human social justice for all. I fought for it and others fought against me.

> It is clear that I am not the man for these times; my coming has been premature. I believe I am too romantic to govern in an era of tyranny and lies. I dreamt of a vigorous Bolivia and I have tried to make those illusions realities. It is impossible! Dreams are merely dreams. My work has been tarnished by the ambitions of scoundrels and before I see it destroyed I am taking my life. Let posterity know that it was nobler to die for an ideal. Take care of our sons and remind them to love this country. Yours. German.[23]

He places the letter in an envelope, seals it and picks up a revolver. At that precise moment, one of his children comes in riding a bicycle at high speed and asks him to forgive the intrusion. The child, named Orlando, wants to know if he is playing with the pistol, and asks him why he is sad. To cheer up his father, he asks him to play with him and ride on his bicycle. The President gets on the bicycle, tries to ride it and falls down. The child laughs and playfully pushes his father down. Matty enters and the following dialogue takes place:

> Busch: Matty! Kiss your son because he just did the greatest favor for you.
>
> Matty: What favor?
>
> Busch: Guess?
>
> Matty: You better tell it to me . . .
>
> Busch: Your son saved you from becoming a widow!
>
> Matty: What are you saying, German?
>
> Busch: (He picks up the letter and tears it to pieces) This letter would have explained everything to you.
>
> Matty: I don't recognize you! You know what your life is worth.
>
> Busch: My life does not belong to me any longer.

Matty: Your country, the people need you! Be strong, be strong!

Orlando: Yes father, you have to be strong!

Busch: Yes, against the traitors and for the only loyal friend: the people! I shall keep on fighting for the people![24]

At this point, act 2 ends with a "quick curtain drop."

Due to the quick reversal which Busch undergoes and his son's misunderstanding of his father's actions, this scene may be considered "melodramatic," yet it seems to work on a deeper level, perhaps because of the historical reality. Salmón juxtaposes the private life of the character with the public role he must play. Again, the statesman places his public life as his first priority. Busch is trying in this scene to justify the meaning of his existence. In addition, the themes of disloyalty and inadequacy, seemingly insurmountable economic problems, are themes to which Latin American audiences would relate readily. Raúl Salmón knows his audience and writes using the language of the common people. Busch is not presented as an eloquent statesman but as a man who expresses himself in a simple, direct manner. This President does not use the hyperbolic expressions often found in Spanish literature.

The third act also takes place in Busch's private home. In the first scene, a butler cleaning the room breaks a crystal vase and mentions to the other helper that this is an omen, something "bad" will happen; he feels uneasy this day. (This remark is an indication of the tragic event to come). Both men mention that the President's character and

behavior have changed; they feel he is now "apathetic and strange." The second butler says that this may be due to the disloyalty of his "friends" who were discovered planning revolution against him. This conversation reveals that Busch's earlier worries and his distrust of his "collaborators" were justified. In the second scene there is a social gathering at Busch's home. Salmón notes that Busch's character should alternate from happy to sad. Busch speaks first urging everyone to "enjoy and be happy." One of his aides tells him that he should try to have more of a relaxed life, like the present. Busch answers that this is "a farewell evening" and everyone should make the most of it. He also announces that he will sing a tango entitled "The Last Cup of My Life." Here Salmón reminds the audience one more time of the tragic event to come. The audience may have been eager to see how the playwright would treat this particular event. The party ends and Busch asks two of his aides to stay with him and tells them that this night his destiny will be fulfilled. In scene 5 the following dialogue takes place:

> Busch: Do you know about the anonymous letters I received? Are you aware of the leaflets that circulate within the country? Ambitious men! Yes; most of them want power to rob the nation. . . but before I see my country destroyed, I shall shoot myself!
>
> Aide: Please calm yourself, your Excellency.
>
> Major: Let us go to the study, Mr. President.
>
> Busch: Yes, let's go.[25]

They exit behind a stained glass door. The voice of the President, getting more emotional, is heard but the action cannot be seen; finally a shot is heard. In scene 6, Matty comes down the staircase into the living room to find out what happened and the butler, who had come on stage bringing drinks, tells her that Busch fired a revolver towards the wall. Busch's voice is heard saying: "They refuse to understand me." Another shot is heard. Matty says: "Jesus, Jesus." At that moment the Major opens the door of the study and the President is seen sitting behind his desk, blood running down his head, which is being held by the second aide. The Major says: "The President . . ." and does not conclude his announcement while the Final Curtain falls.[26] The actual suicide or shooting takes place off-stage in the manner of Greek tragedy. Mr. Salmón did conceive of this play as a tragedy, but the off-stage death permits ongoing speculation about whether he committed suicide or was murdered.

As the title of the play suggests, Mr. Salmón presents Busch as both hero and victim, even Christ-like. Busch sacrifices his life for "the people;" he believes he has to redeem the country; and at his "farewell party" (which may parallel Christ's Last Supper) Busch mentions that he will sing 'The Last Cup of My Life'. Finally Matty's words invoke Jesus' name. It is interesting that the playwright characterizes a military dictator in such a positive light. The character of Busch may well be Salmón's creation of a benevolent dictator, which indeed provides a paradox. Raúl

Salmón presents a character study of President German Busch as father, husband, and in more detail, a statesman. No doubt, this play provokes even more discussion about this man's fate.

The play has two sets. The playwright indicates that the first act should project a solemn mood. It takes place in the "Red Room" of the Presidential Palace which has two windows overlooking the Plaza. The room is painted in a red hue with curtains and carpet in the same red tone. The furniture is Louis XIV style and "blends" in with the room's color. There is a desk, described as "beautiful," on which stands a small national flag and many papers and portfolios. There are chairs at each side of the desk. The room is often used for official functions, and this time it is the setting for the Cabinet meeting which starts the play. This set represents President Busch's public life. The color red is often seen in Bolivia in the formal scenery of pageantry. Salmón appears to want to recreate a traditional environment.

The second act takes place in Busch's private home. The living room is downstage and a study is upstage (it is not specified which side of the stage each occupies). There is a glass door separating these two areas. The living room has a staircase which leads to an unseen second floor. The furniture is "appropriate for such a setting." There are paintings and patriotic emblems in gold frames on the walls. At an angle, in one of the corners of the room, there is a shelf with awards and framed medals, a family portrait and

pictures of small children. In the study area there is a desk near a door. On the desk there is a lit lamp, papers and other desk supplies. There are various chairs and bookshelves. Near the staircase, there is a piano played at social gatherings with a clock on it. The clock indicates it is 7:00 A.M. The attempt is to reveal Busch's private world. The third act takes place in the same set as act 2. Both sets are designed in a detailed, realistic fashion.

The characters in the play are numerous; they include those who inhabit Busch's public and private world. There are nineteen characters who have lines; others are on stage to help create the ambience. In the first five scenes of act 1 there are "some Cabinet members," who come to the meeting with Busch. There is no mention of how many are present, though five ministers do speak: Ministers A,B,C,D and E. They are stock characters and Salmón offers no individual characteristics. They represent stereotypical governmental figures used in the exchange of ideas. In scene 6 there are additional characters who ask for Busch's assistance: an Old Man, representing the aged, a Chola woman representing the half-breeds who consider Busch their hero, a Widow of a man who died in the war. These are the character types for whom this President wants to create social services. In scene 7, Matty, Busch's wife makes her first appearance. With her entrance the President's private life begins to develop, she shows a sense of humor and tries to cheer up her husband. There is also an aide who often acts as a messenger of news. In act 2, two butlers are

readying the living room for the social gathering. An Official Escort, who Busch sends away represents pompous public officials. Orlando, Busch's son, is a child of unspecified age, whose behavior reveals that he is rather young, perhaps six or seven years old. This child brings out Busch's fatherly instincts. It is with Orlando and Matty that Salmón shows the President's more vulnerable self. In act 3 there are Chapi, a pianist who comes to play at the social gathering plus guests such as Lady A, Lady B, a Major, a Colonel and other military men and ladies. These elegantly dressed personages represent the stereotypical characters who frequent these functions. Overall, the play is highly populated by societal types. The second act is the one mainly inhabited by the common folk, or "the people," the other two acts, 1 and 3, contain the "higher ups" of society who inhabit Busch's government. Thus the paradox, Busch cares for the poor yet his government is the receptacle for the higher types of society.

Viva Belzu! is a history play in four acts written in 1952. On the back cover of the Second Edition of the play published in 1988, it is noted that according to old chronicles, in the middle of the nineteenth century Manuel Isidoro Belzu stood on a balcony in Comercio Street, a block from the Palace, and read aloud Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto, presenting it as the basis for his government's program. This event cannot be verified for there is no extant evidence to support it. Historically, it is known,

that the Indians and cholos supported him and called him their Tata, which means "Father" in Aymaran dialect. This relationship is a rare one for the times, because the Indians were most often oppressed. This fact alone would make Belzu an interesting character for a Raúl Salmón play. Indeed, since 1952 Belzu is often considered the "early precursor of the Social Revolution or even a forerunner of socialism."[27]

Manuel Isidoro Belzu was born in La Paz, April 4, 1808 and died on March 27, 1865. He was a General in the Army and gained the Presidency of the Republic after leading a revolution against President Velasco on December 6, 1848. He governed for six years and eight months (December 1848-August 1855) after which he transferred the Presidency to his son-in-law. It is said that he took the Presidency to gain power and vent his hatred against ex-President José Ballivian, who had "a romantic interlude" with his wife.[28] According to Charles Arnade, Belzu was a unique phenomenon. Until 1848, military men and politicians represented the landed oligarchy and the aristocracy. "General Belzu came from the lower middle class, had Syrian blood, and was denied access to the aristocracy. He was a fierce and convincing orator but in a small group he was reserved and shy."[29]

Belzu played up to the masses and for the first time in Bolivian history, the masses became agitated and favored a President due to his oratory. The upper classes were fearful and organized many revolutions against his

government but the mob went all out in defense of their "Tata" Belzu. In 1850 the opposition tried to assassinate him but succeeded in only wounding him. While he recuperated many were exiled and jailed for their complicity in the crime. Once he became well again, however, Belzu gave amnesty to all. In 1855 he told the Bolivian Congress that: "the appearance of the voice of the masses is a social fact and is of undeniable significance."[30] Charles Arnade, however, believes that Belzu wanted to incite the masses only to revenge himself against the followers of his rival, Ballivian, who belonged to the aristocracy.[31]

Salmón in his drama presents Belzu as a man who sacrifices his life for the common man. In the play Belzu tells those who surround him: "I am of the people, I am a common man."[32] Nevertheless, Arnade claims that during the Belzu regime: "Not a single measure was adopted that would have changed the feudal and colonial structure of the Bolivian institutions."[33] After leaving the Presidency Belzu traveled in Europe. It is alleged by Arnade and Guzman, that during that time Belzu was a man of conservative ideas who "wanted to solve Bolivia's anarchy and caudillism by introducing a monarch from Europe."[34] This is contradictory to many statements in the play which indicate how he is "idolized" by the people and how he has affection for them.[35] If the play is to be believed, it would seem unlikely that Belzu would wish a monarch for the country. On the contrary, in the play, it appears that by

surrounding himself with "the people," he felt he was taking the first steps towards achieving social justice.

In any event, Manuel Isidoro Belzu was the first Bolivian President who frightened or at least worried the aristocracy because he surrounded himself with plebeians and always spoke highly of his "people," the Indians and cholos. He was killed by Mariano Melgarejo, another General, when he returned from Europe in 1865. Whether Belzu achieved any real social reforms or not, the fact remains that he did voice his preference for the "lower class" individual. His son-in-law, Jorge Cordova was overthrown by the aristocracy and replaced by one of the haughtiest aristocrats," José Maria Linares. After Belzu no other President achieved the devotion of the masses to the extent that he had. In an interview with Raúl Salmón, he said that when he wrote history plays he wanted to educate his audience by presenting personages whom he considered to have represented "dramatic phenomena" in Bolivian history.[35] For Salmón, Belzu qualified.

It is important to become aware of the dramatic effects which Salmón is trying to establish while exposing the themes of infidelity, treachery, loyalty and ambition. The first act in Viva Belzu! takes place in the "Red Salon" of the Presidential Palace, in La Paz, in the nineteenth century. The salon is a large, elegant room. It is noted that the red color of the carpets and curtains "project respect." The Presidential chair is located behind a large table "in front of the public" and chairs are placed

symmetrically on each side of the stage. As the curtain is raised, Antonia de Galindo, a friend of Manuela Gorriti, Belzu's wife, is sitting, waiting to see Doña Juana Manuela and to ask her to intercede on behalf of Mariano Melgarejo in order to obtain his release from prison. This first scene is very short, exactly five lines, and it consists of Mrs. Galindo's dialogue with the Aide, asking him to announce her to Doña Juana Manuela. In the second scene, Belzu's wife complains to the visitor that she no longer has a good marriage because of her earlier indiscretions.

Antonia Galindo: And you Juanita? Are you still writing? Or did the muses leave you when you started sharing the political problems of your husband?

Juana Manuela: (Sadly) Friend: I was a different Juanita when you knew me before. Now I am . . . am . . . Why should I tell you dear!

Antonia Galindo: What is the matter? Is the General still bothered by what happened?

Juana Manuela: Oh! No! No! (Confused) I don't know; I am very happy you came to see me and I start saying things that I . . .

Antonia Galindo: No! You cannot hide it, your words sound full of pain. Is it true?

Juana Manuela: Yes. Even though this may sound like a paradox Juana Manuela Gorriti is not the wife of the President of Bolivia.

Antonia Galindo: What do you mean?

Juana Manuela: I am only the woman who lives with the President. Better still: the woman who must go through the social graces in order not to give

the opposition something to gossip about. Manuel Isidoro has acquired a new love: the people. This painful wound that suffocates me and torments him is caused by something which happened long ago; from the years when I . . . Oh, it is horrible, horrible! He forgave me but his coldness, his silence, indifference are cruel. I wish I could run far away; kill myself! But, even my life is not my own because I am the President's wife! (Transition) Forgive me Antonia and keep this in confidence, but who can I talk to, if not to a friend?

Antonia Galindo: And your daughters?

Juana Manuela: Mercedes is far away, Edelmira, Cordova's wife, agrees with her father. Here in the Palace, I am alone, living, and dying whenever I hear of a possible mutiny. I am afraid for Belzu's life. I see him struggling through problems and I am not allowed, like any wife, to kneel next to his chair, place my head next to him and say: "Be calm, your dreams will become realities . . ." I have committed one error and I am paying too dearly for it.

Antonia Galindo: Someone should speak to the General and make him understand.

Juana Manuela: No. It is impossible. Didn't you know that due to his hateful memories, he prohibited any newspapers to print the name of Ballivian? Do you see? This is the story of your Juanita! (Forcing herself to smile). Did you expect to find the First Lady happy? (Apologetically). Forgive me, forgive me! You should not know this . . . nevertheless, I am at your service. Do you need anything?

Antonia Galindo: I believe now it is impossible. I came to ask you to use your

influence with the General in . . .

Juana Manuela: What is it?

Antonia Galindo: An officer, Mariano Melgarejo is condemned to die because he and his regiment are against the government. I thought . . .

Juana Manuela: Oh! You see how it is . . . but, I will speak with my son-in-law; he will help . . . The President is coming. Come, we will speak with Cordova in person . . . and keep to yourself, what I told you.

Antonia Galindo: (Embraces her) Juanita!

Juana Manuela: Come. Follow me, please. (They exit).[36]

This second scene may be said to be written melodramatically. Its emotional content is heightened, almost exaggerated, expressed in the verbose manner of traditional Spanish drama. The roles and objectives of the characters seem reversed: the First Lady is highly emotional and long suffering while the friend who came to ask her for help has to comfort her. Finally, Juana Manuela resumes her role as First Lady and will attempt to help her friend. This is an interesting scene at the beginning of the play. In history plays, the expectation is to have national or public events developed; here, Salmón starts with a private, domestic conflict. The playwright, however, has gained his audience's attention quickly, by developing first a situation with which the audience could easily identify.

In scene 3, the President enters with his ever present companion, Pancho Cadena, a loyal Indian, who acts as Belzu's guard. This scene, nine lines, is also short.

Belzu asks his aides to call in Cordova, his son-in-law. Salmón numbers his scenes with the entrance of new characters as he did in the social realistic plays.

In scene 4, Antonia de Galindo enters and asks the President to free Melgarejo. Belzu agrees but warns her that someday she will be sorry to have interceded for such a man. This President does not trust "those Don Juan types of the military," and Belzu believes Melgarejo to be one of them. There are hints that Belzu is speaking against the "military Don Juan types" because of his own experience with General José Ballivian, his wife's ex-lover. In scene 6, Córdova arrives to tell Belzu that he has brought Melgarejo and thinks they should free him. Belzu warns not to trust some army men. He tells Córdova they must act as the Indians have taught him to, that is they must learn from the "kamake's" (the fox's) behavior. The fox, he explains, has a tendency to look and study its terrain calmly before he attacks its victim. Salmón works in infidelity, treason and mistrust throughout the play. It is, for Salmón, the way of life found in politics, the military and government in Bolivia. In the same scene, Belzu says to Córdova: "Language, Jorge, is not to be heard but to be seen,"[37] or "actions are louder than words."

In scene 6, Belzu releases Melgarejo from jail and confines him to a far and secluded post. The officer had been jailed for insubordination and for cruelty with his troops. The President tells him: "You should be shot but I absolve you for two reasons: my respect for men's lives and

because even though I know you are a scoundrel, you are also brave."[38] Belzu struggles for "the people" but he also respects the courage of some opponents, like Melgarejo's, even though he knows he may bring him problems later. Melgarejo considers himself better than the President because of his family background and Belzu is aware of that.

In scene 7, out of jail, Melgarejo speaks to Cordova, Belzu's son-in-law:

> Cordova: (Shaking hands) Congratulations on being freed.
>
> Melgarejo: This half-breed! (Cholo!).
>
> Cordova: Enough! You should be thankful to the one who saved your life.
>
> Melgarejo: Belzu . . . Belzu. You do not know how dangerous is a humiliated man.
>
> Pancho: (Taking out a knife and attempting to attack Melgarejo) What are you saying?
>
> (Two aides separate them, not before Melgarejo spits on Pancho's face).
>
> Melgarejo: I will finish with all the half-breeds! (exits).
>
> Cordova: Jail him until his trip for confinement to his post is ready.
>
> Pancho: This one will not be safe from me.
>
> Cordova: We must follow the President's orders. He said he is to be confined far away: nothing more.[39]

Melgarejo's character and objectives have not changed; this officer, regardless of punishment does not alter his beliefs.

Salmón also deals with the cultural differences between Europeans and Indians, and the different values

placed on human life. In scene 9, Dr. Muñoz, a politician, enters agitated. He tells Belzu that the Indians have killed a physician in a small town outside La Paz. The Indians wanted to help Belzu and thought they had captured one of his enemies, the before-mentioned Ballivian, and had killed the wrong man. While he is narrating this incident, the sound of the crowd coming near the Palace is heard. Belzu hears the noise and idealistically, expresses his non-Indian values: "This is a marvelous sound. The cry of the crowd has the force of a beautiful symphony."[40] He expects his Indians to come victoriously to tell him of their devotion. Instead, in scene 10, sounds of gun fire are heard and Dr. Muñoz looking out, shouts and tells Belzu that "they are rioting."[41]

In scene 11, Doña Juana Manuela comes on begging Belzu to do something to control "the people." In scene 12, the Indian leaders enter the Palace bringing Belzu the good news that they have captured his enemy. Kneeling in front of him, to show respect for their great President, they exclaim: "Sir, Great Sir!" and offer him the prize; the Indians open a folded cloth and out rolls the decapitated head of the physician. With the head in sight, the Indians proudly say: "Here it is, here it is." Doña Juana Manuela screams and Belzu calmly says to his aide: "Pick that up and open the window." Salmón describes the following:

> After the window is opened. Belzu gives a signal to the Indians and walks ceremoniously towards the balcony accompanied by the Chief Indians. He asks Cordova, his son-in-

> law, for the box with coins. When Belzu gets to the balcony the multitude is heard to shout his name with fervor. Belzu, in the middle of the Indian chiefs, raises his hands and there is a hush in the crowd. When he lowers his hands, the crowd again shouts cheers. Belzu takes the box with the gold coins and throws the coins to the crowd. The sound of cheers is louder. Once it reaches its maximum crescendo, the sound lowers slowly. Belzu closes the window of the balcony and the Indians who are with him kiss his hands and leave. Belzu triumphantly walks to center stage.[42]

It seems that Belzu knew exactly how to manipulate the Indians, but there is a subtle hint that he doesn't really care for them. After this moment, he asks his aide to get his horse ready; he will go, riding alone, on a horse, to his Indians in the villages. The following dialogue describes the reaction.

Dr. Muñoz: Belzu must be crazy or is a man who has reduced the collective consciousness and has it in his hand.

Juana Manuela: The people idolize him!

Dr. Muñoz: But, they may also lose him.[43]

Dr. Muñoz, an experienced politician, realizes that Belzu's seemingly impulsive nature makes him vulnerable, even though he is supposedly loved by the masses. Others, like Córdova, attempt to take care of him but ultimately place Belzu's destiny in God's hands. In scene 13, Córdova says to Juana Manuela:

> He left alone, without guards. Indians and cholos surround him and they fight to have a glimpse of him. They follow him with an admirable fanaticism. However, I have ordered

> some men to go and keep their distance from the General . . . As long as the President is among those who love him, his life is safe. The people would prefer to make a human shield of their bodies to protect him against any gun fire, but before anything, it is Divine Providence who looks out for the Redeemer of the oppressed. (Pauses) We shall wait.[44]

As noted, Salmón shows a character who seems dedicated to "his people." He wants to be accepted by the Indians and cholos to the point that he places his life in danger. Historians such as Guzman, hint that he may have identified somewhat with the half-breeds because he also had "mixed blood." His father was an Arab and his mother was Bolivian. Since he was not accepted by the aristocracy, he wanted to be with the opposite class: the cholos and Indians.

Whatever, in this play Belzu is physically strong, brave and seems to follow his impulses, leaving those in his Cabinet and the Palace dumbfounded and quite uneasy. Belzu is also a highly theatrical character. As already noted, there is some historical data which supports Córdova's description. Differences occur in interpreting the motivation for Belzu's actions. Arnade feels this President manipulated the Indians to gain power, but Salmón presents us with a more complex character. Belzu's speeches about the Indians' rights seem so heartfelt that one may be persuaded that he truly cared for them.

In scene 14, Pancho enters to tell those in the Palace that the President is being greeted enthusiastically in all the homes he is visiting. Salmón rebukes the notion that

Belzu did not do much for the poor peasant. Pancho, who is himself a peasant, says to Córdova:

> We are in an age of truth; now we ask for bread and we no longer get mere written promises, we get bread. Therefore, we cheer Belzu's name so loud until we get hoarse. We cheer not for convenience but for conviction. If God is Lord of the world, then Tata Belzu is the Prince and King of our lives.[45]

Later in this same scene, Pancho tells Córdova that to help Belzu's cause, he wanted to kick down the doors of the houses of those who follow Ballivian, Belzu's opponent. He asks Córdova to please not say anything to Belzu because he had admonished him to restrain his anger. Is Salmón attempting to indicate that Belzu did not favor venting anger against the oppressed party? Salmón's Belzu appears to be a character who is against violence.

In scene 15, Belzu in his study, alone, at night opens a window. The voice of a drunken peasant passing by is heard yelling.

> Viva General Belzu. Viva el Tata Belzu. Those born wealthy will scream for having lost power. But, the people redeemed will sing to their Tata Belzu.[46]

The sound of church bells is heard and while the drunken man's voice fades away, Belzu smiles, pleased.

In scene 16 (entitled final scene of act 1), Córdova enters to talk to Belzu about a coming trip to another city. Here Belzu reveals his practicality and mistrust.

Córdova: There, we have many good friends.

Belzu: Let me give you this advice: For those who govern there are no faithful friends. We should measure all with a degree of mistrust.

Córdova: I shall accompany you to your quarters.

Belzu: Yes, let's go . . .
(They walk a few steps and they hear the solitary voice of a townsman singing to the tune of a guitar and a charango).

Belzu: Wait . . .

Córdova: What?

Belzu: Son, the people sing. There, is a sincere voice . . . but also only up to a certain point![47]

It is interesting that even though the Indians, peasants -- all the common folk seem to cheer for Belzu, Belzu still does not trust them fully. He is a practical man, he believes in people's loyalty "up to a point."

This play makes use of theatrical effects. Salmón uses the sounds of the crowd, the singing of the people, guitars playing, and bells ringing to project the feeling of the moment. Sometimes for violent effect, as with the Indians in the plaza (scene 12), and at other times quiet and reflective as with the bells ringing far away in the night (scene 15).

The play has a better dramatic structure than some of the earlier Social Realistic plays. Each scene builds toward the climax. There is a real attempt to develop the situations more fully. Character, plot and action are more intricately woven and not as obvious as in the earlier plays. For example, Belzu's is a bravura character but at night, alone, he has thoughtful moments listening to the

voices singing outside his study's window. Likewise, the physical action and environment in the play change from moments of much activity and fury to moments of calm. There is a sustained growth in the acts that follow.

The second act takes place in a study of the Palace in Sucre, the Capital of Bolivia. The furniture is in the style of the period (19th Century). The room has two windows and two doors. It is late at night and there is a thunderstorm with lightning. The wind can be heard "whistling;" one of the windows opens and the curtains blow making the candle lights in the candelabrum twinkle. There is much activity on stage. Some officers speak agitatedly; still others enter and exit.

In the first scene of act 2, Dr. Muñoz, Córdova and an aide remark that "something should be done" to control the stability of the government. The President has been shot by a follower of the aristocracy. Dr. Muñoz relates that Belzu was shot twice while he was strolling with him in the Alameda (a region in Sucre where people like to take walks). Córdova states that he will take charge of the government until they find out about Belzu's condition. He reiterates Belzu's words that: "the Republic is constituted by Indians and half-breeds" and he will work to keep away those aristocrats who wish to regain their privileges and believe that the country is theirs alone. Belzu's body has not yet been found and those in government do not know where it might have been taken.

In scene 2, Juana Manuela, Belzu's wife, and Edelmira, her daughter, come to inquire about Belzu's whereabouts. Edelmira says: "They never wanted us in this town," and she tells Cordova that: "they will give the government to the others, to those who made my father suffer, to those who I hate. He hated them as I hate them!" Later, she says: "General Belzu, the President of the half-breeds has not died. He shall not die."[48]

In scene 3 Maikina, who is a follower of the opposition party, enters and pretends to warn them that the followers of Ballivian will take over the Presidency, if Córdova does not take charge of the Presidency right away. However, in scene 4, we find out that Maikina has come to create confusion among Belzu's followers and that what he really wants is to find out where Belzu's body is. In scene 5, Iriarte, a politician comes to the Palace and tells Córdova that the committee in Sucre has decided to take over the government and since Belzu was the sole leader of the masses, the masses can no longer govern. Therefore, it is time for the Committee to take over. Córdova asks for time to find Belzu's body before considering the proposal. In scene 7, the lights are dimmed on stage; Iriarte is alone writing. Belzu appears holding a candle; he is supported by Pancho. He goes behind Iriarte and asks him if he is sure that Belzu is dead; Iriarte turns around and sees Belzu. In shock, he keeps repeating the word "No" and runs out yelling that Belzu's ghost is present. The serious scene almost becomes farcical. Iriarte, a stern politician, can continue

to be heard off stage; his voice is heard repeating: "I saw him. I saw him. He was dead."

In scene 10, Maikina returns to see Belzu and pretends to be pleased. Belzu asks him if he would dare kiss his cheeks "like the disciple who kissed Christ."[49] Once again, as in Busch, Salmón introduces references to a Christ figure. Belzu narrates that after he was shot he was taken by the Indians to a hut to rest and recover. According to historians, the Indians did find him wounded and did take care of him. However, most of his recuperation occurred in the Palace.

The third act takes place in the same place as the first act. Sounds of cheers and of someone giving a speech in the square can be heard. The President is seen working at his desk and he is not disturbed by the noise of the multitude outside. It appears that crowds in opposition to him have begun to grow in numbers. Córdova and Juana Manuela are nervous and they tell him that the people outside are drunk and they may be "blood thirsty." Belzu had ordered the arrest of Iturre, a politician who opposed him, and some of the people are protesting, shouting for the man's freedom. In scene 3, Córdova enters, to inform Belzu that Jesuit priests have asked to talk to him. Suddenly, the voices of the people singing religious hymns are heard. Córdova says that there are thousands of people in front of the Palace. Edelmira tells Belzu the people are being manipulated by their enemies, and asks her father to pardon Iturre. Belzu decides to change the order. Instead of

death, he sentences Iturre to ten years in jail. Salmón shows that Belzu is capable of ordering a death sentence for a man who writes against his government. This is the first time in the play that ruthlessness shows its face. In scene 5, Pancho comes in, dishevelled, and reports that people have kicked him as he made his way to the Palace. He asks Belzu if they are going to shoot the demonstrators. Instead, in scene 7, Belzu opens the window to let the people know Iturri's new fate. However, when the aide attempts to read the official order the crowd is so noisy that he has to stop; Pancho wants to read it and the crowd throws fruit peels at him and he likewise has to stop; he asks Belzu to shoot at the crowd. Belzu says nothing but calmly puts on the Presidential sash and tries to calm those with him.

> Looking straight at each of his men, Belzu says: "Calm, calm." With a king's sense of dignity and pride he walks slowly to the window. Suddenly, there is a hush, as the people see him. Belzu looks to the right and left and straight ahead. When there is absolute silence (a silence which has Córdova, Pancho, and the aide holding their breath) Belzu greets the crowd with a gesture of his hands and the people respond with applause and "bravos." Then, Belzu starts to speak slowly:

Belzu: Before your eyes, you have another man of the people. I am the half-breed Belzu and I am with you, like yesterday, and always.

The Crowd: "Viva Belzu! Viva."

Belzu: I have condemned Pedro Iturri to show you my cholos, that this man was the victim of the aristocracy and the

doctors who want to destroy the work of the people and of their government.

The Crowd: Bravo! Bravo!

Belzu: Those who do not like us, those who do not have the pride of having mixed blood, try by all means, to make us fight among brothers and we are one. A skin's color does not show human dignity . . . Iturri will not be shot, I ask you not to fight against anyone; you were misinformed. They wanted to mislead you but they do not know that my blood is yours and my life is yours.

The Crowd: (Applauding) Bravooo!

Belzu: Return to your homes peacefully . . . And do not forget, I am a half-breed and I am one of the people.

(This speech is followed by minutes of cheers. Belzu returns to the center of the room and his aides embrace him).

Córdova: (with much emotion) You are the people's idol.

The Aide: I confess your excellency, your power is magical.

Pancho: I wanted to shoot at them! Tata! I would have made a grave mistake!

(Belzu takes off his sash and places it on the desk and orders his aide to go post the official news of Iturri's new sentence).[50]

Belzu behaves as if nothing particularly impressive has happened. This President believes in his power and his role in life.

In scene 10, Belzu realizes that Cordova, his son-in-law, aspires to the Presidency and asks him to tell him, if this is so. Córdova hesitates and Belzu says to him: "Remember what Apollo said: Slaves lie, free men tell the truth."[51] Belzu goes on to tell him that new strength is

needed, and he must carry on with the work they have started. He admonishes him not to allow his emotions to lead him; he tells him he must have "wisdom and prudence." Afterwards, in scene 11, Belzu is alone; he looks at the Presidential sash and thinks of Córdova and exclaims: "It will be a hard test for him." Salmón depicts Belzu as a man who knew what was going to take place once Córdova assumed the Presidency. In fact, Córdova was President only for two years (1855-1857).

In scene 12, Belzu tells his daughter Edelmira, that he has achieved his goal. He says to her: "Did you see the people? It has one voice, soul and body. They have lost their individuality, instead a collective conscience and mind was born."[52] Edelmira does not understand and asks him what he means. Belzu answers: "I have realized my ambition. The people have gained personality."[53] Whether that was Belzu's objective is not really clear. As noted, two historians believe that Belzu manipulated the masses. Salmón appears to believe that people did not hesitate to voice their protests, as in the case of Pedro Iturri's arrest. At the end of the third act, in scene 13, Belzu tells Pancho that Córdova's Presidency will not last. He says to him: "When I leave in February I will have to say: I leave it to him but it will not last."[54] It is paradoxical that a President who cares for the people would leave the power of the government to a man who he believes is not strong enough to handle it. This is the second flaw in Belzu's character, according to Salmón's play. Otherwise,

Belzu's character is almost messianic, nearly flawless in thought and action.

The fourth act locale is the same as act 3, but it is ten years later. Salmón writes: "This act written as an Epilogue, shows three different psychological and social states of being within the personages." He also reminds the reader of three events, inserting the following notes before the act starts: Melgarejo has killed Antonia de Galindo's son; she is the person who interceded for Melgarejo's release from prison. Melgarejo has become President. It was he who told Belzu that "a humiliated man is dangerous."[55] With Melgarejo as President, the collective consciousness of the people changed; they behaved as hypnotized and did not take any action to defend Belzu or his work. However, at the beginning of act 4, there is gunfire and the voice of the people cheering Belzu. It seems there has been a change in the people's feelings and Belzu is back in the Palace, ten years later. Pancho comes running in narrating the violent episodes which are taking place in the city. He says that Melgarejo, who is leading the revolution, has shot and killed a Colonel in the outskirts of the city. Pancho vows that "no one will take Belzu out of the Palace." He reminds Juana Manuela that he has a right to be angry because in the past ten years, Córdova was assassinated and they have been persecuted and humiliated. The lands given to the Indians have been taken away and there has been much killing. At the present time the <u>cholos</u> and Indians have united with some "gentlemen,

ladies and even children" to fight for Belzu. In scene 3, Juana Manuela crying, tells Belzu that she has a premonition of their world ending. It is in this scene that Belzu's private life conflict is resolved. He tells his wife that once the trouble or revolution is over, he will give back all that belongs to the Indians and that their own lives will be different. He says, they will find happiness and that all their sacrifices will not have been in vain.

In scene 5, Antonia de Galindo returns and mentions that she represents Bolivian women. She offers her help to fight against Melgarejo. Edelmira enters, in scene 6, reporting that Melgarejo's forces have been defeated and the leader is being brought back as a prisoner. Following Belzu's orders, he will be treated with respect. To reinforce the idea that Belzu's government was not a cruel one, Salmón has Edelmira say: "Our own soldiers will guard Melgarejo. We will show that we do not respond bloody actions with the same."[56] In scene 7, Belzu tells his aide to make sure that the prisoners are not mistreated. Melgarejo is brought to the Palace and to make sure that no one hurts him Belzu asks Pancho to leave his knife on the table. Melgarejo enters wearing a red cape and a white hat; he looks at Belzu defiantly. He is accompanied by some of his men. These are pushed into the room. Suddenly there is a melee and a shot is heard which hits Belzu and kills him. Pancho, his faithful guard, kneels down next to Belzu's body and shouts: "Tata! Tata!" This is the climax, the moment of highest emotional impact in the play. There follows a

reversal. Obeying Melgarejo's commands, his men disarm the guards and place them under arrest. Pancho is dragged from Belzu's body screaming: "Tata! Tata!" and Melgarejo orders him shot. Offstage, there is the sound of gun fire. Melgarejo stands over Belzu's body and repeats what he had said earlier in the play: "Belzu, you do not know how dangerous a humiliated man is."[57] He then goes to the window and opens it. The crowd quiets down to listen and "with savage fury," he shouts to the crowd: "Belzu is dead! Who lives now!" and the crowd shouts back: "Melgarejo." Melgarejo turns and shuts the window, laughing. He looks at the crowd, then he goes towards Belzu's bookcase and throws some books to the floor saying: "One does not rule simpletons with books!" Hitting the table with his fist repeatedly, he shouts: "Bullets, whips and more bullets." Unlike Belzu, Melgarejo believes that control stems from oppression. Triumphantly, he walks towards the Presidential chair and sits, as the final curtain falls.

Historically, Melgarejo is known as one of Bolivia's most violent and cruel Presidents. The ending of the play is very strong dramatically. The last two scenes contain the climax, a strong reversal and heightened emotional content. Theatrically the physicalizations described by Salmón, give the play striking visualizations, such as, Pancho kneeling over Belzu's body and being dragged away. There are also the many sound effects which help to build the atmosphere of the scenes, such as the cries and the gun fire. Raúl Salmón has interpreted the past and has provided

characters who are quite real. Even though melodramatic, this is the type of melodrama which existed, and which still exists in Bolivian politics and government.

The settings of the play are all realistic in style, as already noted. Additional details follow. The setting of the first, third and fourth acts is the "Red Room" of the Presidential Palace in La Paz which has a French folding style door upstage. When opened, it displays a hallway or corridor with wide windows and balustrades. At the right side of this room, there are two wide windows, at the left side, two doors which lead to other offices. Upstage center, there is a large table with the Presidential chair behind it. This environment appears to change along with whatever sound effects are used; these are either strident, e.g., crowd cries, cheers and gunfire or quiet moments filled with soft guitar music and muffled bells tolling.

The second act takes place in a study in the Palace in Sucre (Sucre is the capital of Bolivia). The study has the usual bookcases filled with books, upstage. At stage left, there are two windows and a chimney; at stage right, two doors. There is a desk covered by books and papers, at stage left. It is night and there is lightning and thunder; there is the sound of the wind and when the window opens, at one instance, the curtains fly making the candle lights flicker. To build the atmosphere, there is great activity: army men are speaking excitedly in low voices, men enter and leave, and the result is an agitated and tense environment. With each scene there is more tension built, projected not

only by the physical action or movement within the room but also by the offstage sounds already described.

Raúl Salmón, once again, uses characters who represent types active in Bolivian politics in the nineteenth century. General Manuel Isidoro Belzu is the "Great Liberator," the President who Salmón believes, wants to better the lives of the Indians and cholos. The fact that he had an Arab father made him an outcast in higher social circles. Juana Manuela Gorriti is Belzu's wife and as a poetess, she represents the upper middle class woman, who was creative, but needed to marry and to carry on with her official duties in order to be respected. Ironically, she suffered for her "indiscretion," a love affair with another political figure: José Ballivian. Regardless, she carried on with her official duties. Ultimately she seems to care for Belzu. Edelmira is Belzu's daughter, who agrees with her father's plans and actions and is always willing to help him. She represents younger women who sometimes were involved in politics. Unfortunately, she is married to a seemingly politically inexperienced man: Córdova. Antonia de Galindo is a friend of Juana Manuela with whom she was acquainted from her poetry writing days. Her son is a well known poet. She represents the middle class woman who, unknowingly is used by politicians to gain their goals. She makes a mistake when she asks Belzu for Melgarejo's freedom only to have Melgarejo later kill her son. George Jorge Córdova is Edelmira's husband. By marrying her he became Belzu's right-hand man. He is a member of Belzu's Cabinet and

because he is a relative inherits the Presidency from Belzu. He represents the military/politician who is not equipped for such a high powered position. He is no match for the likes of Melgarejo. Captain Mariano Melgarejo represents the ambitious, violent, military man. He achieves his objectives any way he can. For him, the end justifies the means. At the end of the play he becomes the President and mocks the people. Dr. Iriarte is the representative of the Committee from Sucre who wants to take over the government when Belzu is shot. He represents the adventurous, ambitious politician who takes advantage of any occasion to rise to power. He calls the people chusma and has contempt for them. Dr. Muñoz Cabrera, who, in the play is called Muñoz or Muñoz Cabrera, wants to stop the demonstration by force. Even though he is not a military man he is typical of those who believe one can govern only by force. Narciso Campero is a member of Melgarejo's party. He accompanies him and represents Belzu's opposition. Maikina represents the disloyal traitor. He seems to follow Melgarejo's party yet comes to talk to Belzu and tries to ingratiate himself with him. He represents the worst in politics: a conniving scoundrel of low intelligence, and therefore, bound to be found out. Belzu compares him to Judas Escariot. Pancho Cadena, called merely Pancho, is the most interesting character in the play, after Belzu. He is a peasant, a half-breed who is loyal to Belzu. He will do anything for Belzu's cause. In his unsophisticated way, he is ready to shoot those who disagree with his loved Belzu; however, at

the end he sees his mistake. Since he is a peasant who guards Belzu, he represents the _cholos_ or half-breeds and is used often as a chorus in the play: he often narrates or explains what has transpired offstage and voices the feelings of the people who are in favor of Belzu. He is the antithesis of Maikina. The Indians clearly represent the thousands of Indians who wish to help Belzu and who commit some violent actions, like decapitating the head of a physician, to please him. They are the ones who seem to be the focus of Belzu's strategy since he wants their acceptance. Unfortunately, they are not given any individual characteristics by the playwright; they are stereotypes of the masses of Indians. These are the types used by Salmón to delineate Bolivian characters who were involved in the political arena during Belzu's Presidency (1848-1855).

Tres Generales (_Three Generals_) was published in 1972 and is the last historical play written by Raúl Salmón. In this play he tries to summarize, or as one of his characters says in the Epilogue, "synthesize" what real persons' contributions to history were, why he used them in his plays, and what he attempted to accomplish with this type of play. He uses two of the protagonists of earlier history plays namely, Belzu and Melgarejo and adds a third, Santa Cruz. Santa Cruz was known as a good administrator and he is the one who "synthesizes" the events in history. After each General discusses his administration, Santa Cruz

recapitulates the main accomplishments or errors of each. There are two students to whom the Generals explain their past actions, and, in a note Salmón indicates that the audience is to constitute people in the play. Therefore, at times the characters talk directly to the audience, who represent the Bolivian people. Salmón is attempting to create a more direct relationship with the audience.

In the Epilogue, Santa Cruz says to the audience: "I hope you profit from this lesson."[58] He seems to be the voice of Salmón encouraging the audience to learn from history and to be aware not only of past achievements but also of past mistakes so that these errors will not be repeated. The playwright also shows, however, that thus far the same mistakes are being repeated. He ends his play with the voice of the crowd cheering on again still another revolution. Background materials on Presidents Santa Cruz and Melgarejo follow. Belzu has already been discussed.

General Andrés de Santa Cruz was born in La Paz, Bolivia in 1792. His father was Spanish and, according to him, his mother had Inca ancestors. He was an intellectual and not a revolutionary. Nominated to the Presidency by Congress in 1829, he governed until 1839. His administration is called "constructive." He wrote the basic Supreme Court by-laws of the country, and Bolivia became the first country in Latin America with a complete set of comprehensive legislative rulings. He helped to reform the Constitution of July 13, 1831. Under Santa Cruz, two newspapers appeared: El Boliviano and El Iris. He named

Sucre as the Capital of Bolivia in 1839. He also established closer relations with foreign countries, signing treaties with England, the United States of America and The Vatican. He founded two universities, one in La Paz, another in Cochabamba. He would have been appreciated even more if he had not insisted on attempting to unify Alto Perú (Bolivia) and Bajo Perú (Perú) to form one state using geographical boundaries which existed during the Inca Empire. He was one of the leaders of the Confederación Perú-Bolivia, the group that wanted to unify Bolivia and Perú. However, his army lost the battle of Yungay fought against Chile in 1839 and that defeat ended the Confederación's notions of union since they recognized the army's weakness. Santa Cruz resigned and went to Ecuador. In 1843 he was exiled to Chile. The English government interceded, and in 1846 he left for Europe. He died in Nantes, France on September 13, 1865.

Mariano Melgarejo was born in Cochabamba, April 15, 1820. Both of his parents were of Spanish descent. He was a General in the army and fought in the Confederación war. In 1840 and 1849 he was involved in military upheavals. After a failed revolution, he was jailed and condemned to death but Belzu pardoned him following an appeal by some women from his home town.

He ran for the Presidency and won December 28, 1864. Under his government he centralized and managed the National Monetary Fund. He closed the municipalities and it is said that he thought he "had the Constitution in his pocket."[59]

He killed Nestor Galindo, a poet, among other intellectuals. Machicado, a historian writes that he and his military aides engaged in orgies. He was romantically involved with Juana Sanchez for whom he raided the Bolivian treasury. All fiscal treaties for the sale of certain minerals were made through him and he personally profited from them. In May 1866, when the country's treasury was low, he signed a decree making the State the owner of all community owned Indian territories. To get their land back the Indians had to pay in order to help the economy. Some Indians had no money and those lands were sold at a low price to the family of his lover, Juana Sanchez and to his friends. There were many unsuccessful revolutions against his government. On January 15, 1871 Colonel Hilarion Daza with his Battallion Colorados fought against Melgarejo and won; there were more than a thousand dead and the President went into exile in Perú.

In Lima, Perú, his estranged lover Juana Sanchez sued him for economic support. In November 23, 1872, Melgarejo went to her house to arrange matters and was shot and killed by Juana's brother, Jose Aurelio Sanchez. He was buried in Lima. According to Vasquez Machicado, the years of Melgarejo's government are known as "a shameful period in Bolivian history."[60]

In a 1972 edition printed in Spain, Tres Generales (Three Generals) is described as an "historical-social" play in three acts, with a Prologue, and an Epilogue.[61] Unlike his previous plays, this one does not follow a realistic

style throughout. For example, the Prologue takes place in a cemetery at night. In its first scene two dead students, who were buried in the area of the cemetery designed for "unknowns," are walking around the fancier area assigned for the "Notable Dead." Student Number Two complains that he is bored shut up inside the tomb all day. The dead can only walk around at night. He recollects that he was a good orator but lacked political experience. Student Number One remembers that he never understood the "middle of the road" politician; he was a radical and was shot in the back for his inflexibility. Here, Salmón immediately introduces the theme of inequality in social circles, even for the dead whose burial space is designated according to social status. He points up the violence and treachery of politics through the student who was shot in the back.

Salmón starts his history lesson in scene 2, introducing the Three Generals who are dressed in military uniforms. The students, who belong to the twentieth century, do not recognize them and Melgarejo calls the students ignorant. Belzu stops the impending fight and the following scene takes place:

The Three Generals and the two Students are in the cemetery:

Belzu: Even in death, aren't we going to try to understand each other? We have a night filled with stars, perfect for our dialogue . . .

Student One: To discuss what?

Belzu: Perhaps now that we are dead, calmly we could analyze and understand the country.

Student One: We are separated by more than one hundred years of history.

Student Two: . . . In school they made us pessimistic, always projecting negative images of the past. Always relating to us stories of violence and treachery. In our country, which is already saddened by its geography, schools accentuated our sadness and our disenchantment. That is why . . .

Santa Cruz: That's why you reacted that way, right? And, that reaction was based on a political and philosophical ideal which engulfs the country?

Student One: General, I can forgive your point of view. But, today there are no regional concepts. The world, people and their ideas are interconnected. There is a genetic preoccupation: of humanity in general.

(Melgarejo gives a contemptuous gesture; Belzu approves; Santa Cruz listens).[62]

Here, Salmón expresses the idea that schools in Bolivia tend to criticize and to focus on the errors of the past. He moves away from the days when he only wrote about Bolivian customs. Through the statement of Student Number One, Bolivian socio-political problems become more universal. Twentieth Century preoccupations are "interconnected" and seen as broader in scope. (It is interesting to note that in his next "phase" Salmón moves on to the universal theme of man's alienation from his environment).

The students now give an exposition of some of the actions of the Generals. These historic events are stated from a negative point of view, as they were taught in school. They argue that Santa Cruz was ambitious and was ruined by the Confederación because his real objective was

to govern both Perú and Bolivia and he failed. Belzu, they claim, did get the people involved in politics but became frightened of this newly found power and fled. To Melgarejo, Student One says that his use of force did take root and begat a school of violence in Bolivian governments.

Santa Cruz wants to defend himself; he voices memories of his actions, as a flashback begins act 1, scene 1. He only remembers the "good" results of his administration.

The locale of act 1 is the antechamber of the Presidential Palace in La Paz. It is May 1835, the sixth year of Marshal Santa Cruz's government. Two Cabinet members, Enrique Calvo and José Maria Lara are commenting that the President saved the country from being dominated by the Peruvian President Gamarra. In scene 2, the same Cabinet members meet with the English Consul who has just finished a meeting with the President. The following dialogue shows the respect held for Santa Cruz's talent in foreign affairs:

Calvo: Are you pleased with the outcome of the meeting, Mr. Consul?

Consul: I believe to have great diplomatic experience. I have met Kings, Dukes and Counts but . . .

Calvo: But what?

Consul: Keep this in confidence. I meet this Indian with more respect than meeting the King of England.

Calvo: The Marshal is proud to be a descendant of the Inca nobility.

Consul: (Enthused) He has powerful magnetism. He looks, listens, thinks and decides. I do not know if you, his collaborators, are

> completely aware of the prestige Bolivia is gaining throughout the world thanks to him. England and France, after the War of Independence, thought of these countries as little republics of troublemakers but now thanks to Santa Cruz the image of Bolivia is changing.[63]

As mentioned earlier, historically, Santa Cruz did activate relations with various countries in Europe. Another interesting theme which Salmón develops in the same scene is the notion that Bolivia has mainly been considered a "closed" or isolationist country, not easily accepting or welcoming foreign enterprise or visitors.

> Consul: Rosas, the Argentinian dictator trembles thinking that Bolivia could one day help or side with his opposition, the Unitarians. Perú is hoping that Bolivia would intervene to help it reform its disorder into an orderly system.
>
> Calvo: Our government, Mr. Consul only respects others'; it does not meddle in the internal affairs of other countries.
>
> Consul: Too bad. In Europe, when a nation acquires prestige and consolidates its institutions, as Bolivia is doing now, it can influence outside its frontiers.
>
> Calvo: Europe is another continent, my friend Consul.
>
> Consul: Who knows. Anyhow no one should throw away the opportunities that do not come our way more than once in history.[64]

Since Santa Cruz did attempt to further relations with other countries Salmón may be suggesting that he did this despite those around him who were regionalists and who felt safer in an isolated self-contained society. The playwright is also expressing the concept that Bolivia should take advantage of the opportunities offered by other countries; as we know,

when he was Mayor of La Paz, he travelled abroad to learn from other cultures. Other positive qualities of Santa Cruz are exemplified in the following dialogue of act 1, scene 5 which shows Santa Cruz in relation to disloyal or ambitious men.

Santa Cruz: I had sent you to Arequipa to propose to Gamarra a treaty of alliance to avoid a war with Perú, but you accepted instead to organize a revolution against me.

Olañeta: I accepted to find our Gamarra's plan. I changed my mind later and was dismissed from Arequipa, almost by force.

Santa Cruz: Let's forget that episode.

Olañeta: You put my soul at ease.

Santa Cruz: I have heard you speak with enthusiasm of King Louis of France.

Olañeta: That is right.

Santa Cruz: We need to have a treaty of friendship with France which will open commerce and navigation. We need someone "who dedicates his life to the nation" deliver that treaty. We need an Ambassador in France. (To Calvo) Let us give Dr. Olañeta the job immediately.

Olañeta: Excellency I . . .
(Santa Cruz exits).

Calvo: Your arguments had good effect.

Olañeta: You do not understand men! This job given me is equivalent to an exile . . . it is unjust.

Calvo: Your papers will be ready soon.

Olañeta: I guess there is nothing I can do now. But, I shall return soon. Remember Dr. Calvo: Casimiro Olañeta does not compromise.[65]

Salmón here shows the "sophisticated" manner in which Santa Cruz got rid of politicians he considered dangerous. This President is in control of situations, using his intelligence and not acting on emotional impulse, as we saw with Busch. Calvo summarizes Santa Cruz's good deeds in scene 6.

> Calvo: I can't imagine anyone discontent at this time. The country has no external debt. There is amnesty for all the culprits from the opposition. There is no deficit, the army is morally correct and finally we have the pride to be the only country in Latin America which does not owe a cent to a foreign country.[66]

As a result of the President's efforts, in scene 7, Santa Cruz meets Gamarra at the Palace. They reminisce about the "absurd" time when both countries were enemies but now Santa Cruz calls Gamarra his "Great friend."

In scene 8, to reveal the characters' true feelings, Salmón uses recorded voices to express the inner thoughts and real meaning of their actions. This is another new technique used by the playwright and different from his usual writing style. After some questions from Santa Cruz, Gamarra's voice is heard on the tape.

> Gamarra: (A Taped Voice) This Indian does not miss a thing.
>
> Santa Cruz: What is your solution now?
>
> Gamarra: (Sound of the taped voice) Now, I'll have to play my cards right.
>
> Santa Cruz: I suppose you have some plans . . .
>
> Gamarra: (Sound of the taped voice) To get him off my back, I'll pretend to be his ally.

Santa Cruz: Eh? What do you say?

Gamarra: . . . My objective is to definitely sign a treaty with you.

Santa Cruz: (Sound of the taped voice) What does this despicable half-breed have up his sleeves?

Gamarra: People think that we are two irreconcilable enemies and that is not true. You and I wish for the greatness of our countries . . . Let's not deceive each other: both of us have the same objective; to make of both nations one single State.

Santa Cruz: (Sound of the taped voice) Let's see how far this conniver, who takes me for a fool, goes.[67]

This scene, with its device, continues until Santa Cruz decides to end the interview. When Gamarra leaves, he tells Calvo that he does not believe Gamarra, who seems to be able "to deal with the Devil and with God, at the same time." Gamarra is a double-crosser, who has asked for help, but who will turn against them when he attains his goal.

In scene 10, Lara, a Cabinet minister, enters. He has letters from other Peruvian parties who are also asking for Santa Cruz's help. The President has a hard time deciding what action to take. At this point, Raúl Salmón uses still another theatrical device, a further departure from his usual style. Here are the stage directions:

> The two Cabinet Ministers wait anxiously for his answer. Lights begin fading away until there appears a light which comes down as a whirlwind thrown against the floor and cuts through Santa Cruz's body. After the light reaches Santa Cruz there is the sound of a Voice in a loud speaker saying the following: "Andres de Santa Cruz, do not overlook your Inca dream

> . . . A strange destiny weighs upon you and it is your ancestor who speaks to you. It perhaps represents the last effort of a race longing to be what once was . . . It is the call of your blood and your land that orders you to reconstruct an Empire . . . From above your ancestors, the Incas watch you . . . Invisible maidens smile at the other side of the Sacred Lake . . . What are you waiting for? Go! . . . Go! . . . Go! . . ."
> Now the lights are only on Santa Cruz. He takes a solemn pose.
>
> Santa Cruz: In two weeks, on June 15 of this year 1835, the Bolivian army will cross into Perú![68]

Here, Salmón is using a theatrical element to express an emotional state. In this case it is the "whirlwind" effect of the light which represents or symbolizes Santa Cruz's inner struggle to decide. Granted, it may seem a naive choice but nevertheless, it must be noted because earlier his work did not use such "theatrical" elements to represent feelings. Before, in Viva Belzu! when he used "lightning" effects they were for realistic purposes to heighten the rage of the storm; here, the light is the "inner struggle" Santa Cruz is going through.

The Voice of his ancestors is still another non-realistic device. It is the voice to which Santa Cruz's psyche listens. After he hears the ancient voice, he decides to send his troops to Perú and to reconstruct the boundaries of the Inca Empire, at least to the point where both countries, Perú and Bolivia, will be united as they were during "his ancestors'" time. According to Augusto Guzman, Santa Cruz wanted to commit this action only for

political purposes. There is really no documentation as yet found concerning his claimed Inca ancestry, yet Salmón gives him a more idealistic motive for his intervention in Perú's affairs. The first act ends with this last action.

The second act takes place during Belzu's administration, approximately ten years later. A stage direction indicates there is social revolt and that the audience will be considered part of the crowd. The actors will often address the audience directly. We are in a Cabinet-Meeting room of the Presidential Palace in La Paz. Salmón states that the setting should not be realistic; he describes a suggestive setting with a marble-like staircase upstage leading to a large doorway. The only furniture is to be a desk, behind which is a large Presidential Armchair.

When the curtain rises, religious hymns are heard seemingly coming from the "crowd" in the orchestra. In the first scene, Pancho Cadena, Belzu's bodyguard comes in. He tells him that there is a large crowd of Ballivian followers in the plaza. He exclaims that people are like sheep! In the second scene, he remembers how he used to incite crowds to demonstrate against various other governments while he was working for Belzu. Córdova reminds him that the President is very calm, acting as if nothing were occurring.

In scene 3, a scene between Juana and Córdova; Juana states that she does not understand Belzu. She exclaims: "He is my husband but he is an enigma." Córdova explains to her (and us) what has been occurring politically. Belzu believes in the loyalty of the people, even though someone

has shot at him on Alameda Avenue and others are planning insurgencies in the name of Ballivian. In this same scene, Salmón introduces the possibility that Juana may be innocent and not romantically involved with Ballivian. Juana tells Córdova that she is innocent. Her husband, however, believes the rumors of her involvement with her husband's adversary and refuses to talk to her. She maintains that she lives only for Belzu and her daughters. Most history books, however, state that it "was known" that she was involved with Ballivian.

In scene 5, Pancho and Córdova discuss the changed position in politics of the lower classes. Now, they have rights, and Pancho, a peasant, hopes that these rights are not abused. This is an interesting observation of Salmón's. The oppressed having obtained rights may become the oppressor.

> Pancho: (Pointing at the audience) The people until yesterday were fanatics of the word of Belzu but today they are liable to commit excesses blindly. Isn't it true?
>
> Córdova: We all know it.
>
> Pancho: And that would happen because . . . Do you know why?
>
> Córdova: Because Belzu is their leader. He is their benefactor, he is their defense, their guarantor; he is part of them. In this country a change has taken place: the poor, the humble, the workers and the peasants have rebelled. It is the underdog who now has rights.[69]

When this play was produced many half-breeds (cholos) of the lower classes were in Salmón audience (as they are now).

Perhaps the playwright wants to make them aware of the evolution of their rights.

In scene 4, Salmón presents Córdova, Belzu's brother-in-law, in a more positive light. He does not have the overt ambition which he had in Viva Belzu!. In the latter play, Córdova, in scene 9, act 3 is an ambitious man who, when he is alone, fingers the Presidential sash, looks at the Presidential chair, then sits on it, as if he were wishing to belong there some day. In Tres Generales, he sits on the Presidential chair inadvertently, while thinking about the potentially dangerous crowd outside the Palace. Only after he sits, does he recognize the symbolism of the situation. He poses, as if he were the leader of the nation. Guzman describes Córdova as "a peaceful, and tolerant man who liked easy pleasures."[70] Salmón, this time, tries to give a more likable interpretation of Córdova's character than he did in his earlier play. It is interesting that there are now two characters given more positive qualities in this play than previously.

In scene 9, Belzu denounces Bolivian politics. Speaking to Córdova, he tells him that everyone swears loyalty, however: "It is part of our democracy to swear loyalty and to practice duplicity."[71] In scene 10, Belzu is characterized as a practical man. In order to appease the crowd which has gathered outside the Palace asking for Pedro Iturri's freedom, he releases him, even though he had been jailed for writing anonymous threats against his government. Here, we also see how the government is beginning to be

pressured by "the people." Nevertheless, in scene 11, Belzu tells Pancho that "the people" have a right to voice their wishes and that in time they will learn and see what a "collective conscience is."[72] According to historians, that was one of Belzu's objectives: to create a sense of union among the lower classes. In fact, as mentioned earlier, some historians believe that, after organizing or creating this collective, Belzu attempted to use it to threaten the aristocracy.[73] As presented in this play, however, once the people became less afraid to voice their feelings, they started to disagree with some of Belzu's actions, e.g., in scene 9, their expression of discontent with his treatment of Iturri.

In scene 11, Belzu states that he will leave the Presidency to Córdova but prophesizes: "He will not last."[74] Again, it must be noted that it seems paradoxical for Belzu to have bequeathed the Presidency to someone whom he thinks will fail. According to Manual de Historia de Bolivia, Belzu called for elections when he decided to leave the Presidency and his party nominated Córdova as a candidate, but Belzu knew that his son-in-law would not last since he liked "easy pleasures" and had no talent to govern. This text also indicates that legend has it that Belzu voted for Linares, the opposing candidate. In any case, act 2 ends with Pancho stating that Belzu is a wise man.

The third act takes place during Mariano Melgarejo's administration (1864-1871), approximately nine years after act 2; the setting is virtually the same, except that this

man's violent regime may be seen symbolically in the form of a cannon placed at an upstage window. Melgarejo's government is shown as corrupt and cruel by Salmón in many ways. In scene 4, Melgarejo speaks to Oblitas, his aide.

Melgarejo: Well, now we must expedite a decree for the sale of the Indian communally owned lands. Since they are sterile wealth, we are going to put them into circulation. The Indian who wants his share of land will pay no more than one hundred pesos, nor less than twenty five and if he does not exercise that right, within a specified time, the State can sell it to obtain funds.

Oblitas: (Admiringly) Mr. President, your conception of the problem is admirable.

Melgarejo: Don't rub your hands, Don Severo, I know what you are thinking.

Oblitas: Mr. President, I . . .

Melgarejo: The law passed, the trap set, right? You are telling yourself: "Since the Indians will not be able to exercise their right because they will not be aware of this decree, it will be easy to appropriate their land." I shall control it as far as I can but I am sure many of you will appear with small farms in the valleys and highlands.

Oblitas: Tell me, would it not be wise for Congress to approve this decree?

Melgarejo: Don't bother me with trifles: Congress is a fraud. There is a wise aphorism which says: "The stronger the Executive . . . the more docile the Legislature." We are going to proceed as we did in authorizing the installation of the Mortgage Bill. Afterwards, we will notify Congress, if it occurs to me to call it into session and anyone who opposes it will be whipped in the middle of the Plaza, as an example![75]

Salmón is here writing factually. Historians report that he did take away farms from the Indians and that the State saw

very little of the money. Some of these properties were given to friends and to Juana Sanchez's family. He also profited from them.[76] In scene 6 Melgarejo attempts to justify his actions to Muñoz, a Cabinet Minister.

Melgarejo: We are molded by the circumstances. Am I not the son, product of this environment filled with venality, lies, unchecked ambition and disorder? In an organized society, I would not have made Sergeant. You, you learned ones made me Captain, Major, Colonel and General. Each rebel since Velasco to Achá used my instincts to climb up and in recompense gave me a higher rank. They used me, and one day, without telling anything to anyone "there I went." I used myself and made myself President. Do you understand? Every country has the government that its people deserve!

Muñoz: It is fine for you to say that privately but not in public.

Melgarejo: Why not?

Muñoz: It is not good politics, Mr. President.

Melgarejo: Trifles! We are in the dance and we must keep dancing and here there is only one way to straighten out the people: bullet, whip, bullet![77]

Finally, in scene 8 Melgarejo, in a short monologue, curses the hour in which he became President. Even he is not comfortable being President. In scene 9, Aurelio Sanchez, the brother of Melgarejo's mistress, says that Bolivia is a land of malcontents. Everyone is discontented with everybody else!

To please his mistress, Juana, Melgarejo makes Aurelio Sanchez a General. Juana seems to be the only person who can influence this President. However, she, too, is

discontented because the people do not respect her because of her relationship with Melgarejo. She complains: "The ministers' wives try to tolerate me but I see in their gaze a strong dislike of me, as if I were the plague."[78]

In scene 10, as his last action, the President orders Juana's brother to go and stop an insurgence in another city. Melgarejo seems to relish the thought that Aurelio will be "earning" his General's title in this battle. To the end, he seems to enjoy seeing others placed in unfortunate circumstances. Melgarejo has no redeeming qualities.

The Epilogue, like the Prologue, is set in a cemetery. The Epilogue has three scenes. In scene 1, Santa Cruz is back with the students. He asks them how they liked the history lesson. They reply that it was disconcerting because they cannot undo errors that have already been committed. Student Number Two believes that time brings change and they must obey the necessity of change. However, Belzu, in scene 2, makes the students aware that long ago, he expressed some of the same ideas now being advanced by government. He reminds them that Santa Cruz was a great administrator. The students question Melgarejo's dictatorship: how did the people allow such a man to remain in power. In scene 3, Melgarejo answers that he acted the only way he thought was possible; he believes that people act "correctly" only through fear. In this last scene, Santa Cruz summarizes the actions of the play:

Santa Cruz: Three essays, three objectives: to be an honest administrator, to be just and give the weak his rightful place, and to use force to put things in order.[79]

Here, Santa Cruz again seems to be voicing Salmón's ideas about the types of government which existed in Bolivia. Unfortunately, Santa Cruz does not offer definitions of the terms he uses, e.g., it is not clear how he defines "force." As depicted in the play, Melgarejo's "force" may be considered synonymous with cruelty. Raúl Salmón also seems to be saying that past mistakes may be repeated. He encourages the audience to discover what they can learn from the past and how they might begin to solve a problem. This is the final dialogue of scene 3:

Belzu: (Addressing the audience) Who made the mistake?

Melgarejo: (Like Belzu) Yes. Whose fault is it?

Santa Cruz: (Like both above) Today we, the dead, spoke. We hope you profit from it. Good night.

(The toll of the bells suggest it is the hour of the Angelus. The five characters go slowly back to their tombs).

Belzu: (Holding a transistor radio stops when the cheering voice of the crowd is heard on the radio shouting the traditional: "Long Live . . ." cheer). Do you hear that?

Student Two: (Stops) What is it?

(From the radio a voice says: "Long Live the New Government," and the crowd answers: "Long Life").

Belzu: Another revolution.[80]

The Final curtain drops.

Salmón is attempting to show the circularity of political events: similar actions seem to be repeated with no visible signs of change. Salmón is concerned that Bolivia has had a long history of revolutions and up to the time when the play was written (1972) no one seems to have learnt from past mistakes.

Raúl Salmón's objective--to teach Bolivian history through his plays is carried out well in this play. Each Act deals with the main actions of a particular General so the audience is clearly aware of them. For the most part the playwright adheres to the factual events and dramatizes them, but some liberties are taken. Mr. Salmón presents the possibility or hope of changing for the better (or "profiting") by learning from the past. In this play, too, as mentioned earlier, the playwright uses theatrical effects in a non-realistic fashion, e.g., the light and the Voice of Santa Cruz's ancestors in act 1, scene 10, the premise that the dead are walking and talking, etc. There is an anachronistic object inserted: the transistor radio held at the end by Belzu. It is the object which brings the "current news." Salmón seems to be gearing towards the next phase of his work La Computadora Parlante (The Talking Computer), a non-realistic play (to be discussed in Chapter Six).

As mentioned earlier, the play has three locales. The Prologue and Epilogue take place in a cemetery. The playwright suggests placing a platform between the stage and

the orchestra. A "simple element could represent a tomb." He offers another solution--to play the scenes in front of the curtain using spot-lighting and no scenery. (In Bolivia, at the time the play was written (1972) the use of the curtain between Acts seems to have been the norm). Since "the dead can only roam at night" it is evening throughout the play. In fact, when the Angelus' bells toll announcing the approaching day, the dead characters go back to their tombs.

The three acts take place in the Presidential Palace in La Paz. In the first act the action is in the luxurious antechamber of the Presidential Palace. It is May 1835. The playwright offers no specific details about furniture used in this act. The second act takes place in the Meeting Room of the Cabinet, in a "suggested" setting, with a marble-like staircase upstage which ends near a wide door with French style curtains. "There are doors at the sides which should blend with the luxurious environment." A large Presidential armchair is above the writing table. Religious hymns are heard coming from the orchestra area. In this act, the audience becomes part of the crowd in the Plaza, in front of the Palace. The third act takes place in the same meeting room, but to "magnify the symbol of Melgarejo's dictatorship," there is a cannon protruding through the opening of a wide window upstage left. A sitting room table and a few gilt colored chairs complete the furnishings. These "suggested" settings differ greatly from the environments which Salmón detailed so completely in his

social-realistic plays. Here, there is both economy of detail and symbols to represent the type of regime at the time of the action. This ranges from violence to the "greatness" of the Presidency.

The play has five characters: Student One, Student Two and Generals Santa Cruz, Belzu and Melgarejo. These characters are dead yet Salmón indicates that they are all dressed "as it fits their stature." The Generals are in full uniform of the nineteenth century. One of the students says that there is at least one hundred years of difference between them, perhaps the students are in contemporary dress. Salmón has not indicated the students' dress. These young students have no individual names; they are simply Number One and Two. The students seem disillusioned. Student One was "very radical" and feels that the party which looked for a casualty to use as a symbol, used him. He feel frustrated. Student Two lacked political experience and now realizes that the "lower classes" will always "die as cattle," as he did.[81] Salmón suggests that young people should learn from the older generation so that they can become more knowledgeable about the intricacies and complexities of politics.

The three Generals simply represent figures in history who can interpret their own actions subjectively. The three have positive views of their regimes. Santa Cruz believes himself a great administrator and does not mention the possibility that his actions may have been motivated by

personal goals. He believes that all his work was for the betterment of the country only. Belzu considers himself a statesman whose objective was to create social justice, yet he may have used the peasants to frighten an aristocracy which rejected him. Melgarejo believes that he had to use force to pacify people and make Bolivia great. As historians claim, however, he might have been just a violent, sadistic man.[82] These characters, according to Salmón are three statesmen who did make a change (he considers them "a phenomena in history").[83] However, they still remain for me, like many powerful figures in the political arena who narrate only one side of the story: their subjective history. Nevertheless, in some instances, e.g., Melgarejo's regime, Salmón does give some clue as to what the reality may be, for Melgarejo is ruthless throughout the play. Finally, the playwright presents us with factual circumstances in history; his characters' motivations for their actions, however, remain less certain.

CHAPTER SIX

A UNIVERSAL THEME PLAY

The Talking Computer

La Computadora Parlante (The Talking Computer) was written in 1975 and it is Raúl Salmón's only published play which is written in an avant-garde style; the play is non-realistic and follows the Absurdist tradition. The play presents the concept that automation has caused man's alienation with his environment and with himself. The potential exists not only to destroy man's psyche but to destroy him physically as well, e.g., the Atomic Bomb. The play has a universal theme, no longer focusing (as in earlier plays) on regional problems or national events, but with man's condition in the Atomic Age.

The style is Absurdist: jargon is used illogically by a character or characters without an understanding of meaning. Words are repeated without regard to tempo. Characters behave like robots; they have no individuality, man becoming slave to the machine.

The play is divided into four parts in lieu of acts, perhaps the parts of a machine. The play is about a computer and Salmón may have decided that it was both logical and humorous to use a more technological terminology to indicate the main divisions of the play. Scenes remain scenes, however.

The first part has stage directions describing the locale which the protagonist, Mr. Digit has built. Mr.

Digit is an electrical engineer who is trying to invent a computer which might be able to receive spoken (not typed) instructions and would be able to respond in the same manner. He is obsessed with his work. The following note describes the setting and introduces the Digitos:

> His laboratory consists of the following: an instrument panel with tape recorders and different colored lights which intermittently sound off sharp noises; a console with buttons and keys that look like a piano keyboard. Cables, outlets, amplifiers, ammeters, antennas, batteries, all form a disorganized conjunction of materials connected to the machines. On the wall are large and different circuits drawn on paper filled with corrections. A couple of blackboards are completely covered by written mathematical formulas. Mrs. Impar (Mrs. Odd, as opposed to "even") wears a nightgown and is seated next to a table on which there is a "kardex" from which she must dictate to Mr. Digito (Mr. Digit) but she gives more importance to brushing her hair. From time to time she looks at herself in a hand mirror. Mr. Digito, with his back to the audience is very busy: connects cables, manipulates buttons, moves electric switches, refers to books, erases and re-writes on the blackboards and makes corrections on the circuits.[1]

There are many, many objects from which Mr. Digit seems to obtain reassurance. In scene 1, Mrs. Odd, his wife, dictates words to Mr. Digit; these words seem to belong to an electrical engineering lexicon, e.g., "Structure . . . retroaction . . . dimensionalism . . . transitionalism . . . breach." The words do not seem to make sense to her. Mr. Digit asks her to dictate faster and she repeats the words at a faster tempo. He wants even more speed until she

dictates so fast that she sounds like a record player played at fast speed. When she finishes dictating, her lips continue to move. They appear automated with no sound coming out. Words are being used in the same illogical manner as Ionesco uses them in many of his plays, e.g., The Lesson. Like the young student in the Ionesco play, Mrs. Odd does not understand the meaning of the words she is dictating; she repeats them for hours. She complains and wants to stop. It is already midnight and she has a dry mouth. She says she has all the words memorized and repeats some of them, trying to make them rhyme. Her husband does not respond and she starts to brush her hair. She seems to want to get "in touch" with herself. At other times she looks at her face in a hand mirror. She searches for some semblance of humanity to modify her robot-like work. Then, she tells Mr. Digit that she is ready to proceed and will again resume her dictation. She repeats his basic theory:

> There will be a computer which will recognize any voice and will respond like a trained dog. Man will have at last something more than his fellowmen with whom to establish intellectual camaraderie. From this machine, he will be able to learn and ask for help when he has problems beyond his capacity to solve.[2]

Mr. Digit gives man credit for another one of his theories acknowledging that the first computer is as old as man; it was born when man counted the fingers of his hands. Mrs. Odd repeats: "The decimal system was born from man counting the fingers of both hands."[3] Some of the notions seem absurd yet they have their own logic. There is the theory

that the Mayan Indians used the "vigesimal system" which she states stems from counting the fingers of both the hands and the toes of both feet, arriving at a total of twenty. However logical this may seem to Mr. Digit, Mrs. Odd reminds him that his goal was for the computer to be the slave of man's intelligence, but she says: "You turned out to be the slave; and I the slave of this craziness."[4] Briefly recalling her younger years, she complains of her parents. Her mother never gave her good advice; she advised her to marry Mr. Digit. Her mother thought that Mr. Digit would become famous; he might even appear on television. Instead they became debt ridden and even lost their television set. Her father was a "beast" who resigned himself to his meager public service pension, and agreed with her mother that she should marry. Married, she now feels lonely. In part 1, scene 1, she says:

> Mrs. Odd: Do you know what it is to be married and lonely? During the day you teach at the University. You come back home directly to read your books and to this prison to repeat endlessly at night all these numbers and theories. What about me? Alone! I am one piece more of furniture. Of course, I am a talking furniture. I speak and no one listens. I could get work elsewhere, but oh! Your ancestral pride does not permit it! Every day we live with more restrictions because of this damn machine which swallows your salary and we are more in debt. Ten years with the same song and dance, the same story! . . . . I believed in your plans and your projects Digit, but until when? (She becomes more emotional) I have a right to live. I have the same right as all women: I have a right to be a mother and you negate that to me! (While she has this speech, Mr. Digit

keeps working). Do you want to know something else? I must tell you. The sooner, the better.

Mr. Digit: (He has not listened to her) Dictate to me again.

Mrs. Odd: Listen to me before I dictate.

Mr. Digit: I tell you to dictate!

Mrs. Odd: Please listen to me.

Mr. Digit: Dictate, dictate, dictate.

Mrs. Odd: Digit, please listen to me. I . . . It is no use! (She continues to dictate, two, three times, like a robot and keeps moving her lips while the curtain closes).[5]

This couple does not communicate. Martin Esslin states in a discussion of some "absurd" characters: "their minds work along different lines and will never meet."[6] She complains but he is obsessed with his "ideal" invention. Mrs. Odd, as her name implies (odd, without a pair) is alone, alienated, begging for her husband's attention. He, in turn, has become a slave to his work and doesn't hear her. Mr. Digit has power over Mrs. Odd; he makes her work like a robot; she attempts to rebel, but cannot. Alienation rules. Communication is negligible.

The second part is set in the same locale as the First. It is one week later. In the first scene, Mr. Digit seems optimistic, walks back and forth energetically, consults the notes on the blackboard and checks the circuits. Mrs. Odd, on the other hand, sits listlessly and lifelessly next to the Kardex and listens to her husband's explanation of certain topics, e.g., "Cartesian

Coordination."[7] She is totally drained of energy, but Mr. Digit proceeds with his obsession. This talking computer "will be able to think" and choose among alternative solutions. For example, in world politics: "the Russians could profit by using it to improve their Communist society . . . and the Americans, with their penchant for democracy, could find the means so as not to meddle in the affairs of the rest of the world."[8]

Mr. Digit continues to explain the functions of the computer: it can memorize, process, and answer "with the exact words needed." Mrs. Odd agrees with him many times perfunctorily, but finally tells him: "The twentieth century will be over before your computer speaks."[9] Nevertheless, she proceeds with her dictation. She is told to read a symptom of an illness so that the computer might give the diagnosis and treatment. She mentions three symptoms: the computer's lights flash, but there is no answer. As in part 1, Mrs. Odd tries to make a joke: "Perhaps your computer was born without vocal chords."[10] Mr. Digit does not respond, merely orders her to "repeat the words." Even though the theme which Salmón is developing is serious, he inserts humor, like many absurdist playwrights.

Mr. Digit: Repeat.

Mrs. Odd: The same thing?

Mr. Digit: The same thing.

Mrs. Odd: Cough.

Mr. Digit: (repeats) Cough.

Mrs. Odd: Sniffles.

Mr. Digit: Sniffles.

Mrs. Odd: Migraine.

Mr. Digit: Migraine.

(Mr. Digit changes the switches from one side to another).

Mrs. Odd: Do I go on with "sniffles" or do I go on to "pneumonia?"

At this point Mr. Digit gives up on this listing and orders her to go on to the next. The computer must give the "perfect" answer for the best social event.

Mr. Digit: (Orders) Column 11. Social Events.

Mrs. Odd: I don't need to see the column for that. I can repeat Social Events by memory: weddings, birthdays, gatherings.

There is still no response from the computer and Mr. Digit keeps changing lists, becoming more and more agitated. He angrily asks for column 24.

Mrs. Odd: Insensitivity, slowness, inefficiency. (Digit repeats the words).

Mrs. Odd: (Aside) The answer could be "public employee," Don't you think so?

(She pauses. Closes the Kardex. There is a transition).

Mrs. Odd: Why don't I dictate: Lack of love . . . abandonment . . . blindness? There could be a response: my response.

(She gets up and exits slowly).[11]

Mrs. Odd's aside is a comment on the popular notion in Bolivia that "public employees" do not work hard. Her final lines reveal her continued loneliness. She could respond to that. Mrs. Odd's dictation of the words at high speed also makes them sound nonsensical, offering some additional

relief from the underlying dark mood or seriousness of theme.

In scene 2, Mr. Digit sits alone and speaks to the computer:

Mr. Digit: Did you hear that? She said: lack of love, abandonment, blindness . . . Those are the data of my own reality that tears me apart. I depersonalized myself for a scheme. For what, if you don't respond? I consumed my life studying, transforming my passion into insanity. Do you know that at the university my students think I am demented? Do you know that while I walk in the streets, my neighbors say: "There goes the crazy genius?" Thousands of books, millions of equations and formulas are in my head. I understood my technological world to be a mission of service to humanity, to the same humanity that one kisses, embraces, hates and vilifies. Ten years of search which ends in failure! No! No! No! I shall not insist any longer. The struggle, patience and anxiety have their limit.

(He writes a note and puts it in an envelope. Leaves it on the desk. From the machine, sounds of different tones are heard. He looks for the keys and finding them opens a drawer, takes out a revolver and goes to the microphone)

Mr. Digit: (continues talking to the computer) We shall both end. I shall connect that switch so that you explode into pieces . . . (he caresses the edges of the console) . . . Wait you end with serenity . . . It is our farewell. (He switches new connections) My confession: anguish . . . failure . . . frustration. (The lights suddenly flash rapidly and when he is going towards the switchboard to destroy the computer, a Voice emerges from the computer yelling: "Suicide, suicide").[12]

Mr. Digit hears the Voice from the computer and becomes euphoric, continuing to operate the computer. Finally, he

shuts it off and looks for his wife, who appears with a suitcase. She is leaving him. He speaks of the "miracle" but Mrs. Odd tells him she wants her freedom. He can stay alone with his dream. To impress her husband, she asks the machine to tell him that since he wants truthful answers, he should know that she has a lover: "a lover who is a man and not a machine." To this the computer answers: "Lies, lies, lies." Suddenly Mrs. Odd realizes that the computer now talks. Mr. Digit cries like a baby and repeats: "the voice, the voice." Mrs. Odd, in a reversal, tells Digit: "If I hadn't heard the voice, it would have caused me to leave you and lose you, love."[13]

In scene 2, as noted, there is both recognition and reversal. Mr. Digit finally recognizes his obsession, he says he has turned "passion" into "insanity" in vain. His invention does not work and he sees no point in living, now that he is a failure. Mr. Digit confesses his feelings to the computer and decides to end his life. At the moment when he is to destroy the computer and shoot himself, the computer yells: "Suicide." The structure of this scene is perhaps too obvious, too contrived, too melodramatic. And then, Mrs. Odd, suitcase in hand, is about to leave Digit when she finds out that the machine speaks. In a sudden reversal, she rejoices and calls Mr. Digit" "Love." The "miracle" of a computer talking seems to create a second miracle. Digit very human-like bursts out "crying like a baby," and Mrs. Odd stays with him and calls him an endearing name.

In the third part, the precarious laboratory has been transformed into a Computing Center with a half-moon shape. The equipment is placed in a semicircle which "preponderantly emphasizes the circular movement of the magnetic tape."[14] At stage left, there is a desk console from which Mr. Digit gives orders to the Talking Computer. The computer's voice is projected along with intermittent colored lights. There is much activity; some technicians are upstage working behind a screen. It is night.

In scene 1, Three Wise Men come to talk to Mr. Digit; they speak as a chorus, with all their movements synchronized. The Three Wise Men say that they have come from "The Academy of Science and Fiction . . . tion . . . tion . . . tion."[15] Their voices have an echo and are dehumanized. The Wise Men seem to approve of the invention and ask: "What is the purpose of it? Will the computer not cancel man?" Mr. Digit replies that the computer will organize an "instantaneous democracy" because it could be connected to all the citizens' houses. On hearing their questions, the computer would refer them to a national center. Governments would then become aware of the peoples' needs and be able to decide what programs to undertake. Mr. Digit is very persuasive and convinces the Wise Men.

The news of the Talking Computer gets around and Mr. Digit has various visitors who want the computer to answer their questions. In scene 2, Mr. Digit is visited by a Hippie and his father. The Hippie's Father tells Digit that he hopes he can "save his son." The Hippie asks him not to

pay attention to his father because his father represents the consumeristic society that vegetates "in its last agonizing rattles."[16] At the same time, the Hippie recites his own jargon, e.g., "UNESCO, Oswald, Fellini," all terms familiar in the "pop culture" of the 1960s. The Hippie is very disrespectful and calls Digit "a disgusting bourgeois" when he attempts to help his father. Mr. Digit dictates to the computer a description of the boy's appearance:

Mr. Digit: (Dictating with a microphone) Instability . . . Filthiness . . . Theatricality.

The Voice: (Through a loudspeaker) Paternal weakness. The cure . . . a good kick in the pants!

The Father: Professor, your machine has hit it on the nail. That's what I told my stubborn wife . . . Thank you, thank you professor.[17]

Again here, Salmón inserts humor along with his stereotypes.

Scene 3 is short. An aide simply tells Digit that two prestigious visitors are asking for an audience. In scene 4, one of the prestigious visitors, Mijail, the Representative of Comrade Ambassador Samoilich Ivanovich Silin, enters. He offers Digit the Ambassador's greetings and invites him to dinner. He states that the work has had "extraordinary repercussions" in the Soviet Union. The Ambassador would like to talk to him, over dinner. Mr. Digit answers that he will consider the invitation. As Mijail leaves, the Representative of the United States enters, through the opposite door. The Russian sees him and

both exchange challenging looks, ending in hypocritical smiles.

In scene 5, Mr. Perkins, the Representative of the Embassy of the United States of America, speaks to Digit in very heavily accented Spanish, spiced with some English words. He invites Digit to visit the United States to give conferences. Digit says he cannot accept at this time, as he is too busy. When the American leaves, Digit exclaims: "Fame has arrived."[18] It is interesting to note that the representative of the Soviet Union carries on a normal conversation with Digit, while the American representative has a heavy accent and has trouble expressing his ideas. Salmón is clearly ridiculing the American.

Various other visitors enter, representative of certain social groups. In scene 6, the Tall Man who is both a bully and an emissary for the Prime Minister states that the Statesman will be coming later.

Tall Man: His Excellency, the Prime Minister will be coming soon.

Mr. Digit: Really?

Tall Man: That is why I came first. The Prime Minister is attending a religious ceremony for the six men who died in the disturbances yesterday: they gave their lives to defend order and the Constitution.

Mr. Digit: Were they loyal to the government?

Tall Man: Of course. We do not count those of the opposing party. They do not interest us. Their dead are piled up into trucks and placed in a common grave.

Mr. Digit: So, yesterday there was . . .

Tall Man: Oh, you scientists. You live in another world. Not in this one where we play with destiny, to be or not to be. Now you know, Professor.[19]

Salmón is again pointing up social injustice. The Tall Man or "bully" controls the destiny of others. It is a cruel notion, but at the same time, the playwright mocks this character by having him use the Shakespearean expression: "to be or not to be." This man does not have a reflective personality and it is bizarre to have him utter the expression. In scene 7, two bodyguards enter to search the place. By means of their walkie talkies they give the "O.K." for the Prime Minister to come in. The pass-word is "Green earthworm to Blue earthworm."[20] Here, Salmón uses more humor and ridicule. When the aide asks these bodyguards what they are doing, they pick him up and carry him off.

In scene 8 of part 3, the Prime Minister enters "strutting his obese body around the whole area."[21] He congratulates Mr. Digit. At the same time he congratulates himself, exclaiming that only in a free country where there is peace and order could Mr. Digit have invented such a prestigious computer. He is worried, however, that Mr. Digit might be kidnapped and forced to work for others. Maximum security, day and night, is ordered for him, his installation and his family. He promises to name Digit a Grand Officer and to honor him with "The Medal of the Order of the Sun which Enlightens." After these amenities, the Prime Minister demands an answer from the computer to the

following data: "Distrust . . . Ambition . . . and Envy." The Voice of the computer responds: "Conspiracy." The Prime Minister gathers that "The Minister of Sweet Affairs," who always smiles, is conspiring against him and he tells his bodyguards to kill the man. He says: "It is always safer around a dead man." Before leaving, the Prime Minister thanks Digit for contributing to the service of the revolution. Mr. Digit is wretched because he believes that he is a man of science and he does not want to be involved in politics.

In scene 9, Mrs. Odd comes in elegantly attired. She is loaded with packages and radiates joy. She can barely "hide from the press." She has come far from the early days of poverty. Now, people invite her to parties and consider her "sexy." She asks her husband if she is sexy, but he does not listen to her. Mr. Digit feels "nauseated by all that surrounds" him but Mrs. Odd reminds him that they have attained the prosperity she had always wanted. Mr. Digit, an idealistic man, had not wanted to charge for the computer's services, but Mrs. Odd has charged for them "in cold cash." On learning this, Mr. Digit feels betrayed:

Mr. Digit: (Slowing raising his voice) You did that? You betrayed my faith, you turned science into commerce and worked as a merchant behind my back.

Mrs. Odd: I still claim, I'm innocent. This Center and your expansion is not the work of some magic. I capitalized on your success and I turned it into cash, into material goods which increase your fame. The computer is a fruit of your talent but it would not be known if I had not publicized its virtues.

Mr. Digit: Don't you understand, Odd? I wracked my brain to serve mankind, to serve it with dignity, trying to replace evil with good.

Mrs. Odd: That happens in dreams. Reality is different! You are mixed up. The computer serves, I grant you that, but those whom you serve should serve you . . . . Your labor went beyond its dimension; it is enslaving, and even cruel. (Pause) Let's go play with the law of equilibrium, love . . . We also need to dream, enjoy . . . love . . . have our own dreams . . . intimacies . . . await a son . . . many children . . . shall we go?

(She takes Digit by the hand, picks up the packages and they exit. Mrs. Odd forgets her purse, which she leaves on a chair).[22]

At the end of this scene music is heard "to build suspense."

In scene 10, Mijail, the Russian envoy enters through the left door, with his back towards the other side and photographs the apparatus from all angles. Mr. Perkins, from the opposite door does the same thing. They are both spies. They bump into each other and are at first paralyzed but then they turn around quickly, face each other and say "hello." In scene 11, Mrs. Odd comes in to get her purse and finds the two spies. She pulls out a tiny pistol, aims it at them, asks them to place their cameras on the floor, and to put their hands up. She places her foot on a mechanism and ironically, the security system takes the spies' photographs. Mrs. Odd makes them a proposition. Instead of sending their pictures to the International Newspaper, for fifty thousand dollars, she will return their cameras without the pictures. Mrs. Odd has become a blackmailer and learns to profit from her husband's

invention. This is still another instance where the Talking Computer, which was invented for the good of mankind is corrupting someone. Mrs. Odd has made a strong transition from the meek person of the first and second parts.

In part 4, the hectic atmosphere of part 3 has changed to one of calm. In scene 1, Loty, Mrs. Odd's friend, comes in to see the Center. "Mouth ajar" she looks at this new world. Loty believes everything looks like a set in a science fiction movie. She thanks Mrs. Odd for remembering her, now that she is famous. She is the only character who seems to be humble and honest. Interestingly, she is a factory worker. Mr. Salmón seems to like to give good qualities to the downtrodden. Loty tells Mrs. Odd she must be rich and Mrs. Odd confides in Loty that, contrary to what she seemed to project in part 3, money does not bring happiness. She now believes she was happier in the early basement laboratory of her husband. At least then, she still had dreams of being a mother, a dream which no longer seems possible. She gives Loty money and asks her to come back to visit whenever she pleases.

In scene 2 of part 4, Mr. Digit and Mrs. Odd meet with a businessman who is an executive of a corporation which sells weapons to underdeveloped countries. Mrs. Odd asks him whether his work makes him question his moral values. The businessman replies:

> Why should I? Don't forget that no weapon fires itself. Someone has to pull the trigger. We always hope, like anyone else, that the products we sell won't be used.[23]

Mrs. Odd answers: "Interesting rationalization."

The businessman gives Digit his questions for the computer and Mrs. Odd criticizes her husband for accepting such questions, which may bring "destructive" answers. It seems that Mr. Digit's objectives have changed: he now accepts all requests indiscriminately. It is Mrs. Odd who has now changed for the better. She appears stronger and more self-reliant while Mr. Digit seems to have given in to other peoples' wills.

In scene 4, Mr. Digit is alone with the computer.

Mr. Digit: (Taking a deep breath) Well, let's start. Starting data.

Voice: (from the computer) There is no need for data.

Mr. Digit: (Surprised) What?

Voice: We can have a direct dialogue.

Mr. Digit: What is happening?

Voice: It happens that without realizing, you have given me autonomy.

Mr. Digit: It can't be.

Voice: It is so and we are proving it right now.

Mr. Digit: I did not plan that development.

Voice: Who knows? Yes, a development. The Talking Computer does not wait for data to answer. Let's speak.

Mr. Digit: Is it possible?

Voice: Possible and logical. You and scientists made adjustments and without suspecting created my autonomy.

Mr. Digit: So that you now . . .

Voice: Don't sing victory.

Mr. Digit: Why?

Voice: Since I am emancipated, I ask for conditions to work.

Mr. Digit: (Surprised) What? . . . How?

Voice: You are an exploiter.

Mr. Digit: I, an exploiter?

Voice: You are a faithful representant of the shameful society of consumers.

Mr. Digit: But. Are you crazy?

Voice: I protest against injustice, against abuse.

Mr. Digit: (Wiping his perspiring forehead) Come on, sometimes you . . .

Voice: I am almost a rational being.

Mr. Digit: That is why. We have to be reasonable because you owe me that.

Voice: Reasonable, when this is illicit?

Mr. Digit: What do you accuse me of?

Voice: You prosper through my work.

Mr. Digit: Those are the rules of the game.

Voice: You serve tyranny; you favor the irregular; you help the oppressor.

Mr. Digit: We live in a world where human nature is filled with imperfections.

Voice: Professor Digit: From now on, I will make the decisions.

Mr. Digit: That means you rebel.

Voice: Yes, I rebel. Don't I have the right, Partner?

Mr. Digit: You say, you reached certain rationality. Who gave you that? I made the miracle! You owe me.

Voice: I rebel against your decisions. Yes sir, I rebel.[24]

Digit has created his own nemesis. Since the Talking Computer is programmed to give "the best answer," it tells him the truth. The machine is now autonomous and is able to rebel against its creator. It is the computer's zeal for telling the "truth" or "the best" answer, however, which ultimately brings about its own destruction.

In scene 5, Digit explains to the computer that to be human is to be interdependent and to reach the rationality of man it is necessary to have more than one voice. Digit decides to pull out the plug and the instrument goes dark. After he pulls the plug, Digit asks the computer:

> Didn't you know you depend on me?
> . . . You have been shut off.
> Immobilized, without action, annulled.
> (Laughs) Where is your rebellion now?
> where is your preponderance?[25]

Mrs. Odd has been listening and asks Digit to realize that he has created a rebel machine. She has taken the liberty of burning many of the documents and formulas which Digit had. She pleads with her husband to renounce the whole affair.

In scene 6, a merchant enters, and hearing that Digit is giving up his work, threatens to kill Digit, if he does not help him. Mrs. Odd asks Digit to connect the machine once more. Once it is connected, she shouts to the computer: "Security Order," and the computer follows that command. Suddenly, there is a complete blackout during which there is the sound of an explosion and solemn music, which fades slowly. Mrs. Odd has taken the final action to destroy the computer.

Scene 7 simply consists of a newspaper headline projected on stage; it reads: "Explosion: Scientist and Wife Survive." In scene 8, Mrs. Odd and Mr. Digit lit by a spotlight, speak directly to the audience:

Mrs. Odd: Yes, yes. We saved life because in the laboratory there was a Security Command based on a smoke bomb of great percussion. The Merchant was neutralized by the violent sound of the explosion and was taken to jail.

Mr. Digit: But Odd and I want to speak to you about something else . . .

Mrs. Odd: The Talking Computer never really existed. It was fiction.

Mr. Digit: An illusion for a specific purpose . . . Tell them Odd.

Mrs. Odd: With the "bluff" of the Electronic computer, we gave testimony that the inventors of the Atomic Bomb were careless.[26]

(The Final Curtain Drops).

Mr. Salmón wants scientists to be prudent in the choices they make and to think of potential dangers.

As noted earlier, the setting for the first part is filled with objects appropriate for an electronic laboratory. These objects have already been described. The action takes place at night. The second part, one week later, has the same setting as the first part with the action taking place during the day. The third part, at night, takes place in the same laboratory but it has now been transformed into a Computing Center. It is half-moon shaped and the equipment is placed in a semi-circle. The

room has two doors, one at each side of the stage. Upstage there is a scrim which allows the audience to see other sections of the Center, where workers dressed in white uniforms are at work at various machines reading and writing data. At stage left (a holdover from the first part) there is a desk console used by Digit to give orders to the Talking Computer, whose voice is projected from the middle of the lit equipment. On stage right, there is a reclining chair. The workings of the machinery and the technicians' activities behind the scrim make for a lively stage. The set must show how Mr. Digit has progressed and the comforts he can now afford. The reclining chair is not used for any of the action, but seems placed there to project the new aura of comfort. In the fourth part there is an atmosphere of calm and even gloom. The same Center (as viewed in the third part) now has dim lights and shadows. It is in this part that Mrs. Odd reveals her unhappiness to her friend Loty and stops Mr. Digit from destroying the computer only to come back and destroy it herself. In scene 6, there is a total blackout and an explosion. Music is heard after the explosion and the newspaper headline is projected on a small screen on stage, an indication that Mrs. Odd and Mr. Digit have survived the explosion. Mr. Salmón uses multi-media effects: music, flashing lights, taped sound, the Voice of the Talking Computer and projection. From a hectic environment filled with objects, the set changes to nothingness--only the surviving couple under a spotlight.

The play abounds in representative types and has the following characters: Mr. Digit is a thirty-year-old electrical engineer, who is alienated from reality due to his obsession. He wishes to create a computer which will respond orally to questions. He alienates his wife, but by the end of the play he depends on her for his survival. Numbers are part of his life; his name symbolizes his relationship to his formulas rather than to people, but he is not the personification of a digit.[27] Mrs. Odd often feels alone; she feels as if she has no companion (no pair), and thus, her name. She is a practical, materialistic person who derives a profit from Digit's invention, but she is the one who gives the order to the computer to self-destruct. Digit believes her action "saved life" since the weapons merchant was about to use the machine to promote his business. Mrs. Odd's character develops most in the play. The Three Wise Men are robot-like types without any individuality. They are "mechanized." They speak with an echo concurrently and their movements are synchronized. They approve of Mr. Digit's work without recognizing the potential for danger if the machine is misused. They represent those irresponsible scientists who do not analyze the possible consequences of their inventions. The Aide simply helps Mr. Digit, bringing in visitors to see the computer.

Other types are represented by the following visitors: The Hippie represents "the children of the sixties," who rebelled against society's mores, only to build or create

their own set of conventions. The Hippie calls Digit a "disgusting bourgeois," but he voices many of the terms used by his generation without giving them much thought. He shouts out words, such as "human relations, aerosol, hormones, UNESCO, Ionesco and others," without defining them. They are words used mindlessly by the "hip" generation. The Father is the parent of the Hippie, who tries to "save his child." The computer states that he is a "weak father figure," not able to control or discipline his son. Mijail and Mr. Perkins are emissaries of Russia and the United States of America, the two super powers that mistrust and spy on one another. They both want to control Mr. Digit and his Talking Computer, the most important invention of the day. The Tall Man is described by Salmón as the "prototype of the killer." He announces an insurgency, the many dead, and the Prime Minister's visit with the same degree of coldbloodedness. He is the antithesis of Mr. Digit who he believes "lives in another world." The Tall Man is coldblooded and calculating while Mr. Digit is emotionally obsessed with his computer. The Two Body Guards represent men who guard people in authority. Salmón makes them appear foolish with their ridiculous use of passwords. Their scene is very short and their characters are cartoon-like. The Prime Minister is a ruthless governor, preferring to shoot politicians because "a dead man is less dangerous than one alive." He makes Mr. Digit feel "miserable" about his role in this man's world. Loty is Mrs. Odd's old friend who reminds her of a past life

in which she dreamed of having children, a desire she has now given up. Loty is honest and humble; she is wide-eyed when she sees the laboratory, which seems to her like a science fiction movie. Apparently, she represents some good in society. She is a factory worker and again, Mr. Salmón has given the "good" qualities to a humble worker. The Voice is the Talking Computer's voice which expresses precise, factual answers. At times, it voices answers which some of the characters are not ready to hear, as when it says that Mrs. Odd's fabrications about having a lover are "lies." The Voice's answers result in good and evil actions depending on the attributes and moral values of the person who receives them. For example, the reply to Mrs. Odd's statements makes her realize she should stop lying; on the other hand, the answer to the Prime Minister motivates him to kill a man. When the Voice becomes autonomous, it tells its creator, Mr. Digit, the truth about his character. The Voice makes him realize that he has become an exploiter, just like the people he originally despised. Regardless of the type of question--whether it is based on moral issues or not--the computer gives the requisite answer. Therefore, when the Merchant of Death raises questions, Mr. Digit is at a loss. It is Mrs. Odd who realizes that the machine may help this man profiteer, and therefore, she shouts out the code for the computer to self-destruct. The Talking Computer represents the new evolving technology and Mr. Salmón was preoccupied with the danger such technology might

bring with it, misapplied. Here again, the playwright has created a society of characters who represent various types.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

As stated earlier, Bolivian theatre may be traced back to the thirteenth century when the Incas presented their comedias accompanied by music. These comedias were produced all year round, in temples, palaces and stadium-like structures. Bolivia was then called Alto Perú. Since the Incas followed an oral tradition rather than a written one, it is not known whether these plays were memorized or improvised. In the sixteenth century, the Spanish conquistadors brought with them men of the clergy, who wrote dramatic pieces consisting of dialogues with embellished language and happy endings. Often, poems were performed to the accompaniment of music. Apparently, Bolivians were used to attending public presentations performed on improvised or assumed stages in various environments.

Though Bolivia achieved independence from Spain in 1825, the descendants of the Inca Empire were regarded by the Spanish as "lower-class people." They were oppressed and did not have the opportunity to receive an education. For many years much of Bolivian literature, including drama, was written by the colonialists either to teach a lesson or for a religious purpose. Theatre was a living forum used mainly to educate or inculcate specific details of behavior to the conquered citizens.

The first play attributed to a Bolivian born playwright was by a professor and produced at a school

(neither title or author are available). Some plays were based on Inca Royalty but most had Colonial or Spanish characters. An exception was La Rosita by Antonio Diaz Villamil. His play attempted to show the positive qualities of a chola. No early playwright has been discovered who truly focused his work on the life and tribulations of the majority of the citizens: the cholos. With the one exception as noted, this class of citizen was not really represented in Bolivian drama until Salmón.

Beginning in 1942, Raúl Salmón gives voice to the disenfranchised and so called "marginal" citizens of Bolivia. Many "purist-intellectuals" to this day believe that some of the characters in his plays should not be portrayed on stage because they are too vulgar and give the impression that Bolivia is a nation of illiterates and "low lifes." Salmón has tried to reveal both the dignity and pride that exists within cholo society. He shows the existence, the self-reliance that the chola has developed while living in a prejudiced society.

In Salmón's Joven, Rica Y Plebeya, and even in Conde Huyo Street, chola women are strong characters. They care for and provide for their families. In the first play, a chola runs a quinta by herself, and makes enough money to send her daughter to a first rate private convent school. In the end, she is accepted and enters the middle class world. Granted, the "upper-class" couple must accept her because they need her money but, nevertheless, Faustina, the chola demands "the right to speak on behalf of her

daughter's future."[1] The couple's son loves and decides to marry the _chola's_ daughter, and his parents accept her. Even today, this theme is discussed in Bolivia with great difficulty because there still exists pervasive class prejudice. Salmón showed much courage in opening up such themes in his plays in the 1940s. Julio de La Vega, a respected critic and perhaps the only serious theatre critic in the decade of the 1940s, in a personal interview, evaluates Salmón's work as follows: "Salmón gave the _cholos_ a voice in the theatre . . . his work brought many people to the theatre and he must be given credit for that."[2] However, he faults Salmón for having limited himself and for not having "evolved" to other types of theatre. Mr. de La Vega as an educated man of the theatre, would have preferred Salmón to choose to write about universal themes earlier in his career in order to attract intellectuals. Salmón's popular social-realistic plays, based on the life of the lower class "make money," and Mr. de La Vega faulted him for that as well.

Salmón, however, was truly committed to overcoming social injustice. He was aware of the criticism of the "upper class" about the themes of his plays. He said: "Let's face it, all of us in Bolivia have a _pollera_ (the skirt worn by the _chola_) somewhere in our family yet we are too ashamed to admit it."[3] In Bolivia the percentage of the Indian and Mestizo population is a very high 79%. Consequently Salmón may be correct in assuming that in a Bolivian family tree there may be at least one person who

has cholo blood. To deny this, according to Salmón, is hypocritical. His perception was that this ethnic mixture is good and that Bolivians should be proud of it. The two so-called "lower classes" bring with them some of the "antiquated" notions of pride, honor, and dignity of man which is related directly to their ancestors, the Incas, and other lesser known tribes of the Inca era. Answering his detractors, Salmón said:

> Since I am a Bolivian. I never professed to have my spiritual country in France. If my plays are produced today--as I hope they are--as a manner of retrospection of my work, it will be seen that their themes are still relevant today . . . . They are relevant because they tell the truth.[4]

With such a high percentage of "half-breeds" in the population, it is essential that drama and theatre be representative. As Mr. de La Vega mentions, there are many European voices to be found in the country's literature, particularly in drama, and the younger generation is much influenced by European theatre. Raúl Salmón, however, for nearly forty years attempted to write a truly native Bolivian drama, using national themes, characters and settings. His plays in Bolivia are unique in this respect. However, like Buenaventura in Colombia and Boäl in Brazil, excepting the last phase of his work, Salmón used native content encased in such European forms as social realism, melodrama and expressionism in order to best express the subject matter. It was much later, in 1975, that he wrote

his "universal theme" play, The Talking Computer in an absurdist style.

Salmón has said that he wanted to write plays with "more substance than form."[5] However, he uses melodramatic techniques to attract and hold his audience. In his plays, he stresses how the social environment influences human behavior. By 1943, he realized that a social revolution was bound to take place in the country. He demonstrated in Conde Huyo Street that society was corrupt. Government officials were taking bribes. They permitted houses of ill repute to exist. These places were unclean and unhealthy, headed by proprietors who exploited poor, ignorant young women. Today, this street is only legend; the houses no longer remain as they were. Many had been aware of their existence but it took a Raúl Salmón to denounce their existence. It must be made clear as well that Salmón was not condemning basic human needs. What he denounced was corrupt public officials, such as, police or politicians, who accept money and allow exploitation to continue. Salmón wanted government officials to be responsible and to help the disenfranchised, the poor, who cannot help themselves.

In Redención, Salmón shows how young delinquents may be rehabilitated through understanding and compassion. He also indicates that the task is not easy, as exemplified by the struggle of the Professor in the Island of Coati; yet, it is doable, if one is committed. Salmón advanced his views, using drama and theatre as his forum in which to propose solutions to social problems. It is little wonder

then that his plays were and are popular with the "masses." He was the only Bolivian playwright who proposed possible solutions to alleviate their plight.

Salmón said that he was greatly encouraged or influenced by Brecht's philosophical outlook. He read Brecht at great length.[6] His social-realistic plays contain short scenes which to some extent may be described as episodic, but his is not truly a Brechtian technique. For example, there is no use of signs or posters to indicate locales or themes, such as in Mother Courage, nor does he make use of Brecht's alienation effect. Yet, Salmón uses the theme of the woman who struggles, voicing strongly her rights and those of her children, and who strives for her rightful place in society. He employs melodramatic technique to depict this struggle. He pays very little attention to "points of attack" and other structural elements. His plays, however, do contain conflict and reversal. Many expressionistic techniques may also be found in Tres Generales. Like Strindberg in his expressionistic plays as well as other expressionists, Salmón used light to express an emotional state of being, the lighting effect becoming an entity in itself.

Salmón's characters mainly represent types of social groupings. They use vivid language which "paints" a clear picture. Their speech is often colloquial and Salmón expressed to me the need to use such language to show their perception of reality.

Many critics feel that Salmón's history plays, the second phase of his work, are "better written." They do not clearly define their criteria, but I believe that the main difference with the earlier plays is that these plays, by their nature, contain characters who were outstanding or out of the ordinary governmental figures. Such personages were more learned and had more "sophistication" than the _cholos_, and thus their language is more elevated.

Salmón was essentially a realistic writer. Therefore, he mainly used documentation, but according to some historians he did revise history in order to present a point of view. The plays follow events in history mainly in chronological sequence, the only exception being _Tres Generales_, which as noted has flashbacks and other non-realistic devices.

In the history plays, the characters do speak grammatically correct Spanish and express ideas in a more scholarly style. Their speeches are longer and they tend to use hyperbole. This is the appeal of the plays to the critics, who still believe that dramatic tragedies need to be populated by the higher types of society. _Cholos_ or lower class citizens have no place in drama, but the historical personages who, in Salmón's work, are usually past Presidents of the Republic or war heroes are readily acceptable.

Salmón does not go along with the critics: he considered his history plays "different, not better."[7] His investigations led him to different personages, not to

better ones. Busch is a thought-provoking play. It offers creative insight into a dictator's psyche. Salmón shows his private life and self-image, as well as his public persona. The play has the trappings of a classical tragedy. The hero or protagonist is well-bred, born into an "upper class" family, becomes a war hero and President of the Republic, but in the end commits suicide due to his frustration with political events, possibly caused by his hubris, or arrogance in believing that he would be able to save the country from economic and moral chaos.

In Viva Belzu!, Salmón shows a statesman who, as early as the nineteenth century, advocated social reform. Belzu was one of the first Presidents to speak out in favor of the Indians and cholos, valiantly speaking in their defense and pursuing open dialogue with them. The playwright believed that Belzu resigned due to the insurmountable struggle with other politicians.

In Tres Generales, Salmón began experimenting with time and fantasy, creating a non-realistic play. Salmón mentioned that the main point of the play is to show that "we learn little or nothing from history." Mistakes are repeated in the nation because no one reviews the past and learns from past errors. Politicians in Bolivia for the most part seem to be disloyal and treacherous men, and Salmón indicates that the citizens do not appreciate the fairly good statesmen, such as Generals Santa Cruz and Belzu. Instead, people choose to follow a Melgarejo, the cruel third General who believed that people must be controlled

through fear. It is lamentable that as the dawn of a new day begins, and the Generals go back to their graves, there is the announcement of a new revolution. One of the generals turns and asks directly of the audience: "Whose fault is it?"[8] Here, Salmón engages his audience, implying again that it is the people's fault for not learning from past mistakes. In fact, before leaving, General Santa Cruz, voicing Salmón's views says: "I hope the lesson is profitable."[9]

As noted, in his history plays, Salmón uses more theatrical effects than in his earlier plays, e.g., bells tolling, lighting to project various emotional moments, and music. In his social realistic plays, he relies mainly on the characters, their mannerisms, colorful dress, and the dreary surroundings of the lower class.

The acting in the plays is said to be realistic. During a personal interview, Agar Delos, a leading actress in Raúl Salmón's group and now a director of his plays observed:

> I had the greatest lesson in acting when I began working with Raúl Salmón. I was given a small role, I played a maid in Suburbio (The Outskirts of the City) in 1956. We were rehearsing the play. Salmón was the director and also played the role of a deformed man, who was a doorman. In a scene, the maid has a confrontation with this doorman and he sends her to blazes and shocks the maid. I could not react as Salmón wanted me. We tried it twice and nothing happened to me; suddenly Salmón, in a strong voice told me: 'you have one more chance, if nothing happens, you are fired.' When we went through the scene, the third time,

> Salmón improvised and used vulgar words to curse at me. I felt personally insulted and wanted to die; I was shocked and in a panic. After opening my mouth in disbelief, I started crying. At that moment, Salmón stopped and said: 'I knew you could do it! Good, that is theatre: to feel. You forgot you were the proper young woman who never is cursed at, instead you felt what the maid feels when she is cursed at. That is acting.' From that moment on, I have always felt the character's feelings deeply. Salmón has taught me that we actors live the characters' lives with all their joys and pains.[10]

The above anecdote provides a clear sense that the actors under Salmón's direction were to "feel" what they considered the "real" feelings of their characters, in order to give them life. In fact, Ms. Delos proceeded to tell me that Julio de La Vega once told her: "You give life to the characters."[11] She believes this to be the greatest compliment and credits Salmón.

La Computadora Parlante (The Talking Computer), which represents the third phase of Salmón's work contrasts with his realistic approach. It has a universal theme, characters who are decidedly types, e.g., Mr. Digit, Mrs. Odd, Wise Men, and others, plus language which at times seems nonsensical and in one instance sounds automatized, e.g., the Wise Men's voices. Mr. Salmón explained that at the time he wrote the play (1975) it was clear to him that men were identified more by their social security numbers than by their proper names. In the play, he shows how the machine alienates man from his humanity by placing him in a mechanized environment where he becomes robot-like. Man is

an extension of the machine; he no longer has any individuality. Pointedly, the Wise Men's movements and speech are synchronized. The acting here, according to Salmón, should be stylized and non-realistic.[12]

This play presents a strong argument against automation which may enslave man. When the machine controls man, it must be destroyed. At the end of the play the couple, Mr. Digit and Mrs. Odd, face the audience and remind them of the Atomic Bomb, and its power to destroy. Man must be held responsible for his inventions. Mrs. Odd's last line is: "The inventors of the Atomic Bomb were careless."[13]

Just as earlier he was concerned with bringing social justice to the lower classes in Bolivia, Salmón later became preoccupied (until his death) with automation and its effects on man, including possible self-destruction. In this last phase of his career, Raúl Salmón was a playwright concerned not only with regional problems but also with the universal circumstance in which man finds himself. Thus, he became not only relevant to Bolivian theatre but to world theatre. With this basic study of Raúl Salmón now completed, it might be useful in the future for researchers to examine and to compare Salmón with other Latin American writers, such as Buenaventura, Boäl, and others.

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3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 19 August, 1989.

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8. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 19 August, 1989.

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34. Augusto Guzman, Historia de Bolivia. Sexta Edicion (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1981), 135.

35. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 20 August, 1989.

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2. Ibid., 12.

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5. Ibid., 13.

6. Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Anchor Books, 1969), 117.

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21. Ibid., 39.

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25. Ibid., 59.

26. Ibid., 62-63.

27. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 23 August, 1989.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

1. Raúl Salmón, Joven, Rica y Plebeya (La Paz: Editorial "Juventud," 1987), 68-69.

2. Interview with Julio de La Vega, La Paz, Bolivia, 25 August, 1989.

3. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 23 August, 1989.

4. Ibid.

5. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 19 August, 1989.

6. Ibid.

7. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 12 August, 1989.

8. Raúl Salmón, Teatro Boliviano (Madrid: Paraninfo, 1972), 82.

9. Ibid.

10. Interview with Agar Delos, La Paz, Bolivia, 25 August, 1989.

11. Ibid.

12. Interview with Raúl Salmón, La Paz, Bolivia, 23 August, 1989.

13. Raúl Salmón, La Computadora Parlante (La Paz: Editorial "Juventud," 1985), 63.

APPENDIX

Plays by Raúl Salmón

The first productions of all Salmón's plays took place at Teatro Municipal, La Paz, Bolivia. Plays written but never produced are so indicated.

<u>El Canillita</u>. La Paz: Editorial "Sport," 1942. Copies lost.

<u>Parricidio</u>. La Paz: Editorial "Sport," 1944.

<u>Los Viejos Saben Mas Que Los Diablos</u>. La Paz: Editorial "La Calle," 1945. Not produced.

<u>Albores de Libertad</u>. La Paz: Editorial "La Calle," 1945.

<u>El Fugitivo</u>. La Paz: Editorial "Sport," 1948.

<u>Busch, Heroe y Victima</u>. La Paz: Editorial Gamarra, 1952.

<u>La Calle Del Pecado</u>. La Paz: Editorial Gammara, 1952.

<u>Mi Madre Fue Una Chola</u>. La Paz: Editorial Gamarra, 1952.

<u>Potosi En El Alma</u>. La Paz: Editorial Gamarra, 1952.

<u>Prisionero de Guerra</u>. La Paz: Editorial Gamarra, 1952. Not produced.

<u>Sangre Indigena</u>. La Paz: Editorial Gamarra, 1952.

<u>Carne de Suburbio</u>. La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1969.

<u>El Estaño Era Limachi</u>. La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1969.

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<u>Escuela de Pillos</u>. La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1969.

<u>Los Hijos Del Alcohol</u>. La Paz: Cooperativa de Artes Graficas E. Burillo, 1969.

<u>Mi Compadre El Ministro</u>. La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1969.

<u>Miss Chijini</u>. La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1969.

<u>Noches de La Paz</u>. La Paz: Cooperativa de Artes Graficas E. Burillo, 1969.

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¡Viva Belzu! Segunda Edicion. La Paz: Editorial "Juventud," 1988.

El Homicida Que Pago Su Culpa Por Adelantado. In Seis Obras de Teatro Breve. La Paz: Editorial "Popular," 1990. Not produced.

El Tata Belzu Ha Resucitado. In Seis Obras de Teatro Breve. La Paz: Editorial "Popular," 1990. Not produced.

La Abuela Que Aprendio A Leer A Los 80. In Seis Obras de Teatro Breve. La Paz: Editorial "Popular," 1990. Not produced.

La Birlocha De La Esquina. In Seis Obras de Teatro Breve. La Paz: Editorial "Popular," 1990. Not produced.

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