DEHUMANIZATION IN THE THEATER OF VALLE-INCLAN AND MUÑIZ

THESIS

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By

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This study proposes to establish an intrinsic relationship between Valle-Inclán and Muñiz based on the theme of dehumanization in their theater. It examines (1) the stylistic techniques which each playwright uses to depersonalize his characters, (2) the manner in which these characters dehumanize each other, (3) the role of society as the agent of dehumanization, and finally, due to each author's pre-occupation with one social convention in particular (4) the devastating effects on men of the vestiges of an outmoded code of honor.

The principal works used for the study are Valle-Inclán's *Martes de carnaval, Luces de Bohemia*, and *Divinas palabras*, and El tintero, *Un solo de saxofón*, *Las viejas difíciles*, and *El grillo* by Carlos Muñiz.

Such an analysis proposes to reveal a profound literary affinity between these two writers, a bond which unites Valle-Inclán and Muñiz in a common protest against the dehumanization of mankind.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Sensing an important bond between Ramón del Valle-Inclán (1866-1936) and younger Spanish dramatists, many critics acknowledge Valle-Inclán as the father of contemporary Spanish theater. As José Luis Cano remarks, "Spanish criticism has pointed out the modernity of his dramaturgy, how it anticipates the neo-expressionistic theater of today with its mixture of the farcical and the tragic, and the technique of the esperpento."¹ This perspective with regard to Valle-Inclán's work is shared by Anthony N. Zahareas who believes that "the course of contemporary Spanish literature was changed by him in a way that can be said of very few writers."² Joaquín Casalduero, more specifically, affirms that "el teatro de hoy en Occidente continúa en la línea esperpética, expresando el absurdo metafísico del hombre."³


Certain critics have remarked in passing the relationship between the works of Valle-Inclán and one young dramatist in particular, Carlos Muñiz Higuera. Hazel Cazorla, for example, says, "La obra de Muñiz tiene más estrecha relación con lo absurdo esperpéntico de Valle-Inclán que con lo absurdo total y aniquilador de Endgame." And Antonio Buero Vallejo points out that Muñiz' work "ha dado ocasión también a juicios que la encasillan en la tragicomedia social, el esperpento. . . ."  

Carlos Muñiz emerged as a dramatist worthy of critical attention in 1956, when his first play, Telarañas, was produced. It received negative reviews, but within a year he had won a prestigious prize for his second play, El grillo, a realistic drama concerning the financial dilemma of an officer worker and his family. There followed El tintero, which cemented his reputation as a dramatist. Sylistically a departure from his previous works, El tintero is an expressionistic rendering of previous themes: man faces the crippling effects of financial need, the loss of self-respect in an automated world, and the limited possibility of escape from these circumstances. Muñiz' next works were Un solo de saxofón and Las viejas difíciles, which exhibit,

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sometimes even more strongly than *El tintero*, the expressionism to which Muñiz is drawn, and which critics feel is so definitively foreshadowed in the works of Valle-Inclán.

It is the purpose of this study to show that there is a single and specific element that links Carlos Muñiz to Ramón del Valle-Inclán; it is one which motivates, pervades, and lends cohesion to the work of both dramatists: the theme of dehumanization. To support this thesis, one must carefully examine the following aspects of their theater: (1) the stylistic techniques which each playwright uses to depersonalize his characters, (2) the manner in which these characters interact to dehumanize each other, (3) the role of society as the agent of dehumanization in the twentieth century, and finally, due to each author's preoccupation with one social convention in particular, (4) the devastating effect wrought upon men by the vestiges of an outlandish code of honor. Such an analysis proposes to reveal a profound literary affinity between these two writers, a bond that transcends passing years and changing times to unite Valle-Inclán and Muñiz in a common protest against the dehumanization of mankind.
CHAPTER I

THE AUTHOR'S POINT OF VIEW

The theme of dehumanization surfaces quickly in the theater of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz. That it is integral to these writers' perception of the plight of modern man and essential to the very conception of their art is, perhaps, even more apparent to the reader of their works than to the spectator, for each author uses, in anticipation of the moment when his characters speak for themselves, several techniques to prevent them from attaining a human reality within the context of their dramatic roles. With rare exceptions, beautiful in their struggle to preserve their humanity and their integrity, these characters are doomed by their own creator who, like some soulless director, condemns his actors to failure before opening night. Through lengthy stage directions which introduce them at every opportunity as robots or puppets, through images and references which liken them repeatedly to animals and even inanimate objects, through deliberate manipulation of the names they bear, and through rigid control over the setting in which they function--rather than live--Valle-Inclán and Muñiz chain their characters from the outset to a marginal existence that has little relationship to the human experience. Yet, even
as failures, victims of literary device and artful predetermi-
nation, they achieve a degree of sublimity and redemption. In their very lifelessness, they mirror life: they belie Valle-Inclán's and Muñiz' love of humanity, their horror of the fate that awaits man should he succumb to the deadening effects of modern society.

The dramatic impact of the stage directions in the plays of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz rivals that of the dialogue of their plays. It is in these passages, available to the most casual reader, that the authors' personal point of view toward the children of their imagination emerges with insistence to underscore the intrinsic message of their works. Each author denies his characters even the possibility of life and individuality by presenting them relentlessly as puppets, machines, automatons, and even as shadows.

In play after play, Valle-Inclán precludes his characters' chance to live by casting them from the start as mannequins:

Don Friolera en el reflejo amarillo del quinqué, es un fantoche trágico.1

El movimiento de las figuras, aquel entrar y salir con los brazos abiertos, tienen la sugestión de una tragedia de fantoches. (Friolera, p. 97)

1 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Los cuernos de don Friolera, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 95. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.
... son tres fantoches funebres en hilera.\(^2\)

En la fila de fantoches pegados a la pared ... (Luces, p. 117)

El Boticario se dobla como un fantoche.\(^3\)

Dispara el pistolón, y con un grito los fantoches luneros de la tapia se doblan sobre el otro huerto. ... Y se aleja con una arrenga embarullada el fantoche de Otelo. (Friolera, p. 161)

Zaratustra ... promueve, con su caracterización de fantoche, una aguda y dolorosa desonancia muy emotiva y muy moderna. (Luces, p. 16)

La palmatoria pringosa tiembla en la mano del fantoche. (Luces, p. 19)

Not even the children escape this degrading vision, a premeditated depersonalization on the part of the author. Friolera's daughter, Manolita, for example, "una niña como moña de feria," "tiene el aire triste, la tristeza absurda de esas muñecas emigradas en los desvanes" (Friolera, pp. 102, 138). Subtler than such explicit descriptions but equally devastating to their humanity is Valle-Inclán's habit of stressing the mechanical, puppet-like gestures of his characters:

Pachequín, de reojo, mide la tapia y tiende la oreja con el mismo gesto palpitante que doña Loreta. (Friolera, p. 158)

Doña Loreta, con los brazos en aspa y el moño colgando, sale de la casa dando gritos. (Friolera, p. 98)

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\(^2\) Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Luces de Bohemia: esperpento (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1961), p. 113. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.

\(^3\) Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Las galas del difunto, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 26. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.
El coronel . . . abre el compás de sus chinelas bordadas, alzando y bajando un dedo. (Friolera, p. 165)

La cortineja, suspensa de un clave, deja ver la figura sorturna y huraña que tiene una abstracción gesticulante. (Las galas, p. 26)

The characters pop up in windows, from behind doors, as if entering a puppet stage: doña Tadea in Los cuernos de don Friolera "Se desvanece bajo un porche, y a poco, su cabeza de lechuza asoma en el ventano de una guardilla," and later "abre repentinamente el ventano . . . aparece y desaparece" (pp. 86, 144). The king, in La hija del capitán, with his "sonrisa belfona," is seen only within the frame of the train window, an opening also suggestive of a puppet stage. At times, Valle-Inclán's characters, lacking even the material substance of puppets, are but shadows:

. . . las sombras tienen el sentido irreal y profundo de las consejas.5

Juana la Reina, sombra terrosa y descalza. . . . (Divinas palabras, p. 16)

Máximo Estrella y don Latino de Hispalis, sombras en las sombras de un rincón. . . . (Luces, p. 26)

La sombra del sacristán, larga y escueta, asoma por encima del cañizo. (Divinas palabras, p. 95)

En la cocina, terrena y agumada, se acurrucan—sombras taciturnas—marido y mujer. (Divinas palabras, p. 145)

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4 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, La hija del capitán, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa, S.A., 1964), p. 231. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.

5 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Divinas palabras: tragicomedia de aldea (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 16. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.
These murky silhouettes, insubstantial as ghosts, can have little control over their own destiny.

As remorselessly as does Valle-Inclán, Muñiz reduces his characters to the level of puppets, permitting them only the most stylized, mechanical gestures. In El tintero, he introduces Crock as a máquina, an automata. In Las viejas difíciles, Julita and Antonio play cards "como automátas" as they await their death at the hands of the Association. Frank, the director of personnel in El tintero, "viene frotándose las manos, gesto que repetirá constantemente;" he is a mechanical doll, whose "horrorosa mueca," recalls Valle-Inclán's grotesque descriptions of Rovirosa—"sólo mueve un lado de su cara" (Friolera, p. 129)—and Zaratustra—"Parece que la nariz se le dobla sobre una oreja" (Luces, p. 20). Muñiz' Negociante, unable to understand the concept of spring, betrays his wooden mentality, filing his fingernails and finding hollow pleasure in whirling in his swivel chair. The bizarre lifelessness of Muñiz' Director, who "sonríe y se pone serio a cada instante" (El tintero, p. 133) parallels by direct contrast Valle-Inclán's description of Friolera, who is "rígido y cuadrado" (Friolera, p. 166). Indeed, the Director enhances his own pitiful

\[\text{Carlos Muñiz, Las viejas difíciles, in El tintero, Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 259. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.}\]

\[\text{Carlos Muñiz, El tintero, in El tintero, Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 121. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.}\]
caricature as he toasts and drinks from an inkwell with his robot-like subordinates. The damas of the Association move stiffly, like marionettes or sticks: "Solo ellas puedan caminar tiesas... Son como palos" (Las viejas, p. 252). Socorro of the same play "Sale con paso menudo y una risita hueca y molesta como la de cualquier clásica Calestina" (p. 25, 257). The most stylized characters of Muñiz' theater, perhaps, are Pim, Pam, and Pum, the three employees of El tintero who dress alike and speak in chorus. At one point, "Los tres empleados de ponen en pie, se inclinan, se cuadran y permanecen inclinados levemente y en posición de firmes" (p. 156); "... 'Salen los tres funcionaross marcando el paso..." (p. 134). Their counterparts appear in Las viejas in the form of the damas of the Association. In each play, three robots applaud or condemn automatically with the same rigid togetherness, completely lacking individuality and spontaneity. Suggesting their inability to act autonomously, in El tintero their voices sound as one in perfectly memorized phrases as the employees judge Crock: "Crock es la oveja negra de la oficina y fuma en el retrete cuando nadie le ve, cuando se queda solo en su despacho, piensa, sin que lo ordene nuestro querido señor Director" (p. 130). With similar uniformity in Las viejas, "todas rompen aplaudir" after the routing of an enemy (p. 225). Reduced to an even lower level are Concha's sons in the same play. So tenuous is their hold on humanity that, oblivious
to tragedy in their own home, they only march about and mindlessly recite soccer cheers. In *Un solo de saxofón*, Muñiz' shadows are as insubstantial and lacking in humanity as those of Valle-Inclán: "Las inmóviles sombras se animan y avanzan un paso." The "espectros inmóviles" in the same work (p. 195) are reminiscent of Valle-Inclán's "espectro de antiparras y barbas" in *Friolera* (p. 65), while Muñiz' strawman, Sam, who "se mueve como un pelele a cada envite de los blancos" (*Un solo*, p. 189) recalls Valle-Inclán's use of the same image in *Luces*: "Don Latino guña el ojo, tuerce la jeta, y desmaya los brazos haciendo el pelele" (p. 141).

Another technique which Valle-Inclán uses to violate the integrity of his characters is that of describing them as inanimate objects. With a perceptibly fierce determination to degrade them he allows them to exist only as animals or things, not as human beings. He virtually catalogues the officials in *Friolera* as animals:

Los otros dos, muy diversos de aspecto entre sí, son, sin embargo, de un parecido obsesionante, como acontece con las parejas matrimoniales, de viejos un poco ridículos. Don Cabino Campero, filarmónico y orondo, está en el grupo de los gatos. Don Mateo Cardona, con sus ojos saltones y su boca de oreja a oreja, en el de las ranas (p. 129).

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8 Carlos Muñiz, *Un solo de saxofón*, in El tintero, *Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 195. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter II are to this edition and are included in the text.
La bruja, in Las galas, "se anguliza como un murciélago, clavado en los picos del manto" (p. 27). Doña Tadea, in Friolera, is "pequeña, cetrina, ratonil" (p. 91), her head a "cabeza de lechuza" (p. 86). When the protagonist of Friolera reads an anonymous note accusing his wife, "le tiembla el bigote como a los gatos cuando estornudan" (p. 80), and as Valle-Inclán describes Curro in the same play, "su cara es luna llena" (p. 123). Occasionally, Valle-Inclán combines the images of animals and things, distorting a character to an eerie, undeniably subhuman level: "La hija, abobada, lechosa, redonda con algo de luna, de vaca y de pan" (Divinas palabras, p. 37). The particularly grotesque Zaratustra in Luces has "la cara de tocino rancio" (p. 16). In his bookstore, the distinction between animal and human activity vanishes: "hacen tertulia el gato, el loro, el can." The bird of this threesome shouts, "¡Viva España!" effectively mocking the passions of the characters (Luces, p. 16), while the parrot in La hija regularly cries out, "¡Cubanita canela!" (p. 177) Friolera's dog "se levanta . . . y hace una escala de ladridos en la segunda octava" (Friolera, p. 145). At times, Valle-Inclán even allows the animals to rise above the stature of supposedly legitimate characters and to observe, comment upon, or judge their actions. As Friolera agonizes over his predicament, "un ratón a la boca de su agujero, arruga el hocico y curiosea la vitola de aquel adefesio . . ." (Friolera, p. 108).
In _Luces_, Latino's deformed dog jumps over Max's casket, as if displaying a contempt for the mourning. In _Divinas palabras_, the line between humans and animals is further obscured by the presence of the grotesque dwarf and the trained dog Coimbra who seems almost to prophesy the dwarf's death: "Lentemente el animal se dobla, y agacha la cola aullando con el aullido que reservan los canes para el aire del muerto" (p. 17).

Muñiz degrades his characters in similar fashion. He likens Mariano of _El grillo_ to a ridiculous cricket, who chirps incessantly, and bemoans the fact that no one listens to his complaints. His friend tersely underscores the insect-like significance of Mariano's existence:

--¿Cías cantar los grillos en el verano, eh?
--Sí.
--¿Y qué hacías?
--Nada.
--Exactamente. 9

The old women of Muñiz' _Las viejas_ are "tres pájaros vestidos de negro" (p. 223), strongly reminiscent of Valle-Inclán's description of "los tres visitantes, reunidos como tres pájaros en una rama . . ." (_Luces_, p. 20). Antonio describes the _damas_, grotesquely but aptly, as "negras como el carbón, como las cucarachas" (_Las viejas_, p. 240). In _El tintero_, "Los tres empleados hacen una reverencia y se abalanzan sobre Crock como tres fieras" (p. 150). The beasts

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are seen again in *Un solo*, as "todos jadean y babean como fieras" (p. 189). In *El tintero*, the *conserje* "se acerca hasta la mesa andando a cuatro patas" (p. 146), and Crock is forced to assume an animal-like posture before the *Director* as he kneels to write a receipt.

Another element common to the works of both Valle-Inclán and Muñiz is their pointed choice of names. While these may be symbolic of the characters' roles or suggest the authors' themes, often they serve to introduce their characters as ridiculous creatures and ultimately to depersonalize them, to strip them of their humanity. Frequently, Valle-Inclán names his creations sarcastically, creating characters who are antitheses to their names. Thus the grotesque old man who owns the bookstore is named Zaratustra, and a cruel policeman is called Serafín el Bonito. After granting the protagonist of *Friolera* a name *el teniente* Astete, Valle-Inclán promptly forgets it and refers to him throughout the play as "Friolera," that is, "trifling." The hero is thus transformed into a buffoon by virtue of his very name. Friolera himself sees his own emotions as trifles. Refusing to acknowledge the seriousness of his situation, and belittling his own passions upon learning of his wife's possible infidelity, he wails,

Tu mujer piedra de escándalo. ¡Esto es un rayo a mis pies! ¡Loreta con sentencia de muerte! ¡Friolera! Si fuese verdad tendría que degollarla. ¡Irremisiblemente condenada! En el Cuerpo de Carabineros no hay cabrones. ¡Friolera! (Friolera, p. 151)
"Negro y torcido como un espantapájaros" (Friolera, p. 151), Juanito Pacheco, in the same play, is a ridiculous parody of don Juan, attempting to conquer the scruples of doña Loreta. This "galán negro y zancudo" (p. 156) postures and preens, succeeding only in becoming the focus of Friolera's pathetic vengeance, while doña Tadea Calderón, the namesake of the siglo de oro dramatist who glorified the honor code, personifies the exaggerated rigidity and evil that Valle-Inclán sees in that code, as she spies on her neighbors for infractions and indiscretions. The parody of don Juan reappears in Las galas in the person of Juanito Ventolera: "Entra en el claro de la luna, la manta terciada, el gorro ladeado, una tagernina atravesada en los dientes" (p. 27).

Muniz uses names in a similar way in many of his plays. The lack of individuality of nameless characters like the Negociante and the Director is self-evident. Similarly, the author chose to leave nameless the old women of the Association in Las viejas. By denying his characters names, Muniz denies them individuality and humanity itself. While some characters are addressed by name by other characters of the same play, Muniz ironically refuses to acknowledge these names. To him his characters are abstractions of the trait he wishes to portray, much as in Valle-Inclán's Luces, el preso symbolizes all prisoners unjustly sentenced. In Las viejas, Antonio's sense of futility is heightened by the fact that his given name is not his own to use. As he explains to
his aunts: "Me llamo Antonio porque no os gustaba que me llamase Carlitos" (p. 224).

Muniz manipulates names in yet other ways. Often he chooses diminutives to stress the importance and insignificance of his creations. In Las viejas, Julita and Conchita are only marginally autonomous, and the use of diminutives, far from suggesting endearment, simply underscores their futile, naive hopes. This technique is reminiscent of a painful scene in Friolera during which Loreta calls Friolera "Pascualín" and he answers pathetically, "Exijo que me llames Pascual" (p. 100); Friolera's misplaced concern suggests a futile attempt to regain a measure of dignity despite his laughable reality. Parents, in Muniz' plays, name their children after themselves or plan to do so with such regularity that it seems likely that the dramatist uses the device to illustrate the parents' awareness of their own insignificance, giving their names in the hope that their children at least will do something meaningful. It also serves to point out again their inevitable sense of anonymity. As the parents are inextricably caught in a world that refuses to notice them, so will the children be, and thus the painful cycle continues. Muniz seems to say that modern life makes it pointless to dwell on uniqueness in name or personality. Crock, the most unique of his characters, with a most unusual and unharmonious name, is trapped in perhaps the most automated, depersonalizing
situation of all. His name, recalling the lonely croaking of a frog, is suggestive of his isolation and his insignificance in a world that ignores his needs and dooms him to failure.

With reference to both Valle-Inclán and Muñiz, the nonsense syllables *pim*, *pam*, *pum*, warrant particular attention. In *Los cuernos de don Friolera* they signify a childish imitation of gunfire and voice Friolera's sense of futility and frustration as he tries to convince himself that he can satisfy the military's obsession with correct procedure by killing his wife and her lover:

¡*Pim!* ¡*Pam!* ¡*Pum!* . . . ¡No me tiembla a mi la mano! Hecha justicia, me presente a mi coronel: «mi coronel, ¿cómo se lava la honra?» Ya sé su respuesta. ¡*Pim!* ¡*Pam!* ¡*Pum!* (p. 108)

In *El tintero*, Muñiz transforms Friolera's pathetic babblings into names. Three employees, Pim, Pam, and Pum, symbolize conformity, the only alternative left to modern man in the sterile and impersonal existence at the office. While Friolera still has the capacity to choose, and ultimately does opt to conform, Muñiz' characters are already robots, doing nothing except that which the Director explicitly orders. One cannot help but speculate that the younger playwright had Valle-Inclán's ineffectual and defeated protagonist in mind when he epitomized man's broken spirit in this unholy and lifeless trinity.

It is true that, with respect to dehumanizing names, Máximo Estrella of Valle-Inclán's *Luces de Bohemia* and Amigo of Muñiz' *El tintero* appear to be exceptions to the
pattern. Their names are positive—noble and dignified—as are the characters themselves. Max alone grasps the truth of Spain's shabby, grotesque reality—"La tragedia nuestra no es tragedia. . . . [Es] el Esperpento" (Luces, p. 105)—and Amigo's every action expresses his loyalty to Crock. Nevertheless, the name "Estrella," used by Valle-Inclán to emphasize Max's singular capacity to see, stresses the blind poet's symbolic, rather than human, stature as a character. Likewise, Amigo is a symbol rather than an individual; his character clearly embodies the affection and concern so notably lacking in Crock's existence. In this sense, even Max Estrella and Amigo carry in their names a connotation that returns to the concept of dehumanization.

Setting is another dehumanizing force in the plays of the two dramatists. Valle-Inclán distorts the surroundings to underscore his distortion of people into caricatures. The Madrid of Luces is "absurdo, brillante, y hambriento" (p. 8). In Divinas palabras, as Sumner Greenfield points out, "La fealdad grotesca es el elemento que domina el aspecto visual." By preceding Friolera with a puppet show which parodies the main part of his drama, Valle-Inclán indicates his reluctance to place his characters in any but the most closed, artificial setting, equipping them with

stylized responses. And Muñiz, often stylizing his settings, creates a distorted atmosphere similar to that of Valle-Inclán's theater. The resemblance is most striking in the city of Un solo with the "silenciosa y desesperante brillantez de sus luces" (p. 184), a background which clearly mirrors Valle-Inclán's Madrid. Muñiz embellishes the corrosive image further by describing "un complejo de fantásticos y abrumadores rascacielos, que se recortan en la lejanía como amenazadores demonios de hierro, dispuestos a comérselo todo" (p. 185). Later, he specifies that the setting of El tintero "Ha de ser totalmente esquemática" (p. 119). He directs that the home of Concha in Las viejas be "viejísimo, harapiento, sin vida;" it must impart "una sensación de agobio, de estrechez;" and instructs that on the wall there be a clock "cuyas manecillas están girando constantemente a gran velocidad" (p. 227). Even in his more realistic works, El grillo and El precio de los sueños, Muñiz uses the setting of the ugly barrio--"una calle gris y oscura"11--to reinforce the degrading elements that he sees as intrinsic to modern life, and to imprison characters in their environment as surely as Poca Pena is trapped in the tawdry carnival life of Valle-Inclán's Divinas palabras.

Contributing to these warped settings is the role of nature--distant, "unnatural," or completely excluded in the

works of both authors. The sky is "raso y remoto" (Friolera, p. 93), completely out of reach. The stars are cold and removed as Friolera persuades himself to kill his wife; they shrink from the unnatural ugliness of man's actions: "algunas estrellas se esconden asustadas" after Friolera accidently shoots his daughter (Friolera, p. 161). The moon is often visible in Valle-Inclán's works, but it serves a very different purpose than it does, for example, in earlier Romantic works. Here, it reflects only grotesqueness below, as in Divinas palabras, "La luna grande, redonda y abobada, cae sobre el dornajo donde el enano hace siempre la misma mueca" (p. 127). Or it simply exposes the transgressions of the characters; it starkly outlines the illicit lovers in Divinas palabras: "el claro de luna los destaca sobre la puerta de la garita abandonada" (p. 102). Valle-Inclán often contrasts the beautiful aspects of nature with the mental or physical deformity of human beings; thus, when the grotesque dwarf dies, it is a "noche de plata" (Divinas palabras, p. 88). While animals appear throughout Valle-Inclán's works, not even they conform to their normal place in nature. They serve as an absurd reflection of the characters' brutal traits or heighten the grotesque: "La madre le

espanta [del enano] las moscas que acuden a posarse sobre la boca belfa donde el bozo negrea" (Divinas palabras, p. 17).

Muñiz' characters are also kept separate from nature, and are actually further dehumanized by the contempt they feel for it. Flowers are forbidden in the office. As Crock discovers, spring itself is unacknowledged because the regulations do not stipulate its existence:

Crock: ¡Es primavera!
Frank: ¿Dónde? Yo no la veo. ¿Lo dice el reglamento? (El tintero, p. 121)

The Negociante asks his secretary to look up the definition of spring, and must ask Amigo what a park is. In Las viejas, a solitary flower in the park throws the damas into a frenzy of righteous indignation. They vent their anger against so insolent a gardener and will hasten to reprimand him for allowing the immorality of such a sight in January. As the climax of Las viejas approaches, nature becomes the enemy of the Association, and Leonor triumphantly exclaims, "Fuera todo se ríe de ellas. Está llegando la primavera" (p. 257).

As the main theme of the song that Julita and Antonio sing just before their death: "Por el mar corre la liebre. Por el monte la sardina" (p. 262), nature signals the release from the asphyxiating setting that man has created for himself. Similarly, in El tintero, according to Hazel Cazorla, the sea is symbolic of a longing for freedom from the
stifling, unnatural life that Crock leads. Only after being released from the wretched reality of this world is he able to say, "Mira aquellas estrellas" (p. 175), and his words echo those of Valle-Inclán's Juana la Reina, who also exhails only before dying, "Qué estrellón en el Cielo" (Divinas palabras, p. 26).

The devices used so emphatically by both Valle-Inclán and Muñiz violently limit the dimension of their characters. While these characters may be, as Anthony N. Zahareas suggests, "comic and pathetic, frightening and tragic, monstrous and absurd," what they can not be is human. Valle-Inclán and Muñiz, through stage directions, animal images, names and settings have seen to the dehumanization of their characters. It is this point of view of the author which prevails and is contagious to the characters themselves. They, as we shall see, are forced to share a vision of each other that reflects the attitude of their creator.


CHAPTER III

THE CHARACTERS' POINT OF VIEW

Contributing to the dehumanization of the characters in the theater of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz is the fact that even they willingly regard themselves and treat one another as less than men. Rarely do these characters strive to escape the base and static roles assigned to them by the dramatist; rarely is there a moment of understanding or empathy among them. The human factor that might attest to the presence of a soul within the puppet, that might elevate the individual to a level above that of the animal, that might ultimately unite these characters in the sublimity of tragic experience, is almost always missing. They act out their parts on cue: they are self-righteous, indignant, hysterical, anguished or grieved, according to the prompting of the situation. Yet, their reactions are studied, predictable, and often absurdly exaggerated, for they are not motivated by genuine emotion, but by a sense of the appropriate and the expected instead. Having succumbed long ago to the pressures of an unfeeling and ruthlessly mechanized social structure, they are unmoved by even the most intimately human realities—those of friendship, love, and death. As Ricardo Gullón observes with regard to the art of the
esperpento: "Valle-Inclán presents his imaginative image of an ontological crisis related to the social phenomenon: the negation of the individual's freedom and even the individual himself. When this happens, there can be no genuine human behavior."¹ As we shall see later, Muñiz also relates the dehumanization of the individual to the depersonalizing demands of modern society. The violent restrictions which he and Valle-Inclán impose upon the humanity of their characters, restrictions which these, in turn, accurately portray through their own attitudes and actions, have their source in that society. Within the plays, of course, the characters' lack of humanity is most obviously manifested through precisely those aspects of human activity which normally solicit spontaneity, sincerity, selflessness, and loyalty. It is in their most potentially sublime moments, in relationships between friends, lovers, spouses, parents and children, that these characters most blatantly betray their heartlessness, their dehumanized condition.

Friendship enters into Valle-Inclán's plays, but it is at best superficial, tenuous friendship that wanes and disappears the moment that self-interest interferes. In Los cuernos de don Friolera, the protagonist's friend is anxious to see Friolera after hearing of the cloud on Friolera's marriage, but his anxiety is marred by cruel irony: he is

eager not to console Friolera, but to express an interest in buying the house that he assumes Friolera will be vacating. He ignores Friolera's predicament in order to pursue his own narrow interests. In *Luces de Bohemia*, don Latino professes love, loyalty, and admiration for Max Estrella at every opportunity. Yet Latino cheats Max, keeping part of the money he receives when he sells Max's books. The theft constitutes a loathsome and ruthless betrayal, as the sale of the books is Max's only source of income, and the starving poet and his wife consider suicide as a real alternative to struggling for survival in the slums of Madrid. Willing to cheat his friend of the few pesetas that would sustain him and his family, Latino is hardly human, let alone a friend.

Muñiz also deals with the perversion of the ideal of friendship. In his first play, *Telarañas*, he introduces Avelino and Damián. Although Damián, just as Latino in *Luces*, professes great love for his friend, when he becomes attracted to Avelino's wife he feels not so much as a pang of remorse as he makes advances to her. In *El tintero*, the conserje brags of friendship for Crock as his motivation in convincing him to change his rebellious attitude: "Yo soy un buen amigo tuyo y te doy siempre buenos consejos." When his own future is at stake, however, he blurts out, "Tú eres un

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un peligro. ¡Modifícate!" (El tintero, p. 131). Friendship is but a convenient pose that is easily shed at the slightest provocation. It is interesting that Amigo of the same play, who seems to contradict the rule, is not so much a personal friend of Crock as the incarnation of the yearning for friendship in the void of Crock's life. Nameless, futile, he actually symbolizes a prevailing lack of love among men, rather than the reverse.

While the lack of sympathy among the characters is self-evident in the falseness of friendships of the various plays, the absence of feeling between lovers and married couples, those who represent the most intimate and trusting of relationships, suggests that the most elementary emotions in the characters are dead. Friolera and Loreta in Friolera simply play their assigned roles. Although Friolera remembers that they were in love when they married and tries to convince himself that their feelings have not changed, any affection they may have felt is killed by the mechanics of the inexorable honor code. Their only reality is one of role: wronged husband and innocent, accused wife. Neither displays sympathy for the other's predicament, neither acts out of passion. Loreta never considers love for her husband as a reason for refusing Pachequín's advances. At one point, she seduces her own husband, not out of love, but in an attempt to manipulate him. Nor are Loreta and her lover able to sustain emotion for one another. They are merely
marionettes--kissing, crying, pleading for their lives as the script demands. As Loreta mechanically resists Pachequín's seduction, she finds a new mask: "Pachequín, respétame. ¡Yo soy una romántica!"3 and her lover takes his cue from her, carelessly mimicking without sentiment or sensitivity to Friolera, "Soy un romántico, mi teniente" (Friolera, p. 129). Mari Gaila and her lover, Séptimo, in Divinas palabras, feel lust for one another, but sentiment never enters their relationship; their couplings are distinguished by the lack of any feeling but carnal desire. With equal callousness, Mari Gaila leaves home, neglects her duties with the dwarf who represents her livelihood, and scorns her husband's pain. When the lovers of Valle-Inclán's La hija del capitán meet again after several years, it is plain to el golfante that La Sini disdained him because she wanted wealth and luxury. La Sini, by admission, sees no contradiction between her material wants and the love she professes:

El golfante: ¡El amor que tienes por el lujo!
La Sini: Tú nada podías ofrecerme. Pero con todo de no tener nada, de haber sido menos loco, por mi voluntad nunca hubiera dejado de verte. Te quiso y te quiero. No seas loco. Apártate ahora.4

3 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Los cuernos de don Friolera, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 123. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter III are to this edition and are included in the text.

4 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, La hija del capitán, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 208. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter III are to this edition and are included in the text.
She asks her former lover to leave. Although she is trapped in a life not of her choosing, she prefers its creature comforts to a life of feeling.

Muniz' lovers and married couples fare equally badly. In *El precio de los sueños*, the abyss that exists between Elisa and her husband becomes impassible when she forces her husband to admit that he might have been happier if he had married her sister. Their daughter, Amalia, loses her lover because he cares more for his reputation than for her. Frida, in *El tintero*, comes only to a brink of sympathy for her husband Crock and only after he has been fired, and in a desperate attempt to support his family, has sold his body to be dissected after death. When Crock arrives at the village totally exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally, Frida barely manages a moment of fleeting concern, for she is caught up in her thoughts of the maestro's impending arrival. Her relationship with her suitor is an unfulfilling as was her marriage. And the maestro happily admits that he only pursued her for lack of more exciting diversions in the small village. So insensitive are they in their grotesque parody of a lovers' quarrel in the presence of the husband, that Crock must suggest that they at least wait until morning to fight so as not to wake the children.

In *Las viejas difíciles*, empty relationships again prevail. Concha and Elías' farcical marriage is sustained by the rigid rules of the Association, a sort of moral police force.
Living with nine people in two rooms, they never have a moment to themselves. As Concha explains to Julita and Antonio, they do not sleep together: "Somos muy decentes en esta casa."\(^5\) Elías adds, "No nos hemos dado un beso desde que Paquito tiene uso de razón. Los chicos lo ven todo" (p. 234). Their lack of privacy, which they accept with smug complacence because it is in harmony with the dictates of the Association, has corroded their communicative powers and mutual respect. Concha carries high expectations to an absurd extreme as she degrades her husband for his lack of superhuman powers: "Pero nunca has servido para nada. ¡Cuándo has partido una barra de hierro con los dientes? ¡Cuándo has volcado un tranvía? ¡Nunca!" (p. 245). The fiancés in Las viejas, although they are cast in the role of lovers and have been for thirty-seven years, have difficulty in so much as understanding each other's words:

Julita: ¡Te imaginas, si nosotros tuviéramos un hijo, que nos pegara?
Antonio: ¡Un hijo?
Julita: Sí, ¡un hijo!
Antonio: (Muy alegre) ¡Repételo!
Julita: (En tono monocorde) He dicho: ¡Te imaginas, si nosotros tuviéramos un hijo, que nos pegara?
Antonio: ¡Nosotros ... un hijo? ... ¡oh, Julita! ¡Mi pequeña! (Le coge las manos y la mira a los ojos.) ¡Un hijo! ... ¡Gracias, Julita, gracias! ¡Es la mejor noticia que me podías

\(^5\) Carlos Muñiz, Las viejas difíciles, in El tintero, Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles, ed. José Monleón (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 234. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter III are to this edition and are included in the text.
Antonio cannot hear what Julita is saying, and translates her words into a pleasant fantasy: she has only mentioned the word "son" and he assumes that she is with child.

At times roleplaying and falseness between spouses borders on madness. As the prison official who allowed Julita and Antonio to marry while in jail, Teófanes too is hunted by the Association; his wife, finding him, screams, "¡También tú miserable! . . . Tú has llevado la desgracia a nuestra casa. ¡Tú has cubierto de deshonor a nuestros hijos!"

Teófanes protests that they have no children to dishonor: "¡Mentira! ¡Todo mentira! ¡No tenemos hijos! ¡Tiene la matriz infantil!" which elicits a final and wholly absurd harangue from Luisa: "¡Y si hubiésemos tenido? ¡En nombre de estos pobres hijos inocentes, pido justicia para él! ¡La máxima!" (Las viejas, p. 253). The insanity of the scene erupts again in Un solo de saxofón. Muñiz portrays Jackie's fiancée as a vindictive woman who vilifies him because of his reluctance to marry while he is unemployed; she has no love for him, but merely wishes to salve her own pride. She speaks of wanting "un hombre," never of loving him personally. She attacks him with a particularly bizarre version of the grotesque accusations being hurled at him by the others, obliterating forever any bond that could exist between them:
¡Ahora lo entiendo todo, canalla! ¡Ya sé por qué no querías casarte! ¡Eres negro! ¡Te tiñes! ¡Te das polvos! ¡Pero, lo que has conseguido disimular delante de la gente, en la intimidad será algo horrible! ¡Si, tienes el sexo negro! ¡Como el carbón! ¡Como el pecado!6

A lack of feeling separates the couples of these plays and isolates the individual character in a flat, marginal existence. In this limbo, empty of love and understanding, they function as human beings in only the most primitive sense.

In the works of both authors there is a virtual parade of "unnatural" mothers: women lacking the instinctive and traditional qualities of motherhood. Again, the two playwrights choose a classic role and deform it to emphasize the characters' inability to experience emotion. In Friolera, Loreta's feelings for her daughter are, like her other characteristics, determined by her role, rather than human feeling. It is a question of convention: as a mother, she cannot elope with Pachequín, because in her restricted world, it is inconceivable to leave her child. There is, in Loreta's case, no conflict, no agony, no struggle to choose. Her relationship to her daughter is as static and empty as is her role with reference to her husband and her lover. Mari Gaila of Divinas palabras feels no affection for her daughter. She addresses her as "aborrecida," and throughout her escapades, does not spare a thought for the child. The boticaria in Las galas del difunto never mentions her daughter; she seems to

accept her husband's verdict that the girl, who has disgraced the family with her pregnancy, is to be considered dead.

Loveless mothers are the rule in Muñiz' works too. Frida of \textit{El tintero} ignores her children, mentioning them only once, as she invokes their image to try to dissuade Crock from committing suicide. While Concha of \textit{Las viejas} is superficially a very loving, protective mother, her love is manifested as a grotesque solicitousness as she is transformed by Muñiz into an exaggerated caricature of the ultimate matriarch. She denies her children nothing, not because she loves them, but because she cannot transcend the self-serving, permissive aspects of her role. The black humor of the following exchange is rooted in the exaggerated permissiveness of the maternal figure:

\begin{quote}
Conchita: Y si ne me caso con Anselmo antes de los cuarenta me tiro al río, madre.
Concha: Te tiras donde quieras, vida mía, que para eso tienes madre. (p. 230)
\end{quote}

In her absurdity Concha is the ultimate stereotype of motherhood in Muñiz' plays, literally kissing the ground on which her children walk and protecting her \textit{criaturas} from reality, although they are close to thirty years old. She simultaneously uses her children in a smug rationalization that allows her to betray innocent members of her family. Knowing that she is sentencing him to death, she blithely decides to accuse Antonio as the father of Conchita's unborn and illegitimate child. As she explains to the pathetic old
lovers, "A ti no puede importarte, Julita . . . Cuando tengas un hijo lo comprenderás. Se hace por ellos todo. Usted también me perdonará, don Antonio, pero no tengo más remedio. Tendremos que decir a las damas que usted es el padre" (Las viejas, p. 244). Muñiz' Concha, as do Valle-Inclán's mother figures, relinquishes all but biological claim to the title.

Perhaps the most significant void in the characters of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz lies in their incapacity to feel respect or pity in the face of death. If a sense of loss at another's death is proper to man, then these are characters who can only play at life; confronted with the most sublime of human experiences, they betray their incapacity to live as complete human beings. In Valle-Inclán's Luces, the beloved poet's death is grotesque: he dies in a doorway, while Latino stands by uncomprehending, ordering him to stop his joking and grimacing. Latino strips the moment of death of all dignity: unable to recognize death, he refuses to listen to Max, and afterwards takes the dead man's billfold. In an earlier scene of the same play, Max Estrella, shocked by the tragic voice of a bereaved mother carrying her dead child, who has been killed by a stray bullet of the police, cries out, "Jamás oí voz con esa cólera trágica." It is Latino's reaction, however, that expresses the attitude of the masses: "Hay mucho de teatro." No one else seems even momentarily

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7 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Luces de Bohemia: esperpento (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1961), p. 102. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter III are to this edition and are included in the text.
touched by the woman's sorrow, for not even death can touch the heart of a society steeped in cynical indifference; a bricklayer, bartender, and shopkeeper continue to idly chat about the disturbances, dismissing the child's death as one of the "desgracias inevitables para el restablecimiento del orden" (Luces, p. 100). Even Max finds that "Le invade la apatía de los otros y ya sabe que no hay compasión genuina—en todo caso, él tampoco puede simpatizar con los otros que parece habitan un país en el cual no tiene ya ningún puesto la admiración por lo noble y lo trágico." At Max's wake, death is profaned as one character, ignoring the obvious, arbitrarily claims that the poet is not dead, and insists on carrying out an experiment. Finally, the group, indifferent to the suffering of Max's widow and child, resorts to burning Max's thumb, to see if he reacts. An incapacity to feel grief or compassion for the bereaved deteriorates even further into exploitation and perversion in Divinas palabras. When Juana la Reina dies, her relatives moan and tear their hair in conventional signs of grief. True to the rule of Valle-Inclán's characters, however, their grief is feigned, for their actions betray them as they quarrel over who will inherit the dwarf child that earned the dead woman a lucrative living at fairs. Later the death of the dwarf is bemoaned because of the loss of money it implies. His life, like his death, was so little

valued that he was left outside to be partially eaten by scavenger animals. In sad epilogue, Mari Gaila’s avarice causes her to leave his body outside her sister's door, hoping the sister will pay for the funeral. Even the conventional expressions of grief disappear in La hija. Finding don Joselito dead, the captain's first thought is to erase his features and hide the corpse. He does not waste a moment in even pretense of compassion. Except for La Sini, the other characters are interested only in how the death will affect their own futures. From the moment Joselito falls to the ground, to them he is "el fiambre," a nameless, decomposing piece of flesh whose significance is equivalent only to a danger of becoming involved. As the captain says, "El fiambre en el sótano es un compromiso, mi general" (p. 222). In Las galas, Juanito's character reinforces a prevailing insensitivity to the fact of death, as he sneaks into the graveyard to steal a dead man's clothes from his grave.

Muñiz' characters are equally jaded in their reactions to the reality of death. When Crock of El tintero dies, a crowd gathers to "help," offering such first aid suggestions as aspirin. Clearly they have been drawn to the scene only by their perverted interest in the grotesque, and after the director's perfunctory "Hay que ser humanitarios" (p. 174), they swiftly depart on the train. In Las viejas, after Luisa has helped kill her husband Teófanes, she slips quickly into the role of the bereaved wife "¡Como pajarito me lo han
dejado! ¡Pobre Teófanes! ¡Siempre tan bueno, tan caritativo! ¡Que sola me has dejado en este valle de lágrimas!" (p. 254). She is comforted by Joaquina, the leader of the execution, who claims to share her grief. Luisa's stereotyped performance recalls the boticaria of Las galas, who recites the same words upon learning of her own husband's death: "¡Socrates, por que me dejas viuda en este valle de lágrimas!" While this character may be more likeable than Luisa, the shallowness of her feeling is evidenced by the fact that she finds only the most hackneyed clichés in which to express her grief. Like other characters in these plays, she fills the emptiness which has replaced human sorrow with gesture and noise.

The insensitivity revealed in these classic situations invades virtually every aspect of human relationship that is touched upon the plays of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz. Examples are as random as they are numerous. Family members betray each other with an ease that would be shocking among strangers. Valle-Inclán's boticario insists his daughter is dead because she is pregnant; Joaquina in Muñiz' Las viejas summarily condemns her nephew—"Como todos monstruos"—as soon as she hears of his arrest (p. 221). Misery is exploited, laughed at, at best ignored. As la daifa lies in a faint, Juanito

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9 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Las galas del difunto, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 29. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter III are to this edition and are included in the text.
reads aloud the touching plea she had written her father. The other prostitutes comment on how well written it is, the Madame orders drinks, and Juanito and the girls flirt. In *Divinas palabras*, the dwarf is used to make money and furnish amusement for those around him. Mari Gaila watches as her charge is fed liquor, which eventually causes his death; his genitals are exposed to view for those who pay to see them. In *La hija*, people hearing of a duel to be fought feel only idle curiosity, and are morbidly interested in discovering who dies in it. This attitude continues as another imminent scandal comes to their ears: "¡El hombre descuartizado! ¡Se nos presenta un gran verano!" (p. 247). In *El tintero*, Crock begs the Negociante for help. The Negociante recites his good works, gives Crock a peseta, and dismisses him, saying,

A mí estas cosas me parten el alma. Ya sé que en el mundo hay mucha miseria, y me gustaría remediarla; pero ¿cómo? Yo no puedo hacer más. Doy todos los meses una limosna al Asilo, pago un recibo de caridad para los pobres del distrito, y cuando reparto beneficios anuales entrego una respetable cantidad a una fundación de beneficencia. Mi mujer es dama de la Cruz Roja y socia de tres o cuatro sociedades de asistencia de invalidos, niños tontos, y señoras de mala fama. ¿Qué más puedo hacer? No creo que se pueda hacer más. Bueno; si, podría coger mis fincas, mis negocios, y mi dinero y dárselos a este señor. Pero si lo hiciera, este señor viviría estupendamente y yo no podría vivir. (p. 137)

When Frank of *El tintero* learns that Crock's poverty forces him to eat paper, his only response is anger that office supplies should be wasted. Not only is there lack of mutual understanding and respect among these characters, but they
often have difficulty in so much as hearing each other. Concha and Elías continue to discuss Antonio's white hair although he has told them repeatedly that he is wearing a white bandage on his head. While highly comical, the scene is inherently tragic in its emphasis on the lack of simple communication that might be expected among human beings. The few characters who seem capable of feeling honest sympathy for others are prevented from doing so by external forces. Señora Slamb in El tintero would in other circumstances be a kind woman, but finances forbid her the luxury of compassion. After Crock is fired, she says, "Yo no puedo tenerle en mi casa. No puedo permitirme el lujo de tenerle de balde" (p. 157).

The absurd and the grotesque in Valle-Inclán's and Muñiz' plays often revert to the contrast between what one might expect or hope to see in one's own reactions to the intense moments and relationships of life, and the reaction which the author poses as real through his characters. The authors dramatize a dismal state of affairs in man's twentieth century existence: those qualities which define the individual as a member of humanity have been replaced by a void. Only pretense and exaggerated play-acting remain to compensate for a loss of human feelings, these but a remembrance of things past.
SOCIETY: THE AGENT OF DEHUMANIZATION

Valle-Inclán and Muñiz share the opinion that the playwright should attack in his works the evils he sees in society. Both dramatists disdain less serious works being written. As Valle-Inclán says, "Arte no. No debemos hacer arte ahora, porque jugar en los tiempos que corren es inmoral, es una canallada. Hay que lograr primero una justicia social." In similar fashion, Muñiz declares, "... personalmente considero de urgencia lo social en la creación literaria. Es una exigencia de nuestro tiempo." Agustín del Saz comments on the bitter social criticism of the plays included in Valle-Inclán's Martes de carnaval: "En ellos la sátira es monstruosa y grotesca. Estos tres títulos, unidos a Luces de Bohemia, representan la sátira de lo contemporáneo con la caricatura política, intelectual, y militar." He points out that Valle-Inclán "nos da la vida

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española desfigurada sin sentimientos de familia ni de religión; sin respeto a las instituciones de país, sin mitos unificadores posibles, sin patriotismo." 4 With these lines, del Saz offers an apt description of Muñiz' works as well.

With reference to social commentary, there are differences between the approach taken by Valle-Inclán and that of the more contemporary Carlos Muñiz. While these dissimilarities are interesting and even significant in terms of the individual playwright's existential framework, the target of criticism and the accusations hurled against it differ very little, if at all. Valle-Inclán tends to specify historically accurate events and to detail documented incidents to convey his concern with society's crimes against man. As Anthony Zahareas says of Luces de Bohemia, one of Valle-Inclán's most representative plays with regard to society's role in the depersonalization of the individual, "el fondo de la acción central está plasmado de los famosos disturbios políticos durante los años 1917-1919." 5 It is a play in which, he adds, "Las vividas experiencias de las violentas huelgas, el caos desenfrenado y el desplome económico se arraigan." 6 He details obvious examples of timely notes in this work:

4 Agustín del Saz, p. 38.
Considerése que hay en casi todas las escenas de Luces exhortaciones, tropeles de obreros, calles cubiertas de vidrio roto, faroles rotos, polizones, excaramuzas, patrullas, detenciones, palizas, tableteos de fusilada y asesinatos; hay discusiones sobre propietarios y obreros, sobre enriquecimientos escandalosos y revoluciones, sobre el sindicalismo anarquizante; hay también desaprobaciones o ataques contra la prensa, contra los militares, los artistas "apolíticos," y el gobierno. 7

In Valle-Inclán's other plays too the events are firmly based on historical fact: La hija del capitán is based on Rivera's coup, Las galas del difunto on the war in Cuba. Los cuernos de don Friolera focuses on the army, represented by the cuerpo de carabineros. Also, Valle-Inclán often uses real people as characters, as in Luces, in which Rubén Darío appears.

Muñiz' plays, on the other hand, usually take place in an unspecified but obviously modern time, with the setting only sketched in, or vaguely distant, as in Un solo de saxofón, in which the descriptions only suggest New York City or another huge metropolis. His one-dimensional characters reveal no individual traits strong enough to indicate that they are inspired by actual persons, and Muñiz never refers to a recognizably historical event in his works. He rarely wavers from the schematic and the stylized in every aspect of content and technique.

While the reason for these superficial differences may of course be simply stylistic, it is also extremely suggestive. Muñiz, after all, is subjected to a rigid system of censorship 7

from which Valle-Inclán is basically free. Always aware that his plays may be subjected to intense scrutiny several times before they are performed, Muñiz faces the conflict of many serious modern Spanish playwrights. Their unpalatable options are to write plays they deem to be significant or essential to the understanding of modern life, while facing the real possibility that their works will not be approved by the censorship board, and thus will never reach an audience; or to bow to censorship and submit only plays which will certainly reach the stage. Indeed, Muñiz was forced to change the ending of *El tintero* in order to see it performed. He comments cryptically, "*El tintero* no es, exactamente, la obra que yo hubiera querido escribir." Because of censorship problems, Muñiz is forced to mask the social criticism of his plays, to veil his bitter indictment of the outmoded, empty values Spain pretends to honor. It is probable that he creates absurd situations, as in *Las viejas difíciles*, exaggerating the sins of society to make his point, because he is unable to portray directly, as Valle-Inclán does, the troubled times in which he lives. On the other hand, Muñiz' approach may represent a conscious effort to enter into the mainstream of world literature, to achieve a more universal perspective than does Valle-Inclán, who in many ways cannot separate himself from the rural and urban realities of his beloved and troubled homeland.

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8 Monleón, p. 28.
In any case, despite superficial differences and the half century that separates Valle-Inclán and Muñiz, their pre-occupation with social structure reveals striking parallels. Theirs is not the pose of the unadjusted rebel, the malcontent consumed with random and aimless criticism; nor is their perspective limited in tone to the sociological or political. Instead, their wrath is directed against institutions which they view as guilty of the ultimate crime against man: the systematic obliteration of their very humanity. To answer the question of why Valle-Inclán and Muñiz should so degrade their characters and these in turn should mistreat each other to so intense a degree, one must examine each writer's analysis of the collective criminal. Both playwrights scrutinize bureaucracy and bureaucrats, the police, the Church and religion, the military, the press, the intellectual class. In every case they condemn oppressive authority that controls the thoughts and actions of men and denies them autonomy by allowing them only limited responses within the confines of rules.

Valle-Inclán and Muñiz share a vehement indictment of bureaucracy as a degrading, dehumanizing force of contemporary society. Max of Valle-Inclán's Luces accuses the bureaucrat of being brutal and brutalizing, of lacking sympathy, decency, and most important, the ability to dream--
"tú, gusano, burocrática, no sabes nada. Ni soñar;"9 subsequently he harangues the office workers who succumb to bureaucratic pressures. "¡Canallas! ¡Asalariados! ¡Cobar- dés!" (p. 53). Characters of another play chat matter-of-factly about the corruption that has crept into the upper levels of the bureaucratic hierarchy: "en general, la clase de oficiales es decente. El mal está en los altos espacios."10 The military in Valle-Inclán's plays sins against man in many ways but its entrenchment in bureaucratic red tape is salient among its offenses; when Friolera surrenders himself to the comandante for the crime of murdering his wife, the comandante dismisses his tormented confession with bureaucratic obsession for proper procedure: "¡Ha sido usted llamado? . . . ¡Teniente Astete, vuelva a su puesto y solicite con arreglo a ordenanza! ¡Y espere usted un arresto!" (Friolera, p. 188).

He refuses to deal with the realities of life and death until the appropriate amenities of military etiquette have been observed. While the bureaucracy Muñiz attacks sometimes veils a broader target of criticism, he certainly sees bureaucracy itself as an obstacle to the fulfillment

9 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Luces de Bohemia: esperpento (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 50. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter IV are to this edition and are included in the text.

10 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Los cuernos de don Friolera, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espaso-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 118. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter IV are to this edition and are included in the text.
of living a human life in this century. As Monleón
observes,

Con El grillo entra Carlos en un terreno que luego
volverá a frecuentar: el de la sátira de la buro-
cracia, entended por nuestro autor como símbolo másivo
de la destrucción del hombre. El escafalón, los méritos,
las influencias, los horarios, los jefes, la mesa de
oficina . . . configuran un conjunto espiritual y
material que destruye la persona humana. Hay en El
grillo como luego en El tintero, la feroz denuncia de
un orden de producción que exige, generalmente, una
depersonalización.11

As Crock of El tintero sees it, the bureaucrats with whom he
works are mechanical, soulless creatures; instead of a heart,
"¡Tienen una estilográfica! No piensan; firman. No
respiran; instruyen expedientes. No lloran; echan tinta."12
Regulations govern every facet of these robots' world, for
even the coming of spring is subject to official cancella-
tion. As one of the employees says to Crock, "Aquí no hay
primavera. . . . Lo ha prohibido el reglamento" (p. 122).
The most private aspects of the employee's lives are affected
by the Director's iron rule. Crock is told, "Usted no tiene
que pensar. El señor Director lo ha prohibido" (p. 126).
Finally, in a frenzy of anger at Crock's rebellious inde-
pendence, Frank summarizes the average man's predicament:
"¡No hay recados! ¡No hay amigos! ¡No hay nada contra las
órdenes del señor Director!" (p. 126). The bureaucratic

11 Monleón, p. 48.

12 Carlos Muñiz, El tintero, in El tintero, Un solo de
saxofón, Las viejas difíciles, ed. José Monleón (Madrid:
Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 140. Subsequent references to
this work in Chapter IV are to this edition and are included
in the text.
penchant for demoralizing and exhausting its victims by "passing the buck" is parodied in the scene in which Crock confronts the conserje and the director of personnel about not receiving the bonus that he expected. In the stereotyped bureaucratic tradition, the two shunt him back and forth, until Crock finally sees the futility of questions. When he is beaten literally and figuratively with huge fountain pens, the message is clear: the system, for the moment, has won. The prison garb that Crock wears in the final scene of the play is an obvious symbol of the stifling, dehumanized existence that Crock can escape only by dying.

The police come under particular attack in the works of both writers. Their brutality is shocking in Valle-Inclán's Luces when one of their bullets kills a bystander's child, and they offer neither redress nor sympathy. They are robots, capable only of shooting, killing, preventing or provoking riots. The crushing indictment of the police force gains dramatic interest when the central character is arrested, mistreated, and humiliated. In prison, Max meets a Catalan striker who is later shot by the police in an alleged attempt to escape. Valle-Inclán's sympathies are obvious: the striker, representative of the oppressed, exploited working class pursued by the henchmen of a bloodthirsty society, retains his dignity though he must die to do it.

Muñiz also views the police as unthinking brutal tools of a dehumanized society. The policeman in El tintero is a
programmed robot, incapable of seeing, hearing, or feeling. When he comes upon Amigo holding the sharp letter opener in front of Crock, the situation solicits from him no evaluation: a man with a weapon must be trying to kill the other. Refusing to listen to explanations that do not fit his preconceived notion of events, he detains the two friends and arrests Amigo, who is summarily hanged. The policeman in Las viejas also reflects the warped society that pays his salary. He sneaks from tree to tree, spying on the ridiculous old lovers, Antonio and Julita. As soon as they kiss, he leaps out shrieking foolish accusations and they are sent to prison for their indiscretion. Needless to say, the police take no action against the brothel where the damas go for their pleasure. In Un solo Muñiz criticizes the police even more directly. The corrupt policeman in this play takes payment to pretend to be ignorant of crimes happening in his very presence. He reports to his superiors that the black man, whose body is marred by the blows he has received, committed suicide. The police in the plays of Muñiz, like those who appear in Valle-Inclán's works, usurp rather than protect the rights of the individual. Furthermore, since they are in essence the mindless enforcers of codes which they neither evaluate nor understand, their cruelty is absolute and sadistic.

The Church and organized religion in general are fiercely denounced and mercilessly satirized in the works of
both Valle-Inclán and Muñiz. The clergy and those who pay lip service to religious teachings are irreverently exposed as ruthless hypocrites who profane the very concept of Christian sentiment. Diabolical purpose and determination are at the root of their false piety, for as surely as the bureaucrats these are members of the "in crowd" of society who victimize, manipulate, and control men. In Las galas, the sacristan, an avaricious old man, demands large sums of money to have masses said for the deceased. When the widow complains about the exhorbitant fee, the sacristan replies with an implied threat: "¡Que va usted degenerando en herética, doña Terita!"\textsuperscript{13} In Divinas palabras, the sacristan's wife publicly deceives him, and it is his position as leader in the Church that intensifies his anger, jealousy, and embarrassment. In La hija, the bishop makes a pompous approach: "Su ilustrísima le bendice, agitanado y vistoso en el negro ruedo de sus familiares."\textsuperscript{14} In Friolera, two philosophers are in prison for casting the evil eye on a jackass and for being anarchists, supporting the earlier contention that "En España vivimos muy atrasados. Somos

\textsuperscript{13} Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Las galas del difunto, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 51. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter IV are to this edition and are included in the text.

\textsuperscript{14} Ramon del Valle-Inclán, La hija del capitán, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 245. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter IV are to this edition and are included in the text.
victimas del clero" (p. 128). Doña Tadea of the same play, pious to the extreme, is rarely seen when not blessing herself, yet she writes the anonymous note which causes Friolera's anguish and, ultimately, the death of his daughter.

Restricted by censorship in his criticism of the Church, Muñiz relies on satire at its most bitter and exaggerated to denounce its practices. Of all his plays, Las viejas hurls the most adamant criticism against it. The old women pretend to be pious: they cross themselves, pray incessantly, and go to Mass regularly, though their personal lives are a morass of immorality. But as important to Muñiz as the hypocrisy of those who do not live by the standards they preach, is the tendency of the Spanish Church to control the individual, to usurp his mind and his will, ultimately to dehumanize him. The old women tyrannize the population with tactics resembling those of the Inquisition. When they feel it is time to punish Julita and Antonio, choir boys stone them. The "Yo me acuso" that criminals must sign when they are arrested seems to be a direct reference to the practice of the confessional, and for a special celebration, when the criminals have been executed, Joaquina announces that there will be a Te deum.

Personal religion and individual relationships with God have disappeared in these plays, and formula has taken their place. Thus Elías' simplistic bedtime prayer is perfectly in keeping with the context: "Cuatro esquinitas tiene mi cama,
cuatro angelitos que me la guardan. Lucas y Pedro, Juan y Mateo: Dios y la Virgen están en medio.\textsuperscript{15} Julita longs for a real sense of God: she wants to escape to a place "donde los hombres sean ángeles sin espadas" (Las viejas, p. 259). The character of Teófanes seems almost to be a Christ figure: he yearns for truth, love, and peace, and repeats a litany as the women carry him off to be killed: "¡Compasión, amor, belleza, paz, autodeterminación . . ! ¡Paz en la tierra a los hombres de buena voluntad!" (Las viejas, p. 236). Antonio summarizes the stifling, hypocritically and rigidly religious atmosphere as one of "el odio, la venganza, la hipocresía, la envidia, la ambición, las viejas . . ." (Las viejas, p. 240).

The military is sharply criticized in the plays of both authors. In fact, the corruption and self-interest of the high ranking military officers who decide Spain's fate is a major theme of Valle-Inclán's La hija. This corruption is embodied in the general whose patriotic words are empty and veil only an ambition to manipulate the populace. Friolera also examines the Army's corroded values and ignoble behavior. Officers are characterized by the most disgusting and inhuman traits. At the same time, as we shall see, they are the upper echelon of a power that denies the value of the

\textsuperscript{15} Carlos Muñiz, Las viejas difíciles, in El tintero, Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles, ed. José Monleón (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 230. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter IV are to this edition and are included in the text.
individual. *Las galas* is just as pointed in its criticism of Army officers. Juanito comments cynically that in the war only the officers' deaths are honored with ceremony; the soldiers' deaths are insignificant (p. 16).

Sensitive to the limitations imposed by the censorship board, Muñiz still insists upon condemning the military. To do so, in *Las viejas* he invents a group of little old ladies who constitute an army: they march in a military formation, have the same hierarchy, and the same rigidity of meaningless rules, and they value conformity above all. The women literally wave weapons after moral victories--"Joaquina blande triunfante el sable"--that is, after they succeed in beating their prey into submission (p. 225). They are, in essence, a fusion of the rigid formulized aspects of the military and the clergy--as Muñiz instructs: "Lejos se empieza a oír un himno entre militar y sacro interpretado por el ejército de las damas"--and the individual is their victim (p. 246).

Most levels of society have yielded to the spiritual tyranny of these enforcers. The ostensible leaders of society are little more than figureheads who value form and title above substance. The king, in *Friolera*, has many decorations but has never fought a battle. In *La hija*, the king comes to congratulate the army for its coup, and el *golfante* caustically remarks, "Las pompas monárquicas son un agravio a la dignidad ciudadana" (p. 259). In Muñiz'
theater, the Negociante and the Director are the elite. The first has little to do but file his fingernails, and has reached a prestigious position only because he is "medio tísico," did not have to go to war, and so was able to build a business while the other men were gone (p. 137). The Director is consumed with the trappings of his position. The fawning of his employees, the pomp of his exit from his office with special lights and music, and the pedestal that he mounts to better judge the case of Crock and Frida indicate that ceremony has replaced substance. His arbitrary judgments and decisions, on the other hand, imply that he is a stranger to truth and justice. The press, in these plays, is shameful in its abandonment of a duty to inform the public. In Valle-Inclán's Luces, the press conspires with the authorities to conceal the truth in the story of the prisoner who was shot in the back. In Las viejas, Muñiz also portrays the press in collusion with the authorities; the newspaper account of Julita and Antonio's crime is blatantly dishonest, an official version which ignores fact and satisfies authority. Academicians and apolitical intellectuals have also given in. Max of Luces says, "Tengo el honor de no ser académico" (p. 49). Avelino in Muñiz' Telarañas is kin to the Modernists of Valle-Inclán's Luces: he leads a futile existence in his ivory tower with his books and his cat.

Most individual characters also surrender to the suffocating weight of social regimentation. There is an
anonymity to these people, a lack of individuality that prevents them from being easily recognized as persons. Their identities are so weak, eroded by years of society's dehumanizing rules, that they are almost interchangeable. The rules of society, the pointless insistence on form and appearance have left no room for individuality. When La daifa confesses to Juanito that she preferred him when he had all his medals on his chest, he replies, "¡Las mujeres os deslumbraís con apariencias panolis! ¡Todas al modo de mariposas!" (Las galas, p. 55). But he is wrong in limiting the obsession with form and appearance to women, for Manolo of Muñiz' El precio confesses, "Mi padre no había sido nunca rico pero teníamos que aparentar que nos sobraba el dinero para que no nos diera de lado esa sociedad pueblerina sucia, hipocrita, y deslinguada" (p. 67). In Las viejas, Concha, after years under the rule of the Association, is well aware that only appearance is important, and has forgotten that reality is at all significant. She is shocked when Julita brings Antonio with her, seeking refuge, and when Julita reminds her that they are married, Concha can only reply, "¡Y la reputación? ¡Y el honor? ¡Y el que dirán?" (p. 231). In La hija, el golfante kills Joselito while attempting to kill the general with whom La Sini lives. Joselito steps out first and gets shot, because el golfante relies on expectation rather than perception. In the same manner, Teófanes is kissed by Conchita when he arrives at her home, because her
novio has been expected and no one stops to notice that it is not he; in fact, no one is easily convinced of the error.

Hunger, poverty, and injustice among men surface as themes in these plays of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz as insistently as one might expect in social drama. But the problem here transcends the realm of material need and class struggle. If these writers seem obsessed with attacking the institutions of society, it is because the abuses perpetrated by them lead ultimately to the depersonalization of the individual. The lifeless, doll-like figures who populate these works are victims of society's conventions as surely as those characters who manage to live as human beings do so because they are still capable of struggling against those same conventions. And, a cornerstone of the deadly structure that would steal men's souls is the age-old code of honor. Meaningful, perhaps, in its original context, vicious in its eventual extremes, in the twentieth century its strange, monstrous remnants reach out like ugly tentacles to entangle the individual, to suck out his identity and leave him floundering about as something less than human.
CHAPTER V

DEHUMANIZATION AND THE HONOR CODE

Among the tools society employs to de-personalize men are the remnants of an honor code which has lost all meaning. Juan Antonio Hormigón discusses the implications of the code:

... exige ... [del hombre] la conquista minuciosa, pero sometiendo posterior a ninguna ley, de la mujer la sumisión, la fidelidad total, sin fisuras, sin sospechas. La alteración de este orden exige y obliga al marido a lavar la ofensa con sangre, a matar a la pecadora, a matar al amante. Este modo de comportamiento ... es el orden social que Calderón glorifica, práctica y quirúrgica contra el mal que significa a quien lo executa. ... Pero si "el honor" era un anacronismo en el siglo XVII, en plena revolución industrial es una antigua propia de sociedades primitivas, un concepto bárbaro e incivil.¹

Valle-Inclán and Muñiz see the honor code as an empty formula, excessively rigid, externally inflicted by a society that seeks to control men by stripping them of natural feelings, individual perceptions and, ultimately, of their humanity. The honor code, as these authors interpret its effects upon man, demands automatic responses, collective insensitivity, and lifeless subservience to a system that computerizes human existence. Anthony N. Zahareas comments on the honor code's crime against man, and its tendency to "atraparlo y dominarlo,

¹ Juan Antonio Hormigón, Ramón del Valle-Inclán: La política, la cultura, el realismo y el pueblo (Madrid: Industrias Felmar, 1972), p. 366.
es decir, reducir al hombre 'honrado' a algo mecanizado, cosificado, a una marioneta.  
Javier Herrero agrees that the honor code has a deleterious effect and discusses Valle-Inclán's handling of the theme:

Valle-Inclán, sin embargo, lo analiza mediante recursos estéticos que tienen el mismo fin: mostrar el contraste entre un mundo aparcial (el plano del honor) y una realidad innoble (la España moderna), exponiendo, mediante tal contraste, el carácter grotesco de nuestra vida y cultura, y—esto es esencial—contribuyendo con su denuncia a la transformación de esa realidad, a la destrucción del sentido castizo del honor.

With varying degrees of success, the central characters of Valle-Inclán's and Muñiz' plays struggle to maintain their freedom and identity against this artificial mandate of society that would reduce them to puppets. While their roles are not devoid of conflict, the latter has its sources not in passion, but rather in their susceptibility to the trappings of an ideal that has no relevance to the human experience. Other characters yield, without resistance, to the strings of the honor code implacably controlled by an uncaring society; these victims represent the monstrous fate which awaits those who might succumb to the will of the puppeteer, for they never live as individuals. Their roles are static, limited


to farce, and literally embody the dehumanization which Valle-Inclán and Muñiz see as a major threat in modern society. Each author reworks the conventional honor play, examining some of its traditional aspects—the cuckold, the adulteress, a father's duty to his family, and society's attitude toward the situation.

Valle-Inclán's cuckolds approach mechanization, as they are trapped against their will by the code, or escape from it into perversion. In Los cuernos de don Friolera, a bitter parody of the pundonor theme, honor is an empty shell, and Friolera is forced by his position and his superiors to kill for the rule, regardless of his own feelings. Hormigón agrees that "'El honor' se convierte aquí en ideología sin sentido, grotesca y bárbara." Against his deepest wishes, Friolera follows the established axiom of the military: "No hay cabrones en el Cuerpo de Carabineros." That he has learned his responses well is apparent from his automatic verdict when he reads the accusation of his wife: "Si fuese verdad, tendría que degollarla" (Friolera, p. 77). He knows the duty imposed on him by tradition and assents to the vacuous shell of the code that stifles his personal dignity and feelings and, in fact, his very humanity. The absurdity

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4 Hormigón, p. 368.

5 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Los cuernos de don Friolera, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 77. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter V are to this edition and are included in the text.
of his predicament is heightened by the figure of the coman-
dante: theoretically the very receptacle of the ideal that
dictates Friolera's conduct, he is himself an empty figure-
head--an unavenged, indifferent cuckold. In Divinas palabras,
进一步 distorting the concept of honor, Valle-Inclán com-
pletely perverts the ideal. Although the cuckold exclaims,
according to the precepts of society, "¡He de vengar mi honor!
... ¡Está escrito!" the cry is but a cover for his tor-
mented knowledge that he is incapable of raising the knife to
avenge his honor.6 Faced with the fact of his wife's infi-
delity, he sees sleeping with his daughter as the only
suitable vengeance. He calls to her from his bed: "¡Ven,
Simonina! ¡Ven, prenda! Pues que me da corona, vamos
nosotros dos a ponerle otra igual en la frente . . ." (p.
81). As Sumner Greenfield says of Pedro: "su situación de
cornudo se convierte en una parodia grotesca de la comedia
del Siglo de Oro y el tema de pundonor."7

Muñiz' cuckold, on the other hand, Crock of El tintero,
is faced with enormous economic pressures. Honor is a lux-
ury which he simply cannot afford, for it is impossible for
him to satisfy the code, and, at the same time, feed his
family. Confronted with his wife's insistence that he return

6 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, Divinas palabras: tragicomedia
77-78. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter V are
to this edition and are included in the text.

7 Sumner Greenfield, "Divinas palabras y la nueva faz de
Galicia," in Ramón del Valle-Inclán: An Appraisal of His
Life and Works, ed. Anthony N. Zahareas (New York: Las
to the village and deal with the maestro's pointed attentions to her, Crock can only dully reply, "Tengo que quedarme aquí... La oficina... el dinero..." He is trapped in the city by material necessity and his duty as a husband becomes but another pressure imposed by a society that grasps at any weapon to push men into conformity. Frida presses Crock to play his role as the offended husband, but he is confused by this social mandate that has little relevance to his personal world of privation and weariness and he replies in frustration: "¡Yo qué se! Me duele la cabeza, estoy cansado. No hay pisos. No hay dinero. No hay nada. ¡Déjame en paz! Estoy harto de historias" (El tintero, p. 144). Yet, he clings for the moment to a minimal hope of being able to deal with the situation which threatens to destroy his marriage: "Vuelve al pueblo y dile a ese hombre que iré el sábado y le arreglaré las cuentas" (p. 144). Of course, even honor and duty must wait until Saturday, when Crock will be momentarily freed from the bondage of the office.

When the moment of confrontation finally arrives and Crock sees Frida slapped by her would-be lover, the brutality of existence becomes plain to him; he relinquishes the last thread of illusion and faces the truth as he tells Frida, "Necesitas muchas bofetadas aun. Creo que el señor maestro...

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8 Carlos Muñiz, El tintero, in El tintero, Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, S.A., 1969), p. 143. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter V are to this edition and are included in the text.
te conviene. El sabrá ser buen arriero. Yo no sirvo para estas cosas" (El tintero, p. 172). The resignation he expresses is laced with relief, for he is simply too tired to muster the indignation and outrage prescribed by the code as motives for avenging an honor sullied by a faithless wife.

As society, in the context of Valle-Inclán's and Muñiz' theater, is only too eager to continue the tradition of bludgeoning the individual with that mighty club that is honor, it meets the protagonists' predicament with indifference and cynicism. Tragic elements of old have become a game, an inevitable comedy, however black its humor might be. Thus, in these plays, there is not a character, with the exception of the protagonists, who even pretends to assume the burden of a traditional role. Having learned of Crock's dilemma, his employer insinuates casually, "¡Ah! ¡Su mujer es . . .?" (El tintero, p. 149). And even Frida's lover unabashedly introduces himself to her husband, shakes his hand, and blithely explains his dalliance with her: "... en los pueblos se aburre uno y no se tiene nada que hacer" (p. 171). Crock escapes the deadly foolishness of the honor code by his death, as he steps in the path of a train, rejecting the code as he rejects the other artificial trappings of the modern world.

The adulteresses' attitudes reveal no deep sense of wrong or guilt to match the agony of their husbands. Valle-Inclán's Loreta of Friolera most closely approximates the
formula. She knows very well the fate that awaits her if she should be conquered by temptation. Pachequín asks, "¿Y de saberse, qué haría el teniente?" and she replies, "Matarnos... ¡Ay, Pachequín, la esposa del militar, si cae, ya sabe lo que la espera!" (p. 97). She protests her innocence throughout the play:

La tarasca cae de rodillas, abre los brazos y ofrece el pecho a las furias de pistolón. "¡Mátame! ¡Moriré inocente!" (p. 117)

"¡Pascual, mira lo que haces! ¡Limpia estoy de toda culpa!" she cries, with a traditional formula of innocence. Nevertheless, she ends by justifying her temptation with a bold threat: "En adelante, quizá no pueda decirlo, pues me abandonas y la mujer abandonada santa ha de ser para no escuchar al diablo" (Friolera, p. 118). The adulteress of *Divinas palabras* is hardly the traditional accused wife. As Greenfield observes, "Mari Gaila es una mujer vibrante y autónoma que reacciona a toda clase de gente y situación con un irresistible egoísmo y una confianza personal que la permiten despreciar el resto del mundo cuando se le antoja."9 Her blatant scorn for her husband surfaces as she makes no attempt to conceal her liaison with Séptimo. Her taunts for Pedro's concern at being publicly disgraced seethe with contempt:

Pedro Gailo: ¿Donde está mi honra?
Mari Gaila: ¡Vaya el cantar que te acuerda!
Pedro Gailo: ¡Te hiciste Pública!
Mari Gaila: ¡A ver si te encienden las liendres! (p. 131)

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So too does she disdain society's indictment. When a crowd, enraged by her lascivious actions, discovers her with Séptimo, Mari Gaila sees herself not as a transgressor but rather as the victim of the mob's automatic condemnation: she accuses them of being "ladrones de honra" (p. 128). As Greenfield points out, "a la adulteria le falta todo sentido convencional de vergüenza." Feeling no shame for her action, she blames society for its opinions, and she makes her public statement with a brazenly nude return to her husband's church in a pagan procession--"como el carro de un triunfo de faunalias" (p. 132).

In Muñiz' El tintero, Crock's wife, Frida, aware that the burden of honor weighs on him, boasts to her husband about the man who is courting her:

¿Y sabes lo que me dijo? Que una mujer como yo necesita un hombre que la abrace o que la pegue cuando llegue el momento. Dice que el puede hacerlo . . . Y puede que sea cierto. Parece un mozo decidido. Es recio y alto. Tú siempre llegas cansado al pueblo. Ni siquiera me das un beso. Compréndelo, Crock; necesito un marido . . . y tú no lo eres. (p. 144)

When Crock protests, "Tú eres buena, Frida. ¿Verdad que eres buena?" she replies in a tone of cynical finality, "Pero no soy de piedra, hijo, no soy de piedra" (p. 144). Her words contain an implied warning that if Crock is unwilling or unable to prevent the maestro's advances then all future infidelities on her part are justified.

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While the cuckolds are torn between personal feelings and an obligation to follow the mandates of the honor code, other characters succumb to the code without struggle. They do so at the expense of their humanity, for they escape conflict through abandonment of natural feelings and acceptance of a bleak, puppet-like existence, controlled by regulations. Many have long since exchanged their humanity for security and material comfort. As Herrero observes with regard to Valle-Inclán's plays specifically, "la sociedad entera tiene una cultura basada en exaltados principios continuamente contradichos por una conducta regida por el pragmaticismo más brutal y mezquino." In Muñiz' plays also these mannequins of society are limited to following and implementing the code. They eliminate transgressors, they uphold the honor of organizations, and they are only too happy to sacrifice personal integrity to the rule.

In Valle-Inclán's La hija del capitán, honor is a superficial, public reputation that must be maintained at all cost; loss of it is equivalent to public loss of face. Thus the captain senses no conflict in, on the one hand, saving his reputation by giving his daughter to the corrupt general to avoid being expelled from the service, and on the other, expecting the respect and unquestioned loyalty that are due his role as a father. His daughter, La Sini, bears the scars of this hypocrisy. Although she abhors the general, she

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loves the luxury in which she lives, and tells el golfante, "Con este o con otro había de caer. Estaba para eso." She has absorbed her father's attitudes and is willing to forego the possibility of love in order to save her father's reputation and so to live in opulence.

In Las galas del difunto, la daífa dwells in a house of prostitution because her lover was killed in the war in Cuba, leaving her five months pregnant. Upon discovering her condition, her father, sensitive only to the demands of the honor code, disowns her. Receiving a letter from her, he shouts sanctimoniously,

¡Recoge esa carta! ¡No quiero recibirla! ¡Me mancharía las manos! ¡A la relajada que aquí te encamina, déle, de una vez para siempre, que no logrará conmover mi corazón! Llévate ese papel, y no aparezcas más.

He replies coldly to the pleas of the messenger, "¿De qué hija me hablas? Una tuve y se ha muerto" (Las galas, p. 25). Because the code allows him no fatherly feelings, he sentences his daughter to a life of squalor and shame.

Muniz' Las viejas difíciles describes the most immediate, willing, and, therefore, the most frightening surrender of integrity at the order of the authorities. The cruel,

12 Ramón del Valle-Inclán, La hija del capitán, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 208. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter V are to this edition are included in the text.

13 Ramon del Valle-Inclán, Las galas del difunto, in Martes de carnaval (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1964), p. 26. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter V are to this edition and are included in the text.
inflexible, and absurd code imposed by the Association twists the concept of honor almost past recognition. In the play, Conchita becomes pregnant, and her father exclaims, "¡Ese es el pago que le das a tu padre! Sabes que no podemos comer y encima nos traes una boca más. ¿Y ellas? Ahora nos perseguirán por partida doble. ¡No nos dejarán vivir hasta que consigan hacernos reventar!" Again, as in *El tintero*, the fear of material disaster prevails; Elías' immediate reaction of anger due to financial difficulties preempts even his fear of the Association's power to destroy them all. In his world, known sexual activity is followed by certain disgrace, and so he says to his sons, "¡No habéis oído que tu hermana está preñada, que estamos deshonrados, que nos condenarán las damas? Nos perseguirán . . ." (p. 244). His only concern is to find a suitable story to save his daughter's reputation, and he is delighted when his wife is struck by the idea of fixing the blame on his brother-in-law: "¡Eso estupenda! ¡La única solución! Nos quedaremos libres. Se los llevarán y harán con ellos lo que no queremos que hagan con nosotros" (p. 245). Fear, economic necessity, and narrow self-interest have killed not only the sense of personal honor in Elías and his family, but also the capacity for love and compassion: they are eager to accuse an innocent man in

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14 Carlos Muñiz, *Las viejas difíciles*, in *El tintero*, *Un solo de saxofón, Las viejas difíciles* (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1969), p. 242. Subsequent references to this work in Chapter V are to this edition and are included in the text.
order to escape the consequences of their own actions. The remainder of Elías' scolding is based on the inconvenience his daughter causes the family: "¡Desgraciada! ¿Qué haremos ahora los domingos?" (p. 244). If Conchita is obviously pregnant, the family will have to forego their usual Sunday outing. Again, it is the discomfort Conchita will cause the family rather than the crime that infuriates him. The reality of the sin itself does not concern him; appearance has totally superceded honor in this play. He points out to Antonio, "Nada es verdad ni es mentira; todo es según el color de cristal con que se mira" (p. 253). Later, when the Association has accepted their lie, and has promised the family new luxuries, Conchita becomes a heroine in the family's eyes.

The lack of concern demonstrated by the majority of the characters for their victims is engendered by the authorities who preserve and enforce the honor code: characters who, while implementing the code, break it without a moment's hesitation and do not worry unless they are caught, or who manage to delude themselves into believing that they actually possess honor and dignity. Ironically, the very characters who expound most eloquently on the importance of honor understand the concept least. It is with these "enforcers," the pillars of society, that Valle-Inclán and Muñiz are most pitiless and cruel. Both dramatists steadfastly refuse to allow them to live. Both see them as lifeless tools of
society. Those who bully, dictate, impose rules, are puppets themselves, without will, without heart, not driven by conviction, passion, or need, but rather by the lowest motives—greed, lust for power, cold, unfeeling malice. There is no individual in these plays who disinterestedly upholds the honor code; the characters who support it have a position to maintain, power which is protected by that ostensible honor.

A study of the avid enforcers, the nominal receptacles of honor and its stringent code in the plays of the two authors, reveals that these characters are not simply hypocritical, but totally dehumanized: there are no limits to the evil they will perpetrate to maintain their reputations, the only honor they are capable of recognizing.

The contrast between high principles and crude behavior mentioned by Herrero is apparent in the demeanor of the trio of officers who meet to judge Friolera's case and dispense discipline following his loss of honor. They believe themselves to be the incarnation of military dignity and an essential bulwark that guards its preservation. As one says ceremoniously, "Se trata de condenar a un compañero de armas . . . Acaso nos veamos en la obligación de formular una sentencia dura, pero justa" (Friolera, p. 129). In contrast to their noble words is the reality revealed by their reminiscences of vulgar escapades overseas. Their meeting becomes comical, but sadly, they reveal their inhumanity by viewing and judging their own activities according to a
different standard from that which they employ for Friolera in his misfortune. Significantly, the officer with the most lecherous anecdotes is also the one who is most concerned with Friolera's honor: "Hay que obligarle a pedir la absoluta. El ejército no quiere cabrones" (p. 130). El teniente Rovirosa appoints himself as the one to notify Friolera of his possible sentence and to solicit his resignation. His admonition "Respete usted el honor privado de nuestra oficialidad" is laughable as he trembles in fear at sight of Friolera's little dog. Furthermore, Rovirosa's glass eye that pops out at the slightest provocation is a constant reminder that an infected mosquito bite was the only war wound brought home by this noble veteran. He is a grotesque personification of the artificial military honor imposed on Friolera, who protests pathetically, "Ningún militar está libre de que su señora le engane. ¡Friolera! En este respecto, el fuero no hace diferencia de la gente civil, y al más pintado le sale rana la señora" (p. 148). Rovirosa, unquestioningly upholding the principle of honor, certain of his own noble actions were he in a similar position, replies automatically, "¡Evidente! ¡Pero se impone no tolerarlo! Los militares nos debemos a la galería" (p. 149). His very incapacity to perceive that there might be a response other than the sentence of immediate death for the alleged adulteress makes him a virtual puppet, and his attitude is inevitably accompanied by a loss of human qualities. Although
Friolera gradually feels himself transformed into a puppet, those around him have long been mechanical and less than human in their approach to life.

The attitude of the enforcers of the honor code is demonstrated again in the epilogue of Friolera, which is an idealized ballad version of the protagonist's situation. Not altogether subtly, Valle-Inclán indicates that the audience feels more comfortable when confronted with the stereotyped heroic soldier who does not waver in his resolve to avenge his honor. The story has changed considerably:

Aquel oficial valiente/mirando en lengua su fama,/rasga el papel con las uñas/como una fiera enjaulada,/y echando chispas los ojos,/vesubios de sangre humana,/en la cintura se esconde/un revolver de diez balas. (p. 194)

The epilogue may be viewed as a satire of the impossible ideal perpetrated and maintained by the enforcers of the honor code. Hormigón remarks of it, "Valle-Inclán está atacando de frente y por derecho, con su práctica artística, toda la literatura pseudo-popular, la que determinados sectores se obstinan en llamar popular," and says that it contains "conceptos extraños a los intereses del pueblo."15

Another enforcer of the honor code is the general of La hija, whose reputation is impeccable. He is introduced as "vinoso y risueño . . . marchoso, verboso, rijoso . . . (La hija, pp. 211, 212). Dominated by the most bestial and brutal tendencies, he accepts the captain's daughter as payment for

15 Hormigón, p. 372.
allowing the captain to remain in the service. He later
decries the liberties being taken with his honor: "Es una
aberración de este régimen. ¡La prensa en todas partes
respeta la vida privada, menos en España! La honra de una
familia en la pluma de un grajo!" (p. 223). This indigna-
tion follows a newspaper investigation into the circumstances
of a friend's death which he has tried to conceal. The
general, who has no difficulty reconciling his dishonesty
with his own definition of honor, bases a coup on his
apparent innocence. His elastic ethics permit him to dis-
regard any but his own good. As other officers sympathize
with him, he replies, "Me conmueve profundamente este rasgo
de la familia militar. Mientras la honra de cada uno sea la
honra de todos, seremos fuertes" (p. 226). In losing sight
of the truth, in betraying common decency for power in order
to appear honorable in the eyes of the world, he loses his
human dignity.

Just as the general stages a coup to conceal his crimi-
nal activities, Joaquina, in Muñiz' Las viejas, feels justi-
fied in shooting down anyone who threatens the "reputaciones
intachables" of the ladies of the Association (p. 261). The
matron of a "house of sin" believes that she is pleading for
her life when she cries, "Todas ustedes, solteras, casadas,
viudas, me han tenido y han dispuesto de mi casa cuando la
han necesitado," but Joaquina is shocked at the woman's
audacity in proclaiming that the damas indulge in sexual
activity and as her only thought is that the woman can ruin them, she shoots her immediately (p. 261). This action, juxtaposed with Joaquina's hypocritical declamation in front of the portrait of her dead husband: "Ricardo, todo se ha perdido menos el honor" intensifies an already clear indictment of her as a human being (p. 226). Seeking the appearance of honor rather than honor itself, she relinquishes the last vestiges of humanity, and exchanges, like the general in La hija, compassion for power.

As might be expected, the result of the protagonists' struggle against the dehumanizing forces of the honor code in these plays is an absurd violence, as purposeless and futile as the code itself: it is a violence which neither cleanses nor redeems but merely reinforces the sense of helplessness the cuckolds feel. Friolera accidentally kills his daughter, the only source of honest affection in his life. Pedro Gailo tries to commit suicide and, ironically, fails; later he tries to seduce his daughter, the single character in the play who retains a degree of purity. Crock, caught between poverty and frustration in his family life, attacks the man responsible for the loss of his job with a letter opener; and later, by senselessly goading his friend, he causes Amigo to be arrested and hanged. Each of the three harms an innocent person, one uninvolved in his tragedy, and each neglects to punish the seducer himself; nor do the cuckolds punish their wives, as the code dictates. Mari
Gaila is in fact saved from a furious crowd by her husband. Although all three cuckolds agonize over their failures, and Valle-Inclán's characters fully intend to comply with the rules of the code of honor, none successfully carries out his traditional duty. Intuitively they rebel against the code; yet, so deeply is it ingrained in them that their rebellion against the empty convention culminates in a violence as senseless as the rule which demands it.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In his sensitive analysis of Valle-Inclán's theater, G. G. Brown makes this observation:

The distorted, degrading vision is achieved partly . . . by depriving his characters of any dimension of depth, by likening them to animals, dolls, and puppets, catching them and often immobilizing them in grotesque postures, refusing to acknowledge that they mean to say or do anything different from their actual words and behavior.¹

As Brown suggest, in Valle-Inclán's case, the goal of the artist who struggles to instill in his characters a life of their own, to endow them with freedom, autonomy, and dignity, is completely and consciously inverted. Here the author systematically calculates to minimize the stature of his characters, to suspend them in an existential limbo, to prevent them, quite simply, from living. Valle-Inclán himself once theorized that there are three possibilities available to the playwright as he approaches his subject: he may place himself "de rodillas" to idealize the subject, as did Homer; "de pie," in the manner of Shakespeare, who viewed his characters as his equal; or, he may choose an elevated vantage point--"levantado en el aire"--to diminish and undermine the

significance of his subjects.\textsuperscript{2} It is Valle-Inclán's own preference for the last which forces the audience to see his characters as ridiculous or grotesque, "their emotions as insignificant, the passions revealed by their behavior as comic trifles."\textsuperscript{3} As Ricardo Gullón understands the interplay of author, character, and spectator, "From afar, the individual is diminished and dehumanized. This, in turn, lets him be observed ironically, so that the onlooker does not participate in the movements and gestures which seem ridiculous and even senseless."\textsuperscript{4} This point of view, so devastating to the playwright's characters, distinguishes the works of Carlos Muñiz as well. A study of their stylistic techniques also reveals that the devices used by Valle-Inclán and Muñiz to achieve the dehumanization of their characters are essentially the same.

Insofar as the characters of Valle-Inclán's and Muñiz' plays are dramatic casualties sacrificed to a ruthless artistic perspective, they, subsequently, perpetuate the playwright's "degrading vision." Poor, spiritually bereft creatures, victims themselves—with few, though notable


\textsuperscript{4}Gullón, p. 126.
exceptions—they victimize one another. They wound and torment, demean and abuse, mortify and belittle each other, refusing all the while to acknowledge the bond of humanity that might have been their salvation. Theirs is a warped and distorted rendition of the human reality: they are dehumanized and they, in turn, dehumanize, reducing each other's capacity to feel and experience to a cynical penchant for mimickry.

Having isolated the crime—the dehumanization of the individual, both writers vigorously point a finger at the criminal. Society is to blame, in the opinion of Valle-Inclán and Muñiz, for the monstrous state of things, and in their plays they analyze the motives, the tools, and the methods used to depersonalize man, to divest him of his very self. Not only does Valle-Inclán's esperpento express, in Gullón's words, "the negation of the individual's freedom and even the individual himself," but it boldly dissects the social structure which seeks to redesign man in its own distorted image. So too do the works of Carlos Muñiz dramatize the hapless condition of man in the twentieth century and relate the monstrous effect to the cause.

Only the most insensitive audience could fail to be moved by the strength and beauty of Valle-Inclán's and Muñiz' theater. A positive reaction in the face of so cruel a vision and so bitter a portrayal of reality might seem

5Gullón, p. 128.
contradictory were it not for the motivating passion that one senses in the work of these dramatists: an infinite concern for the future of man, underscored by a conviction that the dramatic genre is capable of changing his life. In the words of Valle-Inclán: "Arte no. No debemos hacer arte ahora, porque jugar en los tiempos que corren es inmoral, es una canallada. Hay que lograr primero una justicia social." As we have seen, Muñiz echoes these sentiments when he affirms: "... personalmente considero de urgencia lo social en la creación literaria. Es una exigencia de nuestro tiempo." In the last analysis, the dramatic art of Valle-Inclán and the theater of Carlos Muñiz are one in their plea for human dignity and their faith in the triumph of the individual.


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