

INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted you will find a target note listing the pages in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB RD., ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

DOUGLAS, Dianne

THE DEMYTHIFICATION OF REALITY IN THE NARRATIVE OF JULIO
RAMÓN RIBEYRO.

The University of Oklahoma.

Ph.D.

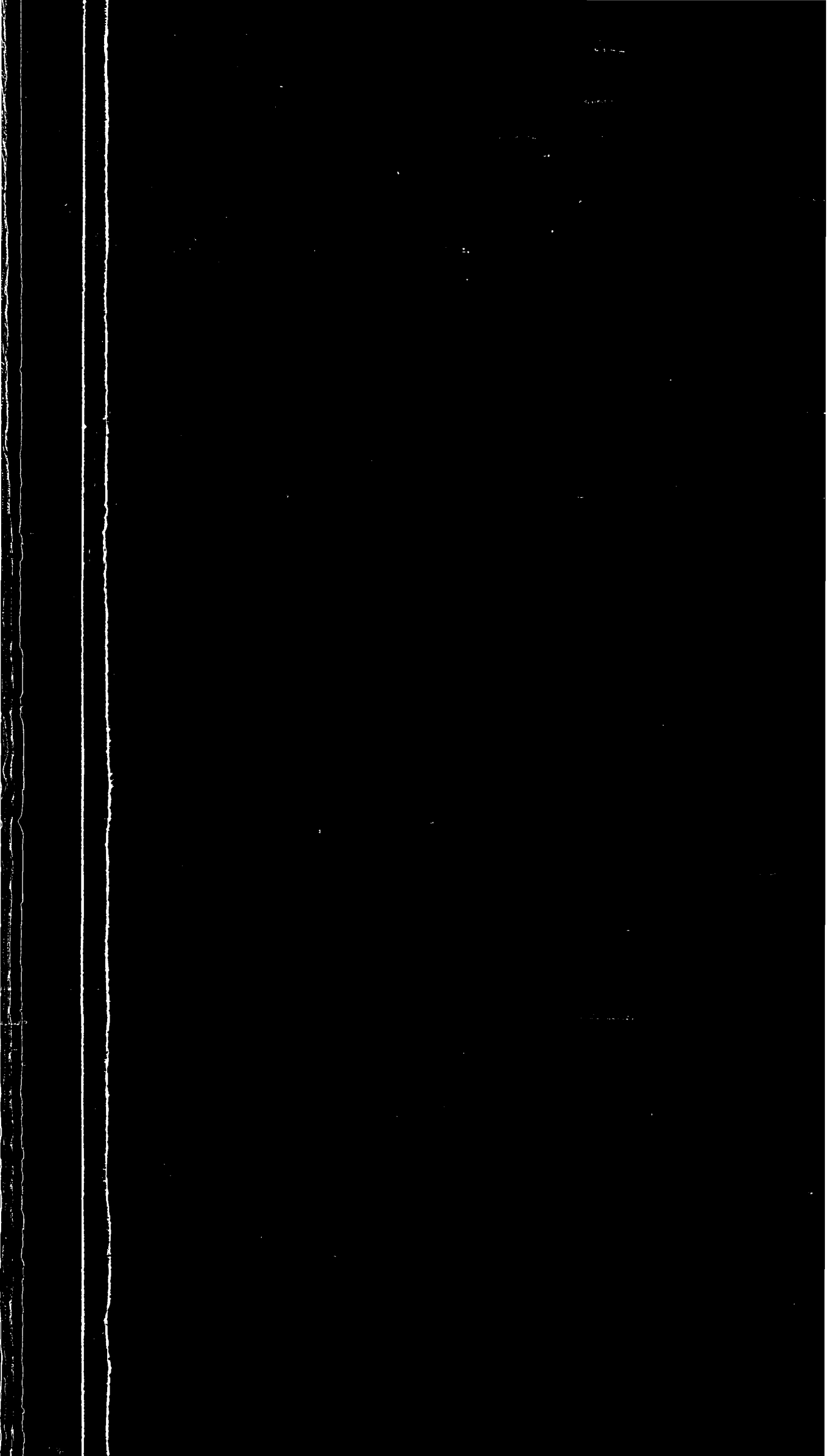
1981

**University
Microfilms
International** 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

© Copyright 1981

by

DIANNE DOUGLAS
All Rights Reserved



THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

THE DEMYTHIFICATION OF REALITY IN THE
NARRATIVE OF JULIO RAMÓN RIBEYRO

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY
DIANNE DOUGLAS
Norman, Oklahoma
1981

THE DEMYTHIFICATION OF REALITY IN THE
NARRATIVE OF JULIO RAMÓN RIBEYRO

APPROVED BY

Laurel Dunham
Mary E. Davis
James H. Artale
Melvin B. Tolson, Jr.
Raymond Zeck

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the encouragement and support of my family and friends during the writing of this dissertation. I am especially grateful to the anthropologist Dr. José Gushiken of Lima, Peru for his assistance in providing resources. Special thanks in the preparation of this dissertation are extended to Dr. Lowell Dunham for his encouragement and advice and to Dr. Mary E. Davis, Dr. James Abbott, Dr. Melvin Tolson, and Dr. Seymour Feiler for their assistance.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PARADIGMS OF REALITY	9
III. THE ILLUSIVE PARADISE	41
IV. FRACTURED IDEALISM	81
V. REALITY: A LABYRINTH OF ILLUSION	113
VI. CONCLUSION	146
BIBLIOGRAPHY	151

THE DEMYTHIFICATION OF REALITY IN THE
NARRATIVE OF JULIO RAMÓN RIBEYRO

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Julio Ramón Ribeyro is a self-proclaimed skeptic whose narrative probes reality, exposing the myths undermining Peruvian society while, at the same time, illuminating the precarious situation of twentieth century man in a world characterized by frustration and discord. Ribeyro's preoccupation with man's fate in a complex society is basically the same one shared by other contemporary Latin American writers. Victor Valenzuela isolates the writers' primary concern in his essay on existentialism and the Spanish American novel:

Because modern man and the society in which he lives gives the impression of being in a state of transition he, therefore, seems to live in an illusive reality or in a reality not his own.... Today's fear is not that occidental culture will disappear or be destroyed as happened with the Egyptians, the Greeks, the

Arabs, or the Aztecs, but that man himself will be destroyed.¹

Ribeyro's novels, plays, and short stories penetrate the socio-cultural facades which control his character's destinies and contribute to their repeated failures, self-effacement, and solitude. The characters dwell within a dichotomous structure which forms the basis of Ribeyro's narrative and brings into conflict the actors and the dreamers, illusion and reality. They are imprisoned in a society that is socially and culturally fragmented, struggling to determine their place in that society, but unable to distinguish in their surroundings the real from the imagined. Ribeyro's beings experience an inward fragmentation as well, which encourages self-doubt and increases their propensity for failure. Their futile searches for happiness, recognition, and purpose in life comprise Ribeyro's narrative and reveal an ambiguous, yet dynamic reality fabricated from useless gestures, dashed hopes, and contradictory anxieties of existence.

Ribeyro's personal view of reality is mirrored in the distorted image of the world inhabited by his characters and helps to define his place as a writer and human being in the twentieth century. The characters that

¹Victor M. Valenzuela, "Existentialism and the Contemporary Latin American Novel" in Contemporary Latin American Writers (Spain: Las Américas Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 23.

populate Ribeyro's narrative become spokesmen for the author's own attitude toward life. In their fragmented lives one discovers the marginality, misfortunes, unfinished projects and doubts that have sustained (and perhaps diminished to some extent) Ribeyro's literary production. The critic Abelardo Oquendo maintains:

Ribeyro no inquiere: registra; es un espectador, no un inquisidor. Desde su posición es fácil confundir el ser con el aparecer. Ribeyro ve la humillación, las frustraciones, la precariedad, el desconcierto, la desdicha, el sinsentido, y siente que es esa la verdadera sustancia del hombre, de los hombres, de sus vidas, de la vida. Todo en él se conduce como si esta visión fuese el punto de partida para un viaje en redondo que vuelve siempre al mismo punto. No se trata, pues, tanto de una conclusión, remate de todo un proceso mental, como de un juicio previo, de un pre-juicio.²

The real point of departure for Ribeyro's narrative and point of view, however, can be traced to the social changes Peru underwent between 1948 and 1962 which produced the Generation of '50, young writers who attempted to renovate the structure, language, and function of Peruvian narrative.³ The desire for renovation followed the diminishing development of the traditional indigenous literature which occurred after the publication of Ciro Alegría's El mundo

²Abelardo Oquendo, "Prólogo" a Prosas apátridas aumentadas de Julio Ramón Ribeyro (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1978), pp. xiii, xiv.

³Antonio Cornejo Polar, "Hipótesis sobre la narrativa peruana última", Hueso Húmero, No. 3 (1979), p. 47.

es ancho y ajeno (1941). Ribeyro's narrative began appearing approximately ten years later with works by other Peruvian authors such as Sebastián Salazar Bondy, Carlos Eduardo Zavaleta, Enrique Congrains Martín, and Lúis Loayza.

According to the literary critic Cornejo Polar, the desire for professionalism and modernization in literature coincided with the false modernization of Peruvian society toward the middle of the twentieth century. Polar views the false modernization as the result of combined effects of a ruling oligarchy and the influx of North American capital. Polar states:

Por cierto, dado el carácter básico de la sociedad peruana y el modo como actuó la inversión extranjera, esa modernización fue epidérmica, no modificó el orden oligárquico dominante y se tradujo en la agudización de los conflictos y desbalances de la sociedad nacional.⁴

As a result, artificialities and inconsistencies permeated the works of many of the writers. Ribeyro, being an exception, explores the new themes that emerged from the social changes, with an objectivity that is both realistic and subjective. He refines and expands images reminiscent of the regionalists, so that they reflect the spiritual and moral problems confronting modern man: the upheaval of human relationships, the loss of tradition, and the frantic search for new identities.

Ribeyro's objective, yet imaginative approach to

⁴Cornejo Polar, p. 49.

contemporary themes, mostly urban ones treating social injustice, moral degradation, and the loss of historical and cultural perspective, give unity to his narrative. His first collection of short stories, Los gallinazos sin plumas, written in Paris but published in Lima in 1955, marked his reaction against the restrictive dominance of the regional short story. While in Europe he continued to write stories responding to the massive emergence of barriadas within the urban center. In 1958 his second collection of stories entitled Cuentos de circunstancia appeared in Lima, followed two years later by the publication of his first novel, Crónica de San Gabriel (1960). The novel's rural theme, uncommon to Ribeyro's narrative, verifies the "... acabamiento, la liquidación de los motivos que predominaban en la narrativa anterior."⁵ Two more collections of stories were published in 1964, Las botellas y los hombres and Tres historias sublevantes. Ribeyro's second novel, Los geniecillos dominicales (1965) won recognition when awarded the Populibros prize. In 1972 two volumes containing Ribeyro's previous four collections of stories in addition to two new collections, Los cautivos and El próximo mes me me niveló were published. A third volume containing his most recent collection of stories, Silvio en el rosal, was

⁵Washington Delgado, Introducción a La palabra del mudo de Julio Ramón Ribeyro (Lima: Milla Batres Editorial S.A.), I, p. xii.

published in 1977. A novelette entitled La juventud an la otra ribera (1973) and a third novel, Cambio de guardia (1976), complete his literary production in the two genres, the short story and the novel, which have placed him among some of Peru's most prolific writers: El Inca Garcilaso, Clemente Palma, Ciro Alegría, José María Arguedas, and Mario Vargas Llosa.

In addition to the three volumes of stories and three novels, Ribeyro's creativity has produced seven plays collected in Teatro (1975); La caza sutil (1976), a collection of literary essays and articles; and Prosas apátridas aumentadas (1978), a collection of intimate reflections on life. The plays dramatize situations which focus on marginal characters who have been betrayed by society. These characters find themselves caught between their own illusions and a reality which Wolfgang Luchting describes as "constituída ya sea por el dinero o por el sexo, o por la falta de ambos, respectivamente."⁶ In Prosas apátridas aumentadas, a kind of intimate diary which Abelardo Oquendo alludes to as embriones de cuentos, one discovers the source and extent of the author's skepticism that impels him to discover in reality the disillusionment that "conduce al apartamiento, a la desidentificación, el espacio que media

⁶Wolfgang Luchting, J. R. Ribeyro y sus dobles (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1971), p. 108.

entre las ideas celestes y sus imperfectas versiones terrenales.⁷

The tension between reality and illusion in Ribeyro's narrative represents an exploration, development, and expansion of the romantic conflict so visible during the early years of the nineteenth century. With an image of the ideal always sought by the romantics ever present in his mind, Ribeyro explores with sentimental objectivity the nebulous space spanning his characters' imaginations and the reality they actually experience. Like the realists, he primarily focuses on the psychological responses of the bourgeoisie to their environment, emphasizing their reactions to events rather than the events themselves. He artistically achieves a balance between thought and image which, in turn, exposes the imbalance between his characters' concept of reality and reality itself, camouflaging, at the same time, the underlying tone of social protest. Ribeyro confesses his preference for simplicity of expression: "Yo temo las trampas que nos tiende el lenguaje y por eso trato de expresarme en la forma más simple posible, tratando que no haya ninguna distancia entre la idea y la palabra."⁸

Divesting society of all grandeur, meaning, and order

⁷Oquendo, pp. xvii, xviii.

⁸Mario Campos, "Una voz distinta, una forma precursora: La palabra," Estampa (2 de diciembre de 1973), p. 7.

through symbolic realism that is both temporal and visual, Ribeyro offers a disquieting view of reality and a unique interpretation of ordinary human experience.

CHAPTER II

PARADIGMS OF REALITY

Underlying Ribeyro's total literary production one discovers a recurrence of the same essential themes, ambience, and personalities which give a fundamental unity and coherence to his fatalistic vision of reality. Prosas apátridas, a collection comprised of brief narratives revealing Ribeyro's intimate view of the world and man's precarious place within that world form the very essence of his stories, plays, and novels. In form, content, and spirit the reflective narrative of Prosas is indicative of Ribeyro's skeptical vision of contemporary life, a vision which all of his creative works further elucidate. Like Prosas, Ribeyro's other narratives are basically fragments of life which present the human condition as he perceives it: frustrated, lacking direction, and self-destructive. Abelardo Oquendo sums up the central thought pervading Ribeyro's Prosas in the prologue to the work:

El hombre es un animal solitario; si cree en algo se engaña, si procura algo fracasa. La vida es un proceso irremediabilmente destructivo; la historia de la humanidad un melancólico disparate. Todo progreso resulta aparente, todo triunfo ilusorio.¹

The spirit of hopelessness expressed in Prosas repeatedly manifests itself throughout Ribeyro's works and is communicated through his presentation of characters and circumstances, as well as in the manipulation of language and structure. Prosas, then, serves as a revealing source which pertains to Ribeyro's essential views as an artist and as a human being. It offers a composite vision of a multifaceted reality from which Ribeyro the artist extracts personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions which he incorporates in his other works to form a new, ambiguous reality representative of contemporary man.

The perspective from which Ribeyro observes life directly affects his view of reality. His own life and attitudes toward existence offer testimony of his marginality. Ribeyro's prolonged residence in Paris accounts, in part, for his position as an observer who is content to assume the role of a spectator rather than that of a participant: "... el hecho de vivir en el extranjero tanto tiempo acentúa en mí esa condición de marginalidad, puesto

¹Abelardo Oquendo, "Prólogo" to Prosas apátridas aumentadas by Julio Ramón Ribeyro (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1978), p. xiii. Subsequent citations to Ribeyro's Prosas will appear within the text.

que vivo en una sociedad que no es la mía."² Ribeyro's voluntary separation from his native Peru enables him to view his homeland more clearly, free of the distortion caused by the proximity of myth. His European vantage point allows him to give order to disperse elements comprised of memories, situations, and people, thereby contributing to the universality of his narrative. For Ribeyro, writing becomes a means of searching for authentic values in a world that, in his estimation, lacks them.

... la literatura representa un entretenimiento. Pero un entretenimiento tan serio como visceral. Una manera de plasmar mediante la escritura, las imágenes, los recuerdos, las circunstancias memorables. Y conformar mediante el juego realizado con las piezas de ese rompecabezas de emociones el mundo de mi narrativa. Experiencias personales de mi desambular por el mundo y por las cosas que un día se transforman en el núcleo de un cuento. Hechos de los cuales he sido testigo ocular o auditivo.³

Even more significant than Ribeyro's self-imposed marginality in terms of his geographical dislocation is the fact that he considers himself marginal with respect to his literary peers. When asked during an interview why he did not form part of the Boom period which gave almost instant recognition to such Spanish American writers as Julio Cortázar, García Márquez, Vargas Llosa, and Carlos Fuentes,

²Eneas Marrull, "Testimonio de un marginado," Mundial, núm. 14, (14-20 marzo 1975), p. 60.

³Alexis Barkal, "Julio Ramón Ribeyro: Un amateur en busca de nuevos caminos," Expreso (28 noviembre 1973), p. 6.

Ribeyro explained: "Simplemente, porque el tren partió muy rápido y no tuve tiempo de subir en él."⁴ Ribeyro accepts his destiny with some of the fatalism that characterizes his works. He recognizes whatever limitations he may have as an artist, but he does not bitterly protest his situation; he simply admits it. Ribeyro's personal observation contained in Prosas illustrates his frustrated acceptance of his fate as a writer.

La mayoría de las vidas humanas son simples conjeturas. Son muy pocos los que logran llevarlas a la demostración. Yo he identificado a quienes se encargarán de completar en mi vida las pruebas que faltaban para que todo no pase de un borrón. Han tenido casi las mismas experiencias, leído casi los mismos libros, sufrido casi las mismas desventuras, incurrido casi los mismos errores. Pero serán ellos quienes escribirán los libros que yo no pude escribir. (Prosas, p. 106)

Ribeyro acknowledges the element of chance that trifles with man's existence, determining the few successes and the many failures a human being experiences during a lifetime. In Prosas Ribeyro's acute observations on contemporary life and the nature of things, do, indeed, seem to be seeking a fatherland or genre suited to a more detailed explanation of reality. They discover a more expansive territory in Ribeyro's stories, plays, and novels where reality is further delineated in terms of specific characters and situations.

⁴Pedro Hernández Navarrete, "La argolla del boom se ha roto," Suceso (2 diciembre 1973), p. 9.

The concise paradigms of reality that Ribeyro conveys in Prosas reappear in his stories and plays transformed into allegories and satires. However, his pessimistic concept of the world always remains constant. With Peru as his point of departure, Ribeyro probes and explores reality, exposing its indifference, banality, and confusion. He sees man confined in a world where illusion and reality overlap. Because of Ribeyro's awareness of man's tendency to take refuge in his imagination or illusions, he has been called a "Pascal tolerante." One of Peru's foremost intellectuals, Pablo Macera, writes:

La Francia del siglo XVII, en vísperas del capitalismo casi es el Perú del siglo XX con su desarrollismo abortado.... No veo Prosas apátridas como un código moral, donde todo está previsto, sino como las preguntas de la letra Kafkiana que levantan los picaportes de una ventana para poder mirar la puerta que en el Perú conduce al corredor desde donde asoma nada.⁵

In his exploration of reality Ribeyro finds no solutions to man's dilemma, only evidence of decomposition. His sympathy for human suffering in an insensitive world of uncertainties makes him a tolerant skeptic and an artistic spokesman for his fellowman. Ribeyro does not place the blame for man's futile existence on any single group or factor in society. Instead, he maintains a theory of the error inicial:

"... en toda vida hay un error preliminar, aparentemente

⁵Pablo Macera, "Ribeyro: un Pascal tolerante," El Comercio (27 agosto 1978), p. 9.

banal, como un acto de negligencia, un falso razonamiento, la contracción de un tic o de un vicio, que engendra a su vez otros errores." (Prosas, p. 7) In order to further illustrate the impossibility of casting blame in one direction, Ribeyro uses the image of a train that:

... por un error del guarda-agujas, toma la vía equivocada. Más justo sería decir por un descuido del conductor de la locomotora. Más justo todavía imputarle el error al pasajero, que se equivoca de vagón. Lo cierto es que al pasajero se le terminan las provisiones, nadie lo espera en el andén, es expulsado del tren, no llega a su destino. (Prosas, p. 7)

The figurative language the author utilizes to reveal contemporary man's susceptibility to error also depicts a complex environment that lends itself to misinterpretation. His works repeatedly show the preclusion of man's aspirations many times due to an innocent, preliminary error that engenders other errors until man falls victim to a number of detrimental forces beyond his control.

In the play Santiago el pajarero Ribeyro dramatizes the incongruencies that exist between reality and the dreamer which ultimately lead to the destruction of the latter. Basing the play on Ricardo Palma's tradición "Santiago el volador," Ribeyro concerns himself with the role of the creative mind in a restrictive, conventional world that demands conformity. Despite the play's setting, Lima in the eighteenth century, Ribeyro modernizes it by emphasizing the destructiveness of contemporary society; thereby, he

transcends national boundaries, giving a universal tone to the play. At the same time he exposes the true nature of a reality that would feign grandeur and truth. Through the protagonist Santiago, symbolizing the idealist who aspires to "superar a las aves, conquistar el aire y darle al hombre el dominio total del universo,"⁶ Ribeyro points out the forces that destroy an innovative spirit.

Santigao, having spent ten years of his life studying birds, envisions a device that will allow man to fly. In order to construct the apparatus he submits his "Memoria" on the art of flying to Viceroy Manuel de Amat, hoping to gain his approval and financial backing. The viceroy ultimately rejects Santiago's invention. All of his friends desert him except two, Basilio the poet and Baltazar the sculptor who, because of their creativity, find themselves also on the fringe of society and are therefore able to share their friend's disillusionment. After suffering ridicule and abuse from a materially corrupt society, Santiago is seized by the townspeople and thrown from the top of San Cristóbal. In Palma's legend Santiago suffers ridicule but is ultimately saved from persecution by the viceroy. Palma writes:

Santiago de Cárdenas aspiró a inmortalizarse,
realizando acaso el más portentoso de los
descubrimientos, y, imiseria humana!, su nombre

⁶Julio Ramón Ribeyro, Teatro (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1975), p. 34.

vive sólo en los fastos titiritescos de Lima.
Hasta después de muerte lo persigue la
rechifla popular. El destino tiene atroces.⁷

Ribeyro, on the other hand, accentuates the tragedy of his protagonist's death by dramatizing the cruelty of the aggressors' action and Basilio's rabid anger upon witnessing the scene:

Hombre 3: --¡No le sueltes! ¡Que vuele! ¡Cómo
nos vamos a dejar embaucar?
Hombre 4: --¿Qué prefieres? ¡Volar o que te
colguemos?
Hombre 3: --¡Llévemolo al San Cristóbal!
Los dos: --¡Santiago está aquí! ¡Santiago
está aquí!
Basilio: --¡Santiago! ¡Santiago! ¡Dónde está
Santiago? ¡Es cierto lo que dice la
gente?
Barbero: --La turba lo ha perseguido. Lo van a
hacer volar desde el cerro San Cristóbal.
Basilio: --¡Asesinos!⁸

It appears that Santiago's initial error was that of daring to dream, an act which made him a non-conformist and decided his inevitable fate. By depicting a society divided into two distinct factions, the idealists and the pragmatists, Ribeyro warns mankind against the tragic loss that ensues when creativity is suppressed. Santiago, Basilio, and Baltazar form an artistic minority, while Santiago's fiancée Rosaluz, the university professors, the viceroy, and the bourgeoisie represent the powerful majority that dictates

⁷Ricardo Palma, "Santiago el Volador," Tradiciones peruanas (Lima: Librería Internacional del Perú, n.d.), II, p. 146.

⁸Ribeyro, Teatro, pp. 68-69.

the artist's destiny. Before the assembly of professors and representatives of the viceroy at the University of San Marcos, Dr. Cosme Bueno announces the panel's decision to deny Santiago the support he needs. Ironically, they do so in the name of Truth and Science. Dr. Cosme Bueno concludes: "Una vez más, esta ilustre Casa de Estudios, pozo de ciencia y de saber, sale en nombre de la verdad, para refutar a los advenedizos y audaces sostenedores de nuevas teorías."⁹ In Santiago's response to the decision, Ribeyro emphasizes the inventor's primary source of frustration as he places him in a superior light in contrast to his opponents:

He querido dedicar mi invento a mi patria, el Perú, y a la ciudad de Lima, donde he nacido. Pero me ha bastado ingresar en esta ilustre sala, para sentirme extraño, como si no estuviera en mi país, sino más bien en un país extranjero. Todo inventor, por naturaleza, es un extranjero. Mi Memoria no ha tenido la acogida que esperaba ni entre los profesores de esta Universidad ni entre mi querido pueblo. Creo que no me entretendré en refutar los especiosos argumentos del profesor Cosme Bueno. Carecen de réplica porque carecen de realidad.¹⁰

Santiago's frustration comes from the fact that his invention was unjustly censored. He is incarcerated in a society that condemns imagination and creativity. From the beginning of the play until the end Santiago remains a marginal, solitary figure. He receives disapproval from Rosaluz,

⁹Ribeyro, Teatro, p. 52.

¹⁰Ribeyro, Teatro, p. 52.

censorship from the illustrious assembly, and finally ridicule and death at the hands of the townspeople.

In Santiago el pajarero Ribeyro represents, in allegorical terms, the artist's situation in the twentieth century. Denied the moral and financial support he needs, his innovative spirit dies. Santiago's death symbolizes the suffering of every altruistic creator in a sterile, profit-oriented society. Santiago discovers an uncompromising, sobering reality which is an extension of Ribeyro's vision, one always filled with marginal figures.

Just as Ribeyro's views of reality have been molded by his personal reactions to his surroundings, the inhabitants of his fictional world help define the multifaceted reality in which they live. For the most part they are marginal characters, and, in that sense, Ribeyro appears to have created them in his own image. They remain trapped within a paradoxical environment, vulnerable and unprotected against chaotic forces and mundane ambiguities that characterize contemporary society. In his works, Ribeyro demonstrates more interest in his characters' reaction to exterior events than in the events themselves. Primarily concerned about man's inner-self, Ribeyro examines reality by observing how his characters are affected by it. Consequently, a new reality emerges which is a valid commentary on human beings in the twentieth century. Ribeyro's subjective observations of his characters' behavioral patterns in

specific circumstances affirm his view of reality as ambiguous and contradictory. It distorts man's values, leaving him disoriented and alienated within a world lacking vitality and meaning.

Several of Ribeyro's works exemplify especially well his varied presentation of reality through his treatment of theme, characters, and situations. At the same time, these expanded visions of reality can be directly linked to his reflections expressed in Prosas. "Los gallinazos sin plumas," one of Ribeyro's earlier stories contained in a collection by the same title, treats the conflict between twentieth century man and his environment. In this story Ribeyro transforms a slum in Lima into a microcosm of universal suffering. Primarily through the use of metaphor and irony he depicts an unreal urban environment by showing man's acceptance of a new set of values which alienates him and dehumanizes him. An old man's desire for a little material gain becomes an obsession which he nourishes until it literally devours him. Don Santos lavishes all his affection and tenderness upon a pig which he hopes to fatten enough to sell. His two grandsons become nothing more than featherless scavenger birds, forced to imitate the gallinazos of Lima which must subsist by pillaging through heaps of garbage. However, the scraps of food these human scavengers find are destined for the pig rather than for themselves. Don Santos sacrifices daily his grandchildren's well being

in order to nourish his own illusion of prosperity. When the two boys become so ill that they are no longer able to make their rounds, Don Santos' distorted sense of values becomes even more evident. The omniscient narrator explains: "Efraín ya no tenía fuerzas ni para quejarse. Solamente Enrique sentía crecer en su corazón un miedo extraño y al mirar los ojos del abuelo creía desconocerlos, como si ellos hubieran perdido su expresión humana."¹¹ The old man's aggressiveness and insensitivity steadily grow until they reach a tragic climax. Taking advantage of Enrique's absence and Efraín's weak condition, Don Santos throws their beloved dog into the corral where it is quickly devoured by the pig. Enrique discovers the dog's remains upon returning, and profoundly hurt and angered, strikes his grandfather causing him to lose balance and fall into the corral. The fatal struggle that follows goes unwitnessed as the two boys flee in terror. Ribeyro gives the story an ironic outcome that stresses the tragic consequences of the willingness to make any sacrifice necessary in order to achieve a goal. Having lost his sense of values, the protagonist becomes disoriented in his environment and alienated from reality.

Ribeyro intensifies his expressionistic vision of

¹¹Julio Ramón Ribeyro, Palabra del mudo (Lima: Milla Batres Editorial S.A., 1972), I, p. 12. Subsequent citations are to this edition and will appear within the text.

reality in the story by projecting it into an unreal, magical atmosphere and by dehumanizing the characters. The protagonists inhabit a nebulous region that recalls the settings for many of Kafka's fantastic stories which have been described as recalling one of "Alfred Kubin's ghostly sketches, or Salvadore Dali's synthetic dream portraits, conveying the dread and fright that pervade many of Edvard Munch's paintings."¹² In Ribeyro's description of the city and its inhabitants at the beginning of the story he separates the characters from their environment:

A las seis de la mañana la ciudad se levanta de puntilla y comienza a dar sus primeros pasos. Una fina niebla disuelve el perfil de los objetos y crea como una atmósfera encantada. Las personas que recorren la ciudad a esta hora parece que están hechas de otra sustancia, que pertenecen a un orden de vida fantasmal. (I: 5)

Later, when Enrique recovers sufficiently from his illness and is ordered once again to find scraps for the pig, the boy identifies with the turbid, impoverished surroundings:

Todo lo veía a través de una niebla mágica. La debilidad lo hacía ligero, etéreo: volaba casi como un pájaro. En el muladar se sintió un gallinazo más entre los gallinazos.... Las beatas, los noctámbulos, los canillitas descalzos, todas las secreciones del alba comenzaban a dispersarse por la ciudad. Enrique, devuelto a su mundo, caminaba feliz entre ellos, en su mundo de perros y fantasmas, tocado por la hora. (I: 13-14)

¹²William Hubben, Four Prophets of Our Destiny: Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Kafka (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 133.

Ribeyro attributes his characters' alienated and dehumanized condition to their prolonged suffering in a hostile environment. Having suffered intense abuse, Enrique must instinctively resort to violence in order to express himself during the bitter confrontation with his grandfather. Don Santos' loss of humanity manifests itself in his tyrannical behavior. His dehumanization becomes obvious, reaching grotesque proportions when he falls into the corral. The sharp irony lies in the fact that all that survives is Don Santos' illusion of prosperity. He is literally devoured by his obsession, having lost all sense of human worth in his search for material gain. His callous response to the suffering of others recalls the insensitiveness of Camilio José Cela's protagonist, Pascual Duarte. Like Cela, Ribeyro creates an expressionistic atmosphere of cruelty and fear, governed by tragic destiny. While subjugated by Don Santos, Efraín and Enrique quietly submit to their tragic fate in life, an inescapable destiny which Pascual Duarte candidly recognizes in La familia de Pascual Duarte:

La verdad es que la vida en mi familia poco tenía de placentera, pero como no nos es dado escoger, sino que ya --y aún antes de nacer-- estamos destinados unos a un lado y otros a otro, procuraba conformarme con lo que me había tocado, que era la única manera de no desesperar.¹³

In stories like "Gallinazos sin plumas" Ribeyro's compassion

¹³ Camilio José Cela, La familia de Pascual Duarte (Spain: Ediciones Destino, 1968), p. 39.

for the suffering of characters such as Enrique and Efraín is voiced in metaphorical terms, supporting his statement in

Prosas:

Comprendo las causas de esta degradación de la personalidad en las urbes demenciales, solo verifico ahora sus efectos. Pero es penoso que tengamos que vivir entre fantasmas, buscar inútilmente una sonrisa, un convite, una apertura, un gesto de generosidad o de desinterés y que nos veamos forzados en definitiva, caminar, cercados por la multitud, en el desierto. (Prosas, pp. 72-73)

Ribeyro's concern for the victims of modern civilization receives a still different treatment in "Junta de acreedores." In this story characterization is the primary device used to explore the reaction of the urban bourgeoisie in a given situation, as opposed to the reactions of the urban poor. It is typical of Ribeyro's growing tendency to probe man's inner, psychological response to threatening, outside forces. Unlike the more expressionistic preceding story, in "Junta de acreedores" Ribeyro focuses on man's inner suffering and its devastating effects. Roberto Delmar, a store owner on the threshold of bankruptcy, exemplifies a number of bourgeois characters populating Ribeyro's other works, characters who find that they must struggle to maintain their place in society after they have gained a certain status. As Don Roberto observes his five creditors who have convened to challenge his existence, he realizes that, more importantly, his personal dignity is at stake. Through Roberto's suffering Ribeyro demonstrates

that contemporary society not only alienates man and distorts his sense of morality, but that it also destroys his personal dignity. In order to communicate one human being's inhumanity to another, Ribeyro depicts Don Roberto's meeting with his creditors as an encounter between things rather than between human beings. Throughout the story each creditor is identified only by the name of the company he represents: "Arbocó Sociedad Anónima," fideos "La Aurora," cemento "Los Andes," caramelos y chocolates "Marilú," and the Japanese representative Ajito. The creditors' overbearing presence is the source of Don Roberto's humiliation. From the moment they enter the store, Don Roberto silently identifies each creditor, dehumanizing each one by refusing to separate the representative from the company represented.

Él no era hombre de sutilezas para hacer diferencias entre una empresa y sus empleados. Para él, ese hombre alto de lentes, era la compañía 'Arbocó' en persona, vendedora de papel y de cacerolas. El otro hombre, porque era adiposo y parecía bien comido, debía ser la fábrica de fideos 'La Aurora,' en chaleco y sombrero de hongo. (I: 84)

Once again an invisible, but unquestionable boundary line begins to divide Ribeyro's fictitious world into two factions: the oppressors and the oppressed. Ribeyro maintains tension during the encounter by contrasting the pretentious behavior of the creditors with Don Roberto's sincerity. The capricious behavior of the materialistic-minded opportunists contributes to Don Roberto's growing sense of inferiority.

"Sus espíritus formaban una bolsa común. Uno siempre coronaba las frases del otro y entre los dos se repartían las ganancias." (I: 90) Their confident banter forces him momentarily to search inwardly for some indication of self-worth.

Tenía la impresión de que esos señores se habían puesto a desnudarlo en público para descubrir en él algún horrible defecto. A fin de defenderse de esta agresión se enroscó sobre sí mismo, como un escarabajo; rastreó su pasado, su vida, tratando de encontrar algún acto honroso, alguna experiencia estimable que prestara apoyo a su dignidad amenazada. (I: 86)

Almost simultaneously, however, he begins to see his chances for survival in a competitive society vanish. By dramatizing the climactic moment when Don Roberto is forced to accept his loss, Ribeyro creates an undulating, illusory sensation with the rhythmic structure of the conversation that decides Don Roberto's fate. As a mambo tune filters through the walls from a house next to the store, the discussion reaches a musical frenzy:

--Entonces, no hay nada que hacer--intervinieron conjuntamente cemento y caramelos--. ¡La quiebra!
 --Sí, la quiebra-- confirmó fideos.
 --¡La quiebra!-- gritó 'Arbocó' con cierto encarnizamiento, como si se anotara una victoria personal.
 --Se procederá a la quiebra.
 --Sí, naturalmente, la quiebra.

Don Roberto los miraba alternativamente, viendo cómo la palabra saltaba de boca en boca, se repetía, se combinaba con otras, crecía, estallaba como un cohete, se confundía con las notas de la música....
 --¡Pues bien, la quiebra! --dijo a su vez y apoyó los codos con tanta fuerza en el mostrador, que diríase hubiera querido clavarse la madera. (I: 95)

Don Roberto's emphatic, verbal acceptance of bankruptcy,

which breaks the climactic moment, gives him a false sense of harmony with his environment. "La idea de que había conservado la dignidad comenzó a parecerle verosímil, comenzó a llenarlo de una rara embriaguez." (I: 95) Like many of Ribeyro's characters, Don Roberto compensates for the deficiencies of a corrupt reality by retreating into a private world of self-delusion.

Ribeyro universalizes his social commentary with the mirrored image technique which reveals once again modern civilization's degrading effect on mankind.

Don Roberto observó su imagen en el pomo, pequeña y torcida. '¡La quiebra!' susurró, y esta palabra adquirió para él todo su trágico sentido. Nunca una palabra le pareció tan real, tan atrozmente tangible. Era la quiebra del negocio, la quiebra del hogar, la quiebra de la conciencia, la quiebra de la dignidad. Era quizá la quiebra de su propia naturaleza humana. (I: 96)

Having suffered humiliation and defeat, Don Roberto experiences "una sensación extraña de haberse insensibilizado, de haber cambiado la piel en corteza, de haberse convertido en cosa...." (I: 98) Ribeyro depicts him wandering to the sea to seek out "un lugar apacible donde apenas se presentía la hostilidad de los hombres" (I: 98), suggesting his intention to terminate his now meaningless existence. Through his character's reaction to a hostile, uncompromising society, Ribeyro exposes its inhumane treatment of man. "Junta de acreedores" is representative of Ribeyro's many stories that attest to his general impression of the inhumaneness

of today's world:

Cada vez más tengo la impresión de que el mundo se va progresivamente despoblando, a pesar del bullicio de los carros y del ajetreo de la muchedumbre. ¡Es tan difícil ahora encontrar una persona! No nos cruzamos en la calle sino con siluetas, con figuras, con símbolos. (Prosas, p. 72)

The solitary figure of a human being lost in a world of ambiguities, bewildered and confused by the transient nature of reality, reveals the impossibility of finding identity or truth in an unstable world that Ribeyro envisions as "la imagen de un remolino donde se ahogan las fantasmas de los días, sin dejar otra cosa que briznas de sucesos locos y gesticulaciones sin causa ni finalidad." (Prosas, p. 5) Ribeyro's fictitious world enables man to view himself and others in a contemporary light which repeatedly tends to magnify two of the author's concerns: the insignificance of man's life and the prevalence of hypocrisy.

In "Las cosas andan mal Carmelo Rosa" the reader is made aware of the mundane actions of life and the passage of time that perpetually sweeps one along in senseless movement that leads nowhere. By avoiding traditional syntax and limiting the narrative to the description of only monotonous activities, Ribeyro conveys the inanity of existence in an oppressive reality that crushes hope and encourages self-delusion. Carmelo Rosa, an employee in a teletype office in Paris, remains suspended in time as he contemplates his

past, present, and future. His vision blurs, time becomes meaningless, and his life insignificant as he voices his inner frustrations. In this narrative Ribeyro breaks away from the first-person point of view, using instead a second-person narration, a French phenomenon which Carlos Fuentes and Vargas Llosa frequently utilize. Carmelo Rosa addresses himself or a projection of himself as he defines his condition. Estranged from his inner being, he contemplates his ineffectiveness and dispensability within the universe.

...entre el ruido de los teletipos todo aquello que puede interesarte manifestaciones procesos atracos viendo en cada acto de estudiantes la caída de un régimen ilusionándote hasta con los delirios de los curas Rosa creyendo que de un día a otro todo regresará no a lo que fue sino a lo que pudo haber sido y tú regresará y serás joven otra vez sin pensar nada retorna hacia el pasado que todo se transforma y se complica cada vez más que no hay proyecto o idea que la realidad no destruya Rosa.... vives en una ciudad de la cual no conoces otra cosa que el túnel del metro y tres calles por las que caminas sin verlas una ciudad que también ha cambiado entre el ruido de los teletipos Rosa hazmerreír víctima payaso pobre muerto número masa sigue soñando que el sueño te mantiene pero no esperes ni confíes nada vendrá en tu socorro seguirás escribiendo entre el ruido de los teletipos.... todo es así Rosa no hay que abrigar ilusión entre el ruido de los teletipos todo es enseñanza para quien sepa escuchar no hay consuelo para los suplicados es agradable morir sin socorro ni paz ni patria ni gloria ni memoria. (II: 177-173)

Carmelo Rosa suffers an agonizing confrontation with his existential self. He seems to typify Kierkegaard's concept of a human being who suddenly discovers himself in a new frame of reference and who is forced to come to terms with

existence in a technological civilization. In his work The Present Age (1846) Kierkegaard discusses the despair that grips the individual who, confused by his new role in society (or the lack of a definite one) is forced to reflect on himself as a "fractional part of some trivial matter."¹⁴

Every human being must be assumed in essential possession of what essentially belongs to being a man.... That our age has forsaken the individuals in order to take refuge in the collective idea has its natural explanation in the aesthetic despair which has not yet found the ethical. Men have perceived that it avails nothing to be ever so distinguished an individual man, since no difference avails anything.¹⁵

Carmelos's recognition of his existential marginality brings with it a deep sense of despair. He expresses a concomitant awareness of life's ephemerality. Despite the awareness of Ribeyro's characters, they attempt to give significance to a meaningless existence by turning illusion into reality.

In Cuentos de circunstancias Ribeyro creates an illusion of reality which is particularly prevalent in this collection of stories. These narratives further explicate contemporary man's psychological responses within a repressive environment. The protagonists in two of the stories, "Explicaciones a un cabo de servicio" and "La insignia,"

¹⁴Sören Aabye Kierkegaard, excerpts from The Present Age, trans. A. Dru and Walter Lowrie, in The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard, comp. W. H. Auden (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1952), p. 49.

¹⁵W. H. Auden, (comp.), The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard, pp. 52-53.

seek recognition, refusing consciously to acknowledge defeat. Both characters have human weaknesses that compel them to withdraw into an illusive reality, one that appears to fulfill their needs neglected by the real world. The consequences of an illusive existence, however, are no less tragic than the ones suffered by those who profess to be well-adjusted and integrated within society. In "Explicaciones a un cabo de servicio" Pedro Saldaña experiences the death of his illusions as well as a psychological death. Ribeyro presents the story in the form of a monologue which Saldaña maintains as a policeman escorts him from a bar to the police station for his failure to pay the bill. In route Saldaña, thoroughly intoxicated, entertains the officer with details of his day spent with an old friend, Simón Barriga. Saldaña and Simón, both unemployed, had discussed earlier, over several bottles of wine, plans for the formation of their own company which they decide to name "Fructífera S.A." Ribeyro captures Saldaña's humorous, yet pathetic account of the reunion with Simón as the officer accompanies him to the station.

Figúrese usted: yo había pensado-- y esto se lo digo confidencialmente-- que un magnífico negocio sería importar camionetas para la repartición de leche y... ¿Sabe usted cuál era el proyecto de Simón? ¡Importar material para puentes y caminos!... Usted dirá, claro, entre una y otra cosa no hay relación.... Sería mejor que importara vacas. ¡Vaya un chiste! Pero no, hay relación: le digo que la hay.... ¿por dónde rueda una camioneta? Por un puente. Nada más claro, eso no

necesita demostración. De este modo comprenderá por qué Simon y yo decidimos hacernos socios.... Un momento, ¿dónde estamos? ¿Esta no es la avenida Abancay? ¡Magnífico!.... Bueno, como le decía, ¡socios! Pero socios de verdad....
(I: 146)

With each additional drink their plans had become more real and elaborate. Finally, Saldaña finds himself abandoned by Simón and unable to pay for the drinks. He continues explaining his predicament to the officer.

¡Demonios! se debía 47 soles.... ¿en qué? me digo yo. Pero allí estaba escrito... Yo dije: 'Estoy esperando a mi amigo.' Pero el mozo no me hizo caso y llamó al maitre.... Hablé con el maitre que es una especie de notario con una servilleta en la mano.... Imposible entenderse.... Le enseñé mis tarjetas... ¡nada! Le dije: 'Yo soy Pablo Saldaña!' ¡Ni caso! Le ofrecí asociarlo a nuestra empresa, darle parte de las utilidades.... el tipo no daba su brazo a torcer.... En eso pasó usted, ¿recuerda? ¡Fue verdaderamente una suerte! Con las autoridades es fácil entenderse; claro, usted es un hombre instruido, un oficial, sin duda; yo admiro nuestras instituciones, yo voy a los desfiles para aplaudir a la policía.... Usted me ha comprendido, naturalmente; usted se ha dado cuenta que yo no soy una piltrafa, ¿dónde estamos? ¿Esta no es la comisaría? ¿qué quieren estos hombres uniformados? ¡Suélteme, déjeme el brazo le he dicho! ¿Qué se ha creído usted? ¡Aquí están mis tarjetas! Yo soy Pablo Saldaña, el gerente, el formador de la Sociedad, yo soy un hombre, ¿entiende?, ¡un hombre! (I: 149)

The instant before illusion and reality collide, Saldaña's appeal for recognition becomes frantic. Despite his desperate attempts to keep his illusions alive, they die the instant reality overpowers him. Ribeyro increases the omnipotence of reality by giving it a tacit presence, disguised

in the figure of the policeman. The contrast between the police officer's silence and Saldaña's verbosity magnifies further the dominance of reality over illusion. Reality is ever present, indifferent, and offers no consolation. Armed only with his personalized card, Saldaña makes a final attempt to combat reality and loses the battle.

Tinged with fantasy, one of Ribeyro's best known allegories, "La insignia," depicts man's active quest for identity as an absurd act of conformity. The protagonist, who remains nameless, describes his unexpected discovery of a silver insignia that triggers for him a sequence of strange events. Intrigued by this labyrinth of mystery, the narrator joins a clandestine organization and soon gains importance among his fellow associates by complying with a series of nonsensical requests:

... tuve que conseguir una docena de papagayos a los que ni más volví a ver. Más tarde fui enviado a una ciudad de provincia a levantar un croquis del edificio municipal. Recuerdo que también me ocupé de arrojar cáscaras de plátano en la puerta de algunas residencias escrupulosamente señaladas, de escribir un artículo sobre los cuerpos celestes, que nunca vi publicado, de adiestrar a un mono en gestos parlamentarios.... (I: 106)

Within a short time he assumes the presidency of the organization, totally ignorant of its fundamental principles. His desire for recognition molds him into an undiscerning participant in an irrational, nightmarish world.

Y a pesar de todo esto, ahora, como el primer día, y como siempre, vivo en la más absoluta

ignorancia, y si alguien me preguntara cuál es el sentido de nuestra organización, yo no sabría que responderle. A lo más, me limitaría a pintar rayas rojas en una pizarra negra, esperando confiado los resultados que produce en la mente humana toda explicación que se funda inexorablemente en la cábala. (I: 107)

The narrator's fate coincides with Pablo Saldaña's in "Explicaciones al cabo del servicio;" both encounter a reality that forbids individuality. For Ribeyro, man's seemingly insignificant defects, such as insecurity and vulnerability, contribute to the erroneous acts for which he is penalized repeatedly. "Lo que pierde a los hombres no es tanto sus grandes vicios como sus pequeños defectos.... Parece que la vida, como ciertas sociedades, tolera los grandes crímenes pero castigara implacablemente las faltas." (Prosas, p. 45)

Hypocrisy appears constantly in Ribeyro's characters, but is more prevalent, however, among members of groups. Regardless of whether the group consists of integrated, visible members as the creditors in "Junta de acreedores" or of marginal, nebulous figures as in "La insignia," hypocrisy remains a constant threat. In Ribeyro's world it thrives best among the more visible, aggressive echelons. This phenomenon becomes obvious in the story "Los moribundos," although it continuously appears in many of Ribeyro's works. A child vocalizes Ribeyro's views as he witnesses firsthand adult reactions to a specific event during the 1940 conflict between Peru

and Ecuador. The presence of two wounded soldiers, one Peruvian and the other Ecuatorian, transforms the young Peruvian narrator's home into a pretentious, irreverent exhibition of loyalties. Ribeyro places the two soldiers in direct contrast to a group of people, (including a Peruvian zone commander and an Ecuatorian proprietor of a bar) who gather to celebrate Peru's victory with a "comida de fraternidad." "En medio del regocijo del armisticio, los moribundos eran como los parientes pobres, como los defectos físicos, los que conviene esconder y olvidar para que nadie pueda poner en duda la belleza de la vida."

(I: 210) The agonizing cries of the dying Peruvian soldier interrupt the shouts of victory in the next room, contrasting the horror of war as experienced by its participants, with the exaltation of victory as experienced by its observers. As the Peruvian soldier dies, the young narrator's father, who hosts the armistice celebration, goes to his bedside and discovers that the Ecuatorian soldier is the only one able to understand the dying soldier's language. Although the war made the two soldiers enemies, they are firmly united by their Indian blood and their quechua language. The guests attending the "comida de fraternidad," on the other hand, share a common bond of indifference, self-interest, and hypocrisy. The youth seems aware of his father's inner torment as he observes his return to the table and hears his response to his

wife's inquiry:

--¿Qué ha pasado-- preguntó mi mamá por lo bajo, al ver que mi padre estaba de pie junto a la mesa, con su nariz más colorado que nunca.
--Nada-- respondió y se sentó en su silla, mirando fijamente la medalla nueva que brillaba en el pecho del comandante. (I: 214)

Although the Peruvian soldier dies among Peruvian patriots, the Eucatorian soldier is the only one that befriends and understands him. The child narrator, so often present in Ribeyro's works dealing with hypocrisy, reveals the author's preoccupation with adults' depraved system of values and its effect on idealism.

In Confusión en la prefectura, a one-act farce, hypocrisy reaches burlesque proportions as Ribeyro characterizes the protagonist's chameleon nature. A prefect in one of Peru's most remote provinces, upon receiving news of a golpe de estado in Lima, hastily sends a telegram to the new President pledging to support him in his endeavors to establish order. Within a very short time the fluctuating political maneuvers in Lima result in so many conflicting reports concerning the identity of the new President, that the prefect, in a frenzied state, sends a series of telegrams to Lima, revising his message each time in accordance with the latest report. The prefect's reaction to the fear of losing his position under a new President exposes his weakness. His condescending behavior places him in a ridiculous light and he quickly assumes the role of a

buffoon, instead of that of a dignified government official.

... ¡Me estoy volviendo loco! (Corre hacia la puerta) ¡Señor alcalde! ¡Señor gobernador! (Regresa al centro de la oficina) ¡Ay! ¡El telegrama! ¡Que no lo pongan!... ¡Sí, que lo pongan! (Trate de pararse de cabeza) ¡Que viva nuestro general! ¡Oh, perdón, que viva don Héctor Verdoso! (Da cabriolas) ¡Que se vayan todos al diablo! (Se tira sobre el sillón) ¡Que me dejan dormir! (Se sienta en el sillón, mirando al público) Un general por aquí, un civil por allá... (se queja) ¡Ay, ay, aaay!¹⁶

For Ribeyro, hypocrisy, along with illusion, are manifestations of attempts to control one's destiny. The pressures of reality encourage contemporary man to falsify that reality by indulging in self-delusion or by embracing a set of false values. These two tactics become primary means of defending oneself against an oppressive reality that breeds despair.

Whatever turn of events may transpire to alter humanity's ill-fated existence is fortuitous and improbable in Ribeyro's view. Contemporary man most often exhibits signs of helplessness when confronting the world as it really exists. In making reality symbolic, Ribeyro permits man to discover those frequently imperceptible components that would undermine his sense of well-being. Rarely do his characters break through the boundaries of their petty existence to glimpse momentarily a utopian existence. If mankind could rise above the confines of the environment

¹⁶Ribeyro, Teatro, p. 260.

and conquer the weaknesses it encourages, then perhaps there would be greater harmony between man and the universe. Ribeyro admits the possibility but also the unlikelihood of such a harmonious relationship:

"...nada podemos desentrañar, pues nuestra conciencia está excesivamente embarazada por la razón y nuestros ojos empañados por la rutina. Limpiar ambos de lo que los estorba no es una tarea fácil. A veces se consigue por un esfuerzo de concentración, otras viene naturalmente, gracias a un trabajo interior en el cual no hemos deliberadamente participado. Sólo entonces la realidad entreabre sus puertas y podemos vislumbrar lo esencial. (Prosas, p. 90)

In "La molicie" Ribeyro combines many of the forces that threaten mankind in an ominous abstraction that hovers over civilization. The conclusion, however, offers a measure of hope rarely present in Ribeyro's works. Related from the first-person point of view, the story maintains Ribeyro's pessimistic view of reality but concludes with an observation indicating a sudden revitalization of vital forces. It is a narrative that verifies the magnitude and sincerity of Ribeyro's interest in the contemporary inner spirit. Like Borges and Cortázar, Ribeyro fabricates an unreal atmosphere where irrationality prevails, but within a well-planned and coherent narrative structure. Unreality emanates from the descriptions of the characters' behavior and the reflection they see of themselves in the vague gestures of others. Ribeyro defines la molicie subjectively, as a corruptive force awaiting the opportune moment

to infiltrate and destroy the lives of the inhabitants of modern civilization: "Comprendimos que la molicie era como una enfermedad cósmica que atacaba hasta a los seres inorgánicos, que se infiltraba hasta en las entidades abstractas dándoles una blanda apariencia de cosas vivas e inútiles." (I: 133) Ribeyro's characters are victimized by a force similar to the one that attacks Cortázar's characters in "Cefalea," maintaining them ever vigilant over las mancupias, ... "cuyo veneno actua con espantosa intensidad...."¹⁷ In "La molicie" windows become mirrors in which man observes his gradual deterioration.

Por las ventanas abierta veíamos hombres y mujeres desnudos, indolentemente estirados sobre los lechos blancos, abanicándose con periódico. A veces alguno de ellos se aproximaba a su ventana y miraba el patio y nos veía a nosotros. Luego de hacernos un gesto vago, que podía interpretarse como un signo de complicidad en el sufrimiento, regresaba a su lecho, bebía lentos jarros de agua y envuelto en sus sábanas, como en su sudario, proseguía su decomposición. Este cuadro al principio nos fortalecía, porque revelaba en nosotros cierta superioridad. Más, pronto aprendimos a ver en cada ventana, como el reflejo anticipado de nuestro propio destino y huíamos de ese espectáculo como de un mal presagio.
(I: 131)

The omnipresence of la molicie forces the characters into aberrant behavioral patterns exhibiting signs of insensitivity and desperation: "Nos reíamos de los malos chistes, estábamos a punto de llorar en las escenas melodramáticas,

¹⁷Julio Cortázar, "Cefalea," Bestiario (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1974), p. 90.

nos apasionábamos con héroes imaginarios y había en el fondo de todo ello como una cruel necesidad y una común hipocresía." (I: 132) Nevertheless, within an indefinite period of time, a force as vaguely defined as la molicie inadvertently jostles man into a state of keen awareness: "...la tierra despertó con un estertor de inmenso y contagioso júbilo, como un animal después de un largo sueño, y nosotros mismos nos sentimos partícipes de aquel renacimiento y nos abrazamos alegremente sobre el dintel de la ventana, recibiendo en el rostro las húmedas gotas de otoño." (I: 134) This auspicious conclusion implies that an alternative to social and moral decay does exist. However, tedious routines and varied schemes of evasion paralyze the self-motivation one needs to reverse the erroneous course of his life, and the characters find themselves unable to transform their inertia into productivity, thereby giving meaning to their otherwise pointless existence. Any illuminating moment of self-discovery that one might experience occurs accidentally and usually too late.

Although Ribeyro's short stories and plays illustrate most succinctly his vision of reality set forth in Prosas apátridas, as well as the sense of frustration overpowering his creations, his novels probe more extensively the imbalance between expectations and reality. Each becomes a fictitious world where the inhabitants unsuccessfully make an attempt to control their own destiny.

Although the majority of the characters struggle within an urban setting, the inhabitants of the rural areas, like those in Crónica de San Gabriel, suffer the same existential anguish in a rapidly changing world that lacks sincerity, justice, and traditional values. Regardless of the particular ambience presented, Ribeyro creates a universe filled with disenchanted beings. They all share the same dilemma; they are out of harmony with themselves and others. In them and in their surroundings Ribeyro sees some of the defects that deprive contemporary civilization and its inhabitants of any grandeur.

Somos un instrumento dotado de muchas cuerdas, pero generalmente nos morimos sin que hayan sido pulsadas todas. Así, nunca sabremos qué música era la que guardábamos. Nos faltó el amor, la amistad, el viaje, el libro, la ciudad, capaz de hacer vibrar la polifonía en nosotros oculta. Dimos siempre la misma nota.
(Prosas, p. 110)

Ribeyro's works echo his personal vision of reality, transforming it into a universal one that reflects that of mankind in general. Ribeyro's multifaceted reality permits his characters to reveal their shortcomings, and the ambiguities in their environment that alienate them and undermine their productivity as human beings.

CHAPTER III

THE ILLUSIVE PARADISE

The phenomenal rate of growth of the urban centers during the middle of the twentieth century poses numerous socio-economic problems for humanity and has prompted Ribeyro to question the authenticity of the struggle for economic and social success within the metropolis. The majority of Ribeyro's works examine the process of urbanization that negatively alters the city dweller's life, without regard for social class. His stories in particular, repeatedly dispel the myths that have made the metropolis a symbol of prosperity, thereby luring masses of human beings with the promise of unlimited opportunity, affluence, security, and happiness. Ribeyro analyzes the desire for urban integration and refutes the assumption that once integrated into the great metropolis, one will profit from his urban status. For Ribeyro, the environment within the city becomes a microcosm of human suffering, permanently damaging one's sense of values. E. M. Aldrich, discussing the urban

dilemma that attracts many writers, particularly those from the developing Latin American nations, enumerates the major negative consequences of urbanization:

... se derrumban las viejas alianzas y afloran nuevas agrupaciones, se levantan interrogantes a la tradición y se introducen nuevos valores. La urbanización también alienta el crecimiento de estructuras burocráticas aún más elaboradas y complejas que tienen a su vez un efecto despersonalizador, deshumanizante, sobre la vida de la ciudad. La urbanización es espacial en cuanto se expande la instalación de la ciudad; es también un período de transición durante el cual chocan inevitablemente quienes defienden el status quo y los que promueven los cambios de estructuras.¹

Capitalizing on the city's demands upon modern man, Ribeyro defines urbanization in terms of a concrete reality that accommodates two groups of people: the authoritative officials characterized by power, money, and aggressiveness, and the often invisible, marginal ones characterized by submissiveness, timidity, and anonymity. Ribeyro transforms the city into a competitive arena where members of the two opposing groups encounter one another on an individual basis, each caught up in a futile illusive struggle for material gain and social position.

Although the authoritarians dominate with their power, the marginal population reigns supreme in numbers. Ribeyro transforms Lima into a microcosm of universal

¹E. M. Aldrich, "Aspectos del cuento contemporáneo peruano," in El cuento hispanoamericano ante la crítica, dirección y prólogo de Enrique Pupo-walker (Editorial Castilla, 1973), p. 326.

suffering where the official world consistently extracts from the marginal world that which will perpetuate its own existence. Since Ribeyro considers Peru itself as a marginal country, the majority of his stories depict a Lima heavily populated by marginal characters. "Todos somos más o menos outsiders. Sea desde el punto de vista político, social, económico, sexual, etc. Una sociedad que no ha logrado aún su síntesis es una yuxtaposición de marginados."² Having witnessed Lima's rapid growth between 1940 and 1960, the author confesses his need to define in universal terms his personal sense of frustration and his compassion for his compatriots. In La caza sutil, a collection of essays and articles of literary criticism, he explains:

La época en que Lima dejó de ser una pequeña ciudad para ir convirtiéndose en una gran urbe. La época de la migración 'salvaje' de campesinos hacia la capital y la aparición de las enormes barriadas. La época en que la clase media--burócratas, empleados, pequeños comerciantes, intelectuales, profesionales sin fortuna, etc.--empieza a constituirse como clase social, sin renunciar a sus anhelos de promoción social ni a su temor de proletarizarse. La época de la dependencia, de la desesperanza, de la incertidumbre, del esfuerzo fallido, de la ilusión no recompensada. La época de la oligarquía y del militarismo fanfarrón, que aparecen en mis cuentos sólo en forma esporádica, pero que forman como el telón de fondo o el contexto de un mosaico narrativo que alguien ha definido como una 'alegoría de la frustración'.... En todo autor hay un 'parti pris' declarado u oculto. El mío me parece que está implícito en la mayoría de mis cuentos y por razones

²"La gran pregunta de J.R.R., El Comercio (2 de marzo 1975), p. 10.

quizás más temperamentales que ideológicas: inutilidad del combate solitario, poder compulsivo y manducativo de la sociedad dominante, búsqueda infructuosa de la dicha, de la seguridad o de la prosperidad.³

The characters in his stories testify to the fact that cosmopolitan life requires one to conform. The majority must yield to those in authority even though hypocrisy lies hidden behind the authoritarian disguise. The city acts as a machine that blends urbanites until individuality and conscience are almost entirely lost. Its victims become disillusioned by the environment and disoriented. They are left trapped in a situation that they are unable to control. Those who do not succumb totally to their new circumstances undertake compensatory measures to re-direct their lives and to preserve their self-dignity. Although the consequences of their actions carry some of the characters further away from reality than others, they all feel the inescapable presence of solitude.

Attempts to flee from oppressive situations are usually planned with hopes of improving reality as María illustrates in "Tela de araña." The exploited citizens who, like María, find themselves enslaved by their environment, entertain hopes of "elevando la realidad a la altura de la imaginación." (I: 76) Ribeyro shows the city's striking

³Julio Ramón Ribeyro, "Prólogo a la tesis de Marc Vaille-Angles," in La caza sutil (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975), pp. 143-144.

resemblance to a gigantic spider web as María, a servant in a bourgeois home, flees from her job to avoid abuse by the family's adolescent son, only to become more deeply entangled in another situation. María's friend Justa takes her to a room in the center of the city where she leaves her to await a mysterious protector, Felipe Santos, who has promised her another job. Ribeyro begins the story at the exact moment when María senses the freedom in her new adventure:

Cuando María quedó sola en el cuarto, una vez que hubo partido Justa, sintió un extraño sentimiento de libertad. Le pareció que el mundo se dilataba, que las cosas se volvían repentinamente bellas y que su mismo pasado observado desde este ángulo nuevo, era tan solo un mal sueño pasajero. (I: 63)

María tries to suppress her growing feeling of panic as she silently awaits the arrival of her protector. By late in the evening her adventurous spirit wanes as she waits alone, listening to distant voices that penetrate the walls of the room. "Las paredes del cuarto le parecieron revistidas de una espantosa palidez.... Sólo ahora le pareció comprender, que lo que ella tomó al principio por libertad, no era en el fondo sino un enorme desamparo." (I: 68) Seeking refuge in some comforting thoughts, she concentrates on her good fortune in having Felipe Santos to rely on, even though she has not yet met him. "Era el único en que podía confiar, el único que podía ofrecerle amparo en aquella ciudad para ella extraña, cuyo cielo teñido de luces rojas y azules, las

calles se entrecruzaban como la tela de una gigantesca araña." (I: 79)

María's apprehension becomes justified when Felipe Santos finally appears, "su rostro de cincuentón y sus pupilas tenazmente fijas en ella, a través de los párpados hinchados y caídos." (II: 70) The situation in which she finds herself provides no escape. Betrayed by her friend Justa and without a job, she has no other alternative than to react passively when her shrewd protector befriends her with a necklace.

María levantó el mentón lentamente, sin ofrecer resistencia. Había en su gesto una rara pasividad. Pronto sintió en su cuello el contacto de aquella mano envejecida. Entonces se dio cuenta, sin ningún raciocinio, que su vuelo había terminado y que esa cadena, antes que un obsequio, era como un cepo que la unía a un destino que ella nunca buscó. (I: 71)

Ribeyro depicts María's search for freedom as useless. In seeking freedom from an oppressive situation, she ironically becomes entangled in a new one.

Ribeyro's use of irony emphasizes the force of destiny. He expands the web image to include María, whose existence he compares to that of a spider. She instinctively and innocently spins a web of defeat for herself. Throughout the story Ribeyro repeatedly focuses attention on a spider making its way across the ceiling, periodically distracting María. He reveals the resemblance between the spider's movements toward the ceiling light and María's

gravitation toward complete submissiveness. Each one of María's glances at the spider triggers a flashback in which she recalls the furtive looks of the adolescent son who was her tormentor and "aficionado a las arañas." (I: 64) The spider's presence links the present with the past, gives dramatic unity to the story, and suggests the protagonist's tragic destiny. The sinister image recalls the inner life of Emma Bovary which Flaubert describes in Madame Bovary: "Mais elle, sa vie était froide comme un grenier dont la lucarne est au nord, et l'ennui, araignée silencieuse filait sa toile dans l'ombre à tous les coins de son coeur."⁴ Like Maupassant and Flaubert, Ribeyro uses symbolic realism to suggest the imminent danger and the tragedy of a situation close at hand.

Irony and sarcasm dominate reality as the marginal beings' appetite for the privileges of the official world begins to grow. The irrepressible desire for integration into the urban center's official sector results in a calculated, vain attempt to achieve material and social advancement. Like Chekhov and Maupassant, Ribeyro penetrates the economic base of society to reveal the hierarchies, mandates, and abstract systems that govern it.⁵ Ribeyro's

⁴Gustave Flaubert, Madame Bovary (n.p.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 52.

⁵José Miguel Oviedo, "Soledad y frustración de una sociedad," El Comercio (10 de mayo 1964), p. 8.

characters manage to survive by their efforts, but are powerless to improve their condition. Utilizing a technique of characterization typical of Maupassant, Chekhov, and Flaubert, Ribeyro places his protagonists in a specific environment that inevitably reveals to them the limitations and banality surrounding them. His characters undergo disillusionments similar to those suffered by the characters in the works of his literary models who find that "some elegant ball or festive occasion once and for all poisons their existence, reveals to them in all its fullness the philistinism of their daily life, the poverty of their circumstances, the humdrum character of the people around them, the unattractiveness of their husbands."⁶ Their struggle consistently ends in failure and frustration, destroying the myth of the self-made man.

In "El banquete" Ribeyro emphasizes environment and characterization to point out the inability to control one's own destiny. Submerged in a provincial setting, Fernando Pasamano, appropriately named for his ambitious nature, attempts to improve his status by preparing an elaborate banquet and inviting the President of the Republic and his cabinet. He converts his home into a luxurious reception hall, spending an enormous sum of money hiring an orchestra,

⁶ Leonid Grossman, "The Naturalism of Chekhov," in Chekhov: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Robert Louis Jackson (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.), p. 43.

constructing a garden and buying all new furniture. Ribeyro gives a detailed account of Fernando's renovative efforts, ridiculing his behavior.

En primer término, su residencia hubo de sufrir una transformación general. Como se trataba de un caserón antiguo, fue necesario echar abajo algunos muros, agrandar las ventanas, cambiar la madera de los pisos y pintar de nuevo todas las paredes. Esta reforma trajo consigo otras y--como esas personas que cuando se compran un par de zapatos juzgan que es necesario estrenarlos con calcetines nuevos luego con una camisa nueva y luego con un terno nuevo y así sucesivamente hasta llegar al canzoncillo nuevo--don Fernando se vio obligado a renovar todo el mobiliario, desde las consolas del salón hasta el último banco de la repostería.
(I: 111)

In short, during the festivities Pasamano manages to corner the President, who, in the course of their conversation, promises him the Ambassadorship to Rome, a coveted position among Peruvian diplomats. The next morning, however, illusion collides with reality when Pasamano's wife awakens him, hysterically waving in her hand the morning newspaper.

Al abrir los ojos, la vio penetrar en el dormitorio con un periódico abierto entre las manos. Arrebatándoselo, leyó los titulares, y, sin proferir una exclamación, se desvaneció sobre la cama. En la madrugada, aprovechándose de la recepción, un ministro había dado un golpe de estado y el presidente había sido obligado a dimitir. (I: 115)

Ribeyro immerses his characters in an atmosphere of pretense, focusing on the behavioral patterns that the characters observe in accordance with their position of authority in the official world. He censures their defects and reveals Pasamano's total submission to his personal desire

for integration and recognition. "Para colmo, terminado el servicio, los comensales se levantaron para formar grupos amodorrados y digestónicos y él, en su papel de anfitrión, se vio obligado a correr de grupo en grupo para reanimarlos con copas de menta, palmaditas, puros y paradojas." (I: 114)

At the close of the festivities, following the departure of the President and his cabinet, the only people remaining are the insignificant guests without any title who are observed marauding near the bar "esperando aún el descorchamiento de alguna botella o la ocasión de llevarse a hurtadillas un cenicero de plata." (I: 115) Ribeyro's exaggerated depiction of characters and environment transforms reality into a skillful game of pretense that mocks both the official world and the marginal world. The surprise ending stresses the far-reaching effects of the metropolis which again appears as a complicated network of interest groups that control not only the destinies of the people in the provinces but also the fate of other powerful groups.

Irony again becomes Ribeyro's primary means of exploring the ephemeral comraderie between employer and employee in "El jefe." Like Pasamano, Eusebio Zapatero is an opportunist who seeks recognition by the official world, only to find that the dividing line between the official territory and the marginal one is firmly established and inflexible. Ribeyro describes an atmosphere controlled by attempts to segregate the two worlds, even during a party

given by Eusebio's company for the employees.

En el cuarto piso de un edificio moderno, situado en el centro de Lima, la firma había alquilado cinco piezas que fueron convertidas en sala de baile, bar, biblioteca, billares y guardarropa. En la pared más importante--porque hasta las paredes tienen categorías--se había colocado una fotografía del fundador de la firma y otra del gerente en ejercicio. El resto de la decoración lo constituía pequeños carteles que contenían frases alusivas al trabajo, a la puntualidad, tales como 'Piense, luego responda' o 'No calcule, verifique,' las que formaban un recetario destinado a cuadrricular, hasta en sus horas de recreo, el cráneo de los pobres empleados. (II: 255)

Eusebio would ameliorate the rigidity of the employer-employee relationship and, at the same time, obtain a salary increase. Part of his strategy includes circulating around his employer throughout the evening. After the party, as many associates disperse, Eusebio joins a group of employees who accompany the employer, Felipe Bueno, to a nearby bar for more drinks. After several rounds the rest of the employees go home, leaving Eusebio alone with his employer. At Sr. Bueno's suggestion they visit still another bar where the distinction between employer and employee seems to disappear altogether. "Al partir de ese momento las jerarquías desaparecieron. Comenzaron a tutearse mientras seguían bebiendo." (I: 258-259) As in "El banquete," daylight brings stark reality. A few hours later Eusebio reports to work prepared to request a raise of his newly acquired cohort, who he now feels he can address by his nickname, "Pim."

Eusebio se fue acercando sigilosamente y cuando estuvo ante el pupitre adelantó la cabeza y murmuró: 'Pim.' El apoderado levantó rápidamente la cara y quedó mirándolo con una expresión fría, desmemoriada y anónima: la mirada inapelable del jefe.

--Buenos días...señor Eusebio Zapatero--respondió. Y continuó leyendo sus cartas. (I: 260)

Despite his efforts to integrate himself into the circle of his superiors, Eusebio is forced to rejoin the ranks of those whose familiar gestures, Ribeyro explains, show signs of inhibition:

Algunos se metían constantemente el dedo entre el cuello de la camisa y la garganta. Otros fumaban con avidez y se apoyaban tan pronto sobre una pierna como sobre la otra; unos terceros, dentro de los cuales se encontraba Eusebio, se rascaban la frente o se tiraban maquinalmente de la nariz. (I: 256)

Ribeyro unobtrusively criticizes in this story the unequal distribution of power that a cosmopolitan existence perpetrates. In his view it causes one to affect a certain behavior in order to impress another human being, therefore discouraging sincerity and promoting artificiality. In order to attain his goal, Eusebio must first gain the confidence of his employer, while el jefe, in turn, must regain his image of superiority in order to maintain the position of authority. Once again Ribeyro affirms, through his treatment of characters and environment, the unproductive nature of the search for material gain.

Although both the integrated and marginal characters in Ribeyro's stories are preoccupied with appearances,

Ribeyro places the marginal ones in a more sympathetic light. They appear as the sensitive, submissive members of society, victimized by the insensitive, aggressive figures of authority. Position and power tend to dehumanize the creatures making them oblivious to the needs of their peers. Ribeyro doubts the authenticity of the success of the limited number of aggressors who appear to have triumphed in their avid pursuit of material goods and social status. He tests the apparent solidarity of the official world by questioning its adopted set of values and revealing its false pride: "Que una ínfima parte de la humanidad triunfe, no cambia nada el asunto. Además, había que preguntarse si también los triunfadores no disimulan una serie de fracasos a otro nivel de su personalidad y su éxito no sea otra cosa que el precio de su desesperación."⁷ Those who appear to have attained success suffer as much as those still seeking it. Their frustrations and fears, however, are camouflaged by an air of self-importance and superiority whereas the marginal characters openly reveal their disillusionment. Nevertheless, both are vulnerable members of society in an environment that breeds discontent.

In "Espumante en el sótano" the reader witnesses a deliberate attack against a worker whose twenty-five years of service in the Ministry of Education stir up resentment

⁷Wolfgang A. Luchting, "11 preguntas a Julio Ramón Ribeyro," Textual, núm. 3 (diciembre 1971), p. 50.

among his co-workers and his employers. By contrasting the characters' conversations with their actions Ribeyro allows the bourgeoisie to betray their innermost thoughts and motives, which, in turn, contradict their behavior. Aníbal Hernández is representative of those outsiders who have learned to accept the limitations that marginality imposes on them. Repressing any envious feelings that might have developed during his twenty-five years at the same job, during which time two of his co-workers assumed respected positions of authority, Aníbal sublimely rationalizes his misfortune: "Si tuviera que trabajar veinte años más acá, lo haría con gusto. Si volviera a nacer, también. Si Cristo recibiera en el Paraíso a un pobre pecador como yo y le preguntara, ¿qué quieres hacer?, yo le diría: trabajar en el servicio de copias de Ministerio de Educación."

(II: 215-216) While Aníbal's speech exudes inordinate amounts of hyperbole, the remarks of his co-workers are characterized by sarcasm and duplicity. His co-workers take every opportunity to deride him at a party he has arranged, complete with champagne and empanadas, to celebrate his many years of service. Even two of Aníbal's former co-workers, now his supervisors, disengage themselves from the celebration as soon as possible, prompting the remainder of the employees to do the same. Aníbal, left alone to clean up the clutter at his supervisor's stern request, suddenly sees with clarity what his situation has

been for the past twenty-five years as he inspects the deserted room:

... el suelo estaba lleno de colillas, de pedazos de empanada, de manchas de champán, de palitos de fósforos quemados, de fragmentos de una copa rota. Nada estaba en su sitio. No era solamente un sótano miserable y oscuro, sino--ahora lo notaba-- una especie de celda, un lugar de expiación.
(II: 216)

Unlike Eusebio in "El jefe" Aníbal's attempt at entertaining conceals no ulterior motive. By financing and arranging the party he merely attempts to give dignity and meaning to a destiny that was decided for him, one that excluded economic and social advancement. Aníbal typifies Ribeyro's numerous urban casualties who, inhibited by the authoritarian figures, are destined to fail in their attempts to gain recognition. Many of Ribeyro's characters, like those in Chekhov's works, seem to accept the force of fate in their lives; their weak, passive natures recall those of Tusenbach and Irina in the play The Three Sisters. All become victims of a colorless universe that appears to have premeasured the amount of happiness and success one may enjoy in life.

Besides contributing to the permanent maladjustment and inhibitions of marginal beings like Aníbal, Ribeyro holds the managerial class accountable for the equation of the accumulation of material goods with social position and acceptance by society. Material prosperity becomes the middle class' primary means of gaining social status. For a fleeting moment during the party, Aníbal, unable to

contain his enthusiasm and pride as he makes a public toast before his co-workers and supervisors, provokes a sarcastic retort from one of the younger office workers.

--¡Viva el señor director!--exclamó Aníbal, sin poderse contener.

Después de un momento de vacilación, los empleados respondieron en coro:

--¡Viva!

--¡Viva nuestro ministro!

Los vivas se repitieron.

--¡Viva la Asociación de Empleados y su justa lucha por sus mejoras materiales!--gritó alguien a quien, por suerte, le había tocado tres ruedas de champán. (II: 214)

City life encourages disloyalty not only between the official and marginal beings, but also among the members within each of the respective groups.

Another unfortunate ramification of the social structure in Ribeyro's presentation of it is the irreparable damage it wreaks in dictating the value system of the younger citizens. Ribeyro populates many of his works with adolescents who learn very early in life the importance of being socially acceptable in the official world. Like the young limeño Luciano in "Las botellas y los hombres," they discover that "en Lima no se podía ser pobre, que la pobreza era aquí una espantosa mancha, la prueba plena de una mala reputación." (I: 193) In this story Ribeyro contrasts Luciano and his father who meet again after eight years of separation. During his father's long absence Luciano has prospered by working his way up in a social club. His prosperity, however, is not entirely the result

of social acceptance, as Ribeyro points out.

... era una prosperidad provisional, amenazada, mantenida gracias a negocios oscuros. Si el club lo toleraba no era ciertamente por razones sociales sino porque Luciano, aparte de ser el infatigable 'sparing,' conocía las debilidades de los socios y era algo así como el agente secreto de sus vicios, el órgano de enlace entre el hampa y el salón. (I: 194-195)

Seeing his father, who has always been an impoverished vagabond, stirs within Luciano feelings of resentment and pity.

As father and son meet that evening in "el jardín Santa Rosa" of Lima, Luciano discovers through alcohol and violence the bond that links him to his father.

A cada trago, el viejo parecía rejuvenecer, alcanzar una talla legendaria.... Ese hombre de gran quijada lampiña, que él había durante tantos años odiado y olvidado, adquiriría ahora tan opulenta realidad, que él se consideraba como una pobre excrecencia suya, como una dádiva de su naturaleza. (I: 197-199)

For a short while Luciano's image of his father becomes a tolerable reality. However, when the conversation turns to the subject of women, prompting derogatory remarks from the father about Luciano's mother, violence breaks out. The discussion ends with a fist fight between the father and son outside the bar, with Luciano the victor. Ribeyro captures the moment when Luciano senses the link between his father and himself:

El viejo estaba inmóvil. Ambos se miraban a los ojos como si estuvieran prontos a lanzar un grito. Aún tuvo tiempo de pensar Luciano: 'Parece que me miro en un espejo,' cuando sintió la pesada mano que le hendía el esternón y la otra que se alargaba rozando sus narices. Recobrándose, tomó distancia

y recibió a la forma que avanzaba con un puntapié en el vientre. El viejo cayó de espaldas. (I: 201)

To illustrate his point, Ribeyro focuses attention on Luciano's final decision concerning his relationship with his father.

Al inclinarse, vio que el viejo dormía, la garganta llena de ronquidos. Tirándolo de las piernas lo arrastró hasta la vereda. Luego volvió a inclinarse para mirar por última vez esa mandíbula recia, esa ilusión de padre que jamás volvería a repetirse, Arrancando su anillo de anular, lo colocó en el meñique del vencido, con el rubí hacia la palma. Después encendió un cigarrillo y se retiró pensativo, hacia los bares de La Victoria. (I: 201)

In exchange for material comfort and social status, Luciano totally rejects his past. He leaves his father a portion of what, for him, denotes success; a ring with a ruby stone. The symbolic value of the ring gives an ironic tone to the conclusion. For Luciano and his father it becomes a symbol of separation rather than unity. Having severed ties with his authentic reality, Luciano returns to the official world where he manages to maintain his social position by exercising his new system of values against the very society into which he so decidedly wanted to integrate. Like many of Ribeyro's young protagonists, Luciano's life becomes one based solely on self-interest. By using and manipulating others for egotistical purposes, he objectifies himself, becoming totally isolated from his authentic self. The author demonstrates that Luciano's urban existence is as fraudulent

as the means he uses to maintain it.

Ribeyro's adolescents as well as his mature characters find themselves incapable of establishing a meaningful friendship with anyone outside of their social structure. After they have been indoctrinated by the questionable values of the other prosperous members of their circle, they become irretrievably lost in the materialistic, official world. In "Un domingo cualquiera" Ribeyro transforms a deserted beach along Lima's coast into a playground of pretense as two teenage girls, Gariella and Nelly, make a vain attempt to overcome their individual complexes through an exchange of confidences.

Gabriella, representative of an affluent but culturally deficient society, initiates a friendship with Nelly, infatuated by the life style and personality which differ significantly from her own. Ribeyro links Gabriella to the image of the "piojo de mar... esos bichitos que hay en la arena.... que a veces pican." (II: 201) Nelly, on the other hand, typifies the majority of Ribeyro's marginal figures; she belongs to the lower middle class and is impressionable and anxious to integrate into the superior, profit-oriented sector of society.

The dialogue between the two contrasts Gabriella's frivolous nature with Nelly's more conservative, subdued personality. Nevertheless, each makes an attempt to adopt some of the values admired in the other. Gabriella declares

her envy openly as she tries to put Nelly at ease.

--No sé como será ser pobre, pero creo que uno no debe avergonzarse. Yo soy hija única, he tenido siempre lo que he querido. Pero, ¿quieres que te lo diga? Mi vida es un poco vacía. Envidio a las chicas como tú que trabajan, que van a la universidad. Mi papá no quiso que yo fuera a la universidad porque dijo que estaba llena de cholos. (II: 195)

Later, she shows interest in intellectual pursuits.

--Tienes que recomendarme algún libro, un libro que me vuelva sabia. El otro día, en la fiesta, oí que discutías con una muchacha no sé de qué escritores. Tú has leído bastante. Yo soy una inculta, palabra.

Nelly le dijo que podía hacerle una lista si realmente quería comprar libros. ¿Qué cosa le interesaba?

--Todo. A mí me interesa todo--respondió Gabriella riendo. (II: 196)

Nelly's reactions, in contrast to Gabriella's, are less spontaneous. She secretly admires her friend's physical beauty and quietly idolizes her carefree behavior. Through the manipulation of dialogue and description, Ribeyro maintains an atmosphere of sensuality, frivolity, and materialism. Describing the scene following the girls' swim in the ocean Ribeyro writes:

Nelly miró su vientre y le pareció distinguir una mancha roja cerca de su ombligo. Más abajo su pubis. Y hundida en la arena, apenas visible, el borde de una chapa de bebida gaseosa, tal vez de una coca-cola....

Mientras terminaba de abrocharse la falda, Gabriella se puso los mocasines, sin limpiarse los pies, después un calzón de encaje negro y finalmente un sostén que le llegaba hasta la cintura. Cogiendo su pantalón, su blusa y su cartera se fue caminando hacia el carro. (II: 201)

Ribeyro associates Gabriella, in particular, with material

objects and emphasizes her careless treatment of them. Nelly, as the conclusion of the story reveals, is only another of Gabriella's possessions, one which she mistreats or ignores after the novelty diminishes. Ribeyro rests the fate of their friendship on an incident that occurs as the girls try to make their way back to the main highway in Gabriella's father's enormous Chevrolet.

Pasaron el oasis de cañas y al cabo de un rato se encontraron en una encrucijada: dos huellas exactamente iguales partían en dos direcciones diferentes.

--¿Te acuerdas por cuál vinimos? --preguntó Gabriella. Nelly quedó vacilando.

--Claro, no te acuerdas --añadió Gabriella tomando la de la derecha....Nos atracamos en la arena.

--No quieres que empuje?

--¡Empujar, tú! Se necesitarían una docena de tipos brutos y unos costales para poner bajo las llantas. Tú sabías que el camino era el de la izquierda.

--Yo no sabía. Te juro que no. (II: 201-202)

Gabriella's accusing tone abruptly closes the circle, excluding Nelly. The latter, in a desperate attempt at reconciliation, renews the offer that she had made earlier.

--Hay un libro estupendo que te puedo recomendar

--dijo Nelly de pronto.

--No me interesan los libros --respondió secamente Gabriella. (II: 202)

As a taxi returns them to Lima, Nelly observes Gabriella at her side, "despierta, vigilante, con las mandíbulas apretadas," (II: 203) and realizes that there will be no more invitations from Gabriella in the future. Gabriella's distorted values, already firmly established, are part of the exorbitant price required of those whose primary concern is

for a secure social position and material comfort. The bourgeois struggle for progress, in Ribeyro's view, is egotistical, and therefore less innocent than the struggle of the urban poor. Ribeyro holds the upper echelons responsible for fabricating an environment of mediocrity and pretense, and for inflicting their deficient values on their offspring. Gabriella's learned behavior has no tolerance for those unable to contribute in some way to her immediate welfare. Once she has been inconvenienced and her security has been threatened, Nelly's presence signifies an invasion of her exclusive world of self-indulgence. Gabriella's life bears a certain resemblance to the arid, barren coastline. Isolated in her self-centered sphere, she seeks material things to replace personal relationships, ultimately incapable of separating one from the other.

Uniting fantasy with reality Ribeyro further explores the tragic consequences of corrupt social structure as it is envisioned by a child of ten in "Por las azoteas." The roof top of an apartment building in Lima becomes a venturesome terrain to be invaded and conquered by the young protagonist. "A los diez años yo era el monarca de las azoteas y gobernaba pacíficamente mi reino de objetos destruidos." (I: 229) Rising above the restrictive, mundane world, the child narrator establishes complete sovereignty over the newly discovered territory.

Las azoteas eran los recintos aéreos donde las personas mayores enviaban las cosas que no servían para nada: se encontraban allí sillas cojas, colchones despanzurrados, maceteros rajados, cocinas de carbón, muchos otros objetos que llevaban una vida purgativa, a medio camino entre el uso póstumo y el olvido. Entre todos estos trastos yo erraba omnipotente, ejerciendo la potestad que me fue negada en los bajos. Podía ahora pintar bigotes en el retrato del abuelo, calzar las viejas botas paternales o blandir como una jabalina la escoba que perdió su paja. Nada me estaba vedado: podía construir y destruir y con la misma libertad con que insuflaba vida a las pelotas de jebe reventadas, presidía la ejecución capital de los maniquís. (I: 229)

The child's unbridled imagination conveniently accounts for the occasional appearance of other human beings within his territory. "La presencia esporádica de alguna sirvienta que tendía ropa o de algún obrero que reparaba una chimenea, no me causaba ninguna inquietud pues yo estaba afincado soberanamente en una tierra en la cual ellos eran solo nómades o poblaciones trashumantes." (I: 229). Later, during one of his expeditions, his encounter with a recluse suffering from tuberculosis further stimulates his imaginative powers rather than curbing them.

Durante los días siguientes pasé el tiempo en mi azotea fortificando sus defensas, poniendo a buen recaudo mis tesoros, preparándome para lo que yo imaginaba que sería una guerra sangrienta. Me veía ya invadido por el hombre barbudo; saqueado, expulsado al atroz mundo de los bajos, donde todo era obediencia, manteles blancos, tías escrutadoras y despiadadas cortinas. (I: 230)

The inevitable confrontation between the child and the recluse ultimately generates a spirit of friendship that is

sustained primarily by the whimsical fancies that both characters share.

Their proposal to construct an enormous parasol to alleviate the penetrating rays of the summer sun reflects Ribeyro's nostalgic longing for an idyllic Lima, a humane city free of suffering. As the dialogue progresses, the focus shifts from the child and his magical realm to the recluse whose words seem to fluctuate between lunacy and sagacity. He represents an hombre marcado, a man forced to live in exile. Rejected by his own family, he resembles the useless objects that have no other purpose than that of occupying space on the roof top. As the child and the recluse discuss their project, the parasol image becomes a universal symbol of protest against the suffering and impersonality of life.

--Entonces escucha lo que te voy a decir: el verano es un dios que no me quiere. A mí me gustan las ciudades frías, las que tienen allá arriba una compuerta y dejan caer sus aguas. Pero en Lima nunca llueve o cae tan pequeño rocío que apenas mata el polvo. ¿Por qué no inventamos algo para protegernos del sol?

--Una sombrilla --le dije--, una sombrilla enorme que tape toda la ciudad.

--Eso es, una sombrilla que tenga un gran mástil, como el de la carpa de un circo y que pueda desplegarse desde el suelo, con una soga, como se iza una bandera. Así estaríamos todos para siempre en la sombra. Y no sufriríamos.

Cuando dijo esto me di cuenta que estaba todo mojado, que la transpiración corría por sus barbas y humedecía sus manos....

--¿La construiremos de tela o de papel? --le pregunté. El hombre quedó mirándome sin entenderme.

--¡Ah, la sombrilla! --exclamó-- La haremos mejor de piel, ¿qué te parece? De piel humana.

Cada cual daría una oreja o un dedo. Y al que no quiera dárnoslo, se lo arrancaremos con una tenaza.

Yo me eché a reír. El hombre me imitó. Yo me reía de su risa y no tanto de lo que había imaginado --que le arrancaba a mi profesora la oreja con un alicate-- cuando el hombre se contuvo.

--Es bueno reír --dijo-- pero siempre sin olvidar algunas cosas: por ejemplo, que hasta las bocas de los niños se llenarían de larvas y que la casa del maestro será convertida en cabaret por sus discípulos. (I: 233-234)

Like the majority of Ribeyro's marginal characters, the recluse serves as the author's mouthpiece, echoing his concerns. The victim's eloquent speeches lend a philosophical, foreboding tone to the story and contribute to Ribeyro's intentional projection of an oneiric, surrealistic ambience. The end of summer, however, announces the impending return of reality. The first grey, dismal moisture of autumn dispels the illusions of summer as the child returns to the roof to seek out his friend. Disenchanted, he surveys his former kingdom. "A esa hora, bajo ese tiempo gris, todo parecía distinto. En los cordeles, la ropa olvidada se mecía y respiraba en la penumbra, y contra las farolas los maniquís parecían cuerpos mutilados." (I: 237) Ribeyro suggests the child's awareness of society's indifference toward suffering by allowing the youth to vocalize his thoughts and observations.

Por la larga farola ... subía la luz, el rumor de la vida. Asomándome a sus cristales vi el interior de la casa de mi amigo, un corredor de losetas por donde hombres vestidos de luto circulaban pensativos.

Entonces comprendí que la lluvia había
llegado demasiado tarde. (I: 237)

Even the most idealistic of Ribeyro's characters must face the realities of existence. In the young narrator's attempt to avoid the oppressive, adult world below, he voluntarily escapes to the rooftop only to discover the recluse, a true victim of an adult society, a society unwilling to recognize human suffering. To the young child the adult world suddenly appears more unreal and ominous than the world that he and his mysterious companion had fabricated.

The themes of solitude and alienation reappear in Ribeyro's most recent stories in which he treats primarily the destiny of the nouveau riche and their adaptation to their socio-economic status. The majority of the protagonists in these stories have decided to remain within the system through which they acquired their status, despite its destructive effect on their lives. The protagonists voluntarily choose to deny their need for contact with other human beings in order to preserve their personal illusions of grandeur. In "Terra incógnita" an overwhelming feeling of solitude prompts a scholar, Álvaro Peñaflor, to explore an unknown realm, his native Lima. With his wife and two children away on vacation, Peñaflor, "un hombre desapegado de toda ambición temporal, dedicado solo a los placeres de la inteligencia," (III: 5) suddenly feels the oppressive solitude of his comfortable home and yields to a banal

temptation to explore Lima.

Él había conocido únicamente la soledad literaria, aquella de la que hablaban poetas y filósofos, sobre la cual había dictado cursillos en la universidad y escrito incluso un lindo artículo que mereció la congratulación de su colega, el doctor Carcopino. Pero la soledad real era otra cosa. Ahora la vivía y se daba cuenta cómo crecía el espacio y se dilataba el tiempo cuando uno se hallaba abandonado a su propio transcurrir en un lugar que, aunque no fuese grande, se volvía insondable, porque ninguna voz respondía a la suya ni ningún ser refractaba su existencia. (III: 5)

Peñaflor's journey outside of his orderly, academic world leaves him in a state of confusion, frustration, and alienation.

The protagonist's exploration of the world becomes a pedantic, chaotic adventure filled with mythical figures and alarming happenings. He attempts to escape temporarily his scholarly way of life, characterized by "la lectura de viejos manuales, la traducción paciente de textos homéricos y el propósito ilusorio pero tenaz de proponer una imagen antigua, probablemente escéptica, pero armoniosa y soportable de la vida terrenal." (III: 9) In a nostalgic mood he heads for Miraflores, a section of Lima holding memories of his youth. Disillusioned, he begins to compensate for the banal surroundings he observes by exercising his imagination. While contemplating a young woman seated in a restaurant, he transforms her into a seductive vision: "Tenía un ensortijado cabello de Medusa y perfil que calificó de Alejandrino." (III: 7) Outside the restaurant he views a

group of adolescents circulating around the plaza, a vision that recalls the past: "Era un ir y venir aparentemente caótico, pero que obedecía a reglas inmemoriales, que se cumplían rigurosamente en pequeños espacios como ese, donde la gente se encontraba, se conocía, dialogaba, se afrontaba, debían haber surgido las premisas de la ciudad ateniense." (III: 8) The real and the imagined continue to merge as he experiences the nightlife in bars along the city's edge. Like a Homeric wanderer yielding to the atmosphere of Circe's den Peñaflor contemplates his surroundings:

En lugar de sirenas, hombres hirsutos y ceñudos bebían cerveza en los apartados pegados al muro o en las mesitas del espacio central. Ocupando una de estas pidió también una cerveza y se deleitó con el primer sorbo de una amarga frescura y lo repitió llenándose la boca de espuma.... Era el sediento perdido en el desierto, el náufrago aterrado buscando entre las brumas la costa de la isla de Circe. Figuras cetrinas en saco blanco patinaban sobre las baldosas con platos en la mano, una sirena gorda surgió en un apartado acosada por una legión de perfiles caprenses, por algún sitio alguien secaba vasos con un trapo sucio, algo así como un chino hacía anotaciones en una libreta, alguien rió a su lado y al mirarlo vio que desde millones de años atrás aflúan a su rostro los rasgos del tirano saurio, se llevó un vaso más a la boca buscando en la espuma la respuesta y ahora la sirena era la Venus Hotentote lacerada por los tábanos.... (III: 10)

Just minutes before dawn Peñaflor regains his sense of reality. He discovers himself in his library in the company of a black man, "un Aristogitón ilusorio," whom he had encountered in a bar and invited home for another drink. Ribeyro alters the rhythm of the dialogue, this time in order to

express the protagonist's anxiety rather than his drunken state. The author describes Peñaflor as he frantically struggles to sober up his companion enough to send him away before the servant discovers his presence.

Por último lo cogió de las muñecas y trató de levantarlo, era un combate desigual, lograba un instante atraerlo hacia sí pero cedía ante su peso, consiguió separarlo del espaldar y ponerlo casi de pie para luego caer encima de él, lo tenía abrazado, olía su sudor, sentía en la cara la piel de su pecho, la barbilla mal afeitada le raspaba la frente, buscó su garganta y apretó, ojos enormes se abrieron, ojos asustados, carajo, lo empujaba hacia atrás, qué pasa, estuvo a punto de hacerlo caer, pero algo debió recordar pues ahora se excusaba, distinguido caballero, cualquiera se queda dormido, ilustre doctor, y miraba parpadeando su pecho desnudo.... Ya el cielo estaba celeste, podía llevarse la botella pero no habría café, debía comprender, sus obligaciones, y lo estaba empujando hacia las escaleras, mientras el negro no ofrecía mucha resistencia, esas cosas ocurrían, ilustrísimo doctor, ha sido un placer, pero alguien tiene que pagar el taxi, ya sabe usted a sus órdenes, todas las noches en "El Botellón," y el billete pasó de una mano a otra y al fin la puerta estaba cerrada con doble llave y el doctor pudo subir jadeando hasta la biblioteca. (III: 14-15)

The dialogue reflects Peñaflor's inner confusion during the final exchange of words between him and the black. The protagonist's attempt to experience life outside the confines of his literary world ends in frustration. The "excursión por los extramuros de la serenidad" (III: 9) necessitates the restoration of order which occurs as Peñaflor makes an effort to place things in a proper perspective.

Miró por los ventanales. El taxi se alejaba en la ciudad ya extinguida. En su escritorio seguían amontonados sus papeles, en los estantes todos sus libros, en el extranjero su familia,

en su interior su propia efigie. Pero ya no era la misma. (III: 16)

Ribeyro leaves the protagonist in a physical and psychological state of alienation. Peñaflor, discovering social differences that cannot be dissolved, is forced to withdraw once again into his literary world of which "tenía un conocimiento libresco pero perfecto de las viejas ciudades helenas, de todos los laberintos de la mitología, de las fortalezas donde perecieron tantos héroes y fueron heridos tantos dioses...." (III: 6) Although surrounded by humanity, the characters in Ribeyro's stories, like those populating Borges' narratives, often become so acclimated to a life of emotional solitude that the slightest deviation from routine generates anxiety. They deliberately withdraw into a private world, thereby minimizing the need to communicate.

The characters' preference for solitude reaches absurd proportions in "Tristes querellas en la vieja quinta," as Ribeyro explores the petty rivalry between two neighbors in Miraflores, a suburb in transition.

El balneario no era ya otra cosa que una prolongación de Lima, con todo su tráfico, su bullicio y su aparato comercial y burocrático. Quienes amaban el sosiego y las flores se mudaron a otros distritos y abandonaron Miraflores a una nueva clase media laboriosa y sin gusto, prolífica y ostentosa, que ignoraba los hábitos antiguos de cortesanía y de paz y que fundó una urbe vocinglera y sin alma, de la cual se sentían ridículamente orgullosos. (III: 28)

Memo García, a long-time resident of Miraflores, typifies a

marginal character who, having retired from life, discovers he is a survivor in a senseless world.

Sin parientes y sin amigos, ocupaba sus largos días en menudas tareas como coleccionar estampillas, escuchar óperas en una vieja vitrola, leer libros de viajes, evocar escenas de su infancia, lavar su ropa blanca, dormir la siesta y hacer largos paseos, no por la parte nueva de la ciudad, que lo aterraba, sino por las calles como Alcanfores, La Paz, que aún conservaban sino la vieja prestancia señorial algo de placidez provinciana. (III: 28)

However, Memo's serenity is disrupted by the arrival of Doña Francisca Morales, who moves into the adjoining apartment. Using humor and irony Ribeyro depicts the rivalry between them which takes the form of aggressive acts and verbal battles. Their aggression toward one another develops into a habit that both rivals are neither able nor willing to modify. Although both fear a loss of privacy and tranquility, their mutual distrust of one another makes them interdependent and aggressive.

Por intuición sabía (Memo) que la única manera de derrotar a un enemigo--y esa señora gorda lo era--consistía en conocer escrupulosamente su vida, dominar por el intelecto sus secretos más recónditos y descubrir sus aspectos más vulnerables.... Como cada cual conocía los hábitos del otro, procuraban no encontrarse jamás en las escaleras ni en la galería. Esto los obligaba sin embargo a vivir continuamente pendientes el uno del otro. (III: 29, 32)

Ribeyro structures the narrative around the aggression and retaliation of each character. In order to protest Memo's Victrola, Doña Francisca acquires a radio.

Una tarde vio llegar a doña Pancha con una enorme

caja de cartón, que lo intrigó.... Memo se desplomó en un sillón: ¡un aparato de radio!.... Memo escuchó dos o tres canciones sin atinar a moverse, pero cuando se inició la siguiente avanzó hacia la vitrola y colocó su Caruso. Su vecina aumentó el volumen y Memo la imitó. Aún no se habían dado cuenta, pero había comenzado la guerra de las ondas. (III: 30-31)

Following the initial confrontation, a sudden interest in plants triggers another battle that turns the balcony into an open battlefield.

La rivalidad de las plantas se hubiera limitado a una simple escaramuza sin mayor consecuencia, si es que para llegar a su departamento doña Pancha no tuviera que pasar frente al de Memo. Y sus plantas iban creciendo. El ciprés había engrosado y tendía a dirigir sus ramas hacia el entro del pasaje, mientras el cactus serrano prolongó sus brazos en la misma dirección. De este modo lo que antes era un corredor amplio y despejado se había convertido en una pequeña selva que era necesario atravesar con precauciones. (III: 33)

When Memo discovers the partially severed limbs of his cactus, one destructive act leads to another, culminating in a verbal battle.

Cuando se acercaba a la balaustrada, la puerta del lado se abrió y surgió doña Pancha en bata: '¡Ya lo vi, sinvergüenza, viejo marica, quiere hacer trizas mi jardín!' 'Me estoy paseando, zamba gorsera....' 'mentira, si ya estaba a punto de empujar mi maceta. Lo he visto por la ventana, pedazo de mequetrefe. Ingeniero dice la tarjeta que hay en su puerta. ¡Qué va a ser usted ingeniero! Habrá sido barrendero, flaco asqueroso.' 'Y usted es una zamba sin educación. Debían echarla de la quinta por bocasucia....' Los insultos continuaron, subiendo cada vez más de tono. (III: 34)

Although there are several intermittent periods of peace following the verbal attacks, the rivalry persists until

Memo discovers that his antagonist has died of tuberculosis.

Ribeyro illustrates how the incessant repetition of vindictive acts reaches a level of meaninglessness, becoming mechanized gestures lacking provocation. Just prior to Doña Francisca's death, the relationship between the rivals becomes an almost rhythmic, harmonious one: ... "ambos nada olvidaban ni perdonaban y ocupaban sus días seniles en una contienda más bien disciplinada, cada vez menos feroz, que iba tomando el aspecto de una verdadera conversación."

(III: 44) The description of the final battle in which a cat and a bird become their weapons serves as an analogy, suggesting that the rivalry between Memo and Doña Francisca has been reduced to a mere game performed as a ritual.

Ribeyro describes the outcome of the conflict involving Memo's cat and Doña Francisca's parrot:

A partir de entonces sucedió algo extraño: entre el loro y el gato se estableció una rara complicidad. Bastaba que el loro lanzara en la mañana su primer graznido para que el gato saliera inmediatamente al corredor, empezara a hacer cabriolas, encorvar el lomo, enhiestar el rabo, dar saltos y volantines, hasta que fatigado terminaba por sentarse muy sosegado y ronroneando al lado de la jaula. El loro se pavoneaba en su columpio, improvisaba gorgoritos y cuando el gato se atrevía por juego a meter su mano peluda por las rejas, fingía el más grande temor para luego acercarse y darle un inocuo picotón en la garra. En este juego siempre repetido parecían encontrar un deleite infinito.

El acercamiento entre lo que antes había sido sus armas de combate no menguó la pugna entre los vecinos. Pero esta asumió formas muchísimo más rutinarias y triviales. Sin pretextos graves para enfrentarse, recurrían al insulto maquinal.
(III: 43)

Like the playful skirmishes between the cat and bird, Memo's and Doña Francisca's last few battles are waged for sport and diversion.

The game abruptly ends with Doña Francisca's death, an incident that Ribeyro treats lightly but without ignoring its pathetic consequences. Upon discovering her body, Memo addresses the corpse in the same indignant tone he customarily used with her: "Y ahora qué hago contigo? ¡Aún muerta tienes que seguir fregando! Dura como loza te has quedado, negra malcriada." (III: 48) Ribeyro's concluding remarks reveal Memo's pitiable state:

Y desde entonces lo vimos más solterón y solitario que nunca.... Heredó el loro en su jaula colorada y terminó, como era de esperar, regando las macetas de doña Pancha, cada mañana, religiosamente, mientras entre dientes la seguía insultando, no porque lo había fastidiado durante tantos años, sino porque lo había dejado, en la vida, es decir, puesto que ahora formaba parte de sus sueños. (III: 48-49)

Ironically, in attempting to preserve his privacy and solitude, he, in fact, establishes contact with another marginal character. Both Memo and Doña Francisca share a mechanized, meaningless relationship that serves no other purpose than to avert boredom in a world of banality.

In "El marqués de los gavilanes" the protagonist distorts reality, the only means he has of dealing with the socio-economic changes in his life. Like Memo in "Tristes querellas," the character in this story, Don Diego Santos, resides in Miraflores, nourished by memories of the

neighborhood when it was the seat of the oligarchy. "La familia Santos de Molina había ido perdiendo en cada generación una hacienda, una casa, una dignidad, unas prerrogativas y al mediar el siglo veinte solo conservaba de la opulencia colonial, aparte del apellido, su fundo sureño, la residencia de Lima y un rancho en Miraflores." (III: 89) Experiencing a loss of grandeur, Don Diego scorns the middle class insurgents who dominate Miraflores and who have ascended very quickly to positions of power.

The parvenus totally alter his perception of reality forcing him into a crazed world of dreams, broken illusions, and senility. For Don Diego the Gavilán y Aliaga family, whose newly acquired position gives them both power and prestige, becomes an obsession. When they censor the latifundium system of land control, advocating the expropriation of land, Don Diego launches a vindictive campaign against his aggressors:

¡Que los Gavilán y Aliaga se volvieran ahora socialistas! Claro, ellos tenían todo, menos propiedades agrícolas.... La única arma de que disponía era su lengua, una lengua que, como decían las malas voces, llegaba hasta la Edad Media. Pero esta lengua culebrina hurgó en vano en los antecedentes de los Gavilán y Aliaga, buscando la mancilla, el hecho definitivo que arruinara para siempre su crédito y los cubriera de ridículo. (III: 92-93)

From this moment on Don Diego lives suspended in time, engaged in a struggle to preserve his aristocratic title, but detached from reality.

Cuando avistó los primeros indígenas con poncho caminando por el jirón de la Unión hizo un nuevo juramento: no poner nunca más los pies en esa calle. Lo que cumplió al pie de la letra, amurallándose cada vez más en su casona, borrando de un plumazo la realidad que lo cercaba, sin enterarse nunca que un millón de provincianos habían levantado sus tiendas de esteras en las afueras de la capital y esperaban pacientemente el momento de apoderarse de la Ciudad de los Reyes. Solo se filtraban hasta su mundo los signos de lo mundano, bodas, bautizos, matrimonios, entierros, distinciones, bailes, y nombramientos. (III: 94)

Gradually Don Diego's flight from reality assumes an ephemeral quality. One is unable to distinguish fact from fantasy as the protagonist seeks anonymity in large cities of Europe, always pursued by the Gavilán y Aliagas who suddenly appear to have multiplied in number. Don Diego recognizes them everywhere.

Los encontraba por todo sitio, vestidos de franciscanos, capuchinos, mercedarios, curas que parecían guardias civiles españoles con caras de peruano. El propio papa, a quien fue a escuchar a la plaza de San Pedro, trazó sobre su cabeza una cruz y se volvió hacia uno de sus asistentes para hablarle al oído. (III: 102)

Later, in his Miraflores residence, proclaiming solitude to be his strength, the protagonist eliminates all contact with others in a further attempt to protect himself.

Luego despidió a la cocinera porque tenía un ojo más grande que el otro y con el grande lo enfocaba como un faro marino cada vez que pasaba por la cocina. Hizo lo mismo con el jardinero, a quien sorprendió cerca de la ventana de su alcoba con una enorme tijera en la mano. (III: 105)

Don Diego's phobias intensify to such a degree that all

contact with reality is finally lost. He envisions a grey bird and watches in horror its metamorphosis into dozens of malicious butterflies accompanied by a bird of prey.

Ribeyro depicts the ensuing struggle as oscillating between the heroic and the ridiculous as the protagonist makes a quixotic attempt to defend himself against the attackers.

Sin dejar de blandir su espada saltó sobre la cama, empujó butacas y consolas, patinó sobre los petates, inventó golpes y esquives hasta que, cuando perdía el aliento, se dio cuenta que los agresores habían huído y que se encontraba solo en el silencio amanecer sobre el piso cubierto de plumas. (III: 106)

Like Don Quixote, Don Diego defends his ideal concept of existence waging a battle against those who, for him, symbolize corruption and evil.

The conclusion accentuates the pitiable rather than the humorous aspects of Don Diego's condition. Ribeyro abandons him in a senile stupor, scribbling over and over again the chronicle of his personal history and that of his family.

... decidió que era el momento de empezar la obra que una vida errante y amenazada le había impedido llevar a cabo.... sacó las diez mil páginas en blanco y las colocó sobre su mesa. Metiendo el lapicero en el pomo de tinta escribió en la primera página con una letra que la emoción hacía más gótica: 'En el año de gracia de mil quinientos cuarenta y siete, el día cinco de setiembre, en la ciudad de Valladolid, vio la luz con Cristóbal Santos de Molina, cuatro siglos antes del combate que su descendiente, don Diego, sostuvo victoriosamente contra los gavilanes.' Releyó la frase, sintiendo que le corría un escozor en los ojos y pasó a la segunda página: 'En el año de gracia de mil quinientos cuarenta y siete, el día cinco de

setiembre, en la ciudad de Valladolid.... ' Secó la página cuidadosamente y pasó a la tercera: 'En el año de gracia de mil quinientos cuarenta y siete.... ' Y así continuó, sin que nadie pudiera arrancarlo de su escritorio, durante el resto de su vida. (III: 107)

Don Diego, unable to adapt inwardly to the external changes in his surroundings, finds consolation by evading reality. For the protagonist, under stress and plagued by empty dreams and feelings of inferiority, familiar things suddenly become disorganized. Only by detaching himself from the world around him can he restore order to his life and retrieve some of the lost grandeur of his past. In reality, however, he becomes another casualty ousted from the official world and condemned to a private reality of madness fabricated by illusion. Ribeyro appears to accept his characters' illusive existence as a tragic, yet inevitable consequence of modern life which often turns dreams into a nightmarish reality.

Through the characters and circumstances presented in his stories, Ribeyro portrays the environment as both elusive and destructive. He explicitly illustrates the hopelessness and fallacy in the struggle for economic and social success. As Ribeyro's characters fervently pursue a better way of life, their inner spirit suffers from neglect and they find themselves portraying an unfamiliar role in an endless nightmare. The city becomes an illusive paradise where only the aggressive, indiscriminate members of society

appear to prosper, always at the expense of others. Ribeyro creates a new reality based on the assumption that two groups exist: the actors and the spectators. This dichotomy is a source of tension through which the author recreates a dynamic world of contradictions, exposing the myths of urbanization. Motivated by the instinct for survival, the upper classes remain vigilant over the lower rungs of society, re-establishing from time to time the dividing line between the almost impenetrable official world and the vulnerable, marginal one. The ambience assumes both a real and dream-like quality that communicates the ambiguous, transient nature of existence. Ribeyro's stories involve a conflict that provokes the protagonists, usually the bourgeoisie, to react spontaneously. These reactions, in turn, betray the characters' most intimate thoughts and attitudes concerning themselves and their particular environment. The characters themselves expose the corrupt elements in society--hypocrisy, egotism, and greed. Their suffering gradually alienates them from the inhumaneness surrounding them, and they create with their illusions a new reality, compensating for the inadequacy of the real one. Although some of Ribeyro's characters accept the force of destiny, the majority discover themselves existing from day to day, nourished by false hopes that one day their luck will change. They all share the aspiration of escaping from their schizophrenic condition, but they are all powerless

to do so. Lured into the city by the promise of prosperity, the characters' visions of advancement and happiness fade as they struggle against the realities of existence. Losing control of their individual destinies, they cling to the only source of freedom and dignity left, their illusions.

CHAPTER IV

FRACTURED IDEALISM

The dichotomous nature of Ribeyro's universe provides a constant source of tension which compels his characters to play out the ironies of life while illustrating the incongruity between their ideals and the reality they actually experience. Like Gustave Flaubert, Ribeyro dispels the myth of man's harmonious relationship to the universe. In La caza sutil he acknowledges the nineteenth century author's ability to "expresar a través de un personaje y una situación concreta una de las constantes de la naturaleza humana: el divorcio entre nuestra noción ideal del mundo y la realidad."¹ Like Flaubert, Ribeyro projects through his characters the imbalance between expectation and reality. The marginal figures populating Ribeyro's narrative find themselves permanently trapped

¹Julio Ramón Ribeyro, "Gustavo Flaubert y el Bovarismo," La caza sutil (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975), p. 27.

their idealistic concept of existence and reality itself, just as Emma in Madame Bovary and Frédéric in L'Education sentimentale are condemned to live banal lives, betrayed by their ideal notions of existence.

The inevitable encounter between the world of illusion and the real one, a conflict so often presented by the romantics, leaves an indelible mark on Ribeyro's characters. However, unlike the romantic types who longed to escape from the external realities of existence, Ribeyro's protagonists are individuals trapped within their own complex, inner realities as well, an obscure region made visible with the advent of modern realism and the denial of the principle of romantic idealism.² Eric Heller has commented on the authenticity of the new reality that was gradually taking shape throughout the nineteenth century and prepared the way for a more expansive, complex reality that includes the observation of man's unconscious acts as opposed to the self-conscious ones. Heller observes: "Now external reality has no claims any more to being real. The only real world is the world of human inwardness."³ It is this world of "human inwardness" that Ribeyro projects by probing the

²George J. Becker, ed., "Introduction" to Documents of Modern Literary Realism (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 3-38.

³Eric Heller, "The Realistic Fallacy," in Documents of Modern Literary Realism, ed. George J. Becker (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 598.

contemporary minds of his characters. Prolonged exposure to the official world elicits from them visions of an ideal unreality, one that continuously renews and intensifies their desire for a more palatable existence. Their illusive search for recognition, happiness, and pleasure damages even further the characters' already deficient self-concept. In many of his works Ribeyro probes the inner recesses of his characters' minds and emotions, focusing primarily on individual weaknesses as the source of failure, as opposed to the inadequacies of corrupt socio-economic conditions. Although the cause of each character's failure to capture his dream varies, the consequences of failure remain the same; like Peñaflor lost in a literary world of solitude or Don Diego Santos submerged in a realm of madness, the protagonists suffer emotional and spiritual debilitation and become further removed from themselves and reality. The pursuit of an ideal existence offers them no personal sense of gratification. The aspirations of the protagonists are as varied as their individual approaches toward life, but, they all share, nevertheless, the experience of frustration and defeat.

Ribeyro offers a possible explanation for each character's failure as he presents the dreamer's personal conflict with reality. Timidity, a general lack of confidence in one's own abilities, emerges as the primary cause of failure in Ribeyro's view: "El poco conocimiento que tienen

de sus posibilidades de realizar algo los lleva a esa situación que se caracteriza como desajuste permanente."⁴

A bill collector, Matías, who is called upon to teach in a high school in Lima, is a typical example in "El profesor suplente." Twelve years earlier Matías had successfully completed his university studies with the exception of his Bachelor examinations, which he failed twice. Since then, he had been unable to open another book, always blaming his failure on the malevolence of the jury whenever he was asked to exhibit his academic knowledge. When he has the opportunity to teach for an old friend who shows confidence in him, Matías raises his self-image: "Todo esto no me sorprende.... Un hombre de mi calidad no podía quedar sepultado en el olvido." (I: 248) After meticulously preparing for the first day of class, he leaves home with high expectations of changing his destiny. Matías, like several characters in Ribeyro's other stories, attaches great importance to a professionally printed card guaranteeing his identity. Minutes before facing the world of reality, he seems to make an unconscious effort to secure in advance his success as he addresses his wife: "No te olvides de poner la tarjeta en la puerta.... Que se lea bien: 'Matías Palomino, profesor de historia.'" (I: 248) Dreaming of the prestige his new position will bring, he heads for the

⁴Eneas Marrull, "J.R.R. Testimonio de un marginado," Mundial, núm. 14 (14-20 marzo 1975), p. 60.

school ready to meet reality.

As the narrative progresses the reader becomes immersed in Matías' psyche, experiencing his confrontation with reality as the surroundings arouse within him feelings of inferiority. The ambience gives off signals of impending the defeat which threatens to overshadow and absorb Matías' now flatulent self-image.

Al cruzar delante de la verja escolar, divisó un portero de semblante hosco, que vigilaba la calzada, las manos cruzadas a la espalda.... En la esquina del parque se detuvo, sacó un pañuelo y se enjugó la frente. Hacía un poco de calor. Un pino y una palmera, confundiendo sus sobras, le recordaron un verso, cuyo autor trató en vano de identificar.
(I: 249)

Glass windows contribute further to the deterioration of the character's self-image. When Matías catches a glimpse of himself in a store window, he is forced to contemplate a disconcerting reality:

... detrás de la vidriera de una tienda de discos distinguió un hombre pálido que lo espiaba. Con sorpresa constató que ese hombre no era otra cosa que su propio reflejo. Observándose con disímulo, hizo un guiño, como para disipar esa expresión un poco lóbrega que la malanoche de estudio y de café había grabado en sus facciones. Pero la expresión, lejos de desaparecer, desplegó nuevos signos y Matías comprobó que su calva convalecía tristemente entre los mechones de las sienes y que su bigote caía sobre sus labios con un gesto de absoluto vencimiento. (I: 249)

The glass acts as a mirror or symbol which J. E. Cirlot defines in Diccionario de símbolos tradicionales as a symbol of imagination or consciousness having the capacity

to reflect the formal reality of a visible world.⁵

Ribeyro's frequent use of a mirror as the characters' instrument of self-contemplation, begins to weaken, in this instance, the protagonist's confidence in himself. Peering into the glass Matias focuses on su calva and the limpness of su bigote, which symbolize his feelings of inadequacy, diminishing further his already faltering inner strength. Shaken by the observation he begins to confuse the facts he had studied the previous night, and this moment of self doubt is later followed by another moment of terror when he again contemplates his reflection in a glass window.

Luego de infinitas vueltas, se dió de bruces con la tienda de discos y su imagen volvió a surgir del fondo de la vidriera. Esta vez Matías la examinó: alrededor de los ojos habían aparecido dos anillos negros que describían sutilmente un círculo que no podía ser otro que el círculo de terror. (I: 250)

Making an effort to recapture his symbolic self, Matías returns to the school's entrance only to have his inner world punctured again by reality.

... cuando llegó ante la fachada del colegio, sin que en apariencia nada la provocara, una duda tremenda lo asaltó: en ese momento no podía precisar si la Hidra era un animal marino, un monstruo mitológico o una invención de ese doctor Valencia, quien empleaba semejantes figuras para demoler a sus enemigos del parlamento. Confundido, abrió su maletín para revisar sus apuntes, cuando se percató que el portero no le quitaba el ojo de encima. Esta mirada, viniendo de un hombre uniformado, despertó

⁵J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1962), p. 201.

en su conciencia de pequeño contribuyente tenebrosas asociaciones, y, sin poder evitarlo, prosiguió su marcha hasta la esquina opuesta.
(I: 249)

Matías' loss of self-identity and his gravitation toward failure are conveyed through a series of images which suggest the protagonist's overwhelming sense of failure. The two anillos negros encircling his eyes seem to mark the character's inescapable bondage, a victim imprisoned by his own sense of inadequacy. Failure itself personified in the Hydra head appears before Matías, intimidating him further and thereby intensifying his paranoia. Suddenly he feels the presence of a disapproving surveillance, a form of all-knowing superiority which is conveyed through the images el ojo, la mirada and un hombre uniformado. Dominated by memories of his past failure and unable to deal with the mental chaos which suddenly assaults him, Matías projects the image of a weak, solitary figure, convinced of his inability to perform academically. Although momentarily immobilized by the sudden influx of chaos, a short time later he makes a second attempt to control his anxiety and again approaches the school's entrance. This time, however, he encounters a cluster of men looking and pointing in his direction. Once more assaulted by a profusion of memories of his past, he turns to escape but instead, experiences the full impact of reality.

A los veinte pasos se dió cuenta que alguien lo seguía. Una voz sonaba a sus espaldas. Era el

portero.

--Por favor --decía--. ¿No es usted el señor Palomino, el profesor de historia? Los hermanos lo están esperando.

Matías se volvió, rojo de ira.

--¡Yo soy cobrador! --contestó brutalmente, como si hubiera sido víctima de alguna vergonzosa confusión. (I: 251)

Matías, representing a classical case of Sartrean "bad faith," denies himself the opportunity to capture his ideal and fulfill his self-concept. Instead, feelings of inadequacy force an angry rejection from him as he attempts to rationalize his own behavior. His defensive retort supports the assertion proclaiming that the "basic purpose of all human activity is the protection, the maintenance and the enhancement not of the self, but of the self-concept, or symbolic self."⁶ Seeking refuge from the uncompromising surroundings, Matías spends the remainder of the day alone. Only when he returns home and is greeted by his proud wife does he yield to his sense of enormous frustration:

--¿Qué tal te ha ido? ¿Dictaste tu clase? ¿Qué han dicho tus alumnos?

--¡Magnífico!... ¡Todo ha sido magnífico!

--balbuceó Matías-- ¡Me aplaudieron! --pero al sentir los brazos de su mujer que lo enlazaban del cuello y al ver en sus ojos, por primera vez, una llama de invencible orgullo, inclinó con violencia la cabeza y se echó desoladamente a llorar. (I: 251)

Finally, Matías self becomes so far removed from his self-concept that he is no longer able to rationalize his

⁶S. I. Hayakawa, "The Self-Concept," Symbol, Status, and Personality (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963), p. 37.

failure. When given the opportunity to resuscitate his ideal self, Matías responds with anticipation, confusion, anxiety, and anger, emotions which finally culminate and overpower him with a sense of frustration, shame, and hopelessness. Ribeyro's character recalls Arthur Miller's protagonist in Death of a Salesman (1949) who discovers his self-concept totally alienated from his true self. Because the fear and anxiety Matías experiences do not form part of his symbolic self, he desperately attempts to suppress these emotions. Afraid to validate his own capabilities, Matías blames the outside world for his failure, rather than acknowledging the deficiencies within himself. Consequently, the gap between reality and imagination widens until there remains no hope of reconciling one with the other. Like Matías, many of Ribeyro's characters lack confidence and choose to remain in a secure, passive state, forced by timidity to hide in the very anonymous mass from which they want so badly to escape.

In "Alienación" Roberto López, on the other hand, manages to make his ideal physical self-concept a reality as he conscientiously endeavors to transform himself into a North American. But as the title indicates, he loses contact with others and himself in the process.

... quería parecerse cada vez menos a un zaguero de Alianza y cada vez más a un rubio de Filadelfia. La vida se encargó de enseñarle que si quería triunfar en una ciudad colonial más valía saltar las

etapas intermediarias y ser antes que un blanquito de acá un gringo de allá. (III: 65)

The transformation, although outwardly accomplished, leaves the protagonist with the same inner defects and inhibitions that deprived Matías of a blissful future in "El profesor suplente."

The story's narrator, an eye-witness to Roberto's "ascensión vertiginosa hacia la nada" (III: 65), relates the events leading to the protagonist's break with his inferiority ridden self in order to become his ideal self. The humorous, social, and critical overtones merge to form an ambience that lies somewhere between the real world and a subworld that Ribeyro's marginal characters inhabit.⁷ Roberto's progression toward his goal becomes, in effect, a gravitation toward self-annihilation. The narrator's account of the comical, yet pathetic transformation emphasizes the futility of the character's negation of his roots.

Toda su tarea en los años que lo conocí consistió en deslopizarse y deszambarse lo más pronto posible y en americanizarse antes de que le cayera el huaico y lo convirtiera para siempre, digamos, en un portero de banco o en un chofer de colectivo. Tuvo que empezar por matar al peruano que había en él y por coger algo de cada gringo que conoció. Con el botín se compuso una nueva persona, un ser hecho de retazos, que no era ni zambo ni gringo, el resultado de un cruce contranatura, algo que su vehemencia hizo

⁷ Augusto Tamayo Vargas, "Una nueva forma de expresión: Ribeyro y 'Silvio en el Rosedal,'" El Comercio (1^{ro} de agosto 1978), n.p.

derivar, para su desgracia, de sueño rosado a pesadilla infernal. (III: 66)

Roberto's decision to sever his social and cultural ties to the environment results in the gradual deformation of his personality and eventually in his total destruction.

The narrator shares, to a certain extent, the protagonist's feelings of dejection. As adolescents they both suffer from being rejected by Queca, the girl whose glorified presence in the story gives unity to the events and helps determine Roberto's destiny. "Lo que cantaba entonces era su tez capulí, sus ojos verdes, su melena castaña, su manera de correr, de reír, de saltar y sus invencibles piernas, siempre descubiertas y doradas y que con el tiempo serían legendarias." (III: 66) In her discerning eyes Roberto sees for the first time a reflection of himself: "... un ser retaco, oscuro, bembudo y de pelo ensortijado...." (III: 66) This discovery, as well as the sound of her unforgettable words, "yo no juego con zambos," kindle within Roberto a desire to efface the stigmas that torture him inwardly. When Queca, with the passing of time shows preference for Chalo Sander, "... el chico de la banda que tenía el pelo más claro, el cutis sonrosado y que estudiaba además en un colegio de curas norteamericanos," (III: 67) the narrator shares Roberto's sense of abandonment: "... comprendimos que nuestra deshesa había dejado de pertenecernos y que ya no nos quedaba otro recurso que

ser como el coro de la tragedia griega, presente y visible, pero alejado irremisiblemente de los dioses." (III: 67)

Somewhat like Cuéllar in Vargas Llosas' Los cachorros, Roberto's state of exile becomes progressively more serious, separating him not only from Queca, but from his peers as well. He becomes a marginal nonentity, a mere observer of life.

Roberto nos seguía como una sombra, desde el umbral nos escrutaba con su mirada, sin perder nada de nuestro parloteo, le decíamos a veces hola zambo, tómate un trago y él siempre no, gracias, será para otra ocasión, pero a pesar de estar lejos y de sonreír sabíamos que compartía a su manera nuestro abandono. (III: 67)

The protagonist's calm exterior masks his intense, inner longing for freedom from himself.

Roberto's actual transformation from zambo to gringo is sparked by Queca when she finally abandons the fair-skinned Chalo Sander for the North American Billy Mulligan, son of a U. S. Consulate official, whom she marries. Queca's action motivates Roberto to attempt a resolution of his personal dilemma and set free the ideal image of himself. The narrator explains the protagonist's reasoning:

Fue sólo Roberto el que sacó de todo esto una enseñanza veraz y tajante: o Mulligan o nada. ¿De qué le valía ser un blanquito más si habían tantos blanquitos fanfarrones, desesperados, indolentes y vencidos? Había un estado superior, habitado por seres que planeaban sin macularse sobre la ciudad gris y a quienes se cedía sin peleas los mejores frutos de la tierra. (III: 69)

Having made the necessary changes in his physical appearance, the protagonist appears suspended between two cultures, camouflaging or discarding whatever might link him with the past. "Pelo planchado y teñido, blue-jeans y camisa vistoso, Roberto estaba ya a punto de convertirse en Bobby." (III: 70) His imagination easily bridges the existing gaps between fantasy and reality.

Frente al espejo de su cuarto era tan pronto el vaquero romántico haciéndole una irresistible declaración de amor a la bailarina del bar como el gangster feroz que pronunciaba sentencias lapidarias mientras cosía a tiros a su adversario. El cine además alimentó en él ciertos equívocos que lo colmaron de ilusión. Así creyó que tenía un ligero parecido con Alan Ladd, que en un western aparecía en blue-jeans y chaqueta a cuadros rojos y negros. (III: 72)

Mirrors and the silver screen reflect Bobby's new image, an exact reproduction of his inner fantasy. Regardless of how real the projection of his self-concept seems to him, its falseness becomes obvious to others, accelerating further Bobby's estrangement from his compatriots.

En realidad sólo tenía en común la estatura y el mechón de pelo amarillo que se dejaba caer sobre la frente. Pero vestido igual que el actor se vio diez veces seguidas la película y al término de esta se quedaba parado en la puerta, esperando que salieran los espectadores y se dijeran, pero mira, qué curioso, ese tipo se parece a Alan Ladd. Cosa que nadie dijo, naturalmente, pues la primera vez que lo vimos en esa pose nos reímos de él en sus narices. (III: 72)

While advancing toward his goal Bobby encounters only one other, a visionary José María, who shares the same intense desire to invalidate the past by adopting the apparel,

speech and mannerisms of los gringos. In their efforts to re-make themselves Bobby and his companion create a hostile environment that scarcely tolerates their presence.

"... la ciudad que los albergaba terminó por convertirse en trapo sucio a fuerza de cubrirla de insultos, y reproches."

(III: 74)

After interminable suffering Bobby finally reaches the idealized destination that correlates with his self-concept: New York. In reality he and José María only exchange the hostility of their native city for the indifference of an alien one.

Se dieron cuenta además que en Nueva York se habían dado cita todos los López y Cabanillas del mundo, asiáticos, árabes, aztecas, africanos, ibéricos, mayas, chibchas, sicilianos, caribeños, musulmanes, quechuas, polinesios, esquimales, ejemplares de toda procedencia, lengua, raza y pigmentación.... la ciudad los toleraba unos meses, complacientemente, mientras absorbía sus dólares ahorrados. Luego, como por un tubo, los dirigía hacia el mecanismo de la expulsión. (III: 75)

As their self-concepts and idealized surroundings disintegrate, another opportunity appears: the U. S. Army, offering new vitality and hope to a crumbling existence threatened by deportation. "El que quisiera ir a pelear un año allí tenía todo garantizado a su regreso: nacionalidad, trabajo, seguro social, integración, medallas."

(III: 76) This vision of heroism soon turns into a mock-heroic saga of mutilation and destruction as the narrator summarizes the events.

José María se salvó por milagro y enseñaba con orgullo el muñon de su brazo derecho cuando regresó a Lima, meses después. Su patrulla había sido enviada a reconocer un arrozal, donde se suponía que había emboscada una avanzadilla coreana. Bobby no sufrió, dijo José María, la primera ráfaga le voló el casco y su cabeza fue a caer en una acequia, con todo el pelo pintado revuelto abajo.
(III: 77)

This tragic account of Bobby's death reveals him as a pawn of his own inadequacies and broken illusions. Reality denies his dream and he becomes the victim of an unreal, nightmarish, alien world. The characters in "Alienación" become products of the world as they perceive it and react upon it. They act out roles they have imagined, cutting themselves off from the past, and therefore denying their true identity and revealing their existential state. They exist and move in an alien space, journeying into nothingness toward the complete nullification of self. Cirlot describes such journeys as eager attempts to escape reality but nevertheless, not without certain consequences: "We people and colour the indifferent, neutral screen with the movie-figures and dramas of the inward dream of our soul, and fall prey then to its dramatic events, delights, and calamities."⁸

Queca completes the representation of distorted idealism as the narrator briefly reconstructs her personal history which constitutes the story's conclusion. Her

⁸Cirlot, p. 197.

desperate circumstances also confine her to an alien reality, living an endless nightmare perpetuated by Billy Mulligan:

... los sábados se inflaba (Mulligan) de bourbon en el club Amigos de Kentucky, se enredó con una empleada de la fábrica, chocó dos veces el carro, su mirada se volvió fija y aguachenta y terminó por darle de puñatazos a su mujer, a la linda, inolvidable Queca, en las madrugadas de los domingos, mientras sonreía estupidamente y la llamaba chola de mierda. (III: 78)

Queca as well as Boby and José María never really attain the utopic existence they had imagined for themselves. After they reach the United States the banal and impersonal forces of reality overtake them, separating them from any idealized concept of existence. Driven by their insecurities and lack of self-knowledge, the characters are compelled to live deceptive, falsified lives.

The lack of heroism pervades Ribeyro's novels as well as his stories and becomes especially evident in Los geniecillos dominicales, as the protagonist, Ludo Totem, and his companions unsuccessfully attempt to break away from a life of boredom. Instead, they discover themselves in an incoherent universe, caught between the contradictory forces of reality and appearances of reality. The protagonist's alienation from reality and his ancestral past gives the name Ludo Totem a symbolic significance, creating an ironic tone which Dick Gerdes of the University of New Mexico discusses:

Para algunas tribus salvajes, un "totem" es un animal que es considerado como el antepasado de su raza. En la novela, Ludo Totem encarna la posición del hombre enajenado de la larga herencia y tradición de su familia y cultura, las que están en un proceso de desintegración, incluyendo a la generación de Ludo. El simbolismo detrás del nombre y apellido del protagonista es ironizado y justificado a la vez. El nombre, Ludo, también ayuda a crear un efecto irónico porque la palabra se origina del latín ludus, que significa 'juego,' y ludibrium, que significa desprecio y mofa, cuyos conceptos perfilan al protagonista según su posición ante la sociedad.⁹

Ludo's ineffectual idealism recalls Frédéric Moreau's betrayed ideals in Flaubert's L'Education sentimentale. In an effort to initiate a life of spontaneity and pleasure, Ludo resigns from his job with "La Gran Firma" and dedicates himself wholly to a life of perversion, but never attains any enviable level of perversity. Like Frédéric, Ribeyro's character witnesses the profanation of his dreams. During a period of seven months, from December 1951 to July 1952, Ludo and his companions become accomplices in a degenerate world, the image of which Ribeyro projects through a pattern of events and descriptions.

The lives of Ludo and the other characters are distinguished by banality, repetition, constant failure and disappointment. Ludo breaks with the bourgeoisie and everything it represents in order to adopt a bohemian life style which proves equally as frustrating and banal as his former,

⁹Dick Gerdes, "Julio Ramón Ribeyro y la narrativa peruana," Diss. University of New Mexico n.d., pp. 170-171.

conservative mode of living. The characters, almost all of whom are capable of leading productive lives, fail to receive stimulation from society and react by rejecting the life style and values of the middle class. The young malcontents populating the novel represent human beings that have lost their traditions and folklore and whom Ribeyro has described as "una especie de fauna que siempre existirá mientras la sociedad no sufra una transformación radical, es decir mientras cada cual no encuentre su verdadero sitio en la sociedad y no se realice plenamente como ser humano."¹⁰ Ludo himself pinpoints the primary source of frustration underlying the meaninglessness of life when he observes a group of students at San Marcos University. The omniscient narrator reveals Ludo's subjective observations:

En vano buscó una expresión arrogante, inteligente o hermosa: cholos, zambos, injertos, cuarterones, mulatos, quinterones, albinos, pelirrojos, inmigrantes o blancoides, como él, choque de varias razas.... En suma, una raza que no había encontrado aún sus rasgos, un mestizaje a la deriva. Había narices que se habían equivocado de destino e ido a parar sobre bocas que no le correspondían. Y cabelleras que cubrían cráneos para los cuales no fueron aclimatadas. Era el desorden. Ludo mismo era desordenado. Tal vez dentro de cuatro o cinco generaciones cada una de sus rasgos encontraría su lugar, al cabo de ensayos disparatados.¹¹

This expressionistic description of the distorted features

¹⁰Marrull, p. 60.

¹¹Julio Ramón Ribeyro, Los geniecillos dominicales (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1973), p. 114. All subsequent references to this work appear in the text cited GD.

on the faces of the students, however, is only one manifestation of the disorder and decomposition that permeates the amorphous world inhabited by Ludo. Events as well as images contribute to the total picture of incongruency between the ideal life envisioned by the characters and the benumbed existence they actually lead, a disparity not unlike that felt by Oliveira in Cortázar's Rayuela, and one which gradually reduces their life force to a series of derisive gestures.

The sense of expectancy that accompanies Ludo's new, adventurous life style incites him to seek some of the pleasurable moments that he envisions as part of an unrestricted, bohemian existence. A pleasureless orgy on New Year's Eve marks the beginning of his indulgent life style and establishes the pattern of profanation and rhythmic irony that permeates the novel. Ludo's moment of triumph over Eva, a dwarfed character, is never accomplished, and instead, it becomes a scene of degradation and depravity. Repulsed by the circumstances, Ludo is abandoned in the perverse ambience that he himself had created.

... toda su fatiga, toda su vergüenza, todo su asco, todo su alcohol le remontan a la cabeza, el cuarto se pone a girar vertiginosamente, y sin ver la última, la impecable parábola que describe la enana al abandonar el cuarto, llevándose en una mano su falda como un cometa su cola, cae de bruces vomitando sobre la almohada de paja. (GD: 25)

The author adds irony to the uneventful scene with the

contrasting description which immediately follows: "En ese momento la ciudad de Lima lanzó su poderoso clamor de campanadas al vuelo, de cohetones, de bocinas de automóviles; saludando al Año Nuevo que llegaba." (GD: 25) All of Ludo's subsequent searches for eroticism are fiascos which the bordello motif repeatedly illustrates, a recurring metaphor so visible in Vargas Llosas' novels La casa verde and Conversación en la catedral.

... tuvo la enojosa impresión de estar visitando los mismos lugares o de estar viendo a las mismas mujeres o lo que era peor a los mismos putañeros. Todos los burdeles se parecían y todas las ramerías parecían acuñados por un mismo y maldito golpe del destino. Tan sólo cuando el carro mostró su preferencia por las avenidas que iban al Callao sorprendió ciertos reductos más originales, pero que a su vez empezaron a repetirse: mocerías tropicales, dotadas de enormes patios descubiertos, con columnas que sostenían civiles enredaderas y bombillas de colores y donde reinaba un falso aire de jungla, poblada de mesitas donde dormían borrachos y bostezaban mujeres, mientras al fondo, en lo que debía ser el santa sanctorum de esa lujuriosa catedral, una orquesta de arrabal acompañaba a un enano que cantaba un tango de Gardel. Y como toda esta gira estaba regada con cerveza, Ludo, a las cuatro de la mañana, se sintió exhausto, ebrio y al borde una vez más de la derrota. (GD: 33)

The symbolic potential of similar scenes increases as the author describes one after another, all depicting betrayed ideals. Ludo's depraved idealism leads him to substitute memories of the past for realities of the present. When a prostitute named Estrella emerges from the sordid surroundings, Ludo falls in love with her. Starved for illusion, his imagination transforms her into "una versión particular

de la Walkira," (GD: 42) a German girl whose innocent, adolescent image he frequently recalls from the past. Like Flaubert's Frédéric, Ludo falsifies reality by substituting idealized images in order to mollify its coarseness. Feeling the need to justify his leisurely existence, Ludo pursues his interest in writing by attending several meetings organized by students interested in publishing a literary magazine. In addition, he acts as an assistant to a lawyer for a short time and attempts to sell insecticides on another occasion. All three ventures fail, however, contributing further to the protagonist's degradation and total loss of self-worth.

The descriptive narrative in the novel becomes functional, depicting Ludo's subjective view of reality which, in turn, exposes the irreconcilable differences between reality as it appears to him and reality as it actually exists. Ludo's subjective vision creates a constant tension that effects his detachment from the environment while it encourages his illusions, passivity, and pessimistic, ironical attitude toward existence. The narrative reveals Ludo's increasing awareness of his own irrelevance and that of his friends to society:

Si entre todos había algo de común era el deseo de perpetuar un ocio que creían merecido o sancionado por el derecho natural y que una serie de circunstancias volvía ahora definitivamente imposible. Todos tenían la sensación de una caída irremisible, de un olvido, o de una

contienda para la cual estaban ridículamente armados con armas ya no usadas. (GD: 83)

Early in the novel, even before experiencing the bohemian life style upon which he is about to embark, Ludo fails to feel a sense of anticipation. Instead, he contemplates the past with indifference, establishing a melancholy, ironic tone that dominates the entire novel, resembling passages in Salazar Bondy's Lima la horrible.

Llega a su casa con la doble depresión del día que termina y del año que se acaba. Mientras vaga por las habitaciones oscuras trata de encontrar en el año agotado uno de esos momentos dorados que hacen soportable la vida: no ve otra cosa que interminables viajes en ómnibus, colectivos, taxis y tranvías, que chatas, casas envueltas en una voluta de cornisas, que páginas de calendario amontonadas, que hombres mutilados o deformes, que mujeres de espaldas, que escribanías, que copias sucias de derecho, que incursiones semanales a un bar de Surquillo. 'El paraíso de la mediocridad,' se dice y enciende la luz de su cuarto. (GD: 16)

The same air of indifference taints his perception of an ancestral past, giving his observations a sardonic humor characterizing many of the views of reality throughout the novel.

Del muro pende el retrato oval de su bisabuelo, un viejo óleo donde el ilustre jurisperito aparece calvo, orejón, en chaleco y terriblemente feo. Ese hombre vivió casi un siglo, presidió congresos, escribió eruditos tratados, se llenó de condecoraciones y de hijos, pronunció miles de conferencias, obligó a su inteligencia a un ritmo de trabajo industrial, para al fin de cuentas ocupar una tela mal pintada que ascendientes lejanos no sabrían dónde esconder. (GD: 16)

Immediately following his observation, Ludo makes light of

his own thoughts, revealing a certain disrespect for the past: "Ah, vejete y revejete, perdóname si he dejado el puesto. Por más que hagamos, siempre terminamos por convertirnos en retrato o en fotografía. Y cuidado con protestar, que te volteo contra la pared." (GD: 16)

Time has a corrosive effect on Ludo's exterior world as well as on his interior, private one. Images of dissolution, similar to those that have been observed in L'Educa-tion sentimentale, suggest the erosive quality of time and the loss of idealism.¹² In his many somber moments Ludo, nearly always with "su copa en la mano," (GD: 18) repeatedly recalls Flaubert's young protagonist as he senses time flowing into nothingness. "Se bebía. Bastaba hacerlo para que el mundo huyera, se precipitara a un abismo de bruma. Pero de soslayo Ludo observaba el crepúsculo y veía derrumbarse sobre el mar los días de su juventud." (GD: 83) The zonas obscuras of the old Totem family home correspond to the zonas indecisas of Ludo's mind and memory. Fragmented and fleeting images or ones encircled in mist reappear throughout the narrative stressing the progressive corrosiveness of time. The family home, a recurrent image, disintegrates in the novel, as Dick Gerdes observes in his analysis of Ludo's alienation from reality: "La repetida imagen de la casa que

¹²Victor Brombert, "L'Education sentimentale: Profanation and the Permanence of Dreams," in Flaubert (A Collection of Critical Essays), ed. Raymond Giraud (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964), p. 171.

cada vez se reduce de tamaño, apretándole, y que le produce una sensación de estar atrapado, es un elemento eficaz para dinamizar la enajenación que siente Ludo."¹³ Ludo's alienation from reality confines him to a world of distorted ideals where people appear as mechanized objects, a discovery he makes during his short-lived job as an assistant to a lawyer.

... ujieres con el uniforme raído, empleados con lentes inclinados sobre enormes cuadernos, empleados con tirantes haciendo funcionar máquinas sumadoras, empleadas viejas que sellaban papeles, pupitres, mostradores, calendarios, ficheros, más empleados recordándole que faltaba un timbre, que eran necesarias dos copias de tal documento, secretarias que le hacían señas de esperar mientras hablaban por teléfono, burócratas encallecidos que no le contestaban, subjeses con escarpines, anteojos por todo sitio, calvicies, camisas remangadas, mecanógrafos con visera, colas, mesas de parte, papeles, más papeles... (GD: 72)

Ludo's inability to decipher the past and relate it to the impersonality and disorder of the present deprives him of a positive self-image. The frustration that is produced as Ludo experiences life as it exists as opposed to life as he wishes it would be only augments his identity problem, eliciting from him visions and behavior befitting an ironist.

One final ironic gesture concludes the novel, affirming Ludo's role as an impotent dreamer and underlining his derisive attitude toward the world and his place in it. When a set of unforeseen circumstances complicates Ludo's

¹³Dick Gerdes, p. 110.

life to such a degree that he considers suicide as an escape, the suicidal act is replaced suddenly by a more temperate one:

Acercándose al espejo apoyó su caño en la sien. Ludo Totem desaparece, pensó, se convierte en un gorgojo, en un infusorio. Su reflejo le pareció ridículo, de mal gusto. En el acto tiró el revolver sobre la cama y cogiendo su máquina de afeitar se rasuró en seco, heroicamente, el bigote. (GD: 214)

This final manifestation of impotence only punctuates Ribeyro's description of a life distinguished by failure. Ludo's disenchantment with the world as it is forces him to seek negative ideals. His ineffectual idealism leads to chronic deterioration and to the devaluation which becomes a reality through Ribeyro's use of temporal and visual symbolism.

In direct contrast to Los Geniecillos dominicales, Crónica de San Gabriel (1960), Ribeyro's first novel, focuses on a mode of living characteristic of the rural, middle class families inhabiting the mountainous region of northern Peru during the years following World War II. In the novel Ribeyro describes the economic and moral decadence of a family from the viewpoint of an adolescent, Lucho, whose aunt sends him to live with his uncle Leonardo in the remote San Gabriel valley where the hacienda, formerly the property of his grandparents, is situated. The proprietor of San Gabriel, however, is portrayed in his moment of defeat rather than in his moment of glory. Unlike

Ciro Alegria's treatment of the same region in El Mundo es ancho y ajeno, Ribeyro's account does not allow the land-owners to triumph.¹⁴ Instead, the young protagonist, an idealist from Lima, witnesses the deformation and decay of a family, its traditions and values. Lucho's idealistic concept of country life is proved erroneous as he discovers the incestuous relationships, the distorted values, and the sinister, vindictive forces underlying the family structure while the proprietor, Don Leonardo, struggles to maintain within the hacienda an appearance of solidarity. Thus, a tension between illusion and reality, always predominant in Ribeyro's narrative, helps dispel the myth of the family as a productive and harmonious entity. At the same time it reveals the protagonist's personal encounter with reality.

It has been pointed out that Ribeyro's realistic descriptions do not concentrate entirely on regional details as does the narrative of many of the nineteenth century writers such as Pérez Galdós, Balzac, and Flaubert. Instead, he uses regional descriptions only to enhance the psychological states created and to suggest sentiments or feelings experienced by the characters.¹⁵ This narrative technique is particularly evident in Crónica de San Gabriel and repeatedly communicates Lucho's strong sense of

¹⁴ Jesus Barquero, "La realidad en las narraciones de Ribeyro," Letras peruanas (abril-junio 1962), p. 10.

¹⁵ Barquero, p. 10.

aleness as he sees his illusions about himself and those around him crumble. Lucho's personal view of the countryside surrounding San Gabriel, which he describes on his arrival as having "demasiado espacio para la pequeñez de mis reflejos urbanos,"¹⁶ becomes marred by the deformed personalities, emotional outbursts, and cruelty of the inhabitants confined within the hacienda. Toward the end of his stay at San Gabriel Lucho stands high above the valley and reflects on his discoveries.

En un instante, esa tierra grandiosa que yo había soñado, comenzó a poblarse de figuras humanas y no todas eran buenas, ni deseables, ni felices. De la tierra brotaba la cizaña. Imaginé que debía haber otros valles como San Gabriel, con sus señores y sus vasallos, sus sediciones y sus orgías, sus cotos de caza, sus locos encerrados en la torre. Mi tristeza renació y, sin poder dominarme, quedé largo rato inerte, desalentado, estrujando con los ojos la belleza inútil, el verdor desesperado de la tierra. (Crónica: 154)

He attempts to lose himself in the vastness of the land which often offers him a temporary refuge from the human personalities that engulf him and the opportunity to sort out his confused feelings.

El paisaje, de tan espléndida soledad, me daba el efecto de un espejo en el cual me contemplara por primera vez. Mis relaciones con la naturaleza cambiaban de signo y en mis oídos parecía resonar una nueva voz. Eran momentos terribles en los cuales algo se desnudaba dentro de mí, no cabía la posibilidad de la hipocresía, y era fácil

¹⁶Julio Ramón Ribeyro, Crónica de San Gabriel (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975), p. 11. All subsequent references to this work appear within the text cited as Crónica.

descubrir que era un imbécil o un predestinado, o que podía tranquilamente quitarme la vida sin vacilación. (Crónica: 71)

Aided by alternating periods of alarming anxiety and quiet communion when immersed in la naturaleza, Lucho forms a stronger self-image and, at the end of the novel, comes to the full realization of the impossibility of co-existing with the values and intense passions that govern the hacienda. Consequently, as the family unit rapidly begins to disintegrate, he decides to return to Lima.

In addition to contributing to Lucho's self-discovery, la naturaleza plays a definite role in the presentation of reality as the young protagonist eventually sees it. The image of aggression, la selva, appears early in the novel in reference to the hacienda and serves as a symbol of the hostility and tension within San Gabriel. It is then developed through the descriptions of behavior, attitudes, and psychological states exhibited by the inhabitants. Life at San Gabriel revolves around a primitive instinct for survival which Jacinto, one of the highly-strung family members, who periodically suffers emotional attacks, explains in one of his lucid moments. "Aquí el pez más grande se come al chico. Los débiles no tienen derecho a vivir." (Crónica: 15) The traditional family excursions and hunts in the countryside are transformed into deadly games based on individual passions or on mere whim.

... la vida en San Gabriel comenzó a mostrármese bajo una luz diferente. Lo que yo tomaba por libre francachela y amor al desorden, eran los signos de una tensión doméstica, secreta y renovada. Las relaciones de persona a persona estaban determinadas por mil pequeños detalles inaprehensibles. Bastaba a veces reír con una para perder la confianza de otra. Un gesto, una palabra, ponían al microcosmos en revolución. (Crónica: 25)

Family festivities are suddenly transformed into irrational scenes of aggression distorted through the creation of auditory sensations and visual descriptions. Lucho relates the moments preceding one of Jacinto's nervous attacks during a party at San Gabriel with family and guests present. "Estaba sentado (Jacinto) al lado de la victrola, la mirada fija en el centro de la sala y la boca torcida con un gesto peculiar que le daba al aspecto de máscara dolorosa."

(Crónica: 107) When Felipe, another of Lucho's uncles, attempts to play a record again, he provokes an unexpected reaction from Jacinto:

Cuando Felipe se acercó para poner nuevamente el disco, Jacinto levantó una mano y lo aferró por la muñeca. Su ademán fue tan rápido que Felipe quedó desconcertado.... El pasadoble comenzó a sonar otra vez. Entonces Jacinto levantó y de un manotazo corrió la aguja sobre el disco. Un chirrido espantoso sucedió a la música e interrumpió las conversaciones. En el silencio subsiguiente se escuchó el ruido de un disco haciéndose trizas contra el suelo.... (Crónica: 107)

When the struggle between Jacinto and Felipe finally is quelled, Lucho's eyes rest on Jacinto's distorted, pitiable appearance:

Después de lanzar una serie de incoherencias, Jacinto quedó callado, los brazos pendientes, la mirada extraviada.... Sonreía torciendo la boca dolorosamente hacia una oreja, como bajo el efecto de una contracción nerviosa.

(Crónica: 108)

Jacinto's confinement to his room has a profound effect on Lucho, increasing his anxiety and awareness of his own isolation and possible destiny.

Su soledad me pareció horrible; horrible también su ausencia de mujer. Me decía que a veces bastaba un hijo para devolverle sentido y grandeza a la vida más inútil. Pero Jacinto tenía todas las apariencias de ser un fin de raza, una de esas tentativas donde la especie humana se extravía y se extingue.

Esta reflexión me produjo un estremecimiento.... Mi soledad comenzaba a parecerme como una enfermedad o un mal augurio. (Crónica: 113)

When offered the opportunity to remain at San Gabriel as an employee, Lucho rejects it. "Mi porvenir era para mí mi único tesoro y yo lo respetaba a tal extremo que no me atrevía jamás a profanarlo con algún proyecto importante."

(Crónica: 112) Thoroughly convinced of the impossibility of adapting to such an illusive existence, Lucho's thoughts turn once again to the coastline and the sea, images which reoccur throughout the narrative. They become latent symbols of liberation and change, as well as a point of reference, often the only means Lucho has of orienting himself after he is immersed in the vast, dominating panorama of

nature and human personalities.¹⁷ Lucho's ideal of rural life is shattered when he discovers that the inhabitants of San Gabriel also have become disoriented, hopelessly separated from their land and traditions. The inhabitants' aberrant behavioral patterns act as a veneer concealing their inner defects, frustration, and sense of isolation from self and their physical surroundings. The ambience, despite its vastness, has a suffocating effect on Lucho and the other inhabitants of San Gabriel. Each character experiences a longing to escape. Only Lucho, however, acknowledges the self-destruction evident in those surrounding him and undertakes a positive course of action.

The irreconcilable rift between Ribeyro's characters' ideals and the realities they actually experience forces them to behave irrationally. Their feeble attempts to transform ideals into reality only further debilitate an already deficient self-image until their inflamed imaginings become an instrument of self-destruction. Most frequently the characters' ideals are, in effect, negations or denials of truths about themselves and reflect the individual's personal conflict with himself and his past, rather than with society. They exhibit weaknesses that make them incapable of leading productive lives, these same weaknesses

¹⁷Alberto Escobar, "Prólogo" a Crónica de San Gabriel (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria S.A., 1969), p. 10.

which encourage the formation of negative self-concepts and false values. The protagonists' thwarted attempts to change reality leaves them trapped in a distorted world, robbed of their ideals and incapable of perceiving the irony of their individual situations.

CHAPTER V

REALITY: A LABYRINTH OF ILLUSION

Because of irreparable conflicts with environment and within themselves, Ribeyro's characters seek and create a new reality through either their conscious or unconscious efforts to escape from themselves and their destinies. In Ribeyro's narrative, illusion often becomes reality for the disenchanted beings who seek, but fail to find absolute truths concerning themselves, their past, present, and future. Kessel Schwartz defines reality in the twentieth century as both "conceptual and perceptual, a three-dimensional experience through which writers seek authentic values in societies which are usually without them, expressing their own visions and obsessions."¹ Ribeyro denies the presence of personal demons as a force that leads him to probe reality, but he acknowledges the existence of

¹Kessel Schwartz, A New History of Spanish American Fiction, Vol. II of Social Concern, Universalism and the New Novel (Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971) p. ix.

recurring ideas, memories, and feelings that impel him to question its substance.² At a given moment Ribeyro's characters frequently defy reality, attempting to transform it into a significant experience only to discover its imposing, deceptive nature and their own powerlessness to become something different from what they fear they will always be. The author expresses the spiritual torment of such a moment in Prosas.

Mi mirada adquiere en privilegiados momentos una intolerable acuidad y mi inteligencia una penetración que me asusta. Todo se convierte para mí en signo, en presagio. Las cosas dejan de ser lo que parecen para convertirse probablemente en lo que son.... Cada cosa pierde su candor para transformarse en lo que esconde, germina o significa. En estos momentos insoportables, lo único que se desea es cerrar los ojos, taparse los oídos, abolir el pensamiento y hundirse en un sueño sin riberas. (Prosas, p. 51)

Linking his vision of social reality to the personal reality of his characters, Ribeyro exposes their need to modify behavior and attitudes in order to survive. Rather than concentrating solely on the events in their lives, he focuses on how the events affect the interior life of the protagonists.³ Reality, then, is fabricated from the characters' internal reaction to exterior events, and it reflects the inner conflicts, doubts, confusion, the relentless struggle

²Wolfgang A. Luchting, "11 preguntas a Julio Ramón Ribeyro," Textual, núm. 3 (dic. 1971), p. 49.

³Jesús Barquero, "La realidad en las narraciones de Ribeyro," Letras peruanas (abril-junio 1962), p. 8

between private illusions and aggressive reality.

The lives of the characters who people Ribeyro's narrative seem to illustrate the Freudian catalogue of remedies for the suffering of mankind, acts of deliverance such as isolation, intoxication, intellectuality, art, and neurosis.⁴ These means of escaping reality and negating pain, whether adopted consciously or unconsciously, become the defense mechanisms that the characters use to protect themselves against the injustice, pressure, and frustration of the social world. By revealing the hidden springs that motivate his characters either to rebel openly against society or to withdraw quietly from its realities, Ribeyro transforms the distortions of his personal vision into recognizable truths about the human condition. From the narrative emerges the image of a misshapen world without values, populated by beings making futile attempts to control their destiny, but unable to distinguish the real from the unreal or to separate truth from falsehood. In Prosas the author verbalizes the bewilderment observed in his characters:

Vivimos en un mundo ambiguo, las palabras no quieren decir nada, las ideas son cheques sin provisión, los valores carecen de valor, las personas son impenetrables, los hechos amasijos de contradicciones, la verdad una quimera y realidad un fenómeno tan difuso que es

⁴Albert William Levi, Philosophy and the Modern World (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959), p. 176.

diffícil distinguirla del sueño, la fantasía o la alucinación. (Prosas, p. 5)

Ribeyro's observations extend beyond the realm of disillusionment to include the often ineffable world of illusion. Illusion frequently overshadows disillusionment, constitutes part of reality and, in fact, becomes the élan vital that determines the characters' destinies.

The distortion, corruption, and confusion dominating Peru's urban area in Los geniecillos dominicales and the rural area in Crónica de San Gabriel, also permeate Ribeyro's third novel Cambio de guardia (1976). However, instead of identifying primarily with one character's view of existence, the reader must deal with numerous characters from diverse social classes, whose interdependence contributes to the falsification of their reality and accentuates the purposelessness of lives. The reader views society collectively, discovering in the fragmented narrative the empty lives, lack of direction, and hopeless destiny of a society trapped in a political system characterized as insensitive, perverse, and self-indulgent. The political machine affects either directly or indirectly the lives of the characters, turning them into mechanized objects. Ribeyro's detailed, almost journalistic account of the preparation of a coup d'état that, in reality, will only transfer power abused by one government into the hands of another, has been compared to Alfred Jarry's theatrical

depiction of Ubu Roi's ascendancy to the throne of Poland.⁵ In Cambio de guardia General Chaparro becomes the bête ambitieuse who is pivoted into power by greedy men who intend to benefit from the change. Although several critics have observed and substantiated the parallel between the 1947 Peruvian coup led by General Manuel Odría and the fictional one led by General Chaparro, Ribeyro denies any intentional comparison between Odría's regime and that of Chaparro. He states that his main purpose in writing the novel is to express certain general ideas concerning reality, such as unforeseen disaster, the intricate web of human relations, and the difficulty in finding truth.⁶ Like Vargas Llosa's Conversación en la catedral (1970), Ribeyro's novel forces an awareness rooted in objectivity and contributes to Peru's understanding of its past while it rejects a future that fails to rectify the degradation and injustice endured by Latin American men and women.⁷

Whereas in Conversación en la catedral Vargas Llosa utilizes a multiplicity of interwoven dialogues to expose corruption and conceal truths, in Cambio de guardia Ribeyro

⁵Samuel Goldberg, "Una radiografía de las grandes minucias," La Prensa (14 de octubre de 1976), p. 15.

⁶Luis Freire S., "No me propuse describir golpe de Odría," La Prensa (2 de nov. de 1976), p. 15.

⁷Alfredo Matella Rivas, "Prólogo" to the Obras escogidas de Mario Vargas Llosa (Madrid: Aguilar, 1973), pp. xxix-xxx.

constructs a labyrinth from the fragmented narrative which relates the personal history of the more than fifty characters, all of whom are caught in a complex network of human relationships. Just as one must decipher the hidden identities in Vargas Llosa's novel, in Cambio de guardia the reader must give order to the fragmented stories in order to discover the chain of dependency that links one character's destiny to that of another. The novel's structure becomes the mirror of the characters' interdependency. The fragmented narrative suggests constant, but futile motion, movement lacking direction, incapable of bringing about positive changes in the socio-political and moral structure of the Peruvian nation. Contributing to the sensation of movement and confusion is the simultaneous occurrence of the actions and events in each segment of narration. The characters gradually grow in number and reappear in other segments as their individual story is related by the omniscient narrator. The coup d'état serves as the major link between the episodes because of the varied ways in which it affects the lives of the characters. Many incidents indirectly provoke other happenings, resulting in unexpected complication which triggers confrontation between the powerful and the weak, the oppressors and the oppressed. For instance, Luque, who fights for the rights of his fellow factory workers, dies at the hands of the secret police, having been falsely accused of abusing and assassinating

a young boy, the crime actually committed by a member of the police force. Because of the real murderer's indirect connection with the military and Luque's unpopular stand as defender of a group of fired factory workers, injustice prevails and Luque is tortured to death for a crime he did not commit.

Apart from the coup d'état another basic link between episodes becomes evident from its special positioning within the text. Each of the thirteen chapters begins with an account of the sexual perversion which Judge Caproni of the Work Ministry organizes and oversees. Dick Gerdes, discussing the political stagnation evident in Cambio de guardia, has viewed these strategically placed descriptions of degenerate behavior as the author's suggestion that "... la perversión sexual es el eslabón clave que enlaza las historias que forman el rompecabezas."⁸ Moral decay, therefore, emerges as a central image around which the other narrative segments are interwoven with no apparent order. While Caproni and his companions make preparations for orgies to be held in an old mansion outside of Lima, Chaparro and his men make preparations for the coup d'état. These two ventures parallel one another, suggesting the basic similarity between the two: conduct steeped in

⁸Dick Gerdes, "Cambio de Guardia: Literary Dynamics and Political Stagnation," American Hispanist, 2, No. 10 (1976), p. 4.

immorality and self-interests. Consequently, the way the stories relate to one another outweighs the importance of the stories in themselves. While corruption and perversion thrive on a political and social level, they also exist in religious institutions as the fragmented narratives about Dorita, a young girl housed in Father Narro's orphanage, illustrate. She becomes an innocent victim of sexual advances by the priest and the other girls in the orphanage. Those imbued with power or the desire for power are transformed into sinister images of moral decay, not unlike the dilapidated mansion with which Caproni, in a moment of self-awareness, compares himself: "Eso como yo la imagen del gentilhombre arruinado."⁹ The numerous characters living out their personal histories in the midst of immoral acts contribute to the generalized view of consciousness which affects and implicates the reader.

While the juxtaposition of the numerous stories gives a feeling of simultaneity underscoring the theme of corruption, the characters' varied verbal and behavioral responses to events also contribute to the confusion in which corruption hides. One discovers that all too frequently a character's words do not coincide with his deeds or his authentic self. This is an incongruity which

⁹ Julio Ramón Ribeyro, Cambio de guardia (Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1976), p. 41. All subsequent references to this work appear in the text cited as CG.

dialogues and indirect, interior monologues, as well as descriptive details reveal to the reader. The virtuous standards that General Chaparro professes when interviewed concerning his opinions on the institution of marriage directly contradict his private thoughts disclosed a few pages before: "Cuando me casé.... no creí que iba (su esposa) a convertir en una verdadera vaca." (CG: 55) On another occasion Chaparro's men, reacting to the recent public demonstration by the factory workers, decide that the moment has come for the general to speak out on the subject. Berrocal, one of Chaparro's men, discusses the delivery of the speech, attaching little importance to the correlation between the speaker and the speech: "Y si Chaparro no se ha aprendido todavía la proclama, qué importa, que mueva los labios, se la grabaremos en una cinta." (CG: 133) Like the Ubu Roi, Chaparro becomes a mere puppet, manipulated by corrupt individuals only interested in the benefits they may receive from Chaparro's presidency. Later, as the fatigued Chaparro, sipping a beer, attempts to address a group of military officers at Infantry headquarters in Arequipa, he projects both a ridiculous and pathetic image, stirring the reader's sympathies: "Señores oficiales.... nosotros, el Perú, quiero decir la patria, ustedes en fin, los ciudadanos, los hombres dignos, los probos, todos los que tienen el corazón grande, los ciudadanos, la patria..." (CG: 156) His inability to gain control of the situation causes the

postponement of the coup d'état until the following day. The sudden delay of the insurrection is only one of many incidents that illuminates the element of contingency permeating the novel, manipulating the characters' lives and altering their destinies. At the same time the fortuitous circumstances sustain the reader's interest by creating an atmosphere of mystery and intrigue. By occasionally withholding segments of reality, Ribeyro further implicates the reader, a technique developed much more extensively on a linguistic level in Conversación en la catedral.

The juxtaposition of scenes and acts described with cinematographic clarity offers a montage effect which contributes significantly to the reader's view of reality in Cambio de guardia. The characters' varied comments and deeds provoke a variety of responses from the reader, such as distress upon witnessing Dorita's circumstances, empathy for the workers and others entrapped within the system, unable to alter it, and disgust for the corrupt, powerful people who appear to be aware of their misdeeds but blind to the destructive consequences of such deeds. Jean Franco has isolated the short-circuit between need and socio-political system in Conversación en la catedral.¹⁰ In Cambio de guardia the same compulsion to satisfy individual impulses

¹⁰Jean Franco, "Conversations and Confessions" in Mario Vargas Llosa, A Collection of Critical Essays, ed., Charles Rossman and Alan Warren Friedman (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), p. 72.

becomes evident in the swirl of political activities that centers around the coup d'état. It drives Carlos Almenara and his friend Héctor to bomb the beach club which symbolizes the capitalistic oligarchy. It also leads César Alva, editor of the leftist magazine to his brutal death on the streets of Lima, and impels Chaparro's supporters to push forcefully the coup d'état into its final stages. The description of General Chaparro's successful return to Lima from Arequipa reveals the sense of urgency that overshadows many of the descriptions in the novel.

Alguien anuncia que ya aterriza el avión y todos se precipitan a la explanada contigua a la pista. El aparato, ya en tierra, sin la gracia del vuelo, rueda pesadamente cortando la niebla matinal. Cuando se inmoviliza un carro avanza hacia él jalando la escalera de descenso. La puerta se abre y Chaparro asoma con tanta torpeza y precipitación para hacer un saludo con el brazo, que Bremer tiene que sujetarlo del cinturón para que no se precipite al vacío. (CG: 194)

Jean Franco observes that in Conversación en la catedral impatience at not gaining immediate satisfaction for an impulse or need is generalized and represented through a series of symbols such as the Cathedral bar.¹¹ In Cambio de guardia conversations and unobtrusive gestures, such as Chaparro's poor timing, frequently reveal the motives that goad some of the characters into ineffective action and lull others into a state of indifference. When Carlos discovers the futility of his attempt to denounce the right-wing,

¹¹Franco, pp. 71-72.

capitalist oligarchy, the narrator suggests his regression into isolation and indifference: "Por la ventana divisa el mar, las islas. Así son ellos, así están todos, contiguos pero separados y al mismo tiempo unidos por las aguas calmas o bravías de la vida." (CG: 218) Similar to Ludo Totem in Los geniecillos dominicales, Carlos recognizes the hypocrisy surrounding him and silently withdraws. Others remain in senseless motion, blind to the truth expressed in the factory workers' candid observations when they learn of Chaparro's successful coup d'état: "Todo es puro teatro.... mientras las cosas no cambien de raíz, estamos jodidos."

(CG: 197) The workers echo Ribeyro's socio-political concerns regarding societies and their destinies. In the introductory remarks to the novel Ribeyro explains: "... las sociedades tienden a veces a afectar movimientos pendulares o circulares y en estas condiciones lo pasado puede ser lo futuro, lo presente lo olvidado y lo posible lo real."

(CG: n.p.) In Cambio de guardia Ribeyro distorts the social reality that centers around a political event by showing how the event affects the characters' lives. The dialogues, interior, indirect monologues, comparisons and descriptions, tinted with humor as well as irony, convey a subjective view of reality which forces the reader's awareness of a tragic destiny having universal significance.

The conflict between values which stirs the reader's indignation in Cambio de guardia is also the source of

tension in three of Ribeyro's stories published in 1964 under the title Tres historias sublevantes. In these stories the protagonists, like the factory workers in Cambio de guardia, appear to be conscious of their own worth and the soundness of their values as they rebel against the insensitive and frequently inhumane values of a social system that invariably crushes their hopes and decides their destinies. What appears to be an affirmation of values on their part becomes in reality a lonely march toward self-annihilation. Like Kafka, Ribeyro often focuses on a definite character in order to reveal man as a victim of a decree of fate. Ribeyro's characters recall Kafka's creatures who are forever adjusting to their inevitable destiny.¹² The rebels in Tres historias sublevantes defy the world of false values, depicted as a ridiculous, formless, distorted force which humiliates and alienates those who dare to challenge its authority.

The characters in the first story, "Al pie del acantilado," illustrate the fighting capacity of those engulfed in poverty whose only triumph becomes their day to day survival in a dry coastal region of Peru. Don Leandro, the narrator-protagonist, relates the plight of the urban poor, a group struggling to survive on arid terrain in much

¹²R. M. Albérès and Pierre de Boisdeffre, Kafka: The Torment of Man, trans. Wade Basken (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1968), p. 58.

the same way as the higuerilla, an image with which the story opens and closes. Although Don Leandro always is forced to move from one place to another by the insensitive social system, his humble, yet undaunted spirit motivates him to put down new roots. As the central image the higuerilla suggests the tenaciousness of the abandoned coastal people who seek shelter alongside the plant, knowing that there they might survive also.

Venimos huyendo de la ciudad como bandidos porque los escribanos y los policías nos habían echado de quinta en quinta y de corralón en corralón. Vimos la planta allí, creciendo humildemente entre tanta ruina, entre tanto patillo muerto y tanto derrumbe de piedras, y decidimos levantar nuestra morada. (II: 7)

The higuerilla therefore becomes the only visible symbol of hope in the inhospitable region to which these marginal people are confined. Don Leandro's personal conflict with civilization, his instinctive acts of survival, and his refusal to give up all hope even though abandoned by family and friends, intensify the story's emotional impact. At the same time, Don Leandro's description of the totality of events diffuses into a subjective view of existence that responds, at best, to his immediate need for shelter. The series of events adversely affect Don Leandro's life, altering his goals until nothing remains for him but the hope of survival embodied in the concrete image of the higuerilla "... con sus hojas ásperas, su tallo tosco,

sus pepas preñadas de púas que hieren la mano de quien intenta acariciarlas." (II: 31)

Three significant events strengthen the emotive intensity of the narration, severing the protagonist's ties to civilization while reenforcing his relationship to the higuerilla. The impact of these events described from Don Leandro's perspective causes him to challenge the laws of civilization and eventually to step beyond its borders into spiritual isolation. The protagonist offers an intimate look at the ambulatory, almost phantasmal existence of the dispossessed who find, ironically, that their only hope for survival lies outside of civilization, rather than within its boundaries. The first two events, the loss of the older son at sea and the loss of the younger one to city life, leave Don Leandro alone in his own wilderness to which he readily learns to adapt himself:

Yo mismo me hacía todo; pescaba, cocinaba, lavaba mi ropa, vendía el pescado, barría el terraplén. Tal vez fue por eso que la soledad me fue enseñando muchas cosas como por ejemplo, a conocer mis manos, cada una de sus arrugas, de sus cicatrices, o a mirar las formas del crepúsculo. Esos crepúsculos del verano, sobre todo, eran para mí una fiesta. A fuerza de mirarlos pude adivinar su suerte. Puede saber qué color seguiría a otro o en qué punto de cielo terminaría por ennegrarse una nube.
(II: 21)

Don Leandro's merger with nature is interrupted on different occasions by intruders foreign to the environment and to the central character's perceptions as well. "... Vimos

tres hombres, con sombrero, que bajaban por el barranco con los brazos abiertos, haciendo equilibrio para no caerse. Estaban afeitados y usaban zapatos tan brillantes que el polvo resbalaba y les huía. Eran gentes de la ciudad."

(II: 22) Shortly after Don Leandro's encounter with the municipal government representatives, the third event with which he must deal becomes evident: the state's seizure of the land to allow for the construction of new beach facilities. Once again Don Leandro's fighting spirit surfaces, and he acts as spokesman for the others who, like himself, face the threat of displacement. The conflict becomes enveloped in ambiguities and misrepresentation which cause the defeat of the abandoned poor. The very premise which Don Leandro trusts to protect their rights, the fact that the land on which they live belongs to the State, ironically becomes the factor determining their expulsion.

--Aquí hay una equivocación --dije--. Nosotros vivimos en tierras del Estado. Nuestro abogado dice que de aquí nadie puede sacarnos.
--Justamente --dijo el juez. Los sacamos porque viven en tierras del Estado. (II: 26)

The lawyer defending their rights to inhabit the land offers them false hope and finally absolves himself of all responsibility toward them. Alienated by the false values of civilization, Don Leandro creates his own reality beyond civilization's boundaries, the only place where he believes he can survive. His open honesty contrasts with civilization's detached, deceitful presence and stirs the reader's

sympathy. The representatives of the municipality, on the other hand, provoke indignation.

Although the final scene revealing Don Leandro stubbornly scratching out once again a new home beside an higuerilla inspires the reader's admiration, it also forces him to question the protagonist's belief in himself. The reader becomes increasingly aware that Don Leandro's defiance of civilization and its realities will only temporarily deter the inevitable isolation and death he will suffer. Because of his simple declaration of his right to exist, Don Leandro becomes the transfessor in a society that professes to be civilized. In seeking a just solution he discovers he has no recourse other than to accept things as they are.

In "El chaco" the setting shifts from Peru's coast to the high sierras, a region often framing the traditional conflicts between enraged Indians and powerful landowners in the stories and novels of writers such as Ciro Alegría and José María Arguedas. The rebellion that occurs in Ribeyro's story, however, does not follow the usual pattern of the Indian insurrections described in most indigenista literature. The rebel in "El chaco," Sixto Molina, is a former mine worker who returns to his community and carries out a personal vendetta against Don Santiago, the landholder whom he holds responsible for his father's death. Although Sixto's motives for rebelling are conventional,

his rebellious spirit is perceived as unusual, linking him to evil spirits. Consequently, he becomes the object of an intense hunt and the victim of a violent death.

The conflict between Sixto Molina and Don Santiago develops quickly and becomes more and more intense as an eyewitness relates the events to the reader. Under the anonymous narrator's vigilant eye Sixto appears as an ambivalent personality whose remarkably clear vision of reality seems incongruent with his often simplistic responses to the environment. As a result of the narrator's conversations with the protagonist, his own observations and opinions, as well as those of others, Sixto projects an intriguing image that soon becomes a source of consternation. Like Don Leandro in "Al pie del acantilado," Sixto is depicted as a survivor. The fact that he is the only one among all the miners returning to Huaripampa who does not die from tuberculosis, arouses the superstitious nature of the inhabitants in the valley. The narrator comments:

Quizá Sixto vino ya muerto y nosotros hemos vivido con un aparecido. Su cara, de puro hueso y pellejo, la ponía a quemar al sol, en la puerta de su casa o la paseaba por la plaza cuando había buen tiempo. No iba a las procesiones ni a escuchar los sermones. Vivía sólo, con sus tres carneros y sus dos vaquillas. (II: 35)

Because he inspires distrust, Sixto is blamed for two otherwise inexplicable incidents that cause damage to Don Santiago's property. With each confrontation between the Indian and the landholder the tension mounts, transforming

the Huaripampa Valley into an unfamiliar scene overshadowed by mysterious forms and the supernatural.

Through the narrator's select observations the reader discovers superstitious beliefs, functioning on a subconscious level, to be the primary factor underlying the events. At the beginning of the story segments of reality are withheld in order to create suspense and effect ambiguity. Consequently, no one knows if Sixto is really guilty of the two destructive deeds he is accused of committing. Familiar forms of reality become distorted apparitions as the conflict intensifies and one vindictive act prompts another. Because of the supernatural elements attributed to Sixto's character, he lives in spiritual isolation, set apart from the rest of the community. The narrator establishes an association between Sixto and the ruins situated on top of Marcapampa, a hill overlooking the valley. It is these ruins that seem to be a type of citadel from which Sixto draws renewed strength and in which he seeks protection. For the other huaripampinos the site inspires fear and distrust stemming from the fates known to have been suffered by those who have climbed the hill in the past. The narrator explains: "Nadie sube por allí porque trae mala suerte. Hace algunos años unos cholos subieron para sacar piedras y hacer con ellas corrales. Pero casi todos se murieron después o se quedaron ciegos." (II: 45) Using the local superstitious beliefs to his own

advantage, Don Santiago explains his violent retaliations against Sixto as the work of malos espíritus, thereby extending his control over the laborers.

De la hacienda de don Santiago hicieron correr las voces de que estaban penando, para disimular. Decían que malos espíritus andaban por los caminos y que era peligroso atardarse en el campo porque a uno lo podían degollar. Hablaban de llamar al cura para que echara cruces en el valle de Huaripampa y nos librara de los aparecidos. (II: 44)

When Sixto regains enough strength and again seeks vengeance, the evil spirits immediately dominate the minds and imaginations of the huaripampinos. Apparitions assume human form and become an ominous reality as perceived by the protagonist-narrator:

Los malos espíritus pasaron más tarde. Nosotros no los vimos porque era una noche oscura. Sentíamos solo el trotar de sus bestias y los fuetazos que les zumbaban sobre las ancas. Debían ser muchos.... Daban vueltas por el pueblo, se juntaban todos en la calle ancha, se dividían por las calles angostas que van al río, siempre bajo la misma voz que los reunía o los separaba. Nosotros corríamos de aquí para allá, a veces para verlos de cerca, a veces para no ser atropellados pues pasaban tan rápido que dejaban detrás un hueco de viento frío y un olor a azufre que se quemaba. (II: 47)

The reader quickly discovers that Don Santiago and his men constitute the malos espíritus and is immediately caught up in the tension-filled search for Sixto which is being carried out by the enraged posse.

Unspoken thoughts, silent movements and hovering clouds turn Marcapampa into a strange environment which

rekindles the superstitiousness of the huaripampinos and somewhat enervates Don Santiago. The protagonist-narrator observes:

Cuando llegamos a la falda del Marcapampa, los huaripampinos habían vuelto a avanzar un trecho más. Conforme los mirábamos, se iban quedando tiesos. Don Santiago volteó otra vez la cabeza para ver cómo se alieneaban, como santones, a la distancia.

--Esto no me gusta --dijo y otra vez se puso caviloso. Todos estábamos callados, mirándolo. Don Santiago comenzó a caracolear con su caballo, de un lado a otro, mirando el cerro, mirando a los comuneros. (II: 54)

When Sixto falls and dies under the rapid fire of the posse, the narrator observes Don Santiago's uneasiness which reveals traces of superstition filtering through the landowner's resolute character: "Yo creí que se iban a ir todos juntos pero no: don Santiago partió solo por un lado, tan al galope que su sombrero voló con el viento y no se dio el trabajo de recogerlo." (II: 57)

Unlike most other accounts of rebellions encountered in indigenista literature, Sixto's battle is a solitary one. Through the narrator-protagonist, the reader is submerged in a strange reality fabricated from external events and unspoken thoughts. The narrator transforms reality into a disconcerting scene depicting mysterious forces quietly at work within the characters' minds. The events leading up to the violent death scene help lay the foundation for the metaphorical, frenzied hunt or chaco in which the Indian becomes the prey. "Era un bulto encogido (Sixto) que se

dejaba rodar entre las piedras para elevarse a veces por los aires y desaparecer entre las grietas." (II: 56) Sixto battles injustice and confronts his inevitable destiny in a way true to his indigenous beliefs. His rebellious spirit remains undaunted by the lack of support from the other comuneros who are described during the hunt as aloof, encircling Marcapampa "como santones, a la distancia."

(II: 53) Sixto finds escape only through death, leaving behind a group of silent spectators, the comuneros, as symbols of a hopeless destiny.

"Fénix," the third story in the trilogy, occurs in the jungle region of Peru, an appropriate setting for the brutal confrontation between two human beings, one seeking self-identity and the other struggling for domination. A circus arena epitomizing society at large becomes a bizarre spectacle where the reader witnesses the circus Strong Man, Fénix, fight for his personal dignity. He undergoes a kind of metamorphosis which stirs within him primal instincts, inciting him to rebel against his oppressor, Marcial Chacón, the circus owner.

Unforeseen circumstances turn the popular circus act involving Fénix and Kong, the circus bear, into a bizarre attraction which is described from various points of view. Prior to one of their performances the bear collapses from old age and heat exhaustion, unable to perform. Chacón, however, in order to comply with public demands, decides to

simulate the dramatic man-against-beast battle by assuming the role of Fénix, the Strong Man, and by disguising Fénix in the trappings of a bear: "en una piel de oso con arañas, polillas y hasta pulgas." (II: 72) Encaged within the bear costume and confined to the animal role, Fénix exceeds his capacity for suffering and yields to the vindictive forces, suffocating Chacón instead of allowing him to emerge the victor. While playing the fictitious role Fénix recognizes its similarity to the part he is forced to play in real life. Irma, the contortionist, observes the affinity between Fénix the human being and Kong the animal: "El oso está viejo, más que Fénix tal vez. Por eso se entienden entre los dos y se quieren como dos hermanos, como animales sufridos que son." (II: 66) Fénix's illusions about himself suddenly disintegrate and are replaced by a reality he abhors and against which he impulsively rebels. Unlike the legendary Phoenix consumed by fire, Ribeyro's protagonist flees toward the river with a sense of self-awareness and renewed strength.

The narrative connects pieces of Fénix's and Chacón's past with fragments of the other characters' personal histories, intertwining them with comments on the ongoing masquerade. The narrator-participants, Fénix and Chacón, as well as the narrator-spectators, including Irma the contortionist, Max the dwarf, and two military men, Eusebio and Sordi, contribute to the transformation of

reality with their varied points of view. Each character, by offering a subjective, primarily sordid view of the past, illuminates the degrading event taking place in the circus arena, therefore increasing its emotional impact. The personal testimonies of the characters magnify the shifting images that Fénix and Chacón project. As the performance begins, Fénix appears vulnerable and submissive, much like Kong with whom Irma again compares him.

Me pareció que era su ropa natural, su misma piel que él acababa, no se sabe cómo, de recuperar. Es que él, aun sin piel, ha sido siempre una especie de oso manso, de oso cansado, o es que ha terminado por parecerse al animal de tanto frotarse contra su pelaje y sus enormes brazos. (II: 73)

As the battle continues, however, animal instincts gradually overpower Fénix, and he loses contact with his former self and, instead, experiences an almost alchemic change which renews his strength. Chacón, on the other hand, embodies the image of the authoritarian who has affected the lives of nearly all the characters, an image which he himself has upheld relentlessly throughout his life:

Yo, Marcial Chacón, he vendido periódicos, a nadie se lo oculto. Y ahora soy dueño del circo: ¡cómo he penado para tener esta carpa, estas graderías, los camiones, los trapecios, los caballos y el oso! He sudado en todas las provincias. Trabajo, en consecuencia no me insulten. Pero sobre todo, hago que trabajen los demás. Vivo de su trabajo pero no a la manera de un parásito sino como un inteligente administrador. Soy superior a ellos, ¿quién me lo puede discutir? Reconozco también que hay superiores a mí: los que tienen más plata. El resto son mis sirvientes, los compro. (II: 62)

Finally overpowered by the animal-man figure, he dies too weak to defend himself. Among the interior monologues through which the reader views the battle, Fénix's and Irma's thoughts communicate the most revealing details and decisive moments which help turn the conflict into a grotesque spectacle. Fénix, having adopted the physical form and internal instincts of an animal, illustrates Cirlot's definition of the bear as a symbol of the "perilous aspect of the unconscious."¹³ In addition to struggling against Chacón, Fénix appears to be grappling with the beast within himself, in an attempt to free the unconscious from the conscious. Having succumbed completely to primal instincts, Fénix's thoughts reveal a new awareness of himself as he takes the life of his oppressor, Marcial Chacón. "No oyes como grita la gente? Diles que hacemos circo, circo para que se entretengan. Circo hago desde que nací. Haz circo tú también." (II: 78) Through Irma we view the battle's conclusion:

¿Qué cosa pasa? Fénix está encima de Marcial. Los soldados hace rato que gritan. Ahora se han puesto de pie y señalan la pista y pegan de alaridos. 'Lo está asfixiando,' dicen. ¿Será verdad? Yo sólo veo un cuerpo echado sobre otro. Fénix parece dormir. Ahora levanta la cabeza y la hace girar lentamente, muy lentamente, como si buscara algo.... Y Marcial sigue en el suelo, sin moverse, con

¹³J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1962), p. 22.

los puños apretados, la lengua casi arrancada. (II: 78-79)

In the moments of chaos following Chacón's death, Fénix gravitates toward the river holding the head of the bear in his hand, signifying his new sense of self and his spiritual regeneration.

An allegorical and kaleidoscopic view of reality transforms a routine circus act into a debased spectacle reflecting the social dilemmas familiar to twentieth century society: man's inhumanity to man and his alienation from society and self. Through the mingling of past with present, the confusion of roles, and the varied points of view, the circus becomes a microcosm of a society bereft of justice, order, and sensitivity. Fénix's symbolic victory over his adversary appears somewhat illusive as he gravitates toward the river, apparently disengaged from his former role. He leaves behind a society blind to his metamorphosis, unaware of his self-deliverance, and ready to avenge Chacón's death as lieutenant Sordi reveals:

Pero iremos a buscarlo, es un peligro dejar un animal así cerca del campamento. Doce cholos me han dado y antorchas además y un perro. El enano nos dirá por dónde se ha ido, porque si no lo mandaremos al calabozo por haber ofendido al muerto. Con un vivo se puede tomar ciertas libertades, pero con un muerto!.... Mi fusil está bien aceitado y en la cacerina tengo mis balas dum-dum. Hay que poner orden aquí, para eso nos pagan y para eso he pasado dos años en Corral Quemado sin quemar un cartucho. (II: 80)

Fénix's escape into freedom contrasts sharply with the

subjugation of those left behind, forever confined within a society that forces them to perform servile roles and to lead meaningless lives.

In contrast with Don Leandro, Sixto and Fénix, who consciously and openly incite rebellion in Tres historias sublevantes, the majority of the characters in Ribeyro's other six collections of stories defy reality in a more private way. They internalize their personal frustrations, finding it necessary to dream the needs and phantasms which reality denies them. Susanne K. Langer, in her study on the symbolism of reason, rite, and art, considers a human being's need to relate positively to the environment of primary importance in achieving a feeling of well-being.

Langer writes:

Opportunity to carry on our natural, impulsive, intelligent life, to realize plans, express ideas in action or in symbolic formulation, see and hear and interpret all things that we encounter, without fear of confusion, adjust our interests and expressions to each other, is the freedom for which humanity strives. This, and not some specific right that society may grant or deny, is the liberty that goes necessarily with 'life' and the 'pursuit of happiness.'¹⁴

When reality repeatedly postpones or destroys their aspirations, Ribeyro's characters manifest their frustrations in a variety of ways which illumine the darker side of their personalities or explain the permanent maladjustment in life

¹⁴Susanne D. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 289.

which they are destined to endure. Each character seeks a way to withdraw from reality in order to facilitate his own survival.

In "Mientras arde la vela," a story from Ribeyro's first published collection, Gallinazos sin plumas (1955), Mercedes nourishes her dream of owning a fruit stand as her drunken husband, who always has usurped the family funds buying alcohol, lies critically ill, having been warned that another drink could be fatal. Seconds before the candle lighting the darkened room goes out, Mercedes reaches for a bottle she had hidden from him earlier, this time leaving it within his reach, hoping to hasten her husband's death and make her own dream a reality. The final scene depicts her alone with her illusion: "Los malos espíritus se fueron y solo quedó Mercedes, despierta, frotándose silenciosamente las manos, como si de pronto hubieran dejado ya de estar agrietadas." (I: 47)

Most of the characters in Ribeyro's second collection, Cuentos de circunstancia (1958) experience some form of disillusionment that does lasting damage to their perception of reality. Consequently, we witness their withdrawal into a private world. Perico is such a victim who, in "Los merengues," develops an inner animosity for the adult world that rudely denies him the proyecto hermoso shared by most children his age: the desire to buy some frothy merengues in a bakery. In order to gain the storekeeper's respect and

to make his purchase legitimate, he takes twenty soles from the household money. He fails, however, to persuade the clerk to make the sale and is forced out of the store. The narrator relates the boy's reaction:

... iba pensando que esas monedas nada valían en sus manos, en ese día cercano en que, grande ya y terrible, cortaría la cabeza de todos esos hombres gordos, de todos los mucamos de las pastelerías y hasta de los pelicanos que graznaban indiferentes a su alrededor. (I: 180)

Viewed from the child's perspective, reality suddenly becomes illogical and ceases to hold any promise for the future. Despite his tender age, Perico begins to alienate himself from society.

The stories in Las botellas y los hombres (1964) frequently depict characters trapped in situations with which they are unable to cope. Alcohol becomes a means of evading reality, an escape mechanism that rescues the characters from the world of suffering. "Vaquita echada" focuses on four men's attempt to avoid an emotional response to the news of a death. Concerned about a long distance call that they must make to their friend, Dr. Céspedes, in order to inform him of his wife's death during childbirth, the men become intoxicated. The story reveals a steady progression from a joke toward the absurd and grotesque until finally an aura of cruelty and insensitivity dominates.¹⁵

¹⁵ Wolfgang A. Luchting, J. R. Ribeyro y sus dobles (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1971), p. 40.

The protagonists' ribald humor contrasts with the seriousness of the theme, creating a pathetic scene of insensate behavior. From the characters' frivolous conversations in which their subconscious thoughts and attitudes surface, a new reality which excludes suffering is fabricated.

Los cautivos (1972) is a collection of stories that probes still deeper the inner recesses of the characters' minds. It explores the shadowy zone where the real and the imagined merge, creating another reality that is strange and alarming. In "Papeles pintados" Carmen's neurotic obsession with travel posters of all sizes, shapes, and colors compensates for her empty, unfulfilled life, while "Aqua ramera" focuses on the psyche of a young man who claims he is feigning insanity. In the later story Lorenzo walks the sanatorium grounds with a visitor, boasting of his ability to deceive the doctors. Before returning to his room he shares with his friend some impromptu thoughts which communicate a disarming truth:

... admira sobre todo los días otoñales, el corazón seco de otoño, el corazón seco de los árboles, que cae sobre nuestro corazón seco, sin amor ni ternura, que cae sobre nuestro corazón seco y lo estruja, que cae sobre nuestro corazón seco y le arrebatata para siempre la luz, que cae sobre nuestro corazón seco y lo entrega al sueño, a las tinieblas. (II: 168)

Shunned by society, Lorenzo dreams his own reality which at least provides him with two basic needs: food and shelter.

Conflicts with reality, searches for truths, and the

inevitable disillusionment that results are treated also in El proximo vez me nivelo (1972). In these stories an unexpected event or situation suddenly alters a character's illusion about himself or life. At the moment of disillusionment the protagonist is forced to contemplate the present as it really is, as opposed to how he expected it would be. The past and the future are reduced to a solemn moment of truth which uncovers human faults and emotions such as hypocrisy, deceit, fear, anger, and pride.

Ribeyro's most recently published collection of stories, Silvio en el rosedal (1977), offers a more subjective, allegorical, and ironic view of reality and the protagonists' struggle against mediocrity. Finding themselves in the midst of an insipid existence, his characters attempt to transcend and enhance reality by seeking in it a special sign or prophetic message that might revitalize a dying dream. In the story for which the collection is named, Silvio tries to give significance to his life by reading his destiny in the design formed by the bed of roses in the garden of "El Rosedal," a country estate. Having been confined all of his life to a routine, urban existence which failed to offer a sense of purpose, Silvio allows himself to be conditioned by his new surroundings. In a futile attempt to reconcile the real with the ideal or imagined, Silvio's interpretations of reality change as often as his illusions. He first interprets the pattern of roses as forming the

Latin word RES which lends itself to all sorts of ambiguities. In an act of desperation Silvio reverses the order of the letters, discovering the equally disconcerting word SER. Lost in solitude he ponders an infinite list of nonsensical interpretations:

Volvió a examinar las letras y compuso Serás Enterrado Rápido, lo que no dejó de estremecerlo, a pesar de que le pareció una profecía infundada.... Silvio llenó varias páginas de su cuaderno, llegando a fórmulas tan enigmáticas y disparatadas como Sálvate Enfrentando Río, Sucedióle Encontrar Rupia o Sóbate Encarnizadamente Rodilla, lo que a la postre significaba reemplazar una clave por otra.

Sin duda se había embarcado en un viaje sin destino. Aún por tenacidad ensayó otras frases. Todas lo remitían a la incongruencia. (III: 128-129)

Dissatisfied with both the passive and active states associated with existence, Silvio sinks further into despair when he recalls that RES in Catalan means NADA. "Triste cosecha para tanto esfuerzo, pues él ya sabía que nada era él, nada el rosal, nada sus tierras, nada el mundo."

(II: 134) His final interpretation introduces him into the realm of love, but like his other speculations concerning his destiny, they become a source of anguish and frustration. The garden again becomes a blur of color as he realizes that the designs never really held any message regarding his destiny.

Even the most sincere search for truth becomes thwarted by the duplicity which forms the basis of Ribeyro's fictional world. From the systematic use of character,

events, and images in the service of themes such as social injustice, corruption, and human suffering, emerges a disturbing view of society. Reality becomes a labyrinth of illusion fabricated from distorted truths of the exterior world and shattered dreams of the world of human inwardness which Eric Heller refers to in his essay "The Realistic Fallacy."¹⁶ The characters' inner and exterior worlds become inseparable, each influencing the other. The duplicity of deeds, words, and gestures contributes to the irony and ambiguity of the Peruvian reality permeating Ribeyro's narrative. At the same time this ambivalence elicits responses from modern man that are incompatible with benevolence and rationality in a dynamic, yet perplexing world of contradictions.

¹⁶Eric Heller, "The Realistic Fallacy," in Documents of Modern Literary Realism, ed. George J. Becker (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 598.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Julio Ramón Ribeyro's narrative represents a creative search for modern man's place in a defective, imposing reality which, by denying aspirations, engenders a dream world. Although Ribeyro is a Peruvian who considers himself marginal with respect to society, his narrative offers a universal view of existence in which reality remains inflexible and illusion is a constant. The characters, conditioned by a society that practices injustice and tolerates corruption, are caught between their own ideals and reality itself. Forced to seek solutions to their personal dilemmas, they desperately search for alternatives that might save them from a destiny they fear. In their attempts to change the course of destiny, they find insufficient inner strength to cope with society's demands and, as a result, they either accept reality with all its defects, or they reject it by withdrawing, at least partially, into a private world of illusion. Both reactions have negative and

destructive consequences which are manifested in the characters' alienation from others and from themselves.

Through the conflicts that Ribeyro's characters experience with environment and self, a distorted, yet recognizable image of the world emerges. The reader participates in the characters' discovery of defects within society and themselves which limit the possibilities for self-fulfillment and happiness. Memories, situations, and people manipulate the lives of the characters, demanding from them a response which, in turn, provides the reader insight into the pathetic, futile roles of contemporary man who finds it necessary to mask his vulnerability. What Ribeyro does, in the words of José Miguel Oviedo, is "... levantar una punta --la más oronda-- de esa máscara y verificar que el rostro verdadero está muerto, inerte en el nicho de su clase social."¹ Middle class values and attitudes, always visible in Ribeyro's narrative, have a powerful effect on his characters, eliciting from them irrational responses to their environment. Those who attempt to reconcile their values with those of the middle class, find themselves losing control of their individual destinies. Others, fleeing the suffocating effects of reality, take refuge in a form of ineffectual idealism by creating a self-image which not only lacks authenticity,

¹José Miguel Oviedo, "Prólogo" a Narradores peruanos (Caracas: Monte Avila Editores, C.A., n.d.), p. 19.

but is inaccessible as well. Their responses make them transparent, revealing the inner complexities of their psyche which, like the surroundings, deny them their freedom. Consequently, the reader discovers, along with the characters, a painful sense of inevitable limits which robs existence of any significance and dictates a hopeless destiny.

Although Ribeyro's view of existence is essentially fatalistic and the underlying tone is one of social protest, his narrative reflects his compassion and understanding of the rapid transformations that have made reality more complex and altered man's historical and social perspective. He approaches reality in an imaginative way, stirring the reader's sympathies as well as his indignation, occasionally offsetting the serious with comic relief which mirrors human frailties. Ribeyro's narrative reflects a spontaneity that has its source in his own experiences, fragments of life which inspire him to write. In an interview Ribeyro states:

... escribo porque es lo único que me gusta hacer; porque es lo más personal que puedo ofrecer (aquello en lo que no puedo ser reemplazado); porque me libera de una serie de tensiones, depresiones, inhibiciones; por costumbre; por descubrir, conocer algo que la escritura revela y no el pensamiento; por lograr una bella frase; por volver memorable, aunque sea para mí, lo efímero; por la sorpresa de ver surgir un mundo del encadenamiento de signos convencionales que

uno traza sobre el papel; por indignación, por
piedad, por nostalgia y por muchas otras cosas
más.²

Taking elements from many and varied experiences and sensations, Ribeyro re-arranges them, creating a sobering view of banality, degradation, and human suffering. In the tradition of the classical realists, Ribeyro prefers to shed light on his characters rather than on himself. His innovative, yet orderly treatment of theme and language, free from stylistic pretense, evokes an immediate response from the reader, allowing events, situations, and actions to speak for themselves. His view of reality excludes psychological analysis and philosophical observations. Instead, Ribeyro attempts to give the reader an awareness of himself, in a spiritual rather than moral sense. Washington Delgado compares Ribeyro's contemplative view of existence to that of Azorín: "Julio Ramón Ribeyro me parece un pariente próximo del personaje azoriniano que, desde un balcón y con la mano en la mejilla, contempla melancólicamente las nubes que pasan, siempre distintas y siempre las mismas."³ Reality becomes an endless cycle of repeated disappointment and failure which successfully communicates contemporary man's solitude and frustration. Ribeyro's authentic, coherent

²Abelardo Oquendo, ed., "Encuesta a los narradores" in Narrativa peruana 1950/1970 (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1973), p. 21.

³Washington Delgado, "Sobre el Cambio de guardia," El Comercio (1^{ro} de abril de 1979), p. 14.

presentation of a reality stripped of dignity, attests to
and justifies the constant presence of illusion which gives
existence its ambiguous quality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by the author

- Ribeyro, Julio Ramón. Cambio de guardia. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1976.
- _____. Crónica de San Gabriel. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975.
- _____. La caza sutil. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1975.
- _____. La juventud en la otra ribera. Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1973.
- _____. "Las alternativas del novelista." In Dos soledades. Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1974, 51-89.
- _____. Los geniecillos dominicales. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1973.
- _____. Palabra del mudo. Vol. I. Lima: Milla Batres Editorial S. A., 1972.
- _____. Palabra del mudo. 1st ed. Lima: Milla Batres Editorial, 1973, Vol. II.
- _____. Palabra del mudo. 1st ed. Lima: Milla Batres Editorial, 1977, Vol. III.
- _____. Prosas apátridas aumentadas. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1978.
- _____. Teatro. Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1975.

Books

Aldrich, E. M. El cuento hispanoamericano ante la crítica. Dirección y prólogo de Pupo-Walker. n.p: Editorial Castilla, 1973.

_____. The Modern Short Story in Peru. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.

Albérès, R. M., Pierre de Boisseffre. Kafka: The Torment of Man. Trans. Wade Basken. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1968.

Becker, George J., ed. Introd. Documents of Modern Literary Realism. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, 3-38.

Brombert, Victor. "L'Education sentimentale: Profanation and the Permanence of Dreams." In Flaubert (A Collection of Critical Essays). Ed. Raymond Giraud. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1964, 125-185.

Cirlot, J. E. A Dictionary of Symbols. Trans. Jack Sage. New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1962.

Cortázar, Julio. "Cefalea." Bestiario. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1974, 69-90.

Delgado, Washington. "Fantasía y realidad en la obra de Ribeyro." In La palabra del mudo de Julio Ramón Ribeyro. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, S. A., 1972, xi-xvi.

Escobar, Alberto. Prólogo a Crónica de San Gabriel. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria S. A., 1969, 10.

Flaubert, Gustave. L'education sentimentale. Paris: Conard, 1923.

_____. Madame Bovary. n.p. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930.

Franco, Jean. "Conversations and Confessions." In Mario Vargas Llosa, A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Charles Rossman and Alan Warren Friedman. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978, 159-175.

Gerdes, Dick. "La realidad en las narraciones de Ribeyro." Diss. University of New Mexico, n.d.

- Grossman, Leonid. "The Naturalism of Chekhov." In Chekhov: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Robert Louis Jackson. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 32-48.
- Hayakawa, S. I. "The Self-Concept." In Symbol, Status, and Personality. New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1963.
- Heller, Eric. "The Realistic Fallacy." In Documents of Modern Literary Realism. Ed. George J. Becker. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1963, 591-598.
- Hubben, William. Four Prophets of Our Destiny: Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Kafka. New York, The Macmillan Company, 1952.
- Kierkegaard, Sören Aabye. Excerpts from The Present Age. Trans. A. Dru and Walter Lowrie. In The Living Thoughts of Kierkegaard. Comp. W. H. Auden. New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1952, 31-55.
- Langer, Susanne D. Philosophy in a New Key. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1957.
- Leal, Lufs. Historia del cuento hispanoamericano. Mexico: Ediciones de Andrea, 1968.
- Levi, Albert William. Philosophy and the Modern World. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1959.
- Luchting, Wolfgang A. J. R. Ribeyro y sus dobles. Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1971.
- Matella Rivas, Alfredo. Prólogo to the Obras escogidas de Mario Vargas Llosa. Madrid: Aguilar, 1973, XX-XLIII.
- Oquendo, Abelardo. Prólogo a Prosas apátridas aumentadas de Julio Ramón Ribeyro. Lima: Editorial Milla Batres, 1978, IX-XX.
- Oviedo, José Miguel. Narradores peruanos. Caracas: Monte Ávila Editores, n.d.
- Palma, Ricardo. "Santiago el Volador." In Tradiciones peruanas. Vol. II. Lima: Librería Internacional del Perú, n.d., 140-146.
- Schwartz, Kessel. A New History of Spanish American Fiction. Vol. II of Social Concern, Universalism, and the New Novel. Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971.

Valenzuela, Victor M. "Existentialism and the Contemporary Latin American Novel." In Contemporary Latin American Writers. Spain: Las Americas Publishing Co., n.d., 23.

Articles

Barkal, Alexis. "Julio Ramón Ribeyro: Un amateur en busca de nuevos caminos." Expreso, 28 noviembre 1973, 6.

Barquero, Jesus. "La realidad en las narraciones de Ribeyro." Letras peruanas, abril-junio 1962, 7-12.

Campos, Mario. "Una voz distinta, una forma precursora: La palabra." Estampa, 2 diciembre 1973, 6-7.

Cornejo Polar, Antonio. "Hipotesis sobre la narrativa peruana última." Hueso Húmero, No. 3 (1979), 45-64.

Delgado, Washington. "Sobre el Cambio de guardia." El Comercio, 1^{ro} abril 1979, 14.

Freire S., Luís. "No me propuse describir golpe de Odría." La Prensa, 2 noviembre 1976, 15.

Gerdes, Dick. "Cambio de Guardia: Literary Dynamics and Political Stagnation." American Hispanist, 2, No. 10 (1976), 4-5.

Goldberg, Samuel. "Una radiografía de las grandes minucias." La Prensa, 14 octubre 1976, 27.

"La gran pregunta de J.R.R. El Comercio, 2 marzo 1975, 10.

Hernández Navarrete, Pedro. "La argolla del boom se ha roto." Suceso, 2 diciembre 1973, 8-10.

Luchting, Wolfgang A. "11 preguntas a Julio Ramón Ribeyro." Textual, No. 3 (diciembre 1971), 47-52.

Macera, Pablo. "Ribeyro: un Pascal tolerante." El Comercio, 27 agosto 1978, 9.

Marrull, Eneas. "Testimonio de un marginado." Mundial, No. 14 (14-20 marzo 1975), 58-62.

Oviedo, José Miguel. "Soledad y frustración de una sociedad." El Comercio, 10 mayo 1964, 8.

Tamayo Vargas, Augusto. "Una nueva forma de expresión:
Ribeyro y 'Silvio en el Rosedal.'" El Comercio, 1^{ro}
agosto 1978, no pag.