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BY

GUS NICHOLSON

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NEGATIVISM IN THE WORKS OF ANTONIO GALA

APPROVED BY

James H. Abbott

Jerri P. Artman

Lowell Turner

Besse A. Clement

Seymour Feiler

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

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NEGATIVISM IN THE WORKS OF ANTONIO GALA

CHAPTER I

ANTONIO GALA AND TRADITIONAL NEGATIVE ATTITUDES IN SPANISH CULTURE

Antonio Gala's dramatic works, as well as some of his short stories, are marked by a tendency to stress the negative effects of the social, economic, and political order on the individual in his efforts to seek self-realization. Gala is a contemporary Spanish playwright, poet, critic, short story writer, and professor whose impact on the present day Hispanic theater is constantly being asserted, noticed, and appreciated not only by the critics of the stage, but also by other dramatists as well, and by the public at large. Having received numerous drama accolades, among them the prestigious Premio Calderón de la Barca award, he has become a well-known theatrical figure throughout Spain, in spite of a relatively short career. However, Gala remains fairly unknown outside Spain, primarily because of his youth. The majority of his works have yet to be translated. His best known play, Los verdes campos del Edén, however, is an exception, having been translated into several languages to

date. Some critics, among them Luis Molero Manglano, believe that international fame will inevitably come to this talented, versatile young playwright.

> Tal vez la única diferencia entre este autor de la vanguardia y algunos de sus compañeros es la íntima comunicación que este crítico comparte con otros muchos de que Antonio Gala tiene un gran talento y que, por tanto, en el momento en que se lo proponga puede ser un primerísimo autor de escala nacional y hasta aventuraríamos a escala universal.[1]

Antonio Gala's plays appeared during that period of theatrical activity which followed the devastating Spanish Civil War. Many dramas which appeared before Gala's plays have been labeled by various critics as the teatro de evasión, a movement which reached its peak during the forties, and which continued well into the fifties. This type of theater represents the opposite of the so-called teatro comprometido, dramas which followed those of the teatro de evasión, and which have as their main tenets a preoccupation with political and social themes. Characteristics of both movements appear in Gala's plays. Referring to the dramatists of the teatro comprometido, Francisco Ruiz Ramón comments:

> . . . empiezan su obra a partir de los últimos años de la década del 50, unos pocos, y, los más, durante la década del 60. Todos ellos, cualquiera que sea su estilo dramático, escriben un teatro de protesta y denuncia radicalmente contestatario.[2]

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[1]Luis Molero Manglano, Teatro español contemporáneo (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1974), pp.367-368.

[2]Francisco Ruíz Ramón, "Prolegómenos a un estudio del nuevo teatro español," Primer acto, núm. 173 (octubre 1974), 4.

For many critics, dramas which belong to the teatro de evasión are inferior in theme and expression, plays which are criticized for their weak, ephemeral plots. Of the evasionist theater Janet Díaz maintains that it is:

> . . . not necessarily fantastic and unrealistic, devoid of all serious content, but may include works of such universal and eternal themes as the importance of illusion and dreams (Casona, López Rubio, Mihura, even Buero), and the conflict of reality and idealism.[3]

As the name implies, this theater is primarily escapist in nature, a curious yet understandable reaction to such a negative and destructive historical experience as the Civil War truly represents. This evasionist theater attempts to flee from the unpleasantness of life which has always surrounded mankind. According to J. Rodríguez Richart, the principal characteristics of these works are that they are pleasing, tender, poetic, highly fantastic, and far too optimistic.[4] Through necessity, however, it was such a type of theater which could survive the constant exigencies of the repressive censorship by the Franco regime. Gala too was influenced, to a limited degree, by escapist tendencies. In his works he sometimes represents the interplay between illusion and reality, inward conflict versus external social conditions.

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[3]Janet Winecoff Díaz, "The Postwar Spanish Theater," South Atlantic Bulletin, XXXIII (March 1968), 10.

[4]J. Rodríguez Richart, "Entre renovación y tradición: Direcciones principales del teatro español actual," Boletín de la biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo, XLI (julio-diciembre 1965), 392.

Also like these dramatists of the teatro de evasión is Gala's irony and wit, even humor, although at times it becomes black humor. Similar to these works is the poetic quality of Gala's plays. It should be kept in mind that Gala began his literary career as a poet. Molero Manglano, along with the critics Antonio Núñez and José Monleón, have repeatedly referred to the poetic quality of Gala's plays. Molero Manglano declares that this playwright's works represent:

> . . . un teatro poético creado desde mundos interiores, íntimos, sencillos que crearán el mundo poético como acontece en Los verdes campos del Edén, y vestido con frase de especial diafanidad, expresividad y trascendencia simbólica.[5]

For these critics, the language is the most outstanding aspect of his plays.

On the other hand, his theater differs noticeably from that of the evasionists in that Gala is concerned to a great degree with the political and social problems of today. Critics such as José Monleón and Fernando Herrero consider the political and sociological aspects of his works as being their most important factors. The dramatist's El sol en el hormiguero is, in fact, a strong political satire. When compared to escapist dramas, Gala's plays are more thought provoking and much more serious works. Moreover, they certainly are not optimistic. If anything, it is his pessimism which distinguishes his plays from many of the other post-Civil War dramatists.

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[5]Molero Manglano, p.379.

Antonio Gala was born in 1937 into a large, wealthy family which included three brothers and a sister in Córdoba. A precocious child who was always encouraged to excel in his classes, Gala showed promise as a writer from childhood. Of those early years Gala states:

> En la intimidad yo sabía que chirriaría en ese mundo. Lo supe clarísimamente y puedo decir con exactitud el momento: tenía siete años y estaba mirando un brocado de color oro viejo, y tuve la seguridad que en el entorno mío no me iba a servir y que además mi familia, con todo lo que me quería y me quiere, no podía ayudarme, que habría un momento en que yo tendría que estar solo. Entonces probablemente hubo en mí un deseo de afirmarme, de no querer esa soledad que, en definitiva, tiene todo creador y que yo he aceptado . . .[6]

Apparently Antonio Gala was concerned with one of the recurring themes of his work, solitude, from a very early age. He received his degree in Derecho, Filosofía y Letras and a supplemental degree in Ciencias Políticas y Económicas. In Seville he founded a poetry review, Aljibe, and upon moving to Madrid he began another periodical devoted to poetry, Arquero. He has worked at several art galleries, and he has been a frequent collaborator for numerous literary journals, among them Cuadernos hispanoamericanos. Antonio Gala believes that it was destined that he become a writer, a decision not entirely his. Referring to his ideas of creativity and to the writing profession in general, Gala says:

> Uno tiene que inventarse un mundo, y, sobre todo, cuando por desgracia se nace creador, porque se nace.

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[6]Nora Ferrada, "Erase una vez un niño . . . llamado Antonio," Miss, núm. 380. (julio 1974), 9.

> No es una vocación, porque si lo fuese, yo la hubiera contradicho. Uno sabe que tiene que inventarse un mundo y tiene que inventárselo vagamente, de una manera casi inconsciente, difícil de recordar, y sabe que va a ser imposible inventárselo.[7]

His first big theatrical success was in 1963 when Los verdes campos del Edén, a play which won for him the Premio Nacional de Teatro and the Ciudad de Barcelona award (1964), appeared on stage in Madrid. He had previously won another literary prize, Premio Adonais (1959) for his book of poems entitled Enemigo íntimo. Another genre which has brought him recognition is the short story, having won the Premio Las Albinas (1963) for Solsticio de invierno. Gala has also written scenarios for Spanish television and the cinema, as well as a representative number of essays on the Spanish theater. He has taught at several North American universities, and he presently resides in Madrid.

Antonio Gala's theater is one in which man is often depicted as a victim of circumstance. His protagonists are anti-heroes who are betrayed by society and nature. Gala's characters are the maladjusted who are seeking a better life, but who are unsuccessful in their endeavors. They are, therefore, the lonely, solitary, alienated beings who continually attempt to discover their existence. Talking with Eduardo Huertas during an interview, Gala has attempted to define the nature of his theater.

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[7]Ibid., p.8.

> El tema fudamental de mi teatro es el hombre y la serie de interrogantes acerados, tan largo tiempo vergonzosamente oculta. Yo soy, sobre todo, un humanista. Pero hoy la política sufre tal hipertrofía que lo llena todo. Cualquier gesto que se haga, cualquier frase toma un matiz político, se quiera o no. Por eso yo trato del hombre como individuo, apoyado en un entorno social que quizás lo oprime en lugar de facilitarle su realización, su último fin: ser cada vez más él mismo.[8]

As a humanist Antonio Gala's primary concern is man. His main preoccupation is to expose those negative forces in society such as prejudice, deceit, ineffective and totalitarian government, and conformity which stifle man's attempts in asserting his own individuality. His works treat those aspects of life which man has traditionally considered to be nonpositive: unhappiness, solitude, alienation, despair and death. For Gala, negativism refers to those obstacles which society and political systems place in man's way in attaining self-realization and happiness. The reasons for the negative themes in Gala's plays are probably numerous, but two stand out as possible explanations: the traditional Spanish negativism pointed out by such scholars as John Crow, Diego Marín, and Rafael Altamira, as well as the general negative tendencies of the twentieth century.

The modern era repeatedly demonstrates an ever increasing awareness of the relevance of existence to the individual, and through extension, to society at large. In

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[8]Antonio Gala, Cantar de santiago paratodos (Madrid: Ediciones MK, 1974), p.10.

an age in which man finds himself constantly threatened by holocaustic extinction through means of nuclear warfare, he becomes apprehensive of his precarious situation in his struggle for survival. Moreover, modern man is aware of his loss of identity, of his isolation, solitude, intimidation, and helplessness through the mechanization of current civilization, which threatens, in turn, his emotional annihilation as well. Once the individual realizes his predicament, he is then forced to confront himself as his only means of retaliation. Man becomes, through circumstance and necessity, the focus of his own preoccupation. Such traumatic situations which characterize modern society have instilled an acute attitude of skepticism. Apparently, this habitual skepticism, while not the only element, is one of the principal factors of negativism in our present era.

Antonio Gala's works, whether prose or poetry, theater or short story, display such negative attitudes as solitude, alienation, anxiety and pessimism, among others. As a contemporary writer and as a Spaniard, Gala falls heir to several tremendous contributors of negativism. For one, existentialist thought has brought about much of the pessimistic positions of the modern-day author. As early as 1921 Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936) described the existential anguish which man experiences as a result of the interior conflict between his ardent desire for immortality and his reason which rejects such a possibility in Del sentimiento trágico

de la vida. Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955) expressed existentialist philosophy in El tema de nuestro tiempo (1923). His ideas were an effort to reconcile rationalism and vitalism, or reason and the irrational life force. From Nietzsche, who rebelled against the conformity and mediocrity of his times to declare that God is dead and that man, rather "Superman," must depend solely on himself; through Jean Paul Sartre, who maintains that man is free to make decisions, and who must consequently suffer because of this freedom, society has been presented with a steady display of nonpositive ideas. Man sees himself, therefore, as the prime agent in forging his existence. The negative consequences of this freedom of choice in determining existence are referred to by C. Hugh Holman: "This freedom and responsibility are the sources of his (man's) most intensive anxiety. Such a philosophical attitude can result in nihilism and hopelessness."[9] The other influence of negativism on Gala's writings could be those negative postures which are traditionally present in Hispanic culture itself.

Literary critics, historians, as well as sociologists, have studied in great detail the pessimistic orientation of the Spaniard toward life, an attitude which is eminently present in his literature as well. Such critics maintain that Hispanic literature appears to be one which harbors a

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[9]C. Hugh Holman, A Handbook to Literature (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1972), p.213.

preoccupation with the negative aspects of the human condition. Several explanations for these nonpositive characteristics have been proposed, which by nature must remain within the realm of theoretical speculation, since any attempt at scientific explanation would be futile. One of the most often mentioned negative factors which contributes to the Spanish personality is his preoccupation with self-criticism. Coupled with this attitude is his pessimistic outlook toward life. Commenting on his fellow countryman's lack of optimism, Diego Marín has made a special inquiry into the popular sayings and greetings of the common man in Spain. His investigation reveals that, to the Spaniard, life is a struggle, a constantly waged battle which always besieges him.

> Literalmente el español ve la vida como una lucha, un enfrentamiento con el mundo exterior en el que hay que vencer para vivir bien. Así lo denotan ciertas frases familiares de saludo: "¿Cómo va la lucha (la vida)?, "Vamos luchando.", o "Se defiende uno." (indicando que las cosas van bastante bien).[10]

Other critics believe that at the heart of the Spaniard's pessimism lies his stoic resignation to his fate. This resigning of oneself to the realities of life is apparent early in Spanish literature, noticeably in the writings of Seneca during the first century A.D. It is this resignation toward his plight in society which enables the Spaniard to endure, to survive. Rafael Altamira refers to this stoicism:

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[10]Diego Marín, La vida española (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1970), p.11.

> Por otra parte, es cierto que nuestro pueblo bajo (en el sentido de jerarquía social) cuenta, entre sus ideas más arraigadas y características, por iletrados que sean quienes participan de ellas, la de la resignación con su suerte, por mala que sea; su estoicismo respecto del dolor y la desgracia (con tal que no lo vea derivar de una intención malévola personal) y su creencia en que todo eso es inevitable porque el mundo será siempre como ha sido hasta aquí. ¡Cuántas veces he oído a pobres labradores que no sabían leer ni escribir, estas elocuentes palabras!: "¡Hay que padecer!" Ahora bien, estas ideas son las más salientes y típicas de Seneca.[11]

Beneath all the comprehensiveness and exhuberance which the Iberians maintain, there is "a certain aloofness, a strange austerity"[12] which remains evident throughout their life. This aloofness is, perhaps, the most apparent manifestation of that personality trait which many critics censure the most in Spaniards and which accounts for their adamant individualism. Certainly individualism, it may be argued, is a universal characteristic, common to all men throughout all ages. Moreover, it is not particularly negative. It is this individualism, which in an acute state becomes isolation and solitude, that appears as a primary negative trait in the characters of Gala's plays. Traditionally a Spaniard first considers himself a regional member of a given area, his _patria chica_, before he thinks of himself as a citizen of the national government. He constantly strives to maintain

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[11]Rafael Altamira, _Los elementos de la civilización y del carácter españoles_ (Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, S.A., 1956), p.233.

[12]Aubrey F. G. Bell, _Castilian Literature_ (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), p.118.

his identity, even when he finds himself in the midst of some collective endeavor. For the Iberian, life represents "un sistema filosófico que considera al individuo como fundamento y fin de todas las leyes y relaciones morales y políticas."[13] Salvador de Madariaga has studied in detail the individualism of his fellow countrymen:

> Direct observation will show that the ideal of the Englishman is ethical, social and positive, that of the Spaniard is ethical, individual and personal. The Englishman's norm is virtue, the Spaniard's norm is honour; the Englishman seeks action in order to conquer things; the Spaniard, in order to conquer men. For the main interest of the Spaniard is in men.[14]

Some writers maintain that much of the pessimistic propensity of the Iberian has been shaped by the physical qualities of the land itself. Among those critics is John Crow, who claims that it is that great feeling of space of the barren surroundings of the province of Castile which has exerted such a tremendous influence on the disposition of the Spaniard. Referring to Castile, John A. Crow comments: "This is the part of Spain that has given to the country its stern character, its primitive robustness, its stoic endurance to pain and suffering, its vitality and its bareness."[15] Unquestionably, the inhospitable properties which constitute

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[13]Altamira, p.73.

[14]Salvador de Madariaga, The Genius of Spain (Freeport: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), p.17.

[15]John A. Crow, The Root and the Flower (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p.4.

much of the austere, dry Spanish landscape could very well contribute to the receptive sensitivities of the Spaniard toward life.

There is a fatalistic viewpoint in Hispanic culture even in the area of entertainment, namely bullfights, as well as folksongs. Sadness and grief are the usual themes of the latter, the so-called cante hondo, although such universal themes are not exclusive to Spanish folksongs. In the cante hondo the singer makes reference to unrequited love most often. He also sings of sadness, loss, death, and even religious passion. Such songs have risen from a multicultural influence such as the African, Hebrew, and Moorish cultures in the south of Spain. Talking about these songs Crow says that they are laments whose:

> . . . sliding and fragmented notes, their sharp quavers which often suggest a piercing cry, their staccato accompaniment on the Spanish flamenco guitar, these qualities suggest in sound the trajectory of a gliding, wavering, and piercing arrow."[16]

It is little wonder, therefore, that certain religious Andalusian chants, which are intended to recall the passion of Christ on Calvary, are called saetas, or arrows.

As for the other form of diversion, bullfighting, the fiesta nacional of Spain, the matador is given the opportunity to challenge the brute forces of nature and to escape the possibility of being overtaken by a terrible

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[16]Ibid., p.21.

death. Actually, this event is more than just sport or a form of amusement. Marín has given a rather adequate definition of bullfighting when he says:

> La corrida, más que una diversión o un deporte, es una función pública, solemne y espectacular, que refleja cualidades típicas o admiradas del español: su hombría, su indiferencia ante el dolor, su gravedad, su sentido trágico de la vida.[17]

On the other hand, bullfighting can be thought of in very positive terms as well, for basically it demonstrates man's skill at deceiving death through the use of his mind as well as his physical prowess.

> The aficionado esteems both the skill of the matador and the fighting qualities of the bull. The animal is coerced into the spectacle. He is the reluctant but totally dignified copartner in a ritual permitting man the cathartic illusion of triumph over death, acquisition of virility, and at the same time mastery and control of his own unfathomable sexuality.[18]

In the realm of literature, pessimism has come to the fore during certain periods of Spanish history. Often negative characteristics in literary works mirror historical reality of a nonpositive nature. Such a negative historical fact was the weakening position of Spain as a global power. Beginning with the defeat of the Invencible Armada (1588) and culminating with the very pessimistic viewpoint of the Generation of '98, with the loss of the Spanish American War

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[17]Marín, p.60.

[18]Antonio Regalado et al., España en el siglo XX (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1974), p.83.

of 1898, Spanish writers have unmercifully given vent to their bitterness. Several authors are particularly singled out by critics as being thoroughly pessimistic writers, among them, Francisco Gómez de Quevedo y Villegas (1580-1645). Otis H. Green has commented on these very facts:

> As we pass into the seventeenth-century, the waning of Spain's political star brings with it an intensification of the tendency to dwell on life's precariousness, its brevity, its essential inability to satisfy man's longings.[19]

As in other literatures, Spanish romanticism produced a plethora of writers with pessimistic viewpoints. Perhaps the principal cause of negative attitudes in Romanticism stemmed from the dramatic clash between the subjectiveness of the writer's feelings against the objectiveness of the outside world. It was their motto to proclaim their right to be different, to be an individual. Being a Romantic often meant waging an interior battle, as Guillermo Díaz-Plaja points out: "Ser romántico consiste en sentirse aparte de la vida normal y suspirar por ella, sin desearla al fondo."[20] Isolation and noncommunication, two frequent themes in twentieth-century literature, were common themes of Romantic authors, since they lived in a rather peripheral world beyond the main current of existence. So acute was their alienation

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[19]Otis Green, Spain and the Western Tradition, Vol. II (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), p.134.

[20]Guillermo Díaz-Plaja, Introducción al estudio del romanticismo español (Buenos Aires: Editora Escalpa-Calpe, 1953), p.55.

from society that they frequently sought suicide as the only remedy to their problematic life. Perhaps one of the best known of these fatalistic Romantics, and one who appears to epitomize the Romantic psyche in Spain was Mariano José de Larra (1809-1837). Larra possessed a double personality, a dichotomy of sensibilities. César Barja claims that there was "un Larra pasional y vehemente, todo corazón, y otro Larra pensador equilibrado, filosófico y crítico literario."[21] Larra demonstrates most readily his sentimental and passionate proclivity in his drama Macías, which concerns the unfortunate passion and demise of the Galician trovador, Macías, victim of an unsuccessful love affair. Interestingly enough, the death of Larra himself is foretold in this work, for he supposedly killed himself because of his despondency over an ill-fated romance. Another pessimistic writer of the nineteenth century was Angel Ganivet (1865-1898). This writer was one of the precursors of the Generation of '98 who, in his Idearium español (1899), subjectively observed the essential traits of the Spaniard. In his book Ganivet optimistically predicted, ironically enough, the rehabilitation of Spain as a viable power and modern nation through hard work and meticulous adherence to her own traditions. Of the numerous writers of the Generation of '98, Pío Baroja stands out as an author with a particularly negative point of view.

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[21]César Barja, Libros y autores modernos: siglos XVIII y XIX (New York: Las Americas Publishing Co., 1964), p.146.

For his times, his novels were essentially virulent criticisms of the flaws of modern Hispanic society, although these novels may seem fairly sedate and not very forceful by present-day standards.

It would be impossible, as well as improbable, to treat here all Spanish authors of the twentieth century whose sensitivities are predominantly pessimistic, since negativism is such a universal, omnipresent attitude in contemporary literature. Yet, one writer in particular, Camilo José Cela (1916) should be mentioned for his particular contribution of fatalism, tremendismo. His negativism is the description of violent, blood-chilling acts carefully related with brutal realism. Describing Cela's first novel, Angel del Río and Diego Marín explain:

> Su primera y sensacional obra, La familia de Pascual Duarte (1942), marca el comienzo del llamado "tremendismo", con su visión truculenta y clínica de la vida en una sociedad desmoralizada y endurecida por la violencia, el temor, el hambre y los odios, como era el caso de la sociedad española a raíz de la guerra civil.[22]

Negative attitudes are indeed evident in much of modern literature, not only in Spain, but also throughout the world. Themes of despondency and solitude are recurring characteristics in the works of the Spanish writers Dámaso Alonso (1898), Antonio Buero Vallejo (1916), Luis Cernuda

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[22]Diego Marín and Angel del Río, Breve historia de la literatura española (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), p.326.

(1904-1963), and José Hierro (1922), authors who, like Antonio Gala, describe the loneliness of modern man who patiently attempts to give meaning to existence in an indifferent and often hostile society. Antonio Gala's works treat those aspects of life which society has traditionally considered to be nonpositive: unhappiness, solitude, alienation, despair, and death. For Gala, however, negativism also includes those repressive socio-economic, political forces which impede man from self-realization. Such nonaffirmative themes cause his plays and short stories to become somber works whose tone is truly tragic and thoroughly negative.

CHAPTER II

GALA'S TREATMENT OF SOLITUDE, ANGUISH AND DESPAIR

Twentieth-century literature abounds in such pessimistic attitudes as hopelessness, loss of identity, loneliness and despair. Recent traumatic historical events such as the devastation of lives and resources in two world wars, the detonation of nuclear arms, the mechanization of life by a highly automated society, and the disintegration of close family ties, could all be cited as having played a decisive role in fostering such negativism. Modern man has become aware of his insignificance, or rather, his hopelessness in an unreceptive community, and such feelings are mirrored in his literature as well. His isolation and helplessness have produced within him feelings of anguish and despair. The well-known writer and sociologist, Joseph Margolis, refers to the universality of such negative aspects in life. He says:

> Indeed, every culture appears to institutionalize distinctly human "negativities," the basic forms of losing and limiting life: suicide, crime, deviance, insanity, inequality, alienation and waste, as well as such distinctly negative correctives as

> anarchy, punishment, war, revolution, abortion, euthanasia, and genocide. It helps to bring these concepts together because one harldy realizes otherwise how very much the world's ideologies are focused on the negative conditions of human life and how systematically they are related to one another.[1]

As a contemporary author, Antonio Gala also employs negative ideas in his works. Of the numerous pessimistic themes which are found in all of Gala's works, solitude, anguish and despair are, perhaps, the most frequent. The treatment of his loneliness of modern man is especially evident in his best known work, Los verdes campos del Edén, a play which earned the playwright the distinguished Calderón de la Barca award, among others. This was the play which, according to the drama critic, Luis Molero Manglano, epitomizes the style and character of all of Gala's theater.[2] Moreover, this work launched the dramatist in his career as a playwright. As in most of Gala's plays, Los verdes campos del Edén represents a loosely structured story. Essentially the plot concerns a young man, Juan, who is seeking his grandfather's tomb, and who abandons the insensitivities of society only to discover that there is no escape from harassment by society. Most of the scenes occur in a cemetery crypt, where several characters come to take refuge from the same hostile, apathetic world from which Juan is fleeing.

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[1]Joseph Zalman Margolis, Negatives: The Limits of Life (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1975), p.4.

[2]Molero Manglano, p.379.

The North American hispanist, Marion P. Holt, claims that these characters are the "disinherited members of society" who "seek a temporary haven from conditions that have created in them an intense feeling of desperation or alienation."[3] Juan's home has been destroyed in the Spanish Civil War, and he becomes a vagabond. Unable to pay for lodging at a boarding house, he resides at his grandfather's crypt. Ana, a young lady who arrives daily at the cemetery to grieve over her lover's tomb, accepts Juan's invitation to live with him at the cemetery. For another couple, Manuel and María, the solitude of the cemetery also represents a refuge. Being newlyweds, they come to the graveyard in order to make love, since they feel intimidated at home, for in a bedroom shared by four people, there is little, if any, privacy.

In the second act a New Year's Eve celebration takes place. Among the guests are Monique and Nina, two prostitutes from a local cabaret where, ironically, existence affords less joy and happiness than the cemetery. Due to the boisterous merriment of the revelers, the festivities are halted by the civil authorities, and the entrance to the crypt is permanently closed.

The theme of solitude in this play is represented symbolically by the juxtaposition of the realm of the living with that of the dead. Ironically, in order to live as he

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[3]Marion P. Holt, The Contemporary Spanish Theater (1949-1972) (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p.154.

may choose, Juan decides to reside in a graveyard. His solitude, as that of many of the other characters, is a result of his inability to communicate or to interact with real people in general. To a certain degree, Juan symbolizes the misunderstood, the lonely and unappreciated individual in society. The same could be said about Ana, whose only solace in life is visiting her deceased lover's grave. The following passage illustrates Juan's loneliness:

> Juan: Yo llevo muchos años andados. Por el campo, ¿sabe?, y por esos sitios. Y ya me llegó la hora de recogerme. Yo con la gente aquella no me entiendo. Y como heredé de mi abuelo esta tierrita de aquí, he decidido venirme a vivir con él.
>
> Guarda: . . . Pero hombre de Dios, ¿no se da cuenta de que eso está prohibido? Aquí no puede haber más que difuntos. Descansando en paz. Para venir aquí a descansar se tiene usted que morir primero.
>
> Juan: Si yo estoy como muerto. Yo vengo, me siento por ahí y no slago más. Yo soy muy pacífico... Donde me ponen, allí me estoy.
>
> Guarda: Que no, que no. ¿No ve usted que yo tengo obligaciones? Lo descubren y me echan a perder la carrera. Menuda está hoy la cosa.
>
> Juan: Si no me van a descubrir. Yo no salgo más que cuando no haya nadie. Cuando usted quiera que me vaya me lo dice y me voy. Yo no le comprometo.
>
> Guarda: ¡Qué no! Pero este hombre está loco. (A Luterio.) Haga usted el favor de llevárselo. ¡Qué manías![4]

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[4]Antonio Gala, Los verdes campos del Edén-Los buenos días perdidos (Madrid: Escalpa-Calpe, S.A., 1972), p.31. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

At the end of the play Juan is denied living space at the cemetery. He feels completely alone, for he is even refused the security and assurance that he will be left alone to live his existence as he pleases. Similarly, this feeling of helplessness and solitude is experienced by the two prostitutes, who are likewise constantly pursued by an inhospitable and insensitive community. Being outcasts of society, they are denied understanding and sympathy. They are, perhaps, the most tragic characters in the drama, for they have no one who will hear their problems nor who will offer them comfort. At least Juan and Ana have each other to console, even though their future is also bleak. However, the characters manage to survive by deluding themselves into believing that some day they will find happiness. In other words, they do express some hope. At one point Juan says: "Mientras se viva hay que llevar la vida, entera para adelante, como sea."(38)

This desire to seek empathy during times of duress and loneliness is a universal feeling experienced by all men throughout history. Octavio Paz in El laberinto de la soledad aptly describes the feelings of solitude. He states:

> Todos los hombres, en algún momento de su vida, se sienten solos; y más: todos los hombres están solos. Vivir, es separarnos del que fuimos para internarnos en el que vamos a ser, futuro extraño siempre. La soledad es el fondo último de la condición humana. El hombre es el único ser que se siente solo y el único que es búsqueda de otro. Su naturaleza--si se puede hablar de naturaleza al referirse al hombre, el ser que, precismamente, se ha inventado a sí mismo al

> decirle "no" a la naturaleza--consiste en un aspirar a realizarse en otro. El hombre es nostalgia y búsqueda de comunión. Por eso cada vez que se siente a sí mismo se siente como carencia de otro, como soledad.[5]

Like the solitude described by Paz in the preceding passage, the characters in Los verdes campos del Edén turn reciprocally to each other for comfort. In an apathetic environment, represented in this play by the world beyond the cemetery, i.e., society, the actors find only incommunicability. They become aware, therefore, of their solitude.

In this play the cemetery itself is a symbolic representation of solitude. It symbolizes that world which lies beyond and separate from the mainstream of existence, even though death, paradoxically, is man's final state in life. Speaking with A. García Pérez, Gala himself has commented on his particular fascination with graveyards. The author states: "Me gusta visitar en las ciudades a las que voy, los mercados y los cementarios. Son lo más definitivo de un país."[6] The cemetery is an idyllic sanctuary for Juan, who convinces Ana that she should remain with him. For these two characters the graveyard is a world free from care and trouble. When this habitation is denied them, they feel sadness and finally resignation. The following passage illustrates this resignation:

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[5]Octavio Paz, El laberinto de la soledad (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1969), p.175.

[6]A. García Pérez, "Antonio Gala sigue vivo," El País (mayo 1976), p.40

Guarda: (A Juan.) ¿Qué hacía usted aquí?

Juan: Esperaba, señor.

Guarda: ¿Qué esperaba usted?

Juan: Ahora ya no lo sé.

Guarda: ¿No sabía usted que aquí no se podía vivir?

Juan: Sí, lo sabía, señor. Pero intenté vivir a pesar de todo.(73)

Marion Holt believes that Los verdes campos del Edén is a play noteworthy for its abundance of Christian symbolism. Gala himself has commented on the play's religious facet when he states: "Los verdes campos del Edén es la historia de una redención."(13) One example of Christian symbolism is the appearance of a white dove with a broken wing. Traditionally the dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Symbolizing the abuse of faith, the bird is discovered at the entrance of the crypt. Later in the play a guard is startled by hearing a cock crowing, which calls to mind the denial of Christ by Peter. A personage named María, a character reminiscent of the Virgin Mary, is pregnant, and it is decided that the child will be named Manuel, again another biblical name. Emmanuel in Hebrew means "God be with us," and it was Jesus' original name. Yet another character, Luterio, places his hand on María's swollen diaphragm and intones a hymn to the glory of the Virgin.

Luterio: (A María) Oye, hija, ¿Me digas que ponga la mano cuando se mueva?

María: Sí. (Pausa.) Ahora. (Luterio se acerca. Pone la mano sobre el vientre de María. Rompe a cantar:)

Luterio: La Virgin va caminando/va caminando solita/ y no lleva más compaña/que al niño en su barriguita./ (Se echa a llorar, casi arrodillado sobre María. Los demás lo rodean. Parece una Adoración de pastores el cuandro que componen.) (68-69)

In another scene María is greeted by Juan with words which bring to mind the Hail Mary prayer of the Roman Catholic Church.

Juan: ¿Cómo te llamas?

María: María, para lo que guste.

Juan: Estás llena de gracia.(35)

Finally, the closing of the crypt and the dispersion of each of the characters by the incensed guards may be intended to symbolize the sealing of Christ's tomb after the crucifixion.

Los verdes campos del Edén has produced accolades from most critics, who acclaim this work as the playwright's best drama thus far. Holt, for example, says that "It is a rewarding play that must rank as one of the most original contributions to recent Spanish theater."[7] Another critic, Leopoldo Rodríguez Alcalde, has been equally as complimentary in his commendation and appraisal of this play:

Un poeta verdadero, Antonio Gala, reveló en Los verdes campos del Edén notaria capacidad teatral. La extraordinaria fábula del cementerio convertido

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[7]Holt, p.155.

> en acampamento donde la felicidad no escasea, abrió de par en par muchas puertas y ventanas al paso de una poesía inequívocamente juvenil, que expresaba su vitalidad por medio de la frase ingeniosa y de la metáfora brillante. Todo es redimible por intercesión de la poesía: fe que no hay que confundir con un barato conformismo, pues la poesía auténtica tiene su raíz en la conciencia del dolor humano y en sus posibilidades de redención, posibilidades que se subliman cuando lo perdonan todo por no ignorar nada.[8]

Having been translated into several languages, Los verdes campos del Edén will unquestionably continue to maintain its fame throughout the world. Due to its poetic and brilliant dialogue, its abundant use of metaphor and symbolism, its serious and pertinent universal message, the play will perhaps be judged as Gala's finest work, one which will sustain Gala's reputation as a capable playwright of the contemporary Spanish theatrical scene.

The theme of solitude is especially noticeable in El caracol en el espejo (1965). This work is a curious play, which has less plot than the preceding drama. Composed of a series of seven vignettes or scenes which afford the main characters ample opportunity to voice their opinions concerning their problems, the play does not contain a traditional story structure with a beginning or presentation of a problem, development of plot, and finally a denouement. Instead, each scene, in which nothing really takes place, begins with the

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[8]Leopoldo Rodríguez Alcalde, Teatro español contemporáneo (Madrid: Ediciones y Publicaciones Españolas, S.A., 1973), p.191.

same assemblage of a large group of characters. For example, the actors are going to a party in the first scene. What little narrative there is can be followed in the story of two characters named A and Z, who are newlyweds at the beginning of the drama. Many guests arrive to help them celebrate their new life together. Later the same guests arrive to celebrate the birth of the couple's baby, only to discover that he has died. In subsequent scenes the audience is informed that A and Z are forced to return their household possessions to their creditors, since Z has lost his money at gambling. Along with his economic ruin comes his emotional destruction, and at the end of the work the couple resign themselves to a life of disillusionment, despair and boredom. Symbolically Gala represents this feeling of despair by closing the work as it began--an empty, dark stage.

This work is a thesis play in which ideas and theories abound, often to the detriment of the dramatic impact. As José Monleón has astutely observed in the introduction to an edition of plays by Gala, in this work, "son ideas y no personajes lo que se debaten."[9] Frustration and boredom appear to be the main themes in this play. Frustration is experienced by each of the characters, whose aspirations are

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[9]Antonio Gala, El caracol en el espejo, El sol en el hormiguero, Noviembre y un poco de yerba (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970), p.22. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

stifled usually by some element of society. Often the individual's intention to fulfill his desires of leading a happy, enjoyable existence is thwarted by the community at large. The age-old theme of individual choice versus the restriction of freedom by society is clearly given expression in this play. The frustration of the actors is fundamentally expressed through the theme of love. A and Z resign themselves to a drab, tedious existence as they realize that for them love is an impossibility. A's anxiety becomes despair as she faces her predicament and laments, "Dios mío. He vivido más de la mitad de mi vida. ¿Dónde está lo maravilloso? Nosotros somos, y nada más, el campo de batalla."(161) Through their ill-fated love affiar, A and Z confess the solitude which each one feels. They acknowledge that they are truly alone and helpless in their attempt to communicate:

> Z: ¿Qué podía hacer yo? ¿Qué puede hacer un pobre hombre? Otros hablan de amor a todas horas. Para eso se necesita tiempo libre y tener ganas de ver ponerse el sol. Lo nuestro es otra cosa. Lo nuestro es estar resignados uno a otro. Aceptarnos. ¿Qué otras manos íbamos a buscar? ¿Qué otros ojos? No hubiéramos podido empezar nuevas historias. Era como si ya tuviéramos juntos muchos hijos. Otros hablan de amor a todas horas. Y, sin embargo, el amor no se puede decir.
>
> A: Ahora estoy sola. Nadie está tan solo. Me miro las manos a ver si me ha credido verdina de lo sola que estoy. Y él también está solo. Huele a humedad cuando anochece. Pero ni él ni yo estamos nunca juntos a solas. Ni siquiéra podemos estarlo. Y ni siquiera sabemos por qué. Nadie está tan solo. (135-136)

Besides these two characters, who express on numerous occasions their loneliness, three other actors also speak of their solitude. One of the most pathetic of these characters is one who is simply called Solterona. She laments that she has never had the opportunity to experience love. Not ever having felt such an emotion, she feels that her life has never been truly complete.

> Solterona: En cierta ocasión yo dormía también. Era en un tren. Me despertó un aliento. Cuando abrí los ojos había una cara de hombre muy cerca de la mía. Pero de esto hace ya mucho tiempo.(126)

She, too, has resigned herself to the ennui, unhappiness and hopelessness in her rather uninteresting life. Another character who expresses his solitude, perhaps metaphorically, is Marinero. He refers to the fact that, although he has always been a sailor, he has never seen the sea.

> Mujer Sola: (Al Marinero.) ¿Usted cree que mañana hará buen día?
>
> Marinero: No sé, señora. Eso no se puede decir hasta mañana por la noche. En el mar pasa igual. Según me han dicho, porque yo, ¿sabe usted?, nunca he visto el mar.
>
> Mujer Sola: Yo, sí.
>
> Marinero: ¿Cómo es? Si yo lo viese... Aunque fuese un momento. Todo sería distinto. Si yo lo viese... (150)

In a very poetic passage Mujer Sola also expresses her loneliness, as a result of being jilted by her sweetheart during a childhood experience.

Mujer Sola: (Al Marinero.) Yo estaba enamorada de un muchacho. Se llamaba Roby. Y a mi mejor amiga, Margarita. Siempre andábamos los tres juntos. Ya usted comprende, a los nueve años.

Marinero: Yo, a los nueve años, hacía pitos con los alcaceles y los tocaba solo, en medio del campo.

Mujer Sola: Roby tenía una tiza de color amarillo. En todas partes escribía con su tiza y ni a nosotras nos la prestaba.

Marinero: Yo nunca, nunca he tenido una tiza amarilla. Y me parece que ya no es la hora.

Mujer Sola: Un día, en un pared, vi unas letras muy grandes que decían: "Roby ama a Margarita." Y estaban escritas con tiza amarilla.(165)

Solitude is conveyed in El caracol en el espejo through technical means, since this drama is divided into self-contained, separate scenes. Each scene is totally independent of each other, since there is no narrative with a beginning, middle and end. These scenes may be interchanged by placing the last at the beginning or in any other combination, without the play's suffering greatly. Solitude is also connoted by the names of some of the characters. Their appellations include: Mujer Sola, Solterona, and Marinero Que No Ha Visto El Mar, all of which conjure the notion of loneliness and detachment.

El caracol en el espejo is a play of ideas, whose message is that all men seek some form of love and acceptance. Moreover, few are the people who attain real happiness in life, since forces in society such as greed, apathy, misunderstanding and jealousy constantly impede one from

achieving contentment. The results of such negative forces exerted by the community cause one to experience frustration and finally resignation to one's unhappy, boring existence. José Monleón sums up efficaciously the essence of El caracol en el espejo. He says:

> La obra es, de arriba abajo, abstracta. . . . Son las mil caras de un mismo sentimiento. Los personajes hablan--como en Extraño interludio de O'Neill--un doble lenguaje, el trivial, de labios afuera, y el íntimo, el que no pronuncian, el que explicita la pesadumbre y el resentimiento--resulta la pugna con la derrota del amor--, colocado por el autor entre parentesis. Están también los personajes que han hecho de este resentimiento un hábito, un hecho cotidiano, una sequedad definitiva.(22)

In another play, Anillos para una dama, the principal negative attitudes are anguish and despair instead of solitude, although one may argue that solitude does appear in this work as well. Antonio Gala obtained inspiration for his play from history as well as legend which dates back in time to the eleventh century, namely, to the Cid and doña Jimena. The dramatist thus continues a long tradition by Spanish writers who have treated some aspect of the life of this illustrious couple in their works. Surprisingly enough, Antonio Gala takes a unique position, for the story in this play concentrates on Jimena's psychological nature and completely excludes Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar. In September 1973, Anillos para una dama opened in Madrid and proved to be a big box office success for the playwright.

Act one opens at the Iglesia Mayor de Santa María de Valencia, where Bishop Jerónimo is eulogizing the accomplishments of the Cid, who has been dead for two years. This service is intended to commemorate the official end of a two-year period of mourning. Mazdalí, an almoravide general, is threatening to lay siege to Valencia, and Jimena is doing nothing about the situation. Instead, she spends her time belittling the Cid and accuses Minaya of being a coward, for he has never returned the love that Jimena feels for him. Later in the play, however, Minaya does confess that he loves Jimena, but that loyalty and respect for her husband always prevents him from expressing his true feelings toward her. Meanwhile, King Alfonso VI, Jimena's uncle, arrives with his troops and conquers Mazdalí. He, therefore, can claim Valencia and annex it to the kingdom of Leon. Jimena's daughter, María, argues with the king, saying that Valencia belongs to the Cid's successors, since her father liberated the city from the Moors, and the king did nothing except exile the Cid. Alfonso adamantly refuses her request. During the king's stay in Valencia, Jimena avails herself of the opportunity to persuade Alfonso into sanctioning her marriage to Minaya. She falls to her knees, embracing Minaya's legs, while he stands stunned by her astonishing actions. Alfonso then calls all his men to arms, in order to defend Valencia from the ferocious forces of Mazdalí's army.

In act two Alfonso ponders Jimena's request to marry Minaya, and decides that she must never wed for love. Although he does not disapprove of her having a love affair with Minaya, he will not allow her to marry him. He believes that she must always appear as a model of fidelity and sacrifice to the memory of the Cid to the entire community. Nevertheless, this proposal displeases Jimena, for she wants everyone to know that she loves Minaya, and that she desperately wants to be his wife. Enraged and embittered over the king's decision, Jimena frantically screams about her emotions toward Minaya. Alfonso manages to subdue her fit of rage by threatening her with incarceration if she persists in her uncontrolled demonstration of anguish. Having been ordered by the king to Toledo, Minaya comes to take leave forever of Jimena. He feels that the memory of the Cid would always come between them, preventing them from ever being truly happy. However, he claims, rather romantically, that they will be together in death, since they were denied union in life. Alfonso commands Jimena to accompany the Cid's coffin to San Pedro de Cardeña for interment. Toward the end of the play she finally resigns herself to her fate. She then delivers some of the most stirring lines of the drama as she reveals this resignation:

> Jimena: . . . Y yo creí que no era una heroína.
> Sí, lo soy: esta es mi pobre herocidad: ser
> siempre el despojo de un héroe para que el héroe
> lo pueda seguir siendo... Sin Jimena no hay Cid.
> Yo soy su prueba. No sería necesaria tu guardia.

> Conservaré lo que demuestra que todo fue verdad: un cadaver podrido y estos anillos en mi mano derecha.[10]

Valencia burns. The king, along with his retinue, departs, and Jimena is left in utter despair. When she is about to faint, she falters and is offered assistance from her chambermaids. But she maintains that she can do what she pleases by herself. As the curtain slowly descends, she states confidently but desperately:

> Jimena: ¡Sola! ¡Dejadme sola! Lo que tengo que hacer de ahora en adelante lo puedo hacer yo sola. (110)

The unhappiness of Jimena reaches the point of anguish and despair. The theme in this play could very easily be frustration. Jimena is pictured as a strong character and a weak one at the same time, for she defies kings, bishops and generals. Yet she is weak in that her primary concern is her own person. In other words, she places her personal satisfaction above her duty to her subjects and the state. Her despair is a result of the fact that her life belongs to the public, to history, to posterity, to everyone but herself. Therefore, her life is not her own, yet what she wants is to be like other women who are free to love as they please. Jimena is presented as an average, ordinary woman with the same desires and foibles as any other person, and

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[10]Antonio Gala, Anillos para una dama (Madrid: Ediciones Jucar, 1974), p.108. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

not as the almost deified super-human figure which is conveyed by history and legend. Fernando Herrero refers to this particular aspect of the play as its desmitificadora element, which lies primarily in the coloquial speech of all of the characters. Referring to this demythication aspect of the work, Herrero states:

> La España del Cid lleva en sí una gran posibilidad de estudio crítico y dialéctico pero todo se ha quedado en una fácil desmitificación, en un desmontaje, exclusivamente esquemático de los aspectos del Poder y de su fuerza de manipulación, en una mera intuición de lo que pudo haber significado la figura del Cid en relación con la política de aquella época.[11]

On numerous occasions Gala has maintained that one of the main precepts of his theatre is that the characters are in search of their being, of their true identity. In his works the characters must struggle in order to find meaning for their existence and a reason for their being. In Anillos para una dama Jimena does just that, for her primary desire is to create a life of her own choosing. She finds, nevertheless, that she is powerless. Her identity has already been fixed in the minds of the people, and nothing she does can change the situation. To Jimena to be rich and famous and unhappy is not enough. She believes she is entitled to feel content as well. When she realizes that her life will never be to her liking, she feels anguish. This anguish

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[11]Fernando Herrero, "Anillos para una dama de Antonio Gala," Primer acto, núm. 162 (noviembre 1973), 69.

later becomes despair. Her despair is so acute that she begins to prefer death over life.

> Jimena: Otros días me miro en los espejos y me digo: "¿De quién son esos ojos? Yo tenía la mirada tan joven... ¿Seré yo aquella misma Jimena de otro tiempo u otra que ha nacido ya vieja?... Se acabó para siempre. Me has prestado esta vida que no me gusta. Se han llevado la mía. Cuando su dueño venga a recogerla, se la daré encantada y le diré: Te la devuelvo igual que me la diste. No la he usado nunca. Ni un día la he usado... (35-36)

The levels of struggle are manifold. Consequently, Jimena's anguish intensifies. This tension is maintained throughout the play. For one, there is the external struggle represented by society versus the individual, in other words, the Spanish nation against Jimena. Society demands that she behave as a heroine who is above the ordinary feelings of common people. Jimena, on the other hand, prefers to give full vent to her emotions. Within the family there is the struggle between María and Jimena. The daughter wants her mother to remain faithful to the memory of her father and not marry a second time. Even Minaya can be viewed as a dissenting element opposing Jimena's desires, for he actually abandons her in her most acute moments of desperation. Lastly, there is that existential anguish which Jimena feels within her own psyche, since she constantly is torn between duty to the state and people and giving in to her own emotions. What is at stake here is not necessarily her love for Minaya, but rather the lack of it. Superficially,

Minaya is the object of Jimena's erotic fantasy. But the definitive problem here is whether or not one has the right to live as one chooses. This is the main issue in this remarkable play by Gala.

Rather than solitude itself, one finds loneliness in Anillos para una dama. Jimena is completely alone in her despair. Abandoned by her lover, left alone in life as a widow by the Cid, alienated from her daughter, and estranged from the king, Jimena remains solitary in her search to be herself. She experiences existential anguish, for she never manages to feel the satisfaction nor the assurance of having attained the type of life which is pleasing to her. Jimena's plight is, indeed, tragic.

Pessimism runs rampant in Anillos para una dama. Unhappiness is experienced by both Minaya and Jimena, since their love is not consummated. Failure to achieve contentment is felt by the couple, María, as well as the king, who must always feel the uneasiness which accompanies the fear of possible attack from the enemy. Despair and anguish, therefore, are felt by most of the characters. Angel Fernandez Santos, in the introduction to this play, makes some rather interesting remarks concerning its pessimism. He says:

> Anillos para una dama es, a mi juicio, un poema lírico sobre la inutilidad del transcurso de la vida. Un poema complejo, difícil, sumamente amargo y pesimista.(17)

The theme of personal desires versus civic duty is a classical theme which dates back to the ancient Greeks. Interestingly enough Antonio Gala takes that idea and makes it relevant to a twentieth-century audience. Whether or not one accepts the philosophy behind Jimena's machinations is not important. Without a doubt Anillos para una dama will continue to fascinate and perplex its viewers.

A play which combines both the negative attitudes of solitude and despair, along with the themes of disillusionment and deceit, is Los buenos días perdidos. This work premiered on October 10, 1973, at the Teatro Lara in Madrid. Containing many of the characteristics of Gala's style, themes, and ideas, this drama is a formidable work for the study of pessimism by the playwright. Perhaps more than the other plays treated up to this point, Los buenos días perdidos contains more of a traditional story development with a beginning, middle and end. Speaking of the opening of the play, José Monleón has made the following observations:

> El estreno fue un éxito clamoroso, pese a que esas negruras de la segunda parte rebajaron un poco el entusiasmo suscitado por la primera, considerada más "poética y amable". El autor pronunció unas palabras, con la sabiduría teórica que los andaluces tienen para estos menesteres. Y la cartelera madrileña, en fin, contra su ya inveterada y penosa costumbre, incorporó a un autor español de nuestros días que aspira, más allá de la gracia formal de su literatura dramática, a hablar críticamente de su tiempo y de su sociedad.[12]

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[12]José Monleón, "La vuelta de Antonio Gala," Primer acto, núm. 150 (noviembre 1972), 30.

As the play opens, Consuelito, a naive and very gullible young lady who often behaves with childlike innocence, is cutting Christmas stars out of cardboard and pasting silver glitter on them for the local buyers in a section of a cathedral which has been converted into living quarters. While traveling to Orleans, Lorenzo, a bell ringer, comes to pay a visit on Cleofás, Consuelito's husband and town barber who had previously been studying theology in a seminary with Lorenzo. Consuelito confides in Lorenzo that her parents were circus performers and would often use her in their act. Having suffered a fall during a performance, she never fully regained the mental capabilities which she possessed before the accident. Cleofás had been persuaded by his mother, Hortensia, to study for the priesthood, but he discovered that he was not suited for such a position. In the New Testament Cleofás was a disciple of Christ. Hortensia, a former prostitute who later employed several ladies at a brothel, makes all the decisions at the expense of intimidating the other members of the family. Meanwhile, Lorenzo untruthfully tells Consuelito that he loves her and tries to win her affection, which he finally manages to do. The mother, on the other hand, is emotionally interested in Lorenzo, and she constantly tries to have an affair with him.

In the second act Lorenzo tells the family that he has been given a position in the town ayuntamiento. He pretends that he is going to work, only to return and try to

pilfer doña Leonor's grave at the cathedral. Consuelito is pregnant and the father of the unborn child is Lorenzo. Both Consuelito and Lorenzo make plans to go to Orleans. When Lorenzo's perfidy is discovered, he is encouraged to leave, and he does. Hortensia wants to accompany him, but is stopped by her son. Then Consuelito climbs to the belfry, saying she is going to Orleans. She commits suicide by jumping from the high rafters, while the Royal bells of the Angelus begin to toll, as if a miracle were occurring.

Los buenos días perdidos is a formidable story of passion and the power of psychological manipulations to control the will of others. A case in point is Hortensia. She is a strong woman who selfishly demands complete submission from the others at the expense of destroying their lives. Her total concern is her own person. Having been previously engaged in dubious practices, she tries to bring respectability to the family by forcing her son to enter the priesthood. When Cleofás fails in his endeavor to become a priest because of his lack of aptitude for such a profession, she continually uses his failure in order to intimidate him and to control his very existence.

> Hortensia: Calla y atiende. Hay que aparentar más virtud de lo que se tiene; de acuerdo. Pero de eso a no tener ni pan hay un abismo. Un santo muerto no sirve más que para que se le rece.
>
> Cleofás: Si te oyeran, mamá.
>
> Hortensia: Si me oyeran, me callaría. Pero ahora no me oyen. Contesta: sin mí, ¿qué hubieras

sido? Un tonto de pueblo. O peor: un minero. Y ahora, aquí, mírate: con tu hopalanda, que alegra las pajarillas sólo el verte... ¿Te fue bien en la vida dejándote llevar por mí en las cosas del mundo? Di, ¿Te fue bien?

Cleofás: Sí, mamá.

Hortensia: ¿Te saqué yo de la pobreza en que nos dejó sumidos tu padre, al que no llegaste ni a conocer? (Se santigua.) Mala peste se lo coma, si es que vive.

Cleofás: Sí, yo, madre, eternamente...

Hortensia: Déjate de eternidades. Y luego no me vengas con "tío, páseme usted el río". . . . yo no tengo intranquila la conciencia.

Cleofás: Pero los remordimientos, mamá, de noche... y este desorden...

Hortensia: El que no sepa vivir, el que no sepa cerrar los ojos a tiempo, que se ahorque, Cleofás. Yo he pasado mucha hambre. A los diez años lo único que tenía mío era una perra gorda enterrada en un agujero del corral. De repente, a los quince, una noche me pusieron en la mano diez duros. Diez duros en la mano y otra cosa en otro sitio. Apreté los dientes y dije: "Ya está".[13]

Hortensia, it seems, has a false sense of values. She believes that it is enough only to give an appearance of respectability and goodness. In her opinion, it is perfectly acceptable merely to appear to be good and just and to harbor inward feelings of enmity and malice. Talking of her personality José Monleón has made the following critical observations:

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[13]Antonio Gala, Los verdes campos del Edén-Los buenos días perdidos (Madrid: Escalpa-Calpe, S.A., 1972), pp.101-102. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

> Doña Hortensia sería el vitalismo desatado, canalla, y un tanto ridículo. Sería la historia oculta en el arcón empeñada torpemente en superar su vejez con acciones falsamente vitales y guerrilleras, con arranques anacrónicos, imaginando siempre que es la más fuerte.[14]

In the end, however, there is poetic justice in the case of doña Hortensia, for she is entrapped by her own plans. For one, Lorenzo does not take her with him when he leaves as he had promised. Second, her son finally takes a stand, and accuses her of being the treacherous woman that she really is, and denounces her. Moreover, Hortensia is rendered powerless, and is even threatened by Consuelito's suicide, since she fears that an investigation will be forthcoming into her daughter-in-law's death.

Lorenzo serves as the catalyst which enables the other characters to reveal their true personalities. He sets the story in action and can, therefore, be considered the protagonist. Being an outsider who disrupts the life-style of the other characters, he has the ability to see them objectively, and tries to take advantage of the situation. He is totally ruthless. For example, he pretends to be in love with Consuelito in order to have his erotic encounter with her. When this is accomplished, he becomes very indifferent toward her. When he informs Consuelito that he will not take her with him to Orleans, he displays his deceit again. His hypocrisy extends even toward Cleofás, for he

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[14]Monleón, p.29.

uses their former friendship in order to gain entrance into Cleofás' abode. He then deceives his friend by having the sexual relationship with Consuelito. Of the character of Lorenzo, José Monleón has made the following observation:

> Es interesante ver que en todo el primer acto el personaje de Lorenzo se mantiene dentro de esa actitud poética, haciendo de "Orleans" el hermoso lugar destinado a evidenciar la miseria espiritual de los demás personajes y del lugar en que viven. Luego, en cambio, en la segunda parte se muestra como cínico, un sinvergüenza y un chulo. El tradicional "forastero generoso" se convierte en un pícaro. ¿Es esa su fuerza reveladora?[15]

The City of Orleans is a symbol of happiness. It is that unattainable destination to which all the characters strive to arrive. Consuelito is deceived into believing that Lorenzo will take her there. But when the appointed time arrives, he refuses. Lorenzo's deceit finally precipitates the destruction of the other characters.

Cleofás displays a difference in personality by the end of the drama. Submissive and intimidated by his mother at the beginning, he finally rebels against her repressive nature. He asserts his authority at the expense of insulting her. Cleofás delivers some of the profoundest lines in the play. He says that one is responsible for making of one's life what one wants. Cleofás believes that the individual must continually strive in order to find happiness, for it simply will not come automatically. He claims that

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[15]José Monleón, "Entrevista con Antonio Gala y José Luis Alonso," Primer acto, núm. 150 (noviembre 1972), 23.

contentment is achieved through continuous labor and effort. These lines could very easily be the theme of Los buenos días perdidos.

> Cleofás: Soñando no se puede ser feliz. Sólo se hace perder días de vida: mala o buena, de vida. La felicidad es un trabajo: esta mañana lo he sabido. Hay que abrir bien los ojos, no cerrarlos; estar bien despiertos.(140)

Realizing their infamy, Cleofás believes that his family has deceived the community long enough. He feels that it is time for them to mend their ways and live respectably. As opposed to Hortensia and Lorenzo, Cleofás shows a concern for ethical behavior.

> Cleofás: No, no y no. Llevamos muchos años viviendo de mentiras, que no nos creemos ya ni nosotros. Hemos de devolver la paroquia al primitivo estado en que nos la encontramos. Basta de ilusiones. Basta de milagros laicos. Hay que poner los pies en tierra firme. Seamos realistas: lo primero es hacer una novena a Santa Rita, abogada de los imposibles.(108)

Perhaps the most pathetic of all the characters in Los buenos días perdidos is Consuelito. Hated and cruelly treated by her mother-in-law, who takes advantage of Consuelito's impaired mental capabilities, neglected by her husband, and beguiled by Lorenzo, she is the loneliest of the characters. Her personality is a combination of child-like innocence coupled with erotic passion. She is the only one without conceit or pretentiousness. Consuelito can speak honestly and openly about the other characters as well as her own feelings, since she is partially demented.

Her straightforward manner causes the others to alienate themselves from her. Her moral stability also poses a threat to them, for it is in direct conflict with their lack of scruples. She is, therefore, ostracized by her closest associates, which causes her solitude to be the profoundest in the family. This failure to communicate totally isolates her from the others. Thrown into the deepest level of despair because of her isolation, she believes that her only escape from anguish is through death. Therefore, she commits suicide. Consuelito expresses her sorrow, as well as her solitude in the following drastic manners:

> Consuelito: El día que me di con la cabeza en el bordillo ojalá me hubiera muerto. Me gustaría morirme en este momento. Morirme y que al mismo tiempo se acabara el mundo.(100)
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Consuelito: Tener lástima de mí. Que tenga alguien lástima de mí... Yo estoy sola... Yo no tengo a nadie... (103)

With Consuelito's death comes the final destruction of the family. Her demise may be thought of as a stirring manifestation of the negativism inherent in this play. Moreover, it serves as a gauge in determining the extent of the anguish and despair which plague her. It is as if Consuelito the good, the meek, the unpretentious, becomes a sacrificial lamb for the expiation of sins of the other characters in this very pessimistic work. It is rather

ironic that with a name which means comfort, joy, and consolation, Consuelito commits suicide.

Solitude in Los buenos días perdidos is felt by all the characters. Lorenzo, the outsider, remains alone as he leaves the company of the others in order to continue his journey. Hortensia and Cleofás are more estranged than ever in their filial relationship, since they openly confess their utmost contempt for each other. Furthermore, Cleofás is left entirely alone, since Consuelito has committed suicide. Due to their absence of intercommunication, they all remain isolated characters thrust into the deepest expression of solitude.

The themes of solitude, anguish and despair again appear in Antonio Gala's Noviembre y un poco de yerba, continuing a tradition of negativism common to all of the dramatist's theatrical productions. Gala handseled this work on December 14, 1967, at the Teatro Arlequín in Madrid, and it too proved to be another box office success. The plot is partially based on historical fact. In a highly publicized real life situation in Spain, a Republican soldier was granted amnesty after having spent twenty-seven years in seclusion. The sequestered soldier in Gala's play is Diego, who is taken care of by Paula. Of this work the playwright has made the following pertinent observations:

> En cuanto a Noviembre y un poco de yerba, ¿qué te puedo decir? La construí, igual que siempre, sobre una doble vía, para que pudieran transmutarse

> de una a otra los últimos sentidos: una individual; otra, social. Dos historias de dominación y servidumbre; de una celda compartida--arriba y abajo--y, como todas, sujeta a mil terrores.[16]

The stage setting is divided into two levels: the upper part which represents a run-down cantina where Paula sells refreshments to railroad passengers, and the lower part which is the basement of the cantina. Paula lives with her mother, La Madre, and her lover, Diego, in the basement. Tomás, a wounded soldier of the Spanish Civil War, flirts with Paula, hoping to win her affection. Paula tolerates his flirtations, so that he will continue to patronize her business establishment. Paula's mother is senile and has lost her ability to think rationally. La Madre constantly imagines her erotic encounters with Dionisio. In this rather chaotic world Paula and Diego attempt to maintain their sanity. In order to spend his time constructively, Diego makes toy cars which Paula sells. The couple is constantly engaged in verbal combat, making life miserable for each other. During the course of twenty-seven years together they have three sons who neglect them. Out of desperation Paula writes letters and pretends that they are from their sons. Paula gives Diego a transistor radio as a present. On the radio they hear a broadcast which informs them that all political criminals have been granted amnesty, and that

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[16]Santiago de las Heras, "Entrevista con Antonio Gala," Primer acto, núm. 94 (marzo 1968), 15.

they no longer should fear being detained or held prisoner. This action places a strain on the couple's relationship, since Diego is now free to choose between leaving his hiding place or remaining with Paula. He decides to leave, and Paula lies about being pregnant, hoping that this will cause him to change his mind. She fears that he will leave her in order to rejoin another woman, who may be his wife. Diego takes his rifle and leaves. Paula, realizing that she will be alone after twenty-seven years with Diego, is thrown into a deep despair. Unexpectedly Diego returns, saying that the sun is too bright and causes him to experience temporary blindness. Paula thinks that he has returned in order to take her with him, but he confesses his contempt for her.

> Paula: Estás aquí. Has vuelto. No quiero saber más. Voy a prepararte tu vino y tu pan. Siéntate. Estás cansado. Tú no estás hecho a tanto trote. Yo te cuidaré. Yo te mulliré la cama. Yo te lavaré todos los días el cabezal de tu almohada. Yo te pondré mi nuca debajo de tu pie para que me la pises. Madre, ha vuelto por mí...
>
> Diego: Te he aborrecido siempre.
>
> Paula: No importa. Lo que tú pienses no me importa. Bébete el vino. Toma: tabaco. Y música y pan bendito. Lo que pidas. Quédate. Nunca volveré a encontrar a nadie como tú.
>
> Diego: A nadie que dependa tanto de ti, ¿verdad? Eso quieres decir. A nadie que te necesita más. A nadie de quien tú puedas ser la sed y el vaso de agua. ¿No es eso?[17]

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[17]Antonio Gala, El caracol en el espejo, El sol en el hormiguero, Noviembre y un poco de yerba (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970), pp.279-280. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

After having heard Diego confess that he does not love her and that he tolerated her temperament for almost three decades simply because he needed her for his survival, Paula decides not to accompany him into the outside world. She says that their relationship could never be as it once was, since Paula now knows Diego's true feelings. She laments her mistortune in the following revealing passage:

> Paula: . . . Ya no podemos seguir viviendo en este sitio. Hemos dicho demasiadas cosas: la verdad. No sería posible volver a empezar. No sería posible olvidarlo todo. Cuando tú te acercaras, yo te vería como ahora, diciendo lo que has dicho. Es necesario cambiar de madriquera. Vete. Aprovecha tu oportunidad.(280)

She then asks him to leave with a push, which causes him to lose his balance, he steps on the trigger of the rifle, the weapon fires, and Diego is fatally wounded.

Noviembre y un poco de yerba is a strange combination of irony and fate. Irony lies in the fact that the character of Paula assumes the role of executioner and savior at the same time. While Diego is living in seclusion, she is his salvation, because she provides him with food and the desire to live. In turn, he appeases her by making her think that he loves her. Diego's pretended affection is his only means of assuring Paula's attention toward him. She becomes the executioner, for her push is the cause of his fatal accident. It is ironic that when Diego is given the opportunity to leave his hiding place and live a normal life, he is prevented from doing so by a stroke of ill fate. If he had

not been given that freedom, he would have remained alive.

The despair felt by the characters in Noviembre y un poco de yerba is often expressed. The helpless situation in which Diego finds himself causes him to feel irritation, since he is virtually a prisoner of circumstances beyond his control. He expresses his anguish as he describes his imposed seclusion.

> Diego: Aquí sólo hay grietas y esas manchas, que ya me las sé de memoria. (Comienza a tocar las paredes, moviéndose como un animal enjaulado.) Arriba está todo: el sol, la luna, las bocas, los trajes nuevos, el trabajo; todo, todo, todo... (251)

Like Diego, Paula also describes her despair, primarily because she too feels enslaved. Her responsibilities in taking care of her senile, insane mother, plus the care which she gives Diego, cause her to feel that her life belongs to the others and not to herself. Paula longs for freedom from these overwhelming responsibilities as she ruefully laments:

> Paula: Me iré. Una mañana os dejaré solos y me iré. Abriréis los ojos, creeréis que estoy arriba y me habré ido para siempre. (Pequeño llanto de la Madre: A Diego.) Estoy harta de oir a cada minuto el mismo ron con son. (Por el transistor.) Y la culpa es de estas otras voces, de esta otra... música. Tras de cuernos, penitencia.(265-266)

All four of the characters experience solitude in Noviembre y un poco de yerba. Tomás, a bachelor, wants Paula to become his wife because he is lonely. He never suspects

that Paula already has Diego as a lover. La Madre is isolated from the world of the other characters because of her insanity. She spends her days imagining her love life with Dionisio, and is oblivious to the reality which surrounds her. In short, the mother inhabits a world of illusion and dreams. She contributes nothing to the others. La Madre expresses her erotic fantasies in very explicit phraseology which causes uneasiness within Paula and Diego:

> Madre: La cama olía a membrillos. Me mordisqueabas los bordes de los pies. Auj, auj: lo mismo que un cachorro.(239)
>
> . . . . . .
>
> Madre: Yo le lamía el vello del pecho. Como una vaca a su ternero. (Hace el gesto de lamer.) Así, así, así. El me tiraba de la trenza... Me deshacías el moño. Yo estaba acurrucada, como una cosa chica, entre tu ombligo y tus rodillas.(240)

The seclusion in which Diego spends his life is a graphic symbol of his solitude. He is isolated from the society from which he fled through circumstances for which he is not responsible, and he is helpless to change his situation. The following passage succinctly expresses his stifling loneliness:

> Paula: . . . Diego, Diego, no me hagas el sordo. Sal. (Va hacia la cortina izquierda, la descorre.) Míralo: haciendose cucamonas delante del espejo. Ay, Señor. De loquera. Me veo de loquera.
>
> Diego: Estaba solo y...
>
> Paula: Y te mirabas para hacerte compañía, ¿no? Ven. He traído muchas cosas.(241)

Paula's solitude is primarily a result of her inability to communicate with the other characters. Communication with her mother is an impossibility, since La Madre lives in her own make-believe world. Paula is even estranged from her three sons who don't even bother to write to their parents. Moreover, she is alienated from Diego because she knows that he only responds to her when he needs something. She can, therefore, control situations by merely threatening to expose him if he does not comply with her wishes. Her inability to communicate is expressed in the following way:

> Paula: Pues yo con mi madre me entiendo muy bien.
>
> Diego: Porque no hablas con ella.
>
> Paula: Sin embargo, contigo, ahora, aunque estuviese hablando todo el día no llegaría a entenderme.
>
> Diego: Porque tú y yo siempre hablamos de otras cosas.
>
> Paula: ¿De cuáles? Dime.
>
> Diego: Ni de ti, ni de mi; de cosas. Lo peor son las cosas. Nos confunden... ¿Por qué no acabamos de mentir de una vez?(269)

Emotionally Paula and Diego remain strangers. They represent two lonely people who are brought together by a historical situation beyond their control.

Yet another symbol of solitude is the Civil War itself. War produces confusion, and it estranges one being from another, not to mention the lives that are lost in such a futile experience. José María Rodríguez Méndez speaks of

this particular war as a source of alienation and solitude in Noviembre y un poco de yerba.

> La guerra nuestra, como todas las guerras, ha sido un motivo de alienación, de desarraigo y confusión. Seres que después del desastre permanecen en la cueva de su desgracia por temor a la luz aclaradora que trastorne sus vidas.[18]

It is this war which has isolated Diego from society. Due to this historical fact, he is the loneliest of the characters. His solitude is imposed upon him not only from the outside, i.e., society, but also from the world within, in other words, his emotional estrangement from Paula, due to their psychological dispositions.

Noviembre y un poco de yerba has been Antonio Gala's most controversial play to date, since some critics are effusive in their praise, while others have condemned the work as a drama which lacks a rational plot. Most admirers single out the poetic quality of the work as its strongest attribute. Whatever one's reaction may be, Noviembre y un poco de yerba will continue to attract the attention of the public and interest of the critics, for this play is one of Antonio Gala's finest dramatic works.

Still another play, El sol en el hormiguero, contains despair and anguish, in spite of the fact that it is a satirical work which, like most satire, is filled with humor

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[18]José María Rodríguez Méndez, "Nuevos temas para el teatro: La revisión de la Guerra," Primer acto, núm. 94 (marzo 1968), 17.

and hilarity. As for its dialogue, it is, perhaps, Antonio Gala's most brilliant because of its abundant use of double entendre, puns, jokes, and plays on words. In order to circumvent the exigent Spanish censorship, the playwright hastens to declare in the introduction:

> La acción no se desarrolla en ninguna época ni lugar determinados. El vestuario, la escenografía, etc., deben, en consecuencia, ser imaginarios. Como la propia acción.[19]

El sol en el hormiguero had its debut on January 9, 1966, at the Teatro María Guerrero in Madrid. The opening caused quite a stir among the critics, authorities, and the public at large. Of the controversial nature of this play, José Monleón has written the following observation:

> El sol en el hormiguero fue una de las obras más mal juzgadas de la moderna historia teatral española. Fue algo así como el ácido que da fe de la composición de un mineral. Y digo mal juzgada, no porque fuese injustamente tratada, sino porque la misma autorrepresión que se hizo Gala al escribir la obra la practicaron los críticos al juzgarla.(32)

In the first part of the play, El Rey, the leader of an imaginary kingdom, convenes his subjects in order to read his annual proclamation of the state of affairs. When La Reina asks him if he is going to say anything new to his subjects, El Rey responds that the populace would get alarmed

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[19]Antonio Gala, El caracol en el espejo, El sol en el hormiguero, Noviembre y un poco de yerba (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970), p.172. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

if he were to announce something new or different. Once the crowd has assembled and is about to hear the king's declaration, it is overcome with fear, for in its midst appears the giant Gulliver. El Republicano is one of the few at court who see the arrival of the giant as a good omen. La Reina is in love with El Republicano, and she agrees with his observation. In fact, the giant is a benevolent being, much more so than the king himself. To the king's dismay, the people finally become accustomed to having Gulliver around, and actually celebrate his arrival with festivities, once they know that he is harmless. Fearing that his position and power are threatened, El Rey has the giant declared nonexistent, and he forbids anyone to maintain relations with him. If one transgresses the king's edict, then the monarch is authorized to kill such an intrepid culprit.

> Jefe: (Leyendo al pueblo, que se ha enmascarado.) "De orden de su alta y sagrada majestad, el Rey, queda abolido el gigante y declarado inexistente. En consecuencia, quien lo vea, quien se refiera a él en sus conversaciones o mantenga con él cualquier tipo de trato, será considerado, sin apelación, reo de muerte por el delito de atentar contra la seguridad del Estado."(204)

In the second part of the work, the king's despair becomes so great that he gathers his ministers in order to discuss killing the giant. They decide that the royal armies will attack Gulliver while he is asleep. During the skirmishes, El Republicano is fatally wounded. La Reina then decides to rally the people to her side. When the king

orders his subjects to render to him complete submission, they refuse to heed his command. In the end the sovereign is abandoned by his followers, and he is left completely alone to bemoan his solitude and misfortune. Despairingly the king laments:

> Rey: No vayáis. No hagáis caso. . . . Volved. . . . Os lo ordeno... Os lo suplico... (Desalentado.) Quizá tenéis razón. Sería demasiado pesado. Es necesario descansar. Quién quiera, puede pensar que he fracasado. Quien no, todo lo contrario. Lo que yo piense no importa mucho ya. Probablemente no he sido yo el verdadero protagonista de esta triste historia. ¿Quién puede saberlo con certeza? Me olvidaré de la ilusión. . . .(227)

Several characters are victims of solitude in El sol en el hormiguero. El Rey is perhaps the personage who is the most isolated. His nuptial relationship fails and his wife leaves him for another man. His conservative ideas, along with his deceitful personality, his desire to intimidate and oppress his followers, and traits in direct opposition to those of his wife, who is much more liberal and kind-hearted. This conflict of ideologies is the principal cause of the couple's estrangement. Similarly, the monarch is isolated from his subjects because of his failure as a ruler. He demands obedience and respect as opposed to earning them through reasonable governing policies. The people finally rebel against their leader and transfer their support to Gulliver. The sovereign's solitude, therefore, is both public and private. The queen, on the other hand, directs her attention and affection toward the Republican. He is in

complete agreement with her way of thinking. Therefore, they are mutually attracted to each other. A passage which reveals with sensitivity their affection, as well as their solitude, appears in the first part of the play:

> Republicano: Cuando pasabas por las calles, yo decía: "Tiene tristes los ojos." Y sentía deseos de seguirte.
>
> Reina: Cuando te encontraba por las calles, me decía: "El pueblo no está solo." Y me sentía yo más sola después en el palacio. Cuando te vi esta mañana supe que te había estado esperando, que toda mi vida había sido estar sentada viendo venir el amanecer.(197)

A secondary character who feels isolated from the others is La Extraviada, the local town prostitute. She attempts to deceive herself into thinking that she is not lonely by having as many amorous encounters with the soldiers as she possibly can. After each erotic escapade, however, she is more alone than ever. Her happiness and sense of belonging last only as long as the love making session. Her name symbolizes her detachment from the other characters. Like the two prostitutes in Los verdes campos del Edén, she too lives on the periphery of society. Being a social outcast, her chances of ever finding true happiness and communion with the people are indeed limited. Her lot is truly tragic and her solitude is absolute.

Negativism in this play is primarily aimed at criticizing frequent ineffectual governmental policies. The dramatist denounces repression of civil liberties, inferior

educational systems, bribery among high governmental officials, bad government, among others. A good example of this social criticism occurs in the following lines:

> Reina: No te comprendo. Siempre se ha opinado que gobernar bien no es más que tener buen oído.
>
> Rey: ¡Bah! Escuchar al pueblo es la manera más rápida de volverse un loco. Un par de horas más y el pueblo se acostumbrará a pensar que es enano. Y ya no le dolería. Hay que engreírlo. Hay que inventarle un pasado glorioso para evitar que su porvenir sea demasiado humillante.(203)

In spite of its fantasy, El sol en el hormiguero is another thesis play. It is a drama which has very traditional moral lessons inherent in its meaning. A principle which one could deduce is that evil is eventually overtaken or conquered by goodness. The malevolent king is abandoned by everyone, and he eventually becomes, quite figuratively, his own executioner. Another moral sentence which is connoted is the fact that one cannot make sound, truthful judgments through faulty preconceived notions. In other words, the people's first reaction to the giant was horror and fear, since they always heard that giants are wicked. They want to destroy him, for he represents a foreign being which causes them to become uneasy. Since he is far greater in size, they reason, he must be an enemy. However, once they become aware of his peaceful, helpful, and affable manner, they unanimously choose to have the giant as their leader. Whether or not Antonio Gala meant this work as a thesis play,

which contains several moral lessons, is indeed difficult to conclude. Nevertheless, if the author's moralizing is intentional, then the positive elements in El sol en el hormiguero far outweigh the negative ones.

Another noteworthy aspect of this drama is the symbolism of the title. The sol unquestionably refers to the sovereign. The irony is that the monarch in this play is anything but brilliant. The hormiguero is the populace itself. At one point in the work the dramatist refers to the ant-like movements of the characters as they busily go about their everyday routines. In some stage directions, the playwright points out how the characters should resemble ants. The author states:

> (Los otros se agrupan, se desagrupan para correr, agacharse, buscar algo por todas partes, arbitrariamente, dando una verdadera sensación de hormigas. Tal pantomima deberá durar apenas lo necesario para producir esa sensación.)(179)

El sol en el hormiguero is both a typical, and at the same time, unique work. The social, political criticism which runs throughout the play, is very apparent in all of Antonio Gala's plays. The writer's concern for social and political equality is one of the most frequent themes in his dramas. What is atypical in this work is the playwright's departure from realism. By placing this work in an imaginary kingdom, with the appearance of a supernatural character, such as Gulliver, the play lapses into the realm of fantasy. Yet another unrealistic aspect in the work is the ant-like

behavior of the townspeople. They temporarily abandon their human-like characteristics and assume the essence of these insects as they carry out their duties. Also like ants they follow the dictates of the queen and not the king at the end of the play. Being the stern realist that he is, Antonio Gala has created an original play, a work which, according to one critic, reaches "rutilantes colores grotescos y satíricos."[20]

En sol en el hormiguero is perhaps Antonio Gala's most universal play. Political corruption and social injustice are not confined to one country at one particular period of history. Instead, they are international traits which go beyond national boundaries and epochs.

This play has many interesting facets: multiple themes, brilliant dialogue, and thought-provoking observations. Without a doubt, El sol en el hormiguero will attract attention and interest of theater audiences and critics as well.

Antonio Gala has written two short stories, Solsticio de invierno and La compañía, both of which treat the theme of solitude in a very sensitive manner. The strong feeling of isolation in these stories indicates that the theme is important in Gala's works, since it appears in both his dramas and short stories.

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[20]Rodríguez Alcalde, p.191.

Solsticio de invierno was first published in Cuadernos hispanoamericanos in March 1963. This short story is particularly effective because of the multiple narrative techniques which the author uses. Among those techniques one finds dialogue, omniscient narrator and stream of consciousness. The passages which describe the action which is presently happening are written in italics. Besides these varied points of view, Gala alternates the sequence of time by juxtaposing the present tense with the past, often in the same paragraph.

The plot is a rather simple one. It recounts the unrequited love affair of a middle aged woman, Ana, with a young man, whose name is never revealed and who is twenty years her junior. The story begins with the end of their relationship. Through means of flashback techniques, the reader learns that they had met at a mutual friend's party. Supposedly the story lasts some seventy minutes, before the lover boards a train for the South of Spain. This represents the last night of an affair which has lasted about a year. The couple had experienced many partings and reunions in the past. Nevertheless, they manage to revive their relationship through coaxing from their friends. Very little action takes place during the duration of the work: they return from an evening out, he plays music on the phonograph, he throws his cigarette out of a window, he takes a carnation from a vase, by telephone he talks with a friend, who informs him

that he has passed his exams, he affectionately kisses Ana's hands, they start out toward the train station, he boards his train and leaves forever. A porter, who thinks that the lover is Ana's son, delivers to her a letter which the lover had asked the porter to give her once he is aboard the train. At that point the story abruptly ends. The last few lines capture with sensitivity the loneliness which envelops Ana once the young man has departed.

> El tren arrancó lentamente. Un instante después él, saludando con la mano en alto, desapereció de la ventanilla. El tren aceleraba poco a poco. El vagón de cola dejó a Ana atrás, en el andén, buscando con los ojos por ver si él volvía a asomarse, con el bolso apretado todavía contra el pecho. Las facciones parecían habérsele descolgado, como un cuadro que acaba por vencer, con su peso, la resistencia del clavo que lo sujetaba. Un mozo, con la gorra en la mano, se adelantó hacia ella.
> --Perdone, señora. Su hijo, me parece que era su hijo, me dio esto para que se lo entregara cuando el tren hubiera salido...
> Y le puso en las manos un sobre blanco.[21]

Throughout this short story Ana recounts her negative opinions concerning the subject of love. Naturally she is embittered, for her feelings are not reciprocated by the lover. She believes that one only pretends to be in love as long as one can benefit either monetarily or psychologically. The lover displays superficial affection, for he only temporarily gives Ana his presence, not his love, and all for a price.

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[21]Antonio Gala, "Solsticio de invierno," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, núm. 159 (marzo 1963), p.412. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

> Porque lo que quiere el amante es el beso y la ternura a costa de lo que sea. Del dinero también. ¿Quién es, por tanto, el que da más? Hay seres, como éste, que sólo ceden su presencia.(400)

Ana knows that the lover returns to her only through selfish motives. He feels important when she lavishes her attention upon him. When he leaves Ana, he ceases to be the center of her existence. His attitude, therefore, is truly selfish, for he thinks only of his personal gratification and refuses to consider her feelings. He begins to experience a certain intolerance toward her, for he knows that his temporary happiness depends upon her affection. This resentment later causes the lover to become his own executioner, since his indifference causes their relationship to cease. The author writes:

> La ira, que acabará por destruir lo poco que ahora existe, transformando el amante en verdugo de sí mismo.(403)

Through the character of Ana, Gala presents his negative attitudes concerning love when he states: "De amor no sabe nadie."(406) He reiterates the futility of love when he says: "No deja el amor nunca satisfecho al amante."(402) The author describes love in terms of warfare, for he comments:

> Comprendía que ser amante obliga a hacer actos imperdonables: espiar, engañar, registrar a espaldas de todos los lugares donde puendan encontrarse nuestra vida o nuestra muerte. El amor es una terrible guerra sin cuartel, de la que no se vuelve.(405-406)

Such negative attitudes concerning love are present throughout this short story.

In many instances the reader is allowed to enter the mind of the main character through the stream-of-consciousness technique. Moreover, the constant shift between exterior and interior realities heightens the sense of anxiety which Ana feels. With the action cut to a minimum, the reader can actually perceive the mental anguish which she experiences. She takes refuge in a world of daydreams, since reality is so painful for her. Sigmund Freud recognizes the saving functions of dreams, since one can come to grips with problems which cannot be faced in reality. Her flight into fantasy is rather natural and healthy. Modern psychology considers daydreaming as a vital biological function, perhaps even necessary for sanity and well-being.

Ana's anxiety and anguish are two-fold. For one, she realizes that she is much older than her lover, and that she cannot compete with younger women for the lover's affection. Moreover, she is constantly aware of the fact that she is growing older. Knowing that she is unable to keep her lover, she becomes depressed as she considers the solitude which awaits her. Her despair is graphically described in the following lines:

> Hoy Ana se sentía invadida de una grave tristeza, que primero se esparcía por sus venas y luego se concentraba ardiente en su garganta.(405)

Among the various literary techniques which Antonio Gala uses in this short story, one finds pathetic fallacy. For example, the lover's billfold is "un poco gastado por los bordes"(400), which brings to mind Ana's greater age when compared to the lover. In describing the time of day the author simply says, "Oscurecía."(401) Like the day which is coming to a close, Ana's and the lover's relationship is dying. Yet another example occurs when the writer refers to the silence which spearates the couple: "El silencio se hacía, por segundos, más espeso. La oscuridad también."(403) Ana's despair causes them to become increasingly silent. Finally, the description of the almost empty square that they encounter as they leave for the train station foretells the emptiness and solitude which Ana will feel once the lover has gone:

> La plaza estaba casi vacía. No había ni un taxi. La gente se apresuraba a volver a sus casas, empujada por la lluvia. Anduvieron. Aparecía todo desolado y sin objeto . . . (409)

Also noteworthy is the symbolism of the title of the work itself, Solsticio de invierno. Winter could be thought of as a metaphor for the cooling of the couple's relationship. In other words, their relationship has now become as cold and inert as winter, since there is no emotion to keep it warm and alive. Moreover, winter could symbolize Ana's greater age, for she has now reached middle age. Like a solstice, when the sun's ecliptic is farthest south of the

equator, Ana and the lover are now farther apart than ever before. One should keep in mind that the lover is leaving for the South of Spain. Also, Ana's life will now be darkened by loneliness, which could be read as an analogy with the disappearance and distancing of the sun.

Ana's anguish is truly understandable. Her despair is the result of her wanting a meaningful relationship with a young man who will not cooperate. Instead, his solipsism prevents him from returning her affection, and she realizes that she is incapable of changing his attitude and the situation. Her solitude is inevitable, for he definitively leaves her at the end of the story. When this happens, she is left alone and forgotten. She experiences, therefore, the total weight of despair and remorse.

In the other short story, La compañía, there is again a fatalistic view of life, a trait which constantly appears throughout Gala's works. This story concerns a young man's visit with his dying father. The son returns home only through filial obligation, and not because he feels any sympathy or love for his father. The narration employs the stream-of-consciousness technique, which enables the reader to participate in the characters' innermost thoughts. This young man is the liberal son of three. Compared to his brothers, he represents the iconoclast, the vagabond, the nonconformist. His liberal ideas precipitate his estrangement from the other members of the family, for they have never understood his disregard for tradition and

decorum. Through his thoughts he expresses his lack of affection and resentment toward his parents and brothers. He says:

> Si no debería haber venido. ¿Para qué? Para estar aquí, sentado a una camilla, fingiendo leer por no tener que hablarles. Me lo dije cien veces. Pero esta Navidad era la última. Esta Navidad era la última, y he venido. No por mí. Yo no necesitaba venir. Ni ellos necesitaban que yo viniera tampoco. Eso se ve: pude no haber venido. Bueno, no estoy seguro. Quizá no pude.[22]

His mother spends her day taking care of his father, who is not only senile, but physically debilitated as well. She is filled with bitter resentment because her life has to be devoted to caring for her husband. Due to these responsibilities, she is not free to live her life as she pleases. This situation causes her to experience bitter remorse. She also harbors feelings of hatred toward her son, for she admits:

> Este no sé a que ha venido. No tendrá donde dormir o algo así. Porque lo que le importemos... Siempre ha sido el más raro. Yo no le he entendido nunca. Cuando empezaba a entenderlo, ya estaba él pensando de otra manera... (238)

The mother confesses that she no longer loves her husband as well. For her, he represents a burden that constantly requires attention. At one point she calls him "Un pájaro feo."

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[22]Antonio Gala, "La compañía," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, núm. 170 (febrero 1964), p.238. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

Again through the stream-of-consciousness narration, the reader discovers that the couple has been neglected by their sons. At the end of the story the father succumbs, even though he puts up a struggle against death. The father says to himself:

> Me está entrando ya... Me está entrando el eso. Qué bien. Así no veo a nadie. Me riñen: "Que te estes quietecito". Quietecito, bah. No me voy porque no me da la gana. ¡Andando con la gentuza! Ya, ni respeto.(244)

La compañía is an interesting commentary about filial obligation, growing old and dying. The members of this family are all estranged from one another. The son who returns to visit his father does so only because he thinks that he is obliged to do it, not because he particularly wants to see him. His obligation is to conform, to a certain degree, with certain social and moral patterns of behavior dictated by society, but beyond his control or influence. The same could be said about the mother. She feels that she is obliged to receive her son into her home, even though she would prefer not to do it. Her caring for her husband is not through love, but because she has to take care of him. She feels trapped in a dilemma. The father, in spite of his senility, can still detect the superficial attention and affection which the others extend to him. However, he too is ineffectual in changing his situation. All three characters are solitary, estranged beings who are brought together only through circumstance and duty. They are unsuccessful in

concealing their true feelings, for all three sense the animosity which each one feels. Their solitude is a result of their inability to experience any close ties of love and empathy, as well as understanding.

Similar to other works by Gala, the title of this work deserves attention. The irony which it connotes is subtle. The word compañía suggests partnership, cordial company, sympathy and cooperation. The irony is that the characters in this work possess none of those attributes which would bind them emotionally to each other.

Keeping in mind the negativism in the best known works by Gala, several general observations can be presented as a conclusion. All of the foregoing works have within them the themes of solitude, anguish and despair. Solitude plays an integral part of the psychological makeup of practically all of the main characters. In these works solitude derives its sources from two opposing elements, both internal and external. That is to say, it is either sought after willingly and intentionally by the individual who, to a certain degree, is an idealist who refuses to confront reality; or solitude is superimposed by an insensitive society against the will of the individual. The character who willfully seeks solitude is the loner, the introvert, that timid soul who finds solitude as his only refuge from an inhospitable environment. Many characters in Gala's plays and short stories voluntarily pursue their isolation from their fellow man. In Los verdes

campos del Edén, Juan seeks refuge from an apathetic, cruel world, which is represented by society at large. He, along with Ana, attempt to settle in his grandfather's crypt, in order to form an idyllic surrounding that is free from the pretentiousness, hypocrisy and regulations of the actual world. They are seeking an existence free from social and political restrictions. In other words, they want complete freedom. Much to their dismay, however, they are even denied the isolation and serenity offered by the cemetery, since they are forced to leave their haven by the graveyard guards. In El caracol en el espejo the characters Solterona, Mujer Sola, and Marinero Que Nunca Ha Visto El Mar are also solitary beings who have chosen themselves their own isolation. It is not imposed upon them externally. They are, in the eyes of the other characters, social misfits unable to interact with other members of society. El Rey in El sol en el hormiguero represents yet another example of self-imposed isolation. He is cut off from his subjects because of his ineptitude and hypocrisy as a ruler. His dictatorial, deceitful reign causes his followers to rebel against his rule. He is even abandoned by the queen herself at the end of the play. In Solsticio de invierno Ana experiences solitude primarily because of personality differences between her and her lover. The great number of years which separates the two causes them to think and react differently. Moreover, there is that character difference which causes their

relationship to fail. Ana is characterized by a generous, sensitive and charitable disposition, whereas the lover is greedy, selfish and completely unresponsive.

The type of solitude, imposed by society against the will of the character, is a basic idea in Anillos para una dama. Society pressures doña Jimena into remaining single. She must be the sacrificed heroine who should always remain faithful to the memory of the Cid. She is denied, therefore, freedom of choice. Society demands its share of heroes and heroines as well. The result of such limitations of personal choice precipitates her frustration and despair. At the end of the drama, she becomes resentful of humanity. In a similar manner, Diego's isolation in Noviembre y un poco de yerba is a result of historical circumstances. Having been on the losing side during the Spanish Civil War, his imprisonment is dictated by the outcome of that terrible struggle. He is powerless in changing his predicament. It is rather ironic that when he is given the freedom to emerge from his hiding place, he is accidently killed. Diego, therefore, is even refused the choice between life and death. In Los buenos días perdidos the characters are estranged members of a family. Their solitude is brought about by their differing psychological dispositions, again something that they are unable to control. Hortensia, Cleofás and Consuelito are estranged from each other because the mother uses her overbearing, aggressive nature to intimidate and control the

others in the family. The characters in La compañía are isolated from one another because of their differences in personality. Other members of the family view the rebellious son as a self-centered individual who cares only about his personal well-being. He expresses his superficial interest toward his father and mother only because it is expected by society and not through any personal affection on his behalf.

Despair in Gala's works is indeed severe. Consuelito's anguish is so overwhelming that she commits suicide. She believes that her only escape from her despair, caused by Lorenzo's deceit, is through death. Doña Jimena's anguish transforms her into a very bitter woman who vows revenge against her oppressors. El Rey is left alone to lament his misfortune. And the characters in Los verdes campos del Edén resign themselves to their unhappiness.

What lies at the heart of the matter in all these works is the question of freedom and unhappiness. It is that type of freedom which Erich Fromm describes in his book Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics which can readily be applied to Gala's characters. Fromm states:

> Indeed, freedom is the necessary condition of happiness as well as of virtue; freedom, not in the sense of the ability to make arbitrary choices and not the freedom from necessity, but freedom to

> realize that which one potentially is, to fulfill the true nature of man according to the laws of his existence.[23]

Apparently, Antonio Gala's universal message is that man lacks complete freedom of choice, even though he constantly tries to find total independence. Although man is endowed with a superior brain and the ability to reason, he is subject to certain limitations and restrictions which are dictated by society. Such limitations are beyond his control. Therefore, he is basically a powerless creature. When man is confronted by such limiting factors, he often feels that one method of combating such hostility is through estrangement and isolation from such an environment. But his search for solitude inevitably fails, for man is basically a social animal who relies upon other human beings for survival and procreation. That is to say, man, like Juan in Los verdes campos del Edén, is even refused his search for isolation. When man's attempts at finding solitude fail, he then is thrust into the deepest expression of anguish and despair. His hopeless situation becomes so acute that, like Consuelito in Los buenos días perdidos, it causes, at times, his own destruction, By attempting to avoid one unbearable situation, man inevitably creates another.

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[23]Erich Fromm, Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947), p.247.

CHAPTER III

ALIENATION IN THE WORKS OF ANTONIO GALA

The theme of alienation appears frequently in the works of Antonio Gala. Many of the dramatist's characters are solitary beings who encounter difficulty realizing their own identity, while others express dissatisfaction with pre-established patterns of social behavior. They rebel against society by attempting to create their own environment, or by refusing to become active members of an existing society.

Commenting on his negative themes and alienation, as well as on the general characteristics of his works, Gala states:

> A la idea existencial, con su aquí y su ahora, acompaña por derecho propio el sentimiento trágico (quiero decir de agonía) de la realidad. De todas sus facetas, la que tiñe a las otras es la de suprimir la religión entendida como una gran sociedad de seguros contra la angustia. Y su secuela de temáticas rituales y acerados: la impotencia de la razón, la desdicha inexplicable, la finitud, la enajenación vital, la incomunicabilidad, la soledad esencial, este juego llamado vida cuyas reglas desconocemos... Retorna, pues, a ser el agonista, el hombre

> razonador, interrogante, eterno insatisfecho. A hurgar sus anchas heridas tan largo tiempo vergonzosamente oculto.[1]

According to Gala's statement, he believes that modern man's abandonment of traditional religion has brought in its wake the disappearance of stability, optimism, and reassurance in a hereafter. In our present era the individual experiences existential anguish, since his existence is the consequence of choices that are solely his own responsibility. This taxing burden of insecurity Gala believes lies at the heart of man's anxiety. Moreover, this element of uncertainty results in a human's insecurity, incommunicability, unhappiness, uneasiness, and especially his alienation.

The depiction of man as an alienated being in modern society is a constant, universal theme in contemporary literature. One critic, Fritz Pappenheim, refers to the ubiquitous aspect of alienation when he says:

> . . . alienation is manifest in all realms of modern life, and its existence is not just the result of certain accidents of recent history but exemplifies one of the basic trends of our age.[2]

Karl Marx is credited by most critics as being the initiator of the modern concept of alienation. His philosophy

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[1]Antonio Gala, El caracol en el espejo, El sol en el hormiguero, Noviembre y un poco de yerba (Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1970), p.55.

[2]Fritz Pappenheim, The Alienation of Modern Man: An Interpretation Based on Marx and Tönnies (New York: Modern Paperbacks, 1959), p.36.

evolved from his economic theories, which sought to examine man's relation to his work and his concern for the loss of identity in a highly industrialized, automated environment. His ideas, therefore, developed primarily from a socio-economic concern for humanity. Marx's principal precept is that man is totally alienated. The worker is alienated from his product, and he apparently takes no vital interest in his work or in the finished goods. In time, this attitude produces a feeling of self-denial which, in turn, causes unhappiness and the loss of one's self, or identity. On the other hand, management takes an impersonal, indifferent attitude toward the laborer.

The reaction between the worker and his product was, for Marx, one of the principal causes of alienation, since modern industrial work is external to the essential being of the worker who produces his product. Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, modern man has witnessed his continual replacement by the machine and automation. Along with this highly automatized environment, a certain degree of dehumanization appears to be inevitable.

As opposed to Marx, however, Erich Fromm treats alienation from an historical point of view. He believes that the concept of alienation can be traced as far back as the Old Testament. The author says:

> The whole concept of alienation found its first expression in Western thought in the Old Testament concept of idolatry. The essence of what the

> prophets call "idolatry" is not that man worship many gods instead of one. It is that the idols are the work of man's own hands--they are things, and man bows down and worships things; worships that which he has created himself. In doing so he transforms himself into a thing. He transfers to the things of his creation the attributes of his own life, and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he is in touch with himself only by the worship of the idol. He has become estranged from his own life forces, from the wealth of his own potentialities, and is in touch with himself only in the indirect way of submission to life frozen in the idols.[3]

Perhaps the most thorough definition of alienation, and one which appears to be the one most often quoted by critics, was formulated by Fromm himself. In his book The Sane Society the author comments:

> By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts--but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced: with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to oneself and to the world outside productively.[4]

Erich Fromm's ideas concerning alienation appear to be a more psychological approach when compared to Karl Marx's philosophies. Marx's thoughts pertain much more to economic and social theories. On the other hand, estrangement for

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[3]Erich Fromm, Marx's Concept of Man (New York: Frederich Ungar Publishing Company, 1961), p.44.

[4]Erich Fromm, The Sane Society (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1955), p.120.

Fromm can mean that the individual is not necessarily alienated from his surroundings, but alien to his own personality. This implies that the alienated person is the one who has a double personality, which is a result of both external as well as internal causes. Herbert Read, in his work Art and Alienation: The Role of the Artist in Society, makes reference to the double application of the word alienation. He says:

> The word is used to denote both a social and psychological problem, but these are but two aspects of the same problem, the essence of which is the progressive divorce of human faculties from natural processes.[5]

Ronald David Laing has used the term existential phenomenology in attempting to characterize the nature of man's experience in the world. In his book The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness, Laing employs an existential-phenomenological account of some schizoid and schizophrenic persons.

> The term schizoid refers to an individual the totality of whose experience is split in two main ways: in the first place, there is a rent in his relation with the world and, in the second, there is a disruption of his relation with himself. Such a person is not able to experience himself "together with" others or "at home in" the world, but, on the contrary, he experiences himself in despairing aloneness and isloation; moreover, he does not experience himself as a complete person but rather

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[5]Herbert Read, Art and Alienation: The Role of the Artist in Society (New York: Horizon Press, 1967), p.21.

> as "split" in various ways, perhaps as a mind more or less tenuously linked to a body, as two or more selves, and so on.[6]

For Laing, the alienated person also includes that individual who is incapable of adjusting to his surroundings, an idea which coincides with many of Fromm's observations. This type of isolated being is an escapist who has lost touch with reality. Speaking of such an individual, Laing continues:

> There is a further characteristic of the current psychiatric jargon. It speaks of psychosis as a social or biological failure of adjustment, or maladaptation of a particularly radical kind, of loss of contact with reality, or lack of insight.[7]

What follows such behavior for many critics is a kind of objectification, or rather, depersonalization, of the individual. This type of person is one who has lost completely, or severely impaired, his sensitivities or his ability to empathize. He ceases to view the human element within himself and in others as well. It is such an attitude of depersonalization and matter-of-factness which leads to an ever-increasing insensitivity according to some critics of the present age of technology.[8]

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[6]Ronald David Laing, The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness (Baltimore: Penguin Books Inc., 1965), p.17.

[7]Ibid., p.27.

[8]Pappenheim, p.42.

Yet another sociologist, Erich Kahler, examines the disintegration of the individual in all fields of contemporary experiences which include social, political and economic processes in learning, art and poetry. Kahler states that modern technological advancements have resulted in the invalidation of the human being in the following categories: specialization, functionalization, standardization and anonymization.[9] Kahler believes that one of the major contributors of the new expression in art and literature is the result of the advent of psychoanalysis, which has provided new insight into human behavior. The existentialists believe that alienation is an essential element of the human condition. Albert Camus describes it admirably in his work Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l'absurde:

> . . . dans un univers soudain privé d'illusions et de lumières, l'homme se sent un etranger. Cet exil est sans recours puisqu'il est privé des souvenirs d'une patrie perdue ou de l'espoir d'une terre promise. Ce divorce entre l'homme et sa vie, l'acteur et son décor, c'est proprement le sentiment de l'absurdité.[10]

All of the foregoing critics of alienation agree on several points. They believe that modern man has become an estranged being through external as well as internal causes. Externally, as man becomes increasingly more dependent on the

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[9]Erich Kahler, The Tower and the Abyss: An Inquiry into the Transformation of the Individual (New York: George Braziller Inc., 1957), p.22.

[10]Albert Camus, Le Mythe de Sisyphe: Essai sur l'absurde (Paris: Gallimard, 1942), p.18.

machine, he loses contact with other human beings. This phenomenon precipitates an absence of interdependence and intercommunication among people, and through extension, society at large. Moreover, by isolating the worker from the finished product, the laborer experiences a strong sense of detachment toward the finished wares, as well as a distancing between himself and his work in general. And yet, man is caught in a dilemma, for he finds himself powerless to alter this situation. Since economic growth is dependent on such a highly developed level of mechanization and specilization, man realizes that he must conform and adapt himself to the technological advancements which characterize his society. The estrangement which he experiences at his work carries over into other aspects of life in general.

The second cause of alienation, according to the preceding critics, is derived from an internal source, from the very psyche of the individual himself. Alienation in this sense refers to the person who is out of touch with reality. The consequence of such a psychosis manifests itself in several ways. The person may isolate himself from society in general, since he feels out of touch with the social system. This is the human being who has lost contact and interaction with his fellow man. Kahler states that man develops "through means of a perpetual interaction between consciousness and reality, between his interior world and

his external world."[11] The alienated person has lost this contact between his consciousness and reality. He views isolation, therefore, as the only answer to his despair. Such an individual may retreat into a catatonic state of inactivity. Alienation may produce an acute case of neurosis as defined by Helen Pallister:

> As used in psychological literature, the terms neuroticism, introversion, and seclusiveness are closely synonymous with the negative or withdrawal attitude. Jung's definition of introversion might well be quoted to describe what is meant by withdrawal attitude: " . . . introversion means a turning inwards of the libido whereby a negative relation of the subject to the object is expressed. Interest does not move toward the object but recedes toward the subject."[12]

In more severe cases, the person may choose the most drastic and definitive form of isolation, suicide. Yet another characteristic of the alienated person is the manifestation of several personalities. Such a human behaves in much the same manner as a schizoid person does. The schizoid individual might assume the role of a completely imaginary being, or he may take on the personality characteristics of a friend, member of the family or acquaintance. He is alienated,

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[11]Erich Kahler, The Inward Turn of Narrative (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p.4.

[12]Helen Pallister, "The Negative or Withdrawal Attitude: A Study in Personality Organization," Archives of Psychology, Vol. 151, April, 1933, p.5. Miss Pallister quotes from the following work by C. B. Jung, Psychological Types Trans. H. G. Baynes (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1923), p.654.

therefore, from his own personality. He has, what some observers conclude, lost his sense of self.

There is yet a third application of the term alienation. In The Sane Society Fromm maintains that an older meaning denoted an insane person. Such terms as aliéné in French and alienado in Spanish "are older words which were used to describe the psychotic, the thoroughly and absolutely alienated individual."[13]

As for Gala's plays, the theme of alienation appears most often in Los verdes campos del Edén, Los buenos días perdidos and Noviembre y un poco de yerba, and to a lesser degree in El sol en el hormiguero. It also is found in his short story, La compañía.

In Act one, Scene one of Los verdes campos del Edén, Juan expresses his inability to adjust to a real society or to reality in general.

> Alcalde: ¿Dónde va usted? Hace media hora larga que le observo y usted no se ha movido. Esto me hace sospechar lo peor. ¿Dónde va? Diga.
>
> Juan: No voy a ninguna parte. Ya ve que estoy sentado. Tranquilícese. Estoy mirando crecer la yerba. Mirando.
>
> Alcalde: Pero supongo que no irá usted a quedarse ahí, debajo de ese árbol, toda la vida, perdiendo su tiempo...
>
> Juan: El tiempo no es toda la vida, señor: Hay además otras cosas.
>
> Alcalde: ¿Cuáles? No me gusta la gente que dice frases misteriosas.

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[13]Fromm, p.121.

> Juan: A mí tampoco. Pero hay además otra cosa de sentarse, de mirar los castaños, de darse cuenta que uno no es demasiado importante.(17)

The above passage reveals several important facets of Juan's personality. In the first place, he is depicted as a sensitive young man who responds emotionally to the beauty of nature. He expresses an appreciation for the natural environment, and he desperately wishes to communicate with it. Since he finds communication with other humans difficult, Juan turns to nature as a means of communicating. His speech connotes an obvious dissatisfaction with his monotonous and often uninspiring workaday routine. He resents having his life regulated by the clock. He wishes he were less occupied, so that he might have more time to devote to spiritual pursuits. Although his condemnation of the actual world is not expressed in a forthright manner, it is implied through his desire to escape from society, for he ruefully laments, "Hay además otras cosas."(17)

As a contrast to Juan's personality, the alcalde is an apathetic, boorish man who reacts negatively to Juan's responsiveness to nature. He suspects Juan of being insane, for he says, "Esto me hace sospechar lo peor."(17) For the magistrate, Juan's concern for nature is an utter waste of time. The alcalde represents everything which Juan loathes in society. Therefore, he becomes a symbolic representation of the world from which Juan is fleeing. The following

comments reveal great differences between the magistrate's personality and Juan's.

> Alcalde: . . . Yo soy realmente importante. Soy alcalde de la ciudad. Ahora paseo con mi fusta por este campo. Yo le pregunto si se va a quedarse aquí quieto para siempre. No me gustan los holgazanes. Ni los castaños, ni las zarandajas ésas: la solidaridad es lo que me gusta. La cooperación, el mutualismo, la sociabilidad... ¿Se quedará usted así, parado, después de esto?(17)

Judging from his comments, the alcalde epitomizes conformity, narrow-mindedness, egoism and prejudice. He symbolizes collective society, whereas Juan represents the individual. The detachment which he feels toward the officer denotes his alienation from mankind in general.

The preceding lines also demonstrate Juan's intrinsic inability to feel at ease in society as it exists. At one point he confesses, "Yo con la gente aquella no me entiendo."(31) Therefore, he seeks refuge in an asolated area of the city, the cemetery. He has lost almost all trust and hope in the real world. Consequently, he assumes the characteristics of a stranger in society. Like so many of Gala's characters, Juan is a vagabond constantly striving to improve his situation. He is searching for a new home. Home, in this instance, is a metaphor for the peace, comfort and freedom from anxiety which he is desperately pursuing. His absurd, desultory words in reference to watching the grass grow reveal his anxiety. His feelings of hopelessness are again expressed when, in the second part, he predicts a future world entirely

different from the present one, which is characterized by sorrow and pain.

> Juan: . . . Nacerá y empezará otra vez el mundo más feliz, como cada vez que un niño nace. Verás como cuando nazca estará todo lleno de flores. Deberá ser así. Dará gusto asomar la cabeza y ver el mundo entonces.(71)

In spite of Juan's disillusionment with the present world, he expresses optimism about the future. He is a victim who is dissatisfied with the status quo. However, he realizes that he can do very little to change his unhappy situation.

Juan is that type of character who feels out of touch with society. His alienation stems from his inability to accept and condone existing conditions. He feels apart and different from other men. Juan discovers that communication with other persons is practically impossible, for his responsiveness and sensitivity set him apart. He experiences rapport only with those who have joined him at the cemetery since they share his dissatisfaction with and mistrust of society. These persons are also in pursuit of a new approach to experiencing life. The two prostitutes, Monique and Nina, find acceptance and friendship at the graveyard, whereas they are social outcasts in actual society.

In his introduction to Los buenos días perdidos, Gala refers indirectly to his treatment of evasion of reality in this work:

> Pero sobre esa realidad se alza--tal como suele--
> el deseo de huirla. Y ocurre--tal como suele--
> que la verdad y el dolor, por crueles que sean,
> nunca nos asesinan. Nos asesinan los inventados
> sueños y el engaño. De ahí que acaban mal, cuando
> dejamos que se pierdan, los buenos días verdaderos.
> (77)

For Gala, it seems, the maladjustment and estrangement which man often feels is a product of his own personality faults. The source of alienation lies, therefore, within the deceit of the protagonists themselves.

Lorenzo is such a deceitful person. He is detached from the other characters, for he is the stranger who comes to visit. He, like Juan in the preceding drama, is also a vagabond. Lorenzo unmercifully deceives Consuelito by telling her that he will take her to Orleans with him. Once he has had his sexual encounter with her, however, he abandons her. He also causes Hortensia to believe that he is interested in her as well. His pretended affection is only a ruse for getting monetary help. Lorenzo gains entry into Cleofás's house by pretending to be a true friend. It is rather ironic that, although he is the cause of the destruction of Consuelito and Hortensia, his treachery goes unchallenged and unchecked. His detachment from the other characters is a result of his selfish disposition. Lorenzo is alienated from the rest of the characters through his personality faults. His egoism prevents him from experiencing any empathy and love toward the other characters.

Ironically, his attempts at misleading others produce his self-deceit.

Perhaps Consuelito is the most alienated person in Los buenos días perdidos, for she feels completely separated from the others. Her estrangement is a result, in part, of her dual personality traits. She displays an obvious schizoid personality throughout the work. One moment she is innocent and childlike, whereas the next moment she becomes seductive and immoral. Therefore, her personality represents a curious combination of childlike innocence and erotic passion. Her unpredictable nature encourages the others to ignore her. The following passage readily demonstrates her puerile facination with the local circus.

> Consuelito: . . . Las cosas necesitan su publicidad. Ya ve usted: es el circo que, ¿a quién no le gusta el circo?, y hace su cabalgata. Cuanto más esto de la iglesia, que siempre es menos divertido... ¿No será usted de un circo? A mí, donde se ponga un charivari. Un buen funeral tampoco es feo, pero donde se ponga un charivari, con su elefante, las mujeres medio en cueros, su malabarista... (83-84)

The above lines display Consuelito's disturbed disposition, since she speaks in disconnected, often incoherent phrases. Moreover, she changes subjects in the course of a sentence. She frequently supplies answers to her own questions, and she is often oblivious to responses which she solicits from others. A few lines later in the play she manifests her passionate nature as she confides in Lorenzo:

> Consuelito: Halá, que mustio se me ha puesto. Pero si está usted en la flor de la edad. Si se parece usted a Jorgito, que era Hércules, y las tenía ási... Que no me gusta que sea usted tan gili-puertas, hombre... (Lorenzo se deja consolar.) ¡La vida! Que le frían dos huevos a la vida. Si ha entrado usted aquí como el rayo del sol por el cristal. . . . (88)

Besides her estrangement from the others, Consuelito is alienated from her own body as well. Her alienation is a result of a psychological problem. At times she feels that she does not exist at all. She shows her perplexity in the following comments:

> Consuelito: Yo no hablo. Aquí es como una se hubiese muerto. Como si una se hubiera dormido una noche y, por la nañana, quisiera despertarse y no pudiera. "Pero, Consuelito, hija, si estás muerta", me digo muchas veces. Aquí no puede pasar nada de nada. Nada.(85)

Consuelito believes that she is insignificant and unimportant because she is constantly intimidated by her mother-in-law, Hortensia, who never misses an opportunity to chastise and criticize Consuelito for her slightest mistakes. As a consequence, this constant criticism is one of the principal causes of Consuelito's ambivalent nature. Her estrangement becomes so great that it makes her feel alien to her own body. Her detachment eventually leads her to suicide. Through her death, therefore, she experiences the most definitive estrangement from life.

In Noviembre y un poco de yerba the theme of alienation is much more obvious than in the preceding plays. Here it is manifested through the Mother, her daughter, Paula,

and Diego, the son-in-law. La Madre is detached from the other characters through her insanity. Such a form of estrangement represents the older meaning of the term applied to an insane individual, the alienado. Throughout the drama the Mother continually mentions her sexual relationships with Dionisio. She ignores what the others are saying, and she only talks about her amorous escapades as a youth using very descriptive terminology.

> Madre: En la cama que fue de mi marido. Donde dormí tres años con mi marido. Pero no me importaba... ¿No se habían muerto ellos? ¿No me dejaron sola? ¿Los maté yo? Se murieron sin dar explicaciones. Que se fastidien... Yo me acurrucaba cuando terminábamos... Metía mis pies entre tus piernas. Qué alto eres, Dionisio... (239)

In only a few words the dramatist presents a believable characterization of a thoroughly demented woman. Gala's techniques of doing this are various. First of all, the passage begins with a series of incomplete sentences, which connote the character's confusion and total lack of lucidity. These unfinished statements are followed by several interrogative sentences, which cause one to wonder to whom she is speaking. First she speaks about the untimely death of her parents. She then changes subjects from her parents to her sexual relations with Dionisio, all in the same breath. Finally, she addresses Dionisio directly, as if he were alive and in her presence.

Paula and Diego completely ignore the mother's words. Her dementia isolates her from the others. Although the other characters are not deranged, they too are alienated beings. Paula and Diego also display traits of schizoid personalities on several occasions. At one point they pretend that they are playing cards at a casino.

Diego: ¿Nos vamos al casino?

Paula: No, que luego haces trampas en el dominó.

Diego: Te juro que no.

Paula: ¿Por tu padre?

Diego: Por mi padre.

Paula: Dilo todo junto.

Diego: Te lo juro por mi padre.

Paula: Madre, que nos vamos al casino. En seguida volvemos. (Se van a un rincón donde hay un cajón, sobre el que ella depositó al llegar una meceta con cuatro o cinco espigas.) Te bajé tu trigal. No has dicho nada.

Diego: Ha credico tan poco...

Paula: Tú ya sabes: eres de melón y tajada en mano. (Como si hablase a alguien mientras baja la maceta.) Dos buenas copas de coñá. Dos buenas copas. Hoy es nuestro aniversario de bodas. ¿Sabe usted? (Las trae y sirve.)

Diego: Esto no es el casino. ¿Por qué no nos decimos la verdad?

Paula: ¡Calla! (Da fichas.) El seis doble.

Madre: Me están sonando las tripas.

Diego: Con tu madre ahí, nadie puede creerse que esto sea el casino.

Paula: ¡Te he dicho que te calles! ¿Qué va a ser de nosotros si empezamos a pensar que esto no es casino? Pon.

. . . . . .

Diego: Es igual. Todo es pasar el tiempo. Irlo matando o irse dejando morir.(258-259)

Diego and Paula evade reality by escaping into their world of fantasy. When their actual world becomes too overwhelming, they create a new surrounding by imagining a different environment. Yet another passage which shows Paula's and Diego's flight into their make-believe world is the one which follows. Here they behave as children who are playing a guessing game. Paula is about to give Diego a radio as a present, and he is trying to guess what the gift will be.

Diego: ¿No me lo vas a dar?

Paula: No. (Comienza el juego habitual.)

Diego: ¿Qué era?

Paula: Una cosa que le compré a un viajante.

Diego: ¿Grande o chica?

Paula: Chica.

Diego: ¿Por qué letra empieza?

Paula: Depende.

Deigo: ¿De qué?

Paula: Del nombre que se le dé.

Diego: Si lo acierto, ¿me lo das? ¿Qué color tiene?

Paula: Por fuera, negro. Por dentro, no lo he visto.

Madre: ¡Un grajo!

Paula: No.

Madre: Un gato negro.

Paula: No.

Madre: Entonces, no lo quiero.

Paula: Como para "usté" no era...

Diego: ¡Otro Kempis!

Paula: No. (Saca un transistor de su bolsillo.) Toma.

Diego: ¡Qué bonito! ¿Qué es?

Paula: Una radio. Escucha.(252-253)

The most obvious expression of alienation in this play occurs when Paula abandons her personality and assumes that of her mother. When Diego leaves her for the outside world, Paula's despair is so great that it causes her to experience temporary insanity. In her demented condition, Paula assumes her mother's mannerisms and speech. Therefore, Paula describes her erotic experiences with Diego by using similar words that her mother used in order to describe her sexual encounters with Dionisio earlier in this play.

Paula: Lo he engañado. No voy a tener ningún hijo... No voy a tener nada... El me mordisqueaba los bordes de los pies, ¡auj, auj, auj!, lo mismo que un cachorro...

. . . . . .

Paula: Le lamía el vello del pecho. Como una vaca a su becerro. Ya no volverá más.(279)

In Act one, Scene one the mother had described her love-making with Dionisio in the following manner:

Madre: . . . Me mordisqueaba los bordes de los pies. Auj, auj: lo mismo que un cashorro.(239)

. . . . . .

Madre: Yo le lamía el vello del pecho. Como una vaca a su ternero. (Hace el gerto de lamer.) Así, así, así. . . . (240)

Paula truly behaves as a schizoid individual. There now exists a reversal of roles. In other words, she abandons her own personality and begins to speak and act like her mother. She undertakes her new personality unconsciously, since she is unaware of what is happening to her. By assuming the characteristics of another person, Paula has alienated herself from her own identity, not to mention her estrangement from the other characters as well.

In Noviembre y un poco de yerba the underground world of Diego, as contrasted to the outside world inhabited by Tomás, becomes a physical representation of alienation. For political reasons Diego is forced to alienate himself from society and take refuge in his subterranean hiding place. Only when political criminals are forgiven and are allowed to become viable members of society does Diego leave his sequestered dwelling. His death, however, prevents him from rejoining the world that he knew prior to the Civil War.

Alienation also appears in El sol en el hormiguero, although its expression is minimal. In this work the actors assume the behavior of ants instead of humans. Like insects, the characters pass objects one to the other in a line, or they talk to one another by whispering in each others' ears. Besides that, the villagers form a queue and mimic the actions of the person who is standing before them. This could be thought of as a parody, whose message is that man has lost his individuality and behaves as an unthinking insect. Such

behavior could also represent the objectification of man, which is referred to by several critics of alienation. The playwright could also use such actions to serve as examples of the mechanization of our modern era. All this suggests that man behaves like an incognizant automaton, since he is a product of a depersonalized, mechanized society.

The theme of alienation appears in La compañía as well. At one point the rebellious, misunderstood son states that he has the sensation that he is detached from his own body. That is to say, he feels that he is missing certain organs, and that his body does not belong to him.

> Yo ya no tengo ni estómago. Qué asco. Si lo tuviera, me hubiera muerto de asco. Voy andando sin saber dónde voy a poner el pie en el próximo paso.(243)

This character experiences what Fromm calls "out of touch with himself," primarily because he feels estranged from his own body. However, he also is detached from the other members of his family. His alienation is the result of his inability to experience any sentiments toward his fellow man, since he is not capable of empathizing with other human beings.

Gala employs several types of estrangement. There is the alienation which Juan experiences in Los verdes campos del Edén, which represents the misfit personality in society. He and the prostitutes seek a refuge from the real world, and they attempt to create their own ideal environment at the

cemetery. Consuelito represents yet another form of estrangement in Los buenos días perdidos like La Madre in Noviembre y un poco de yerba. These two characters are alienated from the others through their insanity. They represent the alienado character, as described by Erich Fromm. In El sol en el hormiguero the townspeople assume dehumanized actions. They behave like ants, or as automata who, like robots, do not possess reason, and who act as mechanized beings. Still another example of alienation occurs when Paula abandons her own personality in order to assume that of another character in Noviembre y un poco de yerba. She represents the schizophrenic person, since she displays a split personality.

All these characters in Gala's works have in common their inherent inability to interact and communicate among themselves. His characters remain, therefore, completely alienated from humanity. In all these works the characters are desperately attempting to define their own identity, and to assert their personality. However, they do not succeed in their search for self-expression. Impeded by circumstances which are usually beyond their control, they represent the truly lost being in an unreceptive, depersonalized, indifferent, and sometimes hostile, society. Their plight, therefore, appears to be truly unfortunate and tragic. This failure at manifesting one's own identity represents negativism in its most patent expression.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER NEGATIVE ELEMENTS: THE ANTI-HERO, DEATH, INCOMMUNICABILITY, BLACK HUMOR, AND UNHAPPINESS

Antonio Gala's protagonists are not the traditional, classic heroes. Instead, his main characters often display a tendency to desist from being forceful, kind, self-assured, strong-willed, positive, and often altruistic individuals. Such attributes usually are associated with the term hero.

The idea of hero and hero worship is, perhaps, as old as mankind itself. Traditionally man has singled out certain individuals who acted or suffered in some unusual manner in order to significantly enlarge the scope of humanity. These exceptional people were looked upon with admiration as models worthy of being imitated. Such men are loyal, sincere, reverent, possess insight, have a strong sense of duty and concern for the improvement of the human condition. For Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), history is the record of great men who were not only exceptional mortals

but divinely inspired as well. In On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History (1841) Carlyle declares:

> We cannot look, however imperfectly, upon a great man, without gaining something by him. He is the living lightfountain, which is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world, and this, not as a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural, luminary shining by the gift of heaven; . . .[1]

Later in the nineteenth century there emerged a new type of hero, one who was at odds with established norms and who did not particularly wish to better society nor to be a part of it. Lucio Ruotolo maintains that the romantic hero "can be said to rise above historical ambivalence, testifying on the one hand to the reality of universal virtue and on the other to uncompromised inwardness; . . ."[2] The hero is now an outcast of society whose primary objective is not to contribute to the development of civilization, but to satisfy his own selfish whims. They themselves and their emotions mattered most in life. The romantic heroes were characterized by an egotistic as well as eccentric personality, and they envisioned nature, which often reflected their moods, in grandiose terms. Similar to the anti-heroes of today, they were impotent to act because they did not believe that there was anything in life worth saving. Consequently, the

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[1]Thomas Carlyle, On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p.2.

[2]Lucio P. Ruotolo, Six Existential Heroes (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), p.7.

romantic hero often sought suicide as his only alternative. Some years later in the century Nietzsche's ideas exerted ample influence on subsequent authors. It was in his book Also Sprach Zarathustra (published in four parts, 1883-1892) that Nietzsche first introduced the concept of the will to power. For him all life expressed a struggle for power. Man, he argued, should concentrate on his own elevation and forge his own destiny. Nietzsche's hero, therefore, is the passionate, active man who can use his emotions creatively instead of relying on worshiping gods in an alleged hereafter.

In the contemporary era critics have often referred to the deterioration of traditional mores and standards in life. Speaking about this situation Helen Weinberg offers the following explanation:

> With the breakdown of traditional systems of philosophy, religion, and ethics, the values of the individual man have been cut loose from universally accepted systems of thought which he might use as his own frame of reference for his intercourse with God and with other men. As once the microcosm was held to mirror the macrocosm, now the macrocosm mirrors the microcosm: man makes his own world in which he functions. Moreover, he makes it as he moves; he creates it in action. His main quality in existential terms is the kinetic one of "becomingness," his struggle is toward "beingness."[3]

Most critics who attempt to define the present-day world most often mention as causes of the feeling of nothingness in modern man the decay of traditional religion, the

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[3]Helen Weinberg, The New Novel in America: The Kafkan Mode in Contemporary Fiction (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1970), p.14.

frightening realization of the destructive nature of nuclear war, and man's reliance on a highly technological environment which emphasizes science and the machine. These phenomena of the twentieth century cause man to realize his insignificance and his debility. Robert Emmet Jones maintains that present-day society is too sophisticated to believe in heroes.

> It distrusts its own thought, it despises its own passions, and it realizes its unimportance in the universe. Its heroes cannot therefore be noble or even significant. Everything becomes merely absurd.[4]

Albert Camus is often credited as being the writer who best described the absurd condition of humanity in Le Mythe de Sisphe (1942). David Galloway maintains that Camus' ideas concerning the absurd condition of society arises from man's attempt at finding unity in a disordered universe, between man's "intention and the reality he will encounter."[5]

Unlike the romantic hero, Camus' absurd man is opposed to both suicide and murder as answers to his dilemma. Man now must go through life making decisions whose outcome determines his existence. There appears to be a disproportion between a man's intention and the reality which he will have to face.

In literature the anti-hero represents the protagonist of a novel or play who possesses the opposite of many

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[4]Robert Emmet Jones, The Alienated Hero in Modern French Drama (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1962), p.5.

[5]David Galloway, The Absurd Hero in American Fiction (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 1971), p.6.

of the characteristics of the traditional hero. He is not particularly forceful, neither courageous nor intrepid, at times inept, greedy and graceless, occasionally dishonest and often unconcerned about others. To a certain degree Gala follows a general tendency of twentieth-century authors who present their main characters as anti-heroes. Many of his characters are cowards, deceivers, egotists and occasionally malicious people. Besides the influence of contemporary literature, he appears to continue a long tradition of anti-heroes and anti-heroines which abound quite early in Spanish letters. The picaresque novel recounts the adventures of a protagonist who is clearly an unheroic type. Antecedents of the modern anti-hero can be found in the characters of Celestina, Lazarillo, Don Juan, and Don Pablos in Quevedo's Buscón, for these main characters commonly share their deceitful nature, ignoble feats, and egocentricity. Similar to these characters, Gala's protagonists live at the periphery of society as social outcasts.

In Anillos para una dama Gala builds his play around the character of doña Jimena as the protagonist of the drama, instead of using Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, a true hero with all the heroic attributes generally associated with such a personage. Doña Jimena's personality is antithetical to that of the Cid's, for she is presented as a selfish, weak, self-indulgent woman. She places her own desires and whims over matters of state and refuses to sacrifice her personal

pleasures and ambitions. Jimena prefers to appease her erotic passions by marrying the man she covets, Minaya, rather than remaining faithful to the memory of the Cid. By traditional standards, giving in to her basic desires implies a weakness of character, and she becomes less than heroic by displaying such human frailty. Doña Jimena expresses her selfish motives in the following passage:

> Jimena: . . . El Cid ha muerto. Yo he sido su mujer. Su memoria es sagrada... pero yo sigo viva. Cerremos el paréntesis. Tachémoslo. No ha existido. Olvidado.(69)

On another occasion Jimena openly acknowledges the fact that she is not a heroine, nor does she pretend to be anything other than an ordinary, average woman who displays all the bewilderment and foibles of any human. This kind of constant personal preoccupation with her own existence represents yet another of her nonheroic characteristics.

> Jimena: No soy una heroína. Soy una mujer sola, con un obispo sordo cuando le acomoda, unas cuantas decrépitas y unos cuantos soldados leales a un mito que ya no existe porque lo hemos tachado...(70)

In spite of the fact that she is not a true heroine, Jimena is honest, for she willingly admits that she is not an extraordinary person. Her complaint is that she cannot live a normal life as she pleases, since society places restrictions on her which impede her happiness and self-realization.

The king in El sol en el hormiguero also displays his anti-heroic nature by being a coward and an ignoble ruler. Instead of making the rational decision of befriending the benign giant in order to work in harmony for the common well-being of his subjects, he chooses the treacherous act of murdering him. Such a deed not only incites the wrath of the townspeople against him, but it also precipitates his downfall as well, since his subjects abandon him at the end of the play. The uncommon appearance of the giant and his tremendous size instill fear within the ruler. His fears reveal his pusillanimous personality. The king feels threatened by the unusual being and his first reaction is to get rid of the giant.

> Rey: . . . Hoy ya no es tiempo de gigantes ni de héroes. No estamos preparados para eso. Se trata, sin duda, de una equivocación, de una broma pesada que alguien quiere gastarme. Pero ¿por qué?, ¿por qué? Pensemos.(192)

In Los verdes campos del Edén Juan and his companions elect to evade a society which is unsympathetic to their personalities. Instead of trying to ameliorate some of the negative conditions which they find in their surroundings, they choose to rebel by deserting the actual world. Therefore, they try to create their own environment. They discover, however, that such a feat is impossible, since they cannot escape constant harassment from society. They display their cowardly nature by refusing to face up to the realities of life such as they are. Similar to many

romantic heroes, these characters refuse to become active members of the existing world. They are outcasts who contribute nothing to humanity. Instead, their primary ambition is to satisfy their own whims and fancies.

Consuelito performs the most unheroic deed of all by taking her own life in Los buenos días perdidos. She not only places minimal value on the lives of others, but she also expresses a definite lack of respect and esteem toward her own person as well. She might also be considered a murderess since, by taking her own life, she kills the unborn child she is carrying in her womb.

By commiting suicide Consuelito chooses to avoid the difficult task of making decisions which would partially determine her existence. For her, suicide represents the only answer to her problems, since she believes that it is the fastest and easiest way of solving them. Consuelito represents the opposite of the existential hero who acknowledges the absurdity of life, but who bears his dilemma in anguish, and who continues to exist through the decisions he makes. For the absurd hero, suicide is no solution to his troublesome existence.

The theme of death appears frequently in Antonio Gala's works. In Noviembre y un poco de yerba Diego accidentally kills himself when the pistol he is holding falls and discharges. Since his demise is not intentional, his death can be thought of as a cruel turn of fate. Whatever

the reason for its appearance in this play, death produces a very bitter note of irony. Diego's secluded existence represents a living death, a hell from which he cannot escape. Besides not being able to enjoy the physical pleasures of contact with nature by simply walking outdoors, his life is made even more unbearable by Paula's constant insults. She seems to delight in belittling him. Moreover, she knows that he is powerless to change his situation, and that through necessity he will do whatever she asks. After enduring all the degradation he can tolerate, he explodes in verbal combat with her on several occasions. When he is given the opportunity to leave and to rejoin the outside world, he then is unexpectedly killed by his own hands. This act is what produces the tragic irony in the work. When Diego is given the opportunity to live, he dies.

Whereas death in Noviembre y un poco de yerba is unintentional, in Los buenos días perdidos it is quite deliberate. Consuelito chooses to put an end to her problems by killing herself. Her death is the culminating act of despair in her unhappy and unbearable existence.

The theme of death is, however, more prevalent in Gala's poetry than in his drama. The publication which launched him into his literary career was a thin volume of twenty poems entitled Enemigo íntimo (1960). Having displayed a genuine talent as a poet, Gala won the Premio Adonais for this collection. The enemy alluded to in the title is

actually a personification of death. Moreover, the title appears to be a contradiction, since enemigo implies a distancing of one individual from another, and íntimo connotes a closeness and familiarity. Nevertheless, the title contains the essential meaning of the poems. The works in this book are highly passionate statements which interweave the theme of love with death. For Gala, love is synonymous with death, since he thinks the two are states of being which man does not choose, and since both are imminently present. He states this idea in the following passage:

> No somos dueños del amor: anamos
> lo que podemos, pues la muerte y
> el amor no se escogen.[6]

Gala believes that death dwells within a person at all times, and yet man resists being overtaken by death. Therefore, death becomes a dreaded companion, an intimate enemy, throughout his existence. The following poem illustrates many of the poet's fatalistic ideas. It is one which makes frequent reference to the theme of death.

III

> Se va el amor de entre las manos con
> la prisa de los ríos. Nos paramos
> a mirar la corriente
> maravillados, como si bebiéramos,

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[6]Antonio Gala, Enemigo íntimo (Madrid: Ediciones Rialp, S.A., 1960), p.22. All succeeding references to this work are from the same edition and are identified by the page number in parentheses.

y va ya el agua en el recuerdo sólo
Con su ardiente desorden nos envuelve
el beso sin mañana.
Comenzó ayer apenas, hoy la aurora
sorprende a los amantes desolados.
En exilio vivimos de aquel reino,
inmediato y distante, donde es todo
claridad: no respuesta
sino entregada ausencia de preguntas.

Quiero estar donde estuve.
Resbala deshojada en mi mejilla
la sonrisa de talco de esta hora.
Aquí el amor de hoy ha de inventarse
hoy y mañana el de mañana.

Si los amantes detener pretenden
su candente nevada, han de morir
antes de que el orâculo
triunfe, con el sigilo
de la boca en la boca:
cuando ignoran sus brazos aún el peso
de una carne inservible.
En tanto que haya muerte, habrá esperanza.

Pero ¿morir? ¿Y qué es morir? ¿Nos queda
algo que pueda sernos arrancado
por la muerte?

Y así nos resistimos
buscando, sin cesar, de madrugada,
un pretexto cualquiera:
este moroso cuello,
esos ojos oscuros, aquel modo
de abandonar las manos.

¿Nuestro universo se derrumba y
no podremos morir? ¿Habrá una nueva
excusa cada día
que nos anime a respirar? Yo pido
tregua para enterrar
a mis muertos, un alba
en que golpee la luz contra unos párpados
indiferentes. Pido
morir, morir, volver, entrar de nuevo,
cerrar los ojos una tarde y ver
cómo se apaga el mundo.(15-17)

The idea that man constantly tries to delude himself into believing that he will not die is plainly expressed in

the above poem. Gala thinks man attempts to negate death by refusing to think about it. And yet, subconsciously man is aware of his finitude. He fears death and at the same time he yearns for mortality, in order to be relieved from his anguish. Gala's ideas are very similar to those of Theodore Adorno who has studied the subject of death in his book Negative Dialectics. Adorno maintains:

> Men have lost the illusion that it (death) is commensurable with their lives. They cannot absorb the fact that they must die.[7]

Then Adorno adds:

> What is destroyed is a nonentity, in itself and perhaps even for itself. Hence the constant panic in view of death, a panic not to be quelled any more except by repressing the thought of death.[8]

For Gala death means several things. It represents a state of being which exists before life. Therefore, when man dies he actually returns to a prenatal condition. This thought is expressed when he says, "La muerte es el encuentro donde se reanuda la anterior vigilia."(40) On the other hand, life represents sorrow and pain as well as suffering. For that reason man longs for death, in order to find rest and comfort from his agony. Nevertheless, man expresses doubt about finding respite from his despair through death. Gala doubts that it is possible to die, for he laments,

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[7]Theodore W. Adorno, Negative Dialectics (New York: The Seabury Press, 1973), p.369.

[8]Ibid., p.371.

"Cuando el día se acerca me pregunto si es posible morir."(36) His poetry as well as his plays and short stories express this deep-seated anguish.

In another poem, Meditación en Queronea, Gala laments the death of an actual but unidentified friend. He confesses that his life will be a continual search for that lost love.

> Tu nombre es ahora "víctima".
> Descansa, ya has llegado.
> Inmortal te retienen
> los brazos de quien te ama, y tu retienes
> inmortal a quien te ama:
> aquel gesto inicial se ha hecho de piedra.
> Tan sólo las estatuas
> pueden seguir sonriendo para siempre.
> Los dos habéis vencido.
> ¿Dónde está el vencedor?[9]

Gala often expresses the very negative idea that there is no hope in life. He maintains, "Se seca la esperanza."[10] Nevertheless, the poet appears to contradict himself, since he also expresses optimism in the future of mankind and confidence in life and happiness. The following lines reveal his positive nature by ending Enemigo íntimo on a note of optimism.

> Porque mañana cantarán los pájaros
> que aprendieron el vuelo entre espinares
> y hemos de oír, al fin, cuando amanezca,
> tiernas voces de niños
> en brazos de la tierra prometida.(65)

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[9]Antonio Gala, "Meditación en Queronea," Cuandernos hispanoamericanos, núm. 183 (marzo 1965), 506.

[10]Antonio Gala, "La deshora," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, núm. 148 (abril 1962), 14.

Another negative attitude which often appears in Gala's works is the idea that man is a creature who is unable to communicate his thoughts, desires, sensibilities, and aspirations to his fellow man. This basic inability to communicate, to make one's feelings understood by others, and the absence of lucidity are a capital cause of the solitude and despair which characterize the majority of his protagonists. Since language is man's basic means of intercourse and communication, the lack of such a vehicle of expression tends to isolate and alienate individuals. In a technological age in which society devotes so many resources --monetary, physical, as well as intellectual, to the development of communications, the fact that there still exists a great degree of misunderstanding seems to be an incredulous indictment against contemporary society. Herein lies the irony: the greater the level of scientific development in telecommunications, the greater the inability to communicate.

The theme of the lack of communication is often conveyed in Gala's works through the use of incongruous dialogue. One such example occurs when Consuelito confides her past to Lorenzo in Los buenos días perdidos.

> Consuelito: . . . ¿Usted sabe que cuando se toma una taza de caldo templado es muy fácil morirse de repente? ¿Usted sabe que cuando alguien hace lo que le ocurre, terminan por ahorcarlo? Entonces, hijo, no le entiendo. . . . (87)

In this passage Consuelito makes several disconnected, absurd, and impertinent remarks. Her lack of reason produces a

series of incongruous statements. She also demonstrates her disturbed personality when she speaks in a childlike manner. The following lines illustrate this tendency:

> Consuelito: . . . ¿Usted sabe que los galápagos hablan muchísimo de noche con las estrellas? . . . (87)

The most obvious instance of the absence of communication occurs when Cleofás and Consuelito participate in a disconnected conversation. In this scene Consuelito talks about a pet cat she had when she was a child, while Cleofás discusses his maintenance duties at the church where he lives. They appear to be paying no attention to each other's comments. Therefore, they engage in desultory babble.

> Consuelito: . . . Siendo ya mayorcita tuve un gato que se llamaba Sultán. No quería a nadie más que a mí. Un mes de enero desapareció. Volvió mucho tiempo después, echando sangre por todas partes: reventado, yo creo. Volvió para morirse...
>
> Cleofás: (Comenzando una serie de réplicas paralelas.) Los paños del altar de Santa Engracia están llenos de polvo.
>
> Consuelito: (Con las manos sobre el vientre.) Sultán se llamaba tambien... Era yo mayorcita...
>
> Cleofás: Habrá que llevarlos uno de estos días.
>
> Consuelito: Una noche fuimos a la verbena de San Pedro y me compraste media docena de claveles. Todavía los tengo.
>
> Cleofás: Y el coro está lleno de telarañas. Mañana cogemos una mesa y la escoba y hacemos zafarrancho, ¿quieres?
>
> Consuelito: "Si algún día me entero de que me engañas--me dijiste--te pego un tiro y después me pego yo otro." Yo me lo creí, y luego ni tiro ni nada.

Cleofás: Esta vez calzaremos bien la mesa, no vaya a pasar lo que en noviembre... cuando te caíste encima del órgano. Sonó tan fuerte que se desprendieron tres metros de cornisa...

Consuelito: Esta chaqueta habrá que guardarla. Ya no va a hacer más frío.(134)

The entire play El caracol en el espejo may be thought of as symbolizing the theme of the inability to communicate. There is little or no action, and the protagonists seem to address their words to characters who do not bother to listen. This play illustrates the emptiness and boredom of modern-day life, as well as the limiting restrictions which society places on individual freedom and choice. El caracol en el espejo technically conveys the absence of communication through its series of disconnected scenes. Each scene appears to be unrelated to the preceding one and to the following scenes as well. The succeeding passage between A and Z plainly demonstrates the failure of communication which is present throughout this work.

A: De todo se me acusa: los pelos, el lavabo, vaya conversación. Podía hablarme de sus proyectos si los tiene, que qué disparate los va a tener; de los míos; del niño por lo menos. O del mes que le debemos al casero. Ya, ya. Llega, se acurruca y ahí se las den today.

Z: He pensado que quizá podía dejar una de las contabilidades. Ganaría un poco menos, pero llegaría antes, podríamos hablar, qué sé yo...

A: Hablar. ¿Es que sirve de algo hablar? Hablar es confundirse. ¿Tú y yo? Hablar, ¿de qué?

Z: No sé... Me parecía. No hablamos casi nunca.

A: Le parecía. Como si todo consistiese en hablar. Con un hombre que siempre está muerto de sueño...(142)

In El caracol en el espejo the lack of communication is also conveyed by the names of the characters: La Mujer Que Vive Sola, La Solterona, El Marinero Que No Ha Visto El Mar, as well as A and Z. These names all suggest an absence of communication. Their names also suggest the lack of a concrete, personal identity, since they are not individualized. These characters are, in effect, nameless. Moreover, they lead sterile lives, victims of their inability to relate and empathize. They constantly express their shortcomings and their failure at attaining what at one time they had aspired to be. However, they do little to ameliorate their predicament.

Besides incongruous dialogue, the idea of noncommunication is also conveyed by the childlike conversations of many of Gala's characters. Diego and Paula play guessing games in Noviembre y un poco de yerba. The protagonists in El caracol en el espejo often behave like children who are attending a child's party, and even A and Z confront their relationship as selfish children who censure each other over the slightest frivolity. In Los verdes campos del Edén Juan and his colleagues display a certain puerile approach to life, since their primary objective is to avoid all responsibilities. They wish to establish a separate society free from restrictions and responsibilities. These characters only want to appease their own desires, and to avoid any civic and social duty. They display, therefore, a childlike attitude of selfish concern.

The absence of communication is conveyed in yet another way, by the use of elipses. Many of the characters' speeches are preceded and followed by these marks. A passage which contains elipses is the following from El sol en el hormiguero:

> Vendedor: ¡Recuerdos de los Reyes. El mejor regalo para las esposas... (Tropieza con la Extraviada.) y las novias! (A la Burguesa 1.ª) ¿Quiere usted una foto de la Reina?
>
> Burguesa 1.ª: Sí, démela. (Le paga.) ¡Ah, qué hermoso cuello tiene...!
>
> Vieja: Carabí. Quién se lo cortará. Carabí, urí; carabí, urá.
>
> Burguesa 1.ª: ¡Qué barbaridad! ¿A dónde iremos a parar con tanta democracia... o lo que sea? El día menos pensado acabamos por ser violadas.(187)

Besides the use of elipses, the Vieja uses nonsensical words which also convey the idea of misunderstanding and absurdity. Such meaningless expressions appear quite frequently in Gala's plays and are usually spoken by adult characters. For the most part these desultory words are alliterative expressions that also contain rhythm, and which often tend to give Gala's dramas a very noticeable poetic quality.

Another important facet of Gala's works is his abundant use of humor, more specifically, black humor. Such theorists of comedy as Thomas Hobbs, Henri Bergson, Immanuel Kant and Sigmund Freud are quick to point out that comedy often springs from very unfortunate circumstances and rather

sad situations. Hence, humor has at its base a very negative attitude. Edwardo Stilman refers to the etymology of the expression black humor:

> El primero que aludió a un "humor negro" fue Aristóteles. Hablando de la melancolía, la llamó "bilis negra", y dijo que en dosis adecuada es un ingrediente del genio, pero que poseída en exceso lo es de la locura. En realidad, hablar de humor negro es una redundancia: todo humorismo tiene su negrura, que se diluye o acentúa de acuerdo con el conflicto en cuestión.[11]

Another critic, Max F. Schulz, however, insists that all attempts at defining black humor are futile, for he says, "Although several attempts have been made to define Black Humor, the results have been elusive and chimerical."[12]

Perhaps one of the first modern interpretations of the nature of humor was Ben Johnson's (1572-1637) theory that comedy springs from an exaggeration of some element in human character. Closely associated to this idea was Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1679) ideas of sudden glory. He believed one laughs at the misfortunes or infirmities of others, or at one's past blunders, if that individual has surmounted such defects. In other words, he felt that the pleasure one derives from laughing may arise from a feeling of superiority over those who are ridiculed. For Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

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[11]Edwardo Stilman, El humor negro (Buenos Aires: Editorial Brújula, 1969), p.12.

[12]Max F. Schulz, Black Fiction of the Sixties: A Pluralistic Definition of Man and his World (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1974), p.4.

comedy springs from an inability for elasticity and adaptation. This means that a comic character is a person with an obsession, or idée fixe. This is the character who is not flexible enough to adapt himself to the changing demands of real life. In such a category Bergson places Don Quixote, Tartuffe and Harpagon. Certainly Bergson's theories appear to bear some resemblance to Ben Johnson's ideas concerning exaggeration. Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) believed humor results from a violent dissolution of an emotional attitude, or the sudden intrusion into an attitude of something incongruous which has strayed from some other compartment of the mind. Therefore, the laughable is derived from the mixture of two opposing and utterly disparate ideas. For Freud (1856-1939) humor was what resulted by outwitting the censor or the internal inhibitions which prevent the individual from giving rein to many reactions to his natural impulses.

In the twentieth century there has emerged a new type of humor whose primary function is to disturb, to shock, as it were, the sensibilities of the audience. One critic, Burton Feldman, insists that "There is something of the terrorist in the Black Humorist."[13] The so-called "absurdists" dramatists of the present century employ incongruity, black humor and cruelty to achieve their aim of astonishing the viewer. This is what they consider total involvement

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[13]Buston Feldman, "Anatomy of Black Humor," Dissent, XV (March-April 1968), 159.

between character and audience. For C. Hugh Holman black humor is defined in the following manner:

> . . . use of the morbid and the absurd for darkly comic purposes in modern fiction and drama. The term refers as much to tone of anger and bitterness as it does to the grotesque and morbid situations, which often deal with suffering, anxiety and death. Black humor is a substantial element in the anti-novel and the Theater of the Absurd.[14]

If all humor has as its base negative attitudes, then black humor differs from most comedy by its degree of bleakness and acerbity. In other words, black comedy is humor at its most negative and cruel expression. Feldman maintains that black humor is inconceivable without the themes of absurdity, alienation, nihilism and exhaustion of the times.[15] These are all negative themes which can be documented readily in Gala's works. Although Gala's humor is often biting and quite forceful, it never reaches the caustic cruelty and morbidity of such black humorists as Artaud, Beckett and Fernando Arrabal. Gala's black humor most often results from some critical remark concerning a character's physical handicap, infirmity or death. On numerous occasions the Bishop don Jerónimo's impaired hearing is ridiculed in Anillos para una dama. The following example is a good case in point of such humor. In this instance humor arises from an incidence of misunderstanding.

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[14]Holman, p.67.

[15]Feldman, p.160.

Here the characters are discussing Jimena's marriage to Minaya and don Jerónimo thinks they are talking about the king, Alfonso VI.

> Jimena: ... Alfonso, como tío y como rey, yo pido tu permiso para casarme por segunda vez. (Tensión. Constanza se santigua. Minaya frena un gesto de dolor. María no le cree del todo.)
>
> Alfonso: Bueno, bueno, bueno.
>
> Jerónimo: ¿Qué ha dicho? Constanza.
>
> Constanza: ¿Qué bueno, bueno, bueno...!
>
> Alfonso: (Intenta disimular su sorpresa.) Este es un desenlace en el que no había pensado... (María hace una reverencia y sale airadamente.) Ni tu hija tampoco, por lo visto.
>
> Jerónimo: (A Constanza.) ¿Qué ha pasado?
>
> Constanza: (harta.) ¿Ay, qué hombre! Que se quiere casar.
>
> Jerónimo: ¿El rey? Si está casado dos veces por lo menos.
>
> Constanza: No el rey; ¡doña Jimena!(70-71)

A much more caustic example of negative humor is produced when the dramatist ridicules death and dying. Such an instance occurs in Los verdes campos del Edén, when Juan tries to explain his presence at the cemetery:

> Juan: Mi abuelo era de aquí.
>
> Mujer 1.ª: Su abuelo dice. ¿Quién es su abuelo?
>
> Juan: Murió.
>
> Mujer 1.ª: Claro, para hacer sitio. Eso sí.
>
> Juan: No. El ya tenía su sitio. El había comprado un panteón de seis cuerpos.

Mujer 1.ª: ¿Dónde?

Juan: Aquí.

Mujer 1.ª: ¿Ay, qué tiempos! Ahora, ahora bastante tenemos con saber dónde vamos a dormir esta noche. Luego, ¿qué más da? A la fosa común.(21)

In this play death becomes a symbol of Juan's search for tranquility. He is seeking total withdrawal from the real world. His longing for death is a consequence of his anguish and feelings of despair. The juxtaposition of the serious idea that death is a state of being which is not eagerly anticipated, with a frivolous suggestion of one character to another to sit and wait for death, produces a humorous situation in the following lines:

Nina: (A Juan.) Siéntese usted, buen hombre. (Juan va a hacerlo.) Viene usted muerto de cansancio.

Juan: (Sentándose.) Yo venía a morir aquí, porque mi abuelo era de aquí. Y yo quería morir aquí.

Lutero: Pues eso lo conseguirá usted muy fácilmente. Se sienta usted y espera un poco.(28)

In the above passage humor is also caused by the figurative use of "muerto de cansancio."

Perhaps the cruelest example of negative comedy takes place in El caracol en el espejo. Here the characters are discussing the death and resurrection of a child who is never identified:

Ordenancista: Salgamos. Con cuidado. Ese lado derecho. Adelante. Cuidado. (El cortejo camina hacia la izquierda. A la Solterona.) Señora...

Solterona: Señorita. Y, además, con tanto meneo acabarán por resucitar al niño.(150-151)

All the characters in Gala's works share a common emotion, unhappiness. Their dissatisfaction arises from several causes. Usually his characters are unhappy because they lack freedom to live as they wish. For the rebellious son in La compañía filial obligations prevent him from living as he pleases. He is compelled to return to render service to his dying father. What he does not realize is that his parents react as negatively to his arrival. They too resent his presence. As parents, however, they are obligated to take him into their home and to feign love and acceptance. In Noviembre y un poco de yerba Diego is obliged to remain in seclusion until political prisoners are granted amnesty. His misery is a result of Paula's total control over his life, since he has to do as she pleases, or run the risk of being betrayed by her. Living in close contact with his insane mother-in-law in the underground railroad station increases his misfortune. This subterranean dwelling represents a living hell where mental torture is constantly dealt in the form of psychological harassment. Pressure by society to remain a widow causes doña Jimena's discontentment in Anillos para una dama. For her, happiness would be marriage with Minaya, whom she loves. However, she is discouraged from re-marrying by relatives and townspeople alike. She is forced to pretend to have a heroic spirit, which she despises.

The characters in Los verdes campos del Edén experience discomfort in the actual world. Their isolation from other members of society is caused by their more developed sensibilities and empathy toward man and nature. As social misfits, they try to create their own environment, since they are misunderstood and unappreciated by others. Their attempts are frustrated when they discover that they are powerless in their efforts to live apart from reality. Thus, they become unhappy and disgruntled.

Another principal cause of dissatisfaction results from the attempts of one character to exploit the vulnerabilities of another in order to gain some temporary objective. Lorenzo in Los buenos días perdidos relies on his friendship with Cleofás in order to gain entrance into the latter's household. Once he has deceived Consuelito by pretending to be in love with her, he attempts to steal money from the church coffers. Lorenzo also relies on Hortensia's erotic interest in him in order to achieve his objectives. Ana, in Solsticio de invierno, tries to win the young man's affection by having him depend on her for sustenance. She fails to realize that money will not buy his affection. In the end she remains embittered and resentful of her own deception.

Gala's universal message is that man is not the free, unrestricted being that he often thinks or pretends to be. Instead, humans are bound by obligations and duties which are distasteful and irrevocable. Such obligations

represent the constant limitations on their lives. When man tries to change his plight, he is thwarted in his ambitions. This disappointment gives way to unhappiness, despair and bewilderment. For Gala, unhappiness is yet another unavoidable negative element of contemporary civilization.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Antonio Gala's works stress the negative consequences of the social, economic, psychological and political order on the individual. His characters find refuge from the real world in their self-imposed solitude. Being social outcasts, they react negatively toward asphyxiating conformity, conventional morality and order. Finding complete freedom from social restrictions impossible, his characters lapse into anger, anguish and despair, which often leads to their self-destruction. Gala's characters are alienated beings. Their alienation includes maladjustment to their surroundings and estrangement from their own personalities. Frequently they assume several roles and dispositions subconsciously. One moment they are rather childlike and naive, only to become cruel and vindictive in the following moment. They apparently derive pleasure in causing anguish in others. His protagonists' primary concerns are their own egotistical interests.

Drama critics are quick to praise the poetic quality of Gala's plays. Of his poetic sensitivities Fernando Lázaro Carreter and E. Correa Calderón observe, ". . . apunta cualidades magníficas en determinados cuandros de evidente originalidad y calidad poética."[1] Gala's poetic dialogue is derived from his ability to suggest rather than describe meticulously. In other words, his characters' speeches are often marked by incomplete sentences which end in deletions that are technically represented by elipses. The meaning, therefore, is often conveyed by suggestion. This enables the viewer or reader to supply the significance of a particular passage, to participate in the creative evolution of his plays. Moreover, the dramatist's works abound in such poetic techniques as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, rhythm, and sensory imagery. The emphasis in Gala's dramas does not lie on action nor narrative structure, but on the dialogue itself. Alluding to this fact David Ladra maintains:

> En efecto, la caracteriología de los personajes proviene directamente de su lenguaje. Así rodea Gala el hueso de carne para humanizar a sus entes. Para darles esta dimensión, la palabra cesa en su carrera, la acción se remansa, y entonces el verbo se revuelve, caracolea y se mira en sí mismo.[2]

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[1]Fernando Lázaro Carreter and E. Correa Calderón, Literatura española contemporánea (Salamanca: Ediciones Anaya, 1966), p.285.

[2]David Ladra, "Tres obras y una utopía," Primer acto, núm. 100-101 (noviembre-diciembre 1968), 43.

The importance of the stories is minimal. Instead, the playwright concentrates on the psychological disposition of his characters. Referring to the importance of the dialogue in Gala's plays, Fernando Herrero observes:

> El teatro de Gala es predominantemente literario, es decir que el signo que modula y expresa las tensiones escénicas de sus obras es fundamentalmente la palabra; las secuencias dentro de cada obra se articulan en relación a determinados juegos literarios, que marcan el tono o rompen la significación de la escena que se interpreta. La gracia irónica de los diálogos, la exactitud en la caracterización de personales marginales, precisamente a través de su forma de decir, son el punto más alto de la producción de Gala, porque, en general, no actúan por si mismos sino, como hemos dicho, integrados en la acción y conduciendo ésta.[3]

The scenery in Gala's plays is usually sparse and also suggestive. Frequently there is a simple dark curtain and unpretentious scaffolding where the characters appear and voice their desperation. Visual effects are usually limited to focusing a spotlight on the actors. This also heightens the somber tone of his works. It therefore complements the serious and pessimistic nature of his plays.

Other negative elements which permeate Gala's dramas are the themes of death, unhappiness, anguish and the absence of communication. His protagonists are anti-heroes who are frustrated by their failure at achieving happiness and self-realization. The characters' despair becomes so acute that it often leads them to self-destruction through their death.

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[3]Herrero, p.68.

Antonio Gala has written more than a dozen plays to date. He is continuously coming to the attention of audiences and critics alike, and his importance as a talented playwright is frequently discussed in literary circles. Gala's significance is referred to by José Monleón in the following manner:

> El caso de Gala es importante y significado. Lanzado por el Premio Calderón de la Barca, arropado por la crítica, acogido por los teatros nacionales y presentado como un gran autor "poético", figura hoy, sin embargo, en la lista de los "eternos jóvenes dramaturgos" españoles, para quienes es dificil estrenar, justaments porque, a través de su propio y particularísimo sentimiento estético, lo que quieren es hablar de España y de ahora en vez de irse por las ramas.[4]

Having been awarded several literary prizes for his poems, plays and short stories, Antonio Gala has achieved fame early in his career. His plays have been translated into several languages and are performed in theaters throughout Spain and Latin America. His universal messages, skillful writing, penetrating psychological statements and pertinent ideas will undoubtedly focus worldwide attention on this worthy dramatist in the present as well as in the future.

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[4]José Monleón, Treinta años de teatro de la derecha (Barcelona: Tusquets Editor, 1971), p.126.

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