To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Mary Jordan entitled "A Study of the Protagonists in the Plays of Fernando Arrabal." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Speech and Theatre.

Albert J. Harris
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

A STUDY OF THE PROTAGONISTS IN THE PLAYS OF FERNANDO ARRABAL

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Mary Jordan

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ABSTRACT

As a young writer Fernando Arrabal was largely unaware of literary movements such as surrealism, absurdism, and the theatre of cruelty, but his plays assimilated certain features associated with such contemporary luminaries as Ionesco, Beckett, Artaud, and Genet. In a manner similar to that of Strindberg, Arrabal's theatre serves as a forum through which he can externalize his innermost psychological traumas.

The first part of the thesis will elaborate on the influences which shaped Arrabal's outlook and his creative talent. Since he, himself, has admitted the autobiographical nature of his work, personal data which has affected his literary output will be given in detail. On a more objective level, his theatre will be linked to certain aspects of the modern French theatre.

In his early plays, which is the second part of the thesis, Arrabal created a special type of character, whom we shall call the adult-child, that establishes the tone for all the plays in the early years of his career. The analysis will deal with the methods the adult-children employ in order to survive in a world they do not understand nor which understands them.

A change in the concept of the protagonists is the subject of the final part of the thesis. The analysis deals with their attempts to find freedom from the stifling and imprisoning memories of childhood.

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CHAPTER I

A PLAYWRIGHT IN PERSPECTIVE

Arrabal and the Modern French Theatre

The avant-garde has always fascinated literary critics and the general public alike. On the one hand, it produces fear by presenting the unknown, the outlandish, and perhaps a hint of what the future might hold. On the other hand, it inspires admiration by breaking away from the past. Despite his protests to the contrary, Fernando Arrabal, Spaniard by birth, Frenchman by choice, is part of this long tradition and has contributed significantly to the modern French theatre.

Arrabal's writings come very close to the Theatre of the Absurd, with some of his plays falling entirely within that category. He has disclaimed any prior knowledge of the Theatre of the Absurd, even stating that when he first heard his work compared to Beckett's, he thought the reference was to Becquer.[1] Critics of Arrabal have compared him favorably with Ionesco and Beckett, even considering him superior in certain respects. It is fitting then that we should begin

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[1]Janet Diaz, "Theatre and Theories of Fernando Arrabal," Kentucky Romance Quarterly, XVI, No. 2 (1969), p. 143.

our investigation into the influences which have shaped Arrabal's writings with the Theatre of the Absurd.

Theatre of the Absurd is a term coined by Martin Esslin and applied to certain dramatists of the 1950's and 1960's who were not part of any self-proclaimed movement, but who held in common the view of the absurdity of the human condition. Esslin stipulates the qualifications for membership by using a statement of Camus's:

> A world that can be explained by reasoning, however faulty, is a familiar world. But in a universe that is suddenly deprived of illusions and of light, man feels a stranger. His is an irremediable exile, because he is deprived of memories of a lost homeland as much as he lacks the hope of a promised land to come. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, truly constitutes the feeling of the Absurdity.[2]

The Theatre of the Absurd, then, deals basically with twentieth-century man, alone, helpless, and bewildered by what is reality and what is life.

In the drama of the Absurd Esslin acknowledges variances of theory and technique among writers, but he states that the following elements are commonly held: (1) the element of "pure" theatre as one might see it in a circus, in a bullfight, in juggling, or in mimes; (2) the element of clowning, fooling, or madness; (3) the element of verbal

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[2]Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961), p. xix.

nonsense; and (4) the element of literary dream and fantasy.[3] Certainly there is little new about these traits, and it is the ageless quality that each possesses which qualifies it for the "new" Theatre of the Absurd. Newness is not an objective of the Absurd. Ionesco feels that the "aim" of the Absurd should be

> . . . to rediscover—not invent—in their purest state, the permanent forms and forgotten ideals of the theatre. We must cut through the cliches and break free of a hidebound "traditionalism"; we must rediscover the one true and living tradition.[4]

The dramatists whose works correspond with these requirements are led by Arthur Adamov, Jean Genet, Samuel Beckett, and Eugene Ionesco. These writers are so securely grouped together by countless critics and critiques that one might easily forget that they worked individually and with complete freedom from any specific ideology. Roger Blin, director of many of the plays of Genet and Beckett, warns us of this danger:

> . . . Genet, Beckett, Ionesco, Adamov are four sincere playwrights. They are individuals and have founded no single school. . . . One cannot say that the work of Genet, Beckett, or Ionesco is "richer" or "truer" than that of the others. They are all poets in their fashion. Their approaches to the theatre, though different, are legitimate.[5]

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[3]Ibid., p. 230.

[4]Eugene Ionesco, "The World of Ionesco," trans. Harold Hobson, Tulane Drama Review, III (Fall 1958), p. 48.

[5]Betinna Knapp, "An Interview with Roger Blin," Tulane Drama Review, VII (Spring 1963), p. 124.

Less well-known, but equally as important, is the Spanish playwright Fernando Arrabal. As a young writer Arrabal was largely unaware of literary movements such as Surrealism and Absurdism, but his early plays assimilated certain features associated with the writers cited by Blin.

Since the qualities of the Absurd are not new, it is of interest to notice their place in history. The most thorough study of the background of the Absurd has been done by Martin Esslin. He finds the "pure" theatre as well as clowning and fooling in the ancient mimus, the Italian commedia dell'arte, the medieval court fools, the fools of Shakespeare, and especially in American vaudeville and silent films. Esslin claims that Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, and the Keystone Cops were influential in preparing the way for the Theatre of the Absurd. The protagonist in Ghelderode's Epitaph for Pantagleize is linked to Charlie Chaplin[6] and Arrabal's first play, Picnic on the Battlefield, has a distinct Chaplinesque quality about it. The Marx Brothers influence can be seen in the trio of musicians, one of whom is mute, in Arrabal's The Car Cemetery.

Literature of dreams and fantasy and that of the closely related field of allegory have provided the Absurd Theatre with a rich heritage. Esslin cites as examples Piers Plowman,

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[6]Ruby Cohn, Currents in Contemporary Drama (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1969), p. 157.

The Divine Comedy, Pilgrim's Progress, the Spanish autos sacramentales, Calderon's Life Is a Dream, and various works by Strindberg, Joyce, and Kafka.

Considered by many as the most important germinal force in the background of avant-garde theatre is Albert Jarry (1873-1907). Influenced by puppet theatre, Jarry accidentally wrote the play that was destined to shake the stage more violently than any other play since Hugo's Hernani caused open warfare between the Classical and Romantic factions of French drama. Jarry's play was a satire written to satisfy a whim. Ubu Roi, with its "wild, extravagant, and uninhibited" language and its "world of grotesque archetypal images," breaks violently with the past, with the "realistic theatre."[7] Killinger suggests that Arrabal's works seem to derive from Jarry in the matter of scatalogical language and blasphemy.[8] Jarryesque language is used in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria: the Emperor calls God a "son of a bitch," and operatically intones various scatalogical remarks about the Creator. The Car Cemetery is a parody of the Crucifiction.

Franz Kafka (1883-1924) is not usually considered a man of the theatre, but Esslin claims that Andre Gide's and Jean-Louis Barrault's adaptation of The Trial (1947) "was

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[7]Ibid., p. 255.

[8]John Killinger, "Arrabal and Surrealism," Modern Drama, XIV, No. 2 (September 1971), p. 218.

the first play that fully represented the Theatre of the Absurd in its mid-twentieth century form."[9] To Janet Diaz Arrabal admitted that Kafka and Lewis Carroll are "his most important models among foreign authors."[10] The Kafkaesque climate in The Two Executioners, The Condemned Man's Bicycle, and The Labyrinth are derived from the ambiance of Franco Spain. The typical atmosphere of trial and condemnation for an unknown or possibly nonexistent offense, with subsequent torture and death is incorporated in The Two Executioners. In The Labyrinth the very innocence of the accused contributes to his condemnation. There is also a Kafkaesque atmosphere in The Condemned Man's Bicycle in which the protagonist unwillingly participates in a mysterious game of life and death.[11]

The Labyrinth shows "that Kafka's influence is as much at the heart of Arrabal's vision of universal guilt and condemnation as is Franco's Spain."[12] The antagonist is a father figure who has absolute power over his domain.

Guillame Apollinaire coined the word "surrealism" as the name of an early twentieth-century trend of which he was a leading member. Apollinaire, a writer whose drama presented

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[9]Esslin, p. 254.

[10]Diaz, p. 144.

[11]Ibid., p. 146.

[12]Allen Thiher, "Arrabal and the Theatre of Obsession," Modern Drama, XIII, No. 2 (September 1970), p. 182.

such spectacle as parts of the stage characters' anatomies floating off-stage, asked such revolutionary questions as: "Why should pathos not be mixed with burlesque?" and "Why should fantasy not be given complete freedom in dramatic art?"[13]

There is an obviously Apollinaire influence in Guernica where balloons representing Fanchou and Lira's spirits float upwards when they die and they laugh while a Fascist officer fires at them, in The Condemned Man's Bicycle where Viloro's spirit likewise soars in a blue ball after he has been killed, and the sounds of children's laughter and of perfectly executed piano scales (alive, Viloro had difficulty playing even the simple C major scale) are heard in the background, and in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria where the Emperor is reincarnated in the person of the Architect.

In her incisive study of contemporary Surrealist theatre, Gloria Orenstein claims that Andre Breton was a direct influence on Arrabal's development as a playwright. Breton published a number of Arrabal's texts in his Surrealist review La Breche.[14]

The most essential characteristics of surrealism are the cult of the dream, the mingling of the familiar with the

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[13]Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker (New York: Harcourt, 1955), p. 191.

[14]Gloria Orenstein, The Theatre of the Marvelous (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1975), p. 240.

strange, and "automatic" writing. These characteristics appear in Arrabal's plays, but he denies that his works are surrealistic:

> My theatre is not surrealistic but is not merely realistic; it is realistic in including nightmares. Nightmares are very important in my life. Why not put them in my books? In my theatre, situations often change; characters and ideas are interchangeable; beauty is concealed in the monster, sainthood in the criminal, the executioner in the victim. . . . I am obsessed by the idea of confusion, and by confusion I mean everything that is contradictory, inexplicable, unexpected. I am creating a realistic theatre which represents this confusion.[15]

A notable example in which surrealistic characteristics are exhibited is The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria in which the characters exchange roles, play a variety of roles, and in which the action is repetitive.[16]

Two of Arrabal's admitted literary masters, Dostoevsky and Kafka, exhibited certain surrealistic characteristics, such as pairing the normal with the grotesque, experimenting with moral deviation, a fascination with "innocent" characters, and a fusion of a dreaming and a waking world. "It hardly requires verification to say that these are precisely the points at which Arrabal follows his mentors most devotedly."[17]

According to the surrealists language was invented by children as a game. It began with nonsense syllables and

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[15]Cohn, p. 30.

[16]Ibid., p. 30.

[17]Killinger, p. 210.

random syntax and, as they developed, children made a "bubble" language out of it for fun. As children grew into adults they made sentences and assigned arbitrary significance to words. As adults they became more serious about linguistic patterns and wound up enslaved to what had begun in play and freedom. "The surrealists deplored this outcome, and wished to break loose again from its designated meanings, to free it . . . for joyous and nonsensical expression."[18]

Andre Breton and the surrealists derived their interest in abstract language from Jarry and the Dadaists. For them abstract language, that is, "automatic" speech, is more closely related to the subconscious than to ordinary language. Breton's definition of surrealism includes verbal freedom:

> SURREALISM, n. Psychic automatism in its pure state, by which one proposes to express—verbally, by means of the written word, or in any other manner—the actual functioning of thought. Dictated by thought, in the absence of any control exercised by reason, exempt from any aesthetic or moral concern.[19]

Arrabal shows an interest in abstract language, "often cloaking even his answers in oneiric replies." When he spoke of his indebtedness to the artist Fernando A. Ruiz, he said "that Ruiz's paintings 'aroused in me the universe of silence

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[18]Ibid., p. 214.

[19]Andre Breton, Manifestos of Surrealism, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 26.

and of cries which cross 100,000 horses covered with tears.'"[20]

The Theatre of Cruelty is a concept of drama originated by Antonin Artaud in which the theatre becomes a ceremonial act of magic purgation. Artaud hoped to raise the theatre to a level of religious ceremony. In so doing he subordinated words to action, gesture, and sound in an effort to overwhelm the spectator and liberate instinctual preoccupations with crime, cruelty, and eroticism. Arrabal's plays have a visual quality about them that lend themselves to the Artaudian style. "Few playwrights outside the movement . . . have made settings so integrally important to the theatrical emotion or experience aimed at in the play."[21]

Arrabal's early works bear the influence of such writers as Ionesco and Adamov, then evolved toward more complex spectacles in which ritual and ceremony are used to give a more stylized expression to his ideas. "Plays such as Le Grand Ceremonial and Concert dans un oeuf should be viewed as erotic ballets or celebrations into which the spectator should enter for purposes of communion and eroticism."[22] Arrabal's theatre of sadism seems to be a direct reply to Artaud's cry for "a new idea of eroticism and cruelty" in the theatre.[23]

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[20]Killinger, p. 216.

[21]Ibid., p. 211.

[22]Thiher, p. 175.

[23]Ibid., p. 177.

Although Arrabal eschews or minimizes any direct influence on his writings, his vision of theatre has derived from all facets of twentieth-century avant-gardism.

Arrabal: Playwright in Conflict with His Past

Arrabal has never denied the strong autobiographical nature of his work. As a matter of fact, he dislikes objective distance and believes in the intrinsic value of a writer's memories and in a literature of the self based on one's obsessions.[24] Since his own memories are traumatic, the literature he produces is suffused with pain and a recognition of the tragic sense of life. In it he bears the wounds which, even though they have formed deceptive scars, have never healed completely. He bears the scars of a child's early awareness of his own ugliness and frail physical appearance. He bears the scars of an excessively puritanical and religious upbringing which stifled his natural impulses, his curiosity, and his need for self-expression. But most of all, he bears the scars of a divided household and a divided Spain. He has used his creative talent to deal with his private traumas and to exorcise his own demons and dread of life's inconsistencies by casting them as stage dreams. And because conflict and paradox have been his steady

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[24]Margaret Croyden, "Here Nothing Is Forbidden," The New York Times, 9 August 1970, Section D, p. 3, col. 2.

companions since early childhood, he has learned to perceive the universe, both intuitively and intellectually, in terms of conflict and paradox, and he has transmitted this perception to his literary work.

Fernando Arrabal was born in Melilla, Spanish Morocco in 1932. When the Spanish Civil War erupted in 1936, his father was arrested in the middle of the night by the authorities loyal to Generalissimo Franco, put in jail, and sentenced to death. His mother took her three children, Fernando, his brother Julio, and his sister Mari-Carmen, back to Spain, where the young Arrabal grew up, in Ciudad Rodrigo and Madrid, surrounded by relatives who believed in God, the State, and sanctimonious self-righteousness. As Thiher points out, Arrabal's early childhood was dominated by a doting, yet strong-willed mother and the "absent presence of the father."[25] The face of the father had been cut out in all family photographs, and he was declared dead by the mother. An ardent Franco supporter, his mother had little use for her husband's left-wing sympathies. Even though there is no clear evidence as to his mother's actual involvement in his father's arrest, Arrabal, at one time or another, must have speculated on her guilt. Did she actually in some way betray him, as the Mother in his play The Two

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[25]Thiher, p. 181.

Executioners had done with defiant self-righteousness? The autobiographical orientation of the play is self-evident to anyone familiar with Arrabal's life: the domineering mother, the two sons, one completely convinced of his mother's virtues, the other sceptical and even rebellious. However, unlike in real life, the rebellious son in the play is, in the end, subdued and conquered by the mother's arguments in her own behalf and her vilification of the father. Thus, the conflicts of Arrabal's own childhood find their way onto the stage: the antagonism between mother and father, the fight for supremacy between mother and son, and the divergent attitudes between the two brothers.

Although undoubtedly troubled by the "absent presence of the father," Arrabal seemed to have satisfied, at least during his early years, his deep need for loving and being loved through his mother. Whatever their relationship was until then, however, was rapidly and radically changed when, at the age of seventeen, he accidentally came upon a package of letters and photographs from his father, in evidence that he had outlived his wife's announcement of his death by at least several years. Not only did Arrabal stop speaking to his mother for the next five years, but he set out to deliberately thwart all her plans and ambitions for his future, a future which she was ready to ensure with hard work and self-denial. Instead of the military officer she

wanted her son to become, he became a lawyer. Instead of the devout Catholic she had tried to raise, he became somewhat of a revisionist as far as church dogma was concerned and started to frequent the Centro Ateneo, the traditional rendezvous of intellectuals and free-thinkers in Madrid. And instead of reading the Bible and officially endorsed literature, he turned to the works of such nonconformists as Rousseau, Voltaire, Kafka, Dostoevsky, Lewis Carroll, Camus, and Sartre.

In 1960 Arrabal presented himself at the Burgos prison to ask for a full account of his father's fate. He learned that after having been under the death sentence for eight months, his father was granted leniency and the sentence commuted to thirty years imprisonment. He was transferred from Melilla to Burgos and there, apparently because of a suicide attempt, he was confined to the mental ward from which he escaped in January of 1942. Nothing is known of him since that date and his son is left to speculate on various endings to the story. Whether dead or alive, his memory is cherished and kept alive by his playwright son who resurrects him and immortalizes his martydom in his work. In it, closely identified with the Christ figure, he becomes every man who has been betrayed by his fellowmen: Bruno in The Labyrinth, Emanou in The Car Cemetery, and Amiel in And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers. Through him, Arrabal has

not only come to understand the horrors of an arbitrary justice, but also the necessity for personal liberty, a theme which runs heavily through his plays and raises his work from the level of private obsessions to that of universal preoccupations.

However, back in 1949, rebellion against his mother was accompanied by ambiguous feelings. There is evidence of unresolved oedipal conflicts towards her, which he freely admits and elaborates on in such plays as The Grand Ceremonial and The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria.[26] Like Cavanosa of The Grand Ceremonial he used to feel proud and strangely possessive of his mother's beauty. Sitting next to her on the grass in the park, he would cover her legs to hide them from admiring glances of passing men. Like Cavanosa, he would react visibly and with undue violence, when these men would try to articulate their admiration.[27] And like Cavanosa and the Emperor of Assyria, he must have desperately needed his mother's love and attention, yet resented her feeding on this need and wanted to remove, by force if necessary, the stifling presence which imprisoned him in his own weakness.

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[26]Phyliss Boring, "Arrabal's Mother Image," Kentucky Romance Quarterly, XV, No. 2 (1968), p. 292.

[27]Ibid.

Today, Arrabal has only minimal contact with his mother, who continues to live in Spain. He claims to have made his peace with her because he understands that she is but a product and reflection of the hypocritical world we live in.[28] She abides by rules whose validity she never learned to question and shares the tendency of so many of her fellowmen of confusing artificial gestures of politeness with sincerity. "My mother was full of gestures," he recalls.

> When I left prison in Spain, in summer of 1967, my mother, whom I hadn't seen in ten years, waited for me with one of my books which she wanted me to dedicate to the prison director for having treated me well.[29]

This outwardly undramatic solution to a long antagonism sharply contrasts with the cathartic deliverance of the fictional Cavanosa and the fictional Emperor whom Arrabal permits to resolve their oedipal conflicts and their love-hate bondage by fantasizing the murder of their respective mothers at their own hands. While Cavanosa, however, achieves freedom at the end and the promise of his own love prisoner in the person of the submissive Lys, the Emperor guiltily demands a trial and his own death sentence.

Not only did Arrabal endow his fictional Cavanosa with his own ambiguous feelings about his mother but also with

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[28]Charles Marowitz, "Arrabal's Theatre of Panic," The New York Times Magazine, 3 Dec. 1972, pp. 101-02.

[29]Ibid., p. 102.

his exaggerated awareness of his own physical deficiencies. He admits that, at one time, he believed himself to be very ugly and was reinforced in this belief by the cruelty of his playmates. "In Spain, children are very cruel. They used to call me pumpkinhead. For a long time, the words 'head' and 'body' could not be spoke in my presence," he recalls.[30] Thus Arrabal came to think of himself as a dwarf with an enormous head, a sort of monster, and the object of unrestrained mirth. His own nightmare must have approached the intensity and dimensions of Cavanosa's, who subconsciously seeks escape from mockery in possible self-destruction.

> CAVANOSA: I dream that people are making fun of me, helpless with laughter, and it seems to me that they are waiting for some kind of catastrophe to overtake me. I keep on walking and the people go on laughing, louder and louder. And I can hear some of them choking and saying "The monster's going to kill himself" but I don't understand how I'm going to kill myself and go on walking until I come to the edge of a dangerous precipice.[31]

It is typical of Arrabal to mix purely personal disasters with social and political ones. Thus, his rebellion against his mother's betrayal of his father was at the same time a rebellion against a household and a culture which stressed the virtues of self-denial and censored joy and

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[30]Ibid., p. 103.

[31]Fernando Arrabal, "The Grand Ceremonial," in Plays III, trans. John Calder (London: John Calder and Boyers, 1970), p. 185.

self-gratification as sinful and degenerate. The restrictive quality of his formative years is closely connected with the Catholic religion, as taught and practiced in Spain. Arrabal's attitude is frankly anticlerical, and in his plays he frequently censors priests for their prejudice, their autocratic behavior, their intolerance towards human weakness, and their arrogance in dealing with the poor and underprivileged.

As a matter of fact, because of the methods reminiscent of the Inquisition, which were employed by the Escalopian fathers who were his teachers, Arrabal felt compelled to set out in search of a new image of God, in whose benevolence he had so ardently believed as a small child. He found it only in recent years, after he had learned to separate faith from religion and religion from dogma. He could not accept the premise that the existence of God must be proven with violence, self-inflicted pain, and self-inflicted guilt. He remembers the severe corporal punishment meted out by the priests at the slightest infraction and the threat of eternal damnation with which they kept their charges in line.[32] Many of Arrabal's characters suffer from the fear of the horrors of hell, from Lira in Guernica to Lais in Garden of Delights, and all of them are filled with a vague sense of guilt which

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[32]Croyden, p. 3, col. 5.

they are unable to define or fully understand and which, in one way or another, haunts them and blemishes the quality of their lives.

Because of the severe moral attitude on the part of his family, but particularly of the church authorities and his teachers, for whom anything related to the body was sacrilegious and shameful, the young Arrabal was condemned to prolonged innocence in the matter of sex. In a retroactive rebellion against this exaggerated and hypocritical puritanism, which stifled and punished his natural curiosity and instincts, he employs in his work an unusually candid terminology and images which range from erotic to scatalogical. This technique, while somewhat self-indulgent, actually has a more provocative purpose: to administer, by means of discomfort and shock, an antidote for sexual hypocricy and man's tendency to hide and even deny, for the sake of convention and to protect his self-image, his basic humanity.

Labelled a political playwright and a revolutionary from the very beginning, Arrabal actually concentrated in his early plays mainly on his own anguishes. The fact that he betrayed even then a deep sympathy for the underdog and a preoccupation with personal liberty can be related to his intense identification with his characters. As a matter of fact, for a long time Arrabal harbored ambiguous feelings about the "committed artist" who permits himself to become

the spokesman for a definite political group and ideal. He, himself, did not wish to be forced into a formalized position, both artistically and politically, but always wanted to retain his right to autonomy and dissent.[33] For this reason he distrusts the Spanish press. In Guernica, he portrays a journalist who professes to high ideals while surveying, with a calculating eye, the victims and the destruction of the bombing in search of a human interest story which would make him a hero to the public.

Therefore, if Spain did not particularly embrace her native son and was suspicious of his liberal attitudes and unconventioanl style and language, she nevertheless did not interfere with his comings and goings. Arrabal crossed the border between France and Spain freely and frequently between 1955 and 1967. In that last year, while vacationing with his wife in Murcia, he was unceremoniously hauled out of bed in the middle of the night and carried off to prison, allegedly on orders from Madrid. The arresting officer seemed to be as ignorant as Arrabal of the reason for the arrest and questioned him extensively about it. Though apparently no one knew the extent of his crime, he was placed in solitary confinement in the company of the ever-present prison rats. From there he was transferred to the high

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[33]Ibid.

security prison of Carabanchal where he was told what he must have suspected all along: that his grave offense was an inscription he had written for an enthusiastic autograph hunter who turned out to be a government agent. Requesting something "Pan-like" and whimsical from the founder of the panic theatre, he was obliged by Arrabal with the words: "I s___ on God, the Fatherland, and everything else."[34] Though undeniably disrespectful, offensive, and in bad taste, this inscription hardly constitutes a criminal act. Nevertheless, the official press erupted in furor and a sense of outraged piety and suggested twelve years imprisonment and castration as a suitable punishment for so serious a transgression. Ironically, it was at that moment that Spain became aware of Arrabal's international prominence. Letters in his defense started pouring in from literary notables all over the world. Samuel Beckett, for example, wrote on his behalf:

> You are passing a judgement on a Spanish writer who, in the brief space of ten years, has risen to the first rank of contemporary playwrights—and this through a deeply Spanish talent. Wherever his plays are performed—and they are performed everywhere—Spain is there.[35]

To save further comment and possible embarrassment, the case was quickly disposed of. The Spanish court ruled temporary mental derangement and imposed a nominal fine.

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[34]Marowitz, p. 75. [35]Ibid., p. 77.

The case was more quickly dismissed from the court than from Arrabal's mind. For him, imprisonment came not only to represent a physical experience of hardship but a metaphysical experience of renovation and an important turning point in his life as well:

> There, in that hole, I re-entered my mother's womb. I was in darkness, isolated, in a state of limbo and I was born for the second time and felt once more all the pain connected with birth. It seemed to me that I was born into the real world of injustice, torture, intolerance. A world which, in part, had been absent until then in my life and my work. And I asked myself whether this was not a way to recapture my true childhood and, buried in oblivion, to get close to my father again.[36]

Thus Arrabal endowed the real experience of his confinement with a mythical quality in a strange evocation of the original source of pain, his parents, and a new sense of commitment to a new source of pain, the world of today.

The theme of rebirth and renovation is treated theatrically in Garden of Delights where Lais, a famous but unhappy actress, goes through a similar return to the womb before she can achieve true fulfillment as a woman. On the other hand, his new sense of commitment expresses itself at first in an open letter to Le Monde in which he talks of the plight of his fellow prisoners and the injustice which had put them behind bars in the first place.[37] Later, he wrote

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[36]Ibid., p. 80.

[37]Betina Knapp and Kelly Morris, "L'affaire Arrabal Espagnol," Drama Review, XIII, No. 1 (Fall, 1968), pp. 77-78.

a more poetic variation on the same theme in And They Put Handcuffs on the Flowers, a play which openly attacks the church, the state, and business in Franco Spain and speaks out in behalf of the forgotten victims of the Spanish Civil War. And while the purely subjective and fantasy elements are not eliminated, they are coordinated with, and subordinated to, the central theme of political outrage.

Arrabal's private life seems far removed from the trials and tribulations of his theatrical career. He lives in Paris with his wife whose name, Luce, appears in numerous variations such as Lis, Lys, Lais in his plays, and their two small children and prefers the lifestyle of the average family man to that of a celebrity. Although he is well known, particularly in France, and his plays are performed all over the world, he is far from being a commercial success.[38] Eccentric, controversial, and even revolutionary in his work, he surprises his numerous interviewers with his unassuming behavior, his politeness, warmth, and quiet charm. Quick to detect insincerity in others, he is known to resort to Pan-like antics and shock methods in putting off those who are more attracted by his notoriety than his talent.[39]

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[38]Croyden, p. 3, col. 6.

[39]Ann Morrissett, "Dialogue with Arrabal," Evergreen Review, No. 14 (Nov.-Dec. 1960), pp. 70-71.

As far as his theatre is concerned, it remains to be seen how he will deal, in the future, with his fairly recent commitment to the socio-political realities and to specific problems. Basically, Arrabal is not so much a revolutionary as a spokesman for the introspective who has chosen to live, not only with their private demons, but also with some particular insight into life's disasters. We may find it difficult to empathize with Arrabal's obsessions, but we can perceive and acknowledge that his visions are authentic. Therefore, there is much to be learned from his theatre, particularly because, as Charles Marowitz points out:

> There is about Arrabal's character and his work, a distinct smell of sulphur. He has the inverted, incandescent eyes of someone who has seen purgatory and we always turn to such writers for testaments about the human condition, on the very sound assumption that anyone who has sojourned in hell can add to our knowledge of life on earth.[40]

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[40]Marowitz, p. 106.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY PLAYS: SONS AND LOVERS

The characteristic most closely associated with the first phase of Arrabal's dramatic production is his penchant for childlike characters. As Roger Shattuck perceptively points out in his study of the avant-garde of La Belle Epoque, the cult of childhood has been a hallmark of the various avant-garde movements starting with the romantics who rejected the classical man and his mature, balanced, and sober view of man and his world.[1] By giving a special role to the world of childhood in his earliest plays, Arrabal has unwittingly staked his claim to a place in the avant-garde. But Arrabal creates a special type of character in these early plays: this character, the "adult-child," combines the playful and sadistically cruel behavior of the child with the chronologically mature body of an adult.

If one were to fix upon the single quality of Arrabal's characters which makes them appear most childlike it would undoubtedly be their innocence. Fando, Lis, Emanou, Fidio, Lilbe, the entire gallery of Arrabalian creatures have in common their eternal naivete and their eternal incredulity

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[1]Roger Shattuck, The Banquet Years (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), p. 31.

and surprise in the face of life's vicissitudes. More than the array of toys (dolls, wagons, balloons, drums, bicycles) with which Arrabal's characters surround themselves, which occupy their time and attention, more than their preoccupation with urination and defecation (preoccupation is perhaps unfair: Arrabal's characters are interested in these body processes and have not acquired the taboos which would hinder the indulgence of that interest), it is the perpetual newness of life which particularly identifies the Arrabalian character.

These creatures take nothing for granted because they have no frame of reference into which new information may be integrated. Everything happens to them as though it had never happened to them or to anyone else before. Thus great wonderment and delight may be expressed at events which are not only uninteresting to those who do not share their view, but may even be repugnant. The following example taken from The Tricycle is one among many. Climando has just told Mita that she may ride his tricycle:

> MITA: And will you let me steer it with one hand?
>
> CLIMANDO: Only one hand? (He considers.) Well, all right. (He considers.) And what will you do with the other?
>
> MITA: I'll put one of my fingers up my nose.
>
> CLIMANDO: You are a one! You can do everything.[2]

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[2]Fernando Arrabal, "The Tricycle," in Guernica and Other Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 77.

What is evident from the above example is that the lack of a frame of reference also nullifies any notion of a hierarchy of values. In Arrabal's world everything is reduced to the same state of equivalency in which an act of murder may be committed without remorse while the accusation of unfairness in a word game may call forth tears and pleas for forgiveness (The Tricycle). It is a world in which Fando seeing Lis, his paralyzed and completely dependent lover, in a state of distress may ingenuously inquire, "I don't know if you're hungry or if you want some flowers or if you feel like having a pee."[3]

Arrabal's characters are physically mature, but they are almost completely devoid of memory. Fando's theory of knowledge eludes him at the very moment he calls upon it and Climando "forgets" that the police are looking for him because they have found out about the murder he committed. An experience immediately after having been lived falls once again into the realm of the unknown. Having retained from prior experience only a minimum of linguistic and behavioral information which enables them to function at an elementary level and having been denied memory, Arrabal's characters are without identity. In fact, it is with difficulty that

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[3]Fernando Arrabal, "Fando and Lis," in Four Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (London: Calder, 1962), p. 55.

one thinks of them as "characters" at all in terms of having any psychic reality outside of their function as elements in the dramatic action. "Character" implies a certain psychic density, a complexity, a state of tension or conflict within a single person. Arrabal's creatures are, on the other hand, completely lacking in density, flat, and unidimensional. They are thus completely without artifice, without hidden motivation. Perhaps it is their unidimensionality and their lack of substance (particularly as it is reflected in their language) that makes Arrabal's characters more abstract than "real." But the bareness of their verbal expression, having nothing behind it, as Genevieve Serreau has noted, "no shadows, no implications, no ambiguity, no false modesty"[4] is an important factor in the communication of the utter simplicity and flatness of character.

Their behavior is totally unmotivated: they are capable of anything from the most touching care and solicitude to the most brazen acts of cruelty and destruction. In Fando and Lis Fando carries Lis so that she may view the countryside, but when he grows tired of carrying her he drops her without warning. In The Car Cemetery, Milos, in the first part of the play, completely dominates the submissive Dila, while in the second part of the play it is Dila who becomes domineering.

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[4]Genevieve Serreau, "A New Comic Style," Evergreen Review, No. 4 (Nov.-Dec. 1960), p. 68.

Not only are Arrabal's creatures capable of completely unmotivated changes of mood and behavior ("unmotivated" not only without need of external stimuli but without internal necessity as well), they are capable of becoming "someone" else. In The Car Cemetery the relationship of Tossido and Laska is in the first act that between a not very energetic young man and an extremely energetic female trainer who periodically drags him across the stage in a training exercise. During the second act Tossido and Laska become lovers: Tossido is masculine and insistent and Laska is retiring and clinging. In the third act Tossido and Laska assume the roles of police inquisitors who capture, torture, and eventually crucify Emanou. The final scene finds them once again in the roles of reluctant athlete and agressive trainer except that this time the roles are reversed: Laska is the athlete and Tossido is the trainer.

The Arrabalian character who does not undergo such complete metamorphosis finds refuge in language. Much of what Arrabal's characters do they do to escape boredom—they talk because there is nothing else to do:

> CLIMANDO: Tell me to talk to you about something you like, Apal, I'm very good at talking about hens and staircases, and about grasshoppers, and about tricycles, and about storks, and about fishes and meals. Tell me, Apal, what you'd like me to talk about.[5]

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[5]"The Tricycle," p. 97.

Apal, who is trying to go to sleep, is kept awake by several lengthy discourses. He finds his refuge in sleeping eighteen hours a day.

> CLIMANDO: . . . Do you understand? Apal, don't go to sleep. What's the matter with you?
>
> APAL: I'm sleepy.
>
> CLIMANDO: If you go to sleep I'll get bored.[6]

One cannot but think here of Beckett's Estragon as he says to Vladimir, "We always find something, eh Didi, to give us the impression we exist?"[7]

Violent action is another antidote to despair. It may take the form of cruelty on a small scale such as verbal abuse or it may be carried to the extreme of brutal murder. Violence is a way of giving substance to one's existence in a world so vague that even the reality of that existence is undermined. In response to Bettina Knapp's question as to why his plays are impregnated with sado-masochism, Arrabal replied:

> In Fando and Lis, for example, when Fando seems to be hurting Lis—he really isn't. It's just that Fando wants to live intensely and completely. He wants to experience everything in the domain of human existence.[8]

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[6]Ibid., p. 99.

[7]Samuel Beckett, Waiting for Godot (New York: Grove Press, 1954), p. 45.

[8]Bettina Knapp, "Interview with Fernando Arrabal," First Stage, VI, No. 4 (Winter 1967-68), p. 200.

On the other hand, Arrabal's creatures manage to seek and find comfort in simple sensual pleasures. In this paradoxical sense they are both insubstantial beings and creatures of the earth who delight in the functions of their bodies, in the taste of an anchovy sandwich, and in the heat of the sun.

It is evident that because they do not build on prior experience future experience is equally inconceivable to them, consisting always in a slight rearrangement of immediate information without any real envisioning or projection into a different future reality. Arrabal's characters, in a word, lack imagination. Fando, in an effort to please Lis, creates for her the "feather song":

> The feather was in the bed
> And the bed was in the feather.[9]

Since they are sensual creatures it is difficult for them to imagine a state of nonbeing, of nonfeeling, in a word, death. In Guernica Lira's voice is heard from the latrine in which she has been imprisoned by the bombings:

> LIRA: I know you. It'd be all the same to you if I died.
>
> FANCHOU: That's what you say. When you're dead I'll . . . (He considers.) I'll sleep with you three times running.[10]

Or Climando in The Tricycle, who hearing that Mita is contemplating suicide, hastens to assure her: "It's obvious.

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[9]"Fando and Lis," p. 55.

[10]Fernando Arrabal, "Guernica," in Guernica and Other Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 21.

Commit suicide . . . if you think you'll be happier committing suicide, commit suicide as soon as possible."[11]

Unmotivated action and complete metamorphosis of character are dramatic manifestations of the fact that reality itself is volatile, fluid, and multifaceted, but containing, none the less, its own inner coherence which is unchangeable. Removed from any frame of reference in a society based on logic, significance, and relevance, Arrabal's characters are a perfect reflection of the baroque universe in which they find themselves.[12]

This is not to say that Arrabal's characters make no attempt to structure "reality." In fact, one of the basic sources of dramatic tension in Arrabal's theatre is precisely this effort on the part of his characters to order a reality which constantly eludes them. They want to have confidence in something. One way in which they attempt to give form to experience is through language. They have incredible confidence in its formalism, apparently unaware that the reality it both reflects and creates at every step refuses the order they are seeking.[13]

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[11]"The Tricycle," p. 74.

[12]Peter L. Podol, Fernando Arrabal (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978), p. 29.

[13]Ibid., p. 56.

LIS: We really ought to agree.

FANDO: And are you sure that that would be any use to us?

LIS: Almost sure.

FANDO: But be some use for what?

LIS: It doesn't matter much; what does matter is that it should be some use to us.[14]

Their faith in the ordering power of language removes them even further from the reality of immediate experience. Fanchou in Guernica, learning that Lira is dying, invokes the formalism of language: "Are you really and truly going to die? D'you want me to tell the family?"[15] Attempts at logical deduction lead to non sequiturs: "My eyebrows hurt me because I wear trousers,"[16] and attempts at description lead to tautology:

FANDO (flattered): Pooh, that's nothing. I'll make up some much nicer ones. Other ones in which I won't talk about feathers but (he considers) about birds' feathers as well, and . . . about eagles' feathers as well, and (he considers, but can't think of anything) and . . .

LIS: And about feather markets as well.

FANDO (pleased): Yes, yes, and about feather markets as well, and also about . . . about . . . about, er, and about feathers as well.[17]

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[14]"Fando and Lis," p. 48.

[15]"Guernica," p. 12.

[16]"The Tricycle," p. 70.

[17]"Fando and Lis," p. 82.

Finally, language often serves to call into question the very existence of those using it as well as those on whom it is focused. Mitaro in Fando and Lis is speaking to Nemur about Fando: "But you made him cry as if he were a man going to Tar with a woman in a pram."[18] It is the "as if" which is jarring since our perception is precisely that Fando is the man on the way to Tar pushing Lis in a child's carriage. By the same token the reality of an action as it is perceived by the spectator also serves to nullify the language with which Arrabal's characters try to grasp it. At the very moment Tasla reports to Vilaro that her prisoner, Paso, never sticks his tongue out at her, he is doing so; when she says that the cage in which he is imprisoned is too solid for him to escape, he blithely opens the cage door, steps out, and takes physical liberties with her.

In this battle for survival silence occasionally wins out over language. Fando recalls how he once managed not to talk for a whole day, attempting to fill the silence with physical action. Although he refuses to discuss the incident in detail, things apparently ended very badly. More often than not, however, Arrabal's characters pursue their hapless quest for system. The quest may be quite limited in scope as in the case, once again, of Fando who had devised a method

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[18] Ibid., p. 64.

of knowing whose side to take in arguments. The winner would always identify himself as "the first one who says 'which way.'"[19] If after the first five minutes no one says "which way" then he substitutes the word "fly" and if no one says "fly" then the word "tree" will do. He takes great pride in explaining his more complicated system: "It's like this: on the days which are multiples of three, men who wear glasses are in the right. On even days, mothers are in the right, and on days which end in a nought, nobody's right."[20] But for many of Arrabal's characters the dilemma is much broader. Climando of The Tricycle states it well when he says:

> In short, what I'm saying is that there must be some sort of order, we must know why we've said what we have said, what we're going to do, and what we will do. . . . We must have some sort of order, a straight, rational path, we must find the best way to behave.[21]

The search for significance, for a hierarchy of values, for a code of behavior is a constant preoccupation of Arrabal's characters. It is not surprising, moreover, that they should seek answers to these most basic of questions in religion. They recall, interestingly, in the particular direction of their search something of Arrabal's own inspiration:

> Two Spaniards, equally persecuted by the Inquisition, showed me two paths. They were

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[19]Ibid., p. 71.

[20]Ibid., p. 72.

[21]"The Tricycle," p. 98.

> Therese d'Avila who contemplated God as goodness, a God like a volcano of love, and Father Luis de Leon who sought in God the sun of knowledge, the key to all riddles.[22]

Arrabal's characters, too, may be said to seek meaning both in "goodness" and in "knowledge," and although both tend to remain active choices throughout the body of Arrabal's works, "goodness" dominates the early plays while "knowledge" becomes more of a concern in the later plays.

Three early plays in particular, Orison, The Car Cemetery, and The Tricycle, deal with the attempt on the part of Arrabal's characters to establish a moral code, to erect certain guidelines for living. Fidio and Lilbe of Orison, like Adam and Eve before knowledge, cannot distinguish between good and evil. They have a nostalgia for what is "good" ("From today on we're going to be good and pure."[23]) as if the concept had somehow remained with them through time, the last vestige of a form whose content had long since disappeared. The play which unfolds amidst all the formal trappings of a solemn religious ceremony (crucifix, lighted candles, austerity of set) traces their effort to rediscover the significance of the word "good":

> FIDIO: Don't you realize what you have to do to be good?

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[22]Knapp, "Interview with Fernando Arrabal," p. 200.

[23]Fernando Arrabal, "Orison," in Four Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (London: John Calder, 1962), p. 9.

LILBE: No. (Pause.) Do you?

FIDIO: Not very clearly. (Pause.) But I've got the book, so I'll be able to find out.[24]

Fidio reads to Lilbe the story of creation and that of the birth of Christ, answering her questions as a tender parent would answer the questions of a curious child, yet manifesting all the while his own strangely innocent construction of the holy writ:

> And they were following and following the star, and finally one day they arrived at the manger in Bethlehem. So they gave the child everything they had brought on their camels: a lot of toys, and sweets, and some chocolate too.[25]

Fidio seeks God in terms of his only real attachment to existence: his physical experience of the world. It is this sensuality rather than a sense of blasphemy which creates the peculiarly touching quality of his quest. Fidio and Lilbe, apparently unaware of the repressive Catholicism of Arrabal's own youth (that which Cavanosa in The Grand Ceremonial describes as a "horrible myth"), try to relate to the arch-legend in the only way open to them:

LILBE: And shall we be able to sleep together like we used to?

FIDIO: No.

LILBE: Shall I have to sleep all by myself, then?

FIDIO: Yes.

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[24]Ibid., p. 12.

[25]Ibid., p. 18.

LILBE: But I'll be awfully cold.

FIDIO: You'll get used to it.[26]

It is evident that such a categorization must be completely arbitrary resulting in the following permitted and proscribed behavior:

LILBE: Shall I be allowed to tell lies?

FIDIO: No.

LILBE: Not even very little ones?

FIDIO: Not even those.

LILBE: Nor steal oranges from the grocer?

FIDIO: Not any more.

LILBE: Shan't we be able to enjoy ourselves, like we used to in the cemetery?

FIDIO: Yes, why shouldn't we?[27]

There is irony in the fact that Fidio recalls to Lilbe Christ's injunction to the multitudes that they regain innocence and the purity of childhood. The innocence of the Arrabalian "child" is not synonymous with moral purity only with absolutism. We discover that these "innocents" have in fact "enjoyed themselves" at the cemetery by putting out the eyes of corpses and are even now conducting their search for goodness before the casket of the child they have killed. Arrabal's characters have a nostalgia for goodness, but it is impossible for them to become as "good" as they

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[26]Ibid., p. 11. [27]Ibid.

would wish. In connection with the concept of goodness Arrabal mentions the following three terms explaining why his characters cannot achieve goodness: they are sexual energy, imagination, and knowledge. It is immediately apparent that sexual energy is the only trait of the three which Arrabal's characters possess, being, as we have seen, precluded from attaining either imagination or knowledge by their lack of memory. The fact that knowledge is equated by Arrabal with art comes to mind here when it is noticed that one of the ways in which Arrabal's characters attempt to arrive at an ethic is by way of aesthetics. On three different occasions in Orison Fidio seeks to define "good" in terms of what is beautiful or nice. One example will suffice:

> FIDIO: God writes down everything good that you do in gold letters in a very beautiful book and all your sins in a very ugly book in very ugly writing.
>
> LILBE: I'll be good. I want Him always to write in gold letters.[28]

But the effort is doomed to failure from its inception: "It's going to be just like everything else," says Lilbe as the curtain falls: "We'll get tired of being good, too."[29] To which Fidio replies with all of the tenacity and improbable optimism of one who cannot imagine the future, "But we'll try."

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[28]Ibid., p. 15. [29]Ibid., p. 21.

The same ineffability, the same tenacity in the face of repeated failure to create a meaningful system characterizes the heroes of The Tricycle. Their concern, however, is less with the abstract statement of rules of conduct than with the resolution of a practical problem: they must somehow find the money to pay the rental on the tricycle which they use to ride children around in the park for a small fee. Fate provides them with an answer in the person of a rich old man whose wallet they steal but only after they brutally murder him. Neither the act of robbery nor the act of murder occasions remorse in them. It is more a question of practicality. As Climando suggests in considering the murder, "I don't very much like having to kill him. It's a terribly long way of robbing him."[30]

What becomes evident is that Arrabal's characters, just as they seek structure and significance in the forms of language, seek in these same forms the basis for their moral code. That the forms are completely devoid of content for them is shown, first of all, by their inability to generalize, to apply the principle of any moral injunction to a situation not entirely elucidated in that injunction. The Old Man, for example, in The Tricycle knows that it is bad to kill once or twice, but doesn't remember about three times: "I haven't got as far as that, I only know the first two by heart."[31]

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[30]"The Tricycle," p. 83. [31]Ibid., p. 93.

A parallel case is that of Emanou in The Car Cemetery. Here the irony is even more acute since Emanou bears such a striking resemblence to the Christ figure: his name is singularly evocative of "Emmanuel,"[32] he was born in a stable under supernatural conditions, he is thirty-three years old, he cares for the multitudes by knitting them sweaters and playing the trumpet for them, he is eventually betrayed and crucified, and as if this were not enough, Dila alludes to his parentage by saying, "You must be the son (she points to the sky and says awkwardly) . . . of someone, of someone, what shall I say, who's in a very high position."[33]

But if Emanou is the son of God, the savior of mankind, his sense of calling is very different from that which we have been led to expect. Early in the play he expresses his dissatisfaction with being an outcast musician, hero of the downtrodden, and considers becoming instead either a killer or a judge, both "professions" which pay well and which afford a great deal of publicity. Emanou is, moreover, in spite of his sporadic gentleness capable of violent and antisocial conduct. He has killed people whom he buries single-handedly and on whose graves he then plants geraniums

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[32]Thomas John Donahue, The Theatre of Fernando Arrabal (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1980), p. 12.

[33]Fernando Arrabal, "The Car Cemetery," in Four Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (London: John Calder, 1962), p. 111.

because it is "pretty" (again the substitution of aesthetics for ethics). He has, however, infinite faith in the power of "good," a concept to which he refers often, "as if he's learnt a lesson by heart."[34]

> When we're good we experience a great inner joy born of peace of spirit that is revealed to us when we see that we resemble the ideal man.[35]

That Emanou's definition of good is a useless tautology (goodness is the experience of being good) is borne out by its utter inapplicability to life situations. As noted above, Emanou's "good" may include the killing of all the poor to keep them from suffering as it includes the sexual promiscuity of Dila:

> DILA: I want to be good, too, Emanou.
>
> EMANOU: You already are: you let everybody sleep with you.[36]

More interesting is Emanou's unshakeable faith in the magic power of words themselves, quite apart from their significance or lack of it. They give him the courage and the energy to go on; they are the source of his optimism. On the other hand, his sudden inability to recreate their magic leads to a parallel lack of confidence, and to subsequent deterioration; and yet it is inevitable that this inability arise, for magical formulas must be remembered:

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[34]Ibid., p. 103. [35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 109.

> Yes, but you know very well that when we're good (he recites this hesitatingly) we experience a great joy . . . (he continues to recite, hesitating more and more) . . . that . . . springs from . . . no, that comes from . . . from the peace . . . from the goodness, no, from the goodness, no, from the peace . . . that . . . (normal voice, tragically). I've forgotten it, Dila.[37]

Arrabal's creatures are always, then, the victims of their own attempts to structure the world and their conduct in it. They seek consolation from outright freedom in the forms of order and significance, but these very forms insidiously work toward repression and suffocation. The most extreme consequence of the need for certainty is the temptation of slavery: in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, the Emperor exclaims as he chains himself to a tree, "Bliss! My universe: a circle whose radius is the length of this chain."[38] But it is also this overwhelming need for certainty in the Arrabalian character, his awe in the face of established order and authority which calls into being the repressive forces which originated from without. From the awesome figures of the policemen in Guernica and The Tricycle, to the jailers of The Two Executioners and The Labyrinth, to the stretcher-bearers of Picnic on the Battlefield, Arrabal's universe abounds with the representatives of a rigorous and abusive power before whom Arrabal's

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[37]Ibid., p. 144.

[38]Fernando Arrabal, "The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria," in Plays III, trans. John Calder (London: Calder and Boyers, 1970), p. 37.

children bend in complete submission. These children never try to fathom the values underlying the awesome order they perceive. It is not by accident that the oppressors in Arrabal's world rarely speak: they are the products of those who permit them to exist, the natural outgrowth of their passivity. Occasionally the oppressed try to explain away the actions of the oppressors in terms of their own shaky reality as in the case of Fanchou (Guernica) who, watching helplessly as Lira is buried alive, justifies the bombing:

> FANCHOU: They're trying out high explosives and incendiary bombs. Next thing you'll be saying that I'm the one that forgets things.
>
> LIRA: Couldn't they try them out somewhere else?
>
> FANCHOU: You seem to think everything's so easy. They had to try them out on a town, after all.
>
> LIRA: Why?
>
> FANCHOU: Why! Why! Why d'you think, except to find out whether they work.
>
> LIRA: And then what?
>
> FANCHOU: And then what? And then what? You're being stupid on purpose: if a bomb kills a lot of people, then it's a good bomb, and they make some more, but if it doesn't kill anyone, it's no good and they don't make anymore.[39]

Sometimes in exceptional moments of courage they brazenly, but rather ineffectively, defy the powers which overwhelm

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[39]"Guernica," p. 23.

them: Fanchou thumbs his nose at the back of the policeman who has just brutalized him; Vilaro points at Paso and laughs derisively, but immediately reverts to a timid and subservient state. But more often Arrabal's "little men" passively accede to the repressive forces which surround them. Vilaro is delighted when he realizes that although his captors have chained him (he has no right to play the piano) he can still reach the piano stool. Francoise in The Two Executioners unconsciously uses the Gestapo-like torturers to enact personal revenge upon her husband whom she has denounced to them, thus becoming herself one of the "executioners" of society. Climando (The Tricycle), even though his very survival is at stake, is prevented from escaping by a few nonsense syllables uttered by a policeman who is lying in a hammock reading. In fact, the approval of the policeman is so important to Climando that he subsequently offers him some of his treasures: a cardboard box, a chipped chamber pot, some pages from a calendar.

The fear and awe of authority does not even depend on the presence of authority figures for its effectiveness. The sounds and symbols of authority are enough to inspire guilt, shame, and terror in the oppressed. Derisive, mocking laughter arising as if from nowhere, a background of police whistles, sirens, and searchlights creates an atmosphere of constant surveillance and vigilance on the part of the powers

that would control and destroy (The Grand Ceremonial, The Car Cemetery). Arrabal's oppressed may also experience a sort of free-floating guilt in the absence of any real wrongdoing. If Adam and Eve can be said to have come to guilt as a consequence of knowledge, Arrabal's characters experience guilt before knowledge. Etienne, although he is completely innocent, lies to the court in The Labyrinth thus creating a network of falsehood from which he cannot extricate himself. The guilt of Arrabal's world is so terrible and pervasive precisely because it has no real issue. It cannot be attached to acts that are "wrong" just as it cannot be purged through reparation.[40]

Arrabal's use of scenic space as a means of isolating and imprisoning his creatures relates both to the theme of repression and to that of guilt. Arrabal creates a physical environment of extreme poverty, particularly in the early plays. His characters are provided with little in the way of positive external stimuli, and since, as it has been noted, they cannot rely on memory and have only rudimentary imaginations this factor alone results in a narrowing of experience with a subsequent narrowing of perspective. More importantly, perhaps, the action of the play almost always unfolds within severely condensed spatial limits. Orison is

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[40]Diaz, p. 148.

set in a closed sanctuary entirely cut off from the rest of the world. In Guernica a character expires within a closed latrine which is itself contained within the bombed out hulk of an enclosing structure. Arrabal's universe is frequently a claustrophobic one, a closed casket in which even "normal" existence is seen as caged and compressionistic. The characters of The Car Cemetery exist within the abandoned chassis of an automobile junkheap in which half a car is rented out for the night as something of a luxury, and where life must be so strictly regulated that even urination is accomplished in accordance with a prearranged schedule: "It's your usual time, sir," says Dila to the inhabitant of "Car 2" as she passes him the chamber pot.[41]

The carriage in which Fando pushes Lis is another example of compressionism. Because Lis is paralyzed it constitutes in a real sense her entire living space. Thus, while outwardly denoting mobility, as do the cars in The Car Cemetery, it is but another imprisoning and immobilizing instrument. This is true for Fando as well for he is chained to it also; hence the irony arising from the observation of the three men who assume that the carriage will enable Fando to go much faster than they can on foot. These innocuous vehicles of childhood—tricycles, bicycles, and prams confine

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[41]"The Car Cemetery," p. 132.

their occupants and riders, always stressing their essential immobility.

The Labyrinth, whose very title implies its imprisoning and suffocation properties, deserves special mention here. Interestingly, it is the closest of all Arrabal's plays to direct dream transposition. The dream itself apparently took place while Arrabal was in the sanatorium at Buffemont shortly after undergoing a lung operation.[42] It is particularly interesting to contrast this play with other plays written at about the same time (1956) because although it deals with many of the themes already considered, one sees here a distinct difference in tone which may be attributed to lack of conscious arrangement on the part of the author.

The action of the play involves the attempts by Etienne to escape from the latrines in which he finds himself prisoner. With him is another prisoner, Bruno, who is apparently dying. Surrounding the latrines and extending as far as the eye can see is a park in which blankets have been hung out to dry in such a way as to create a complicated network of narrow paths. Early in the play Etienne manages with great difficulty to free himself from his chains, overcomes his anxiety about leaving Bruno behind, and flees into the labyrinth park. He comes upon Micaela who says she

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[42]Knapp, "Interview with Fernando Arrabal," p. 200.

is the daughter of the park's owner and who seems to want to help him escape. Justin, the father, soon appears however, and contradicts everything Micaela has said, confiding in an aside to Etienne that she is mad, and tells him that in order to be freed he must appear before the judge of the park who is the final arbiter in such matters. In ensuing alternating conversations with Micaela and Justin, reality and truth become a labyrinth of conflicting reports. Etienne finally appears before the court, is condemned to death for killing Bruno (whom we have seen commit suicide), escapes somehow, and finds himself once again in the latrines where Bruno, still dying, utters the words which opened the play, "I'm thirsty."

There are certain immediate similarities between this play and others which have been discussed to this point. Like Guernica, this play takes place inside a latrine, "symptomatic of increasing scatalogical preoccupations in the author."[43] There is the preoccupation with the problem of chaos as opposed to repressive order: Micaela argues ironically for a sort of "divine" order behind the chaos of the park when she says:

> That's why things here may appear to be in some disorder, but it is an apparent disorder which only throws into relief the existence of a superior

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[43]Diaz, p. 152.

> order which is much more complex and exigent than any we can imagine.[44]

There is the struggle for liberation, for light and truth: "I'm thirsty" recalls the words of the dying Christ; abrupt character change: Micaela is alternately fragile and victimized and then masculinely assertive as when she asks Etienne to climb on her shoulders to see if her father is coming; awe of authority: the Judge, like the authority figures in Guernica and The Tricycle eats a sandwich during the trial to show his complete indifference to the administration of justice. Additionally, there is the pervasive guilt which has been noted before: Etienne is perpetually being asked in an accusing manner to explain things which he cannot, and often resorts to lying. There is also complete structural circularity: the action returns to its point of departure with Etienne trapped again and for eternity between slow death with Bruno in the latrine and the certain death of an attempted escape. Any notion of reality is undermined by behavior which weakens one's perception of the existing state of affairs: Micaela shows Etienne the lash marks on her back where Justin is to have whipped her. But during his trial when Etienne called them into evidence as proof of Justin's brutality, the marks have entirely

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[44]Fernando Arrabal, "The Labyrinth," in Guernica and Other Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 38.

disappeared. Language weakens observable reality as well: Justin observes Micaela's vulgar sexual assault on Bruno and calls it "innocent" and "romantic."

Language is also used in this play in a manner somewhat different from that seen in other plays of this period. Although it serves to undermine its own integrity, it does so not through redundancy and repetition but through its labyrinth-like complexity. We do not have the feeling in The Labyrinth that Micaela, Justin, and the Judge are children overwhelmed by language or by the "reality" which it represents. On the contrary, everything is explicable, even the most blatant and outrageous contraditions:

> MICAELA: Your questions, as always, are reasonable. That's why I have to explain to you in detail— well, with all the precision I'm capable of— every little factor of every problem, to arrive at an accurate and comprehensible solution.[45]

But the "solution" is incomprehensible. Language is as insidious and as enveloping as the blanket maze and the "details" of explanations form mazes as well.

There is a further and still more essential difference between The Labyrinth and Arrabal's other plays, not only of this period, but generally. With the exception of The Grand Ceremonial (the Lover is the character brought to mind) this is perhaps the only play in which one of the characters is

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[45]Ibid., p. 40.

set apart from the rest as embodying or reflecting a world view more or less similar to the spectator's own. Etienne is the victim of the madness in which he finds himself. He is weak, dishonest, and unimaginative, but unlike Emanou or Climando, he views the developing circumstances as somehow alien and apart from himself.

Women occupy a central position in Arrabal's universe. Women are not only givers of life, but destroyers as well. If they teach love, it is a love infused with pain. It is woman, who, particularly in her role as mother and therefore initiator to life, creates the cycle of tenderness and cruelty, pleasure and pain, excitation and guilt which her male children perpetuate.

In only three plays is the character of woman as mother developed in any depth: The Two Executioners, The Grand Ceremonial, and The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. Francoise of The Two Executioners is closest to being an untouched projection of Arrabal's own mother. Having denounced her husband, Jean, to the "authorities," Francoise arrives with her two sons, Benoit and Maurice, at the place where the executioners of the title will torture Jean until he dies. But the real executioners, as it soon becomes apparent, are Francoise and Benoit, who will with the insidiousness of their arguments justify the murder of the father while perverting the innocence and destroying the sense of justice of the younger son, Maurice.

The simultaneous killings are played off against each other as in counterpoint. The symbolic murder of Maurice is enacted in a small dark room where the light of truth cannot penetrate. Two doors lead from the room: one to the street through which Francoise and her sons and later the two tormentors enter with Jean, the other to the torture chamber where Jean slowly falls before his captors. The spatial implications are clear: for Maurice there is a choice, but the choice must be made in darkness. Maurice cannot overcome the forces of darkness, cannot choose the door which leads to freedom. He is progressively engulfed and destroyed by Francoise against the background of his father's anguished cries.

And Francoise is engulfing. Hers is the ineffable force of the martyred, of the self-righteous. She acts only in selflessness and for the "good" of others: "I'm only a poor, ignorant, uneducated woman, I've spent my whole life doing nothing but worrying about other people, forgetting myself."[46] Unlike Fidio and Lilbe who, although they have a certain nostalgia for what is good, ultimately admit the impossibility of being good, Francoise, when she says, "I try to be good,"[47]

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[46]Fernando Arrabal, "The Two Executioners," in Four Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (London: John Calder, 1962), p. 39.

[47]Ibid., p. 29.

is inwardly convinced that she has already achieved that state. Her son, Benoit, responds immediately: "Mother, you are the best woman in the world. You are a saint."[48] It is by using the same sort of thinly veiled insinuation that Francoise succeeds in arousing Benoit against Maurice who has bitterly condemned his mother's actions. Says Francoise to Benoit: "I don't want you to hit him even if he does thoroughly deserve it."[49] Benoit, to be sure, is immediately incited to attack his brother.

Francoise's actions belie at every step her protestations of selflessness and her verbalized desire to see justice done. Not only has she come personally to the executioners to disclose her husband's guilt and to give them his address so that they may find him immediately, but once Jean is prisoner she goes often into the torture chamber to assure herself that the job is being properly carried out. She, too, tortures Jean, first verbally by disclosing that it is she who has denounced him by telling him that he now must gracefully accept his punishment. She tortures him physically by rubbing salt and vinegar into his wounds, clawing at them with her fingernails. She reinforces his suffering with a verbal description of it, a kind of doubling and extension of reality which heightens her pleasure.

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[48] Ibid.

[49] Ibid., p. 28.

Francoise, like all Arrabalian mothers, is a figure in caricature, fantastic in her excesses and her unidimensionality. A fine line keeps her from being a comic figure and even this line is occasionally traversed. Genevieve Serreau's perceptive observation that The Two Executioners may ultimately turn out to be comic because the horror of the play is so intolerable is consonant with the generally accepted definition of the grotesque as the uneasy union of the horrifying and humorous. The prime example is Francoise's sadistic pleasure which achieves a level of near orgiastic hysteria when she goes to rub salt and vinegar into Jean's wounds.[50] What maintains the tension between the comic and the tragic is the very real destruction of two beings before our eyes. Jean dies after hideous agony and is carried out by his tormentors hogtied on a long pole. At the final curtain Maurice has succumbed to his brother's desire that he forgive and embrace his mother. The final picture of the family reunited bespeaks his utter defeat.

The character of Francoise is made even more interesting by her complete conviction that she is acting in good faith. The exaggerated nature of her claims, their theatricality, would tend initially to detract from their sincerity. But Francoise is without knowledge of her essential cruelty.

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[50]Serreau, pp. 64-65.

She believes that she has sacrificed her youth and beauty to an ungrateful husband and son, and that she is acting even now in benevolence and in the interest of the greatest good.

The character of Francoise is at least in part assimilable to Arrabal's own mother, and, as such, serves as a prototype for the mothers in his fictional works. It is probable that she may be expanded to symbolically include other institutions of maternal sponsorship and concomitant repression.[51] There are several indications that one of these institutions is the Church. Francoise speaks frequently of her martyrdom, of her desire to live in keeping with God's will, of the presence of evil in the world as a punishment for sin. The stage directions also make it apparent that at the point of revealing to Jean that she has denounced him, she speaks "as though she was in church."[52] At other times she recalls both the Church and the larger structure of a repressive political force, hiding its self-interest and treachery behind perfidious slogans and the perpetuation of guilt: "I want us to live in peace and harmony . . . I want peace and love to reign in our midst."[53]

The "Mother" of The Grand Ceremonial recalls Francoise in several respects. Like her, she is drawn in caricature,

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[51]Boring, p. 292.

[52]"The Two Executioners," p. 32.

[53]Ibid., p. 28.

the consumate martyr who has sacrificed "everything" for her son. Like Francoise she attempts to control her son through guilt:

> The doctor told me I had the first signs of encephalitis, brought on by frustration. I didn't say anything because I didn't want him to know you were the cause of my frustrations. Kill me if you want, kill me with your own hands but don't let me die slowly of misery. What a cross I have to bear.[54]

Like her, she hated her husband, long since departed ("He was repellent, a monster")[55] and sees in her son, Cavanosa, many of his qualities:

> CAVANOSA: You treated me like a monster.
>
> MOTHER: But you are a monster.[56]

Unlike Francoise, however, for whom sexuality was a confined response to the tortures she inflicted, Cavanosa's mother is also his sexual initiator. It is her hope that by being "everything" to him she may keep him forever: "Love me and let me love you. We could be the happiest couple in the world. I'll look after you, feed you, do everything."[57]

But her maternal love has within it the seed of intense cruelty. Her embrace tears his flesh as it enfolds him; his body bleeds from her "love":

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[54]"The Grand Ceremonial," p. 157.

[55]Ibid., p. 147.

[56]Ibid., p. 146.

[57]Ibid., p. 144.

CAVANOSA: Let me go, you're hurting. You're digging your nails into me.

MOTHER: I'm your mother.[58]

She has taught him masturbation so that he will remain faithful to her, forbidding him at the same time contact with other women. Apart from indiscretions with certain of his life-sized dolls, Cavanosa has remained pure. He recalls fondly his own feelings of jealousy and protectiveness led him as a child to cover his mother's legs in the park so that she could not be ogled by passing men. But he has now come of age: he wants to be free to live with Sil, a young girl he met in the park. His mother will not release him. Her seemingly omniscient eye has followed him everywhere. She knows that he has seen Sil and that together they plan to murder her.

Matricide is one of the temptations of the Arrabalian hero, alternating with an equally strong desire to remain a child sheltered in the pervasive warmth of the maternal embrace. Cavanosa's first lines are "Mummy! Mummy!," but as he later remarks his cries are "for the mother I had when I was a child."[59] The child strives for identity as a man, an identity which the mother would refuse him. He must kill her, and yet he cannot. He gives his mother as a gift a small casket symbolizing her death, but his real violence

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[58]Ibid., p. 152.

[59]Ibid., p. 139.

is unleashed on his dolls which he tears to shreds. First he enlists the aid of Sil, then of Lys, but all attempts to destroy his mother are abortive. Even the Mother, in a frenzied scene of the macabre and the slapstick, tries to be helpful by suggesting ways in which me might accomplish the task. The police sirens wail in readiness for the act which Cavanosa cannot bring himself to commit. His mother declares herself victorious once again:

> How well nature does things! I'm not only stronger than you mentally but physically as well. You're just a poor cripple with no strength in you. And mentally you're just a poor thing without any experience at all.[60]

It remains for the Emperor of The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria to complete the task which Cavanosa left unfinished. The mother in this play never appears in "life," only in the retrospective fantasies of the son who has killed her as he projects himself into the roles of the various witnesses who will condemn him to death for the act. As the wife of the accused he tells the court:

> He hated her to death and loved her like an angel. He only lived for her. Do you think it was normal for a man of his age to be tied to her apron strings day and night? He didn't need a wife, he needed a mother.[61]

And as Olympia, the Emperor's sister, we hear a similar story amplified by a report of how on one occasion, the

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[60] Ibid., p. 154.

[61] "The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria," p. 62.

Emperor had prepared himself for a feast before the sleeping body of his mother. Just as he was raising the butcher's knife to kill her, she awoke, preventing the act. It is when the Architect plays the part of the Emperor's mother that the Emperor avows the act which he had denied until that moment:

> It's true, I killed my mother, all by myself. I hit her on the head with a hammer while she was asleep. . . . The Alsatian we had . . . the Als . . . the Als . . . well he ate the body.[62]

But the Arrabalian hero cannot escape his mother. The guilt which the Emperor's mother has instilled lives on to destroy the body it inhabits. The Emperor is immediately overcome, even in his fantasy reenactment, by remorse: "Mother. It's me, I didn't mean to hurt you. What's the matter. Why don't you move."[63] Maladroitly he tries to bring her back to life by reciting to her the tea party scene from Alice in Wonderland. But her life cannot be reinstated. He will pay for his crime with his own life: "I want you to kill me with a hammer, Architect, I want you to kill me."[64]

These three plays, then, constitute a triology in which the entirety of the mother-son relationship is played out. It is a constant battle for survival with the mother

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[62]Ibid., p. 83.

[63]Ibid., p. 84.

[64]Ibid., p. 86.

destroying the son in The Two Executioners, initiating him to violence and sexuality in The Grand Ceremonial, and becoming his victim in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. But as victim, the mother is still victor. The circle comes full round again with love giving birth to death.

A totally different type of mother is portrayed in Arrabal's first play, Picnic on the Battlefield. One Sunday afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Tepan prepare a picnic lunch which they bring to their soldier son on the battlefield unmindful of and unperturbed by the war proceedings. Mrs. Tepan is the epitome of superficiality in her mannerisms and concerns. She is preoccupied with decorum: she refuses to allow her son to bring his rifle to the picnic table and is less concerned with his general well-being than with his personal hygiene:

> It's not good manners to bring your rifle to the table with you. (Pause.) But you're absolutely filthy, my boy. . . . Let's have a look at your hands. . . . And what about your ears? And your teeth? . . . Because, you know, there's one thing I will not have, and that's making fighting a war an excuse for not washing.[65]

She considers the captured enemy soldier, Zepo, a guest and engages in all the social amenities one would with a guest

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[65]Fernando Arrabal, "Picnic on the Battlefield," in Guernica and Other Plays, trans. Barbara Wright (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 113.

in one's home. She admonishes her son, Zapo, for binding his prisoner too tightly and even invites Zepo to share in their picnic lunch. In no other Arrabalian play will we encounter a mother so benevolent and caring.

In her perceptive essay, Irmgard Anderson convincingly demonstrates Arrabal's debt to the works of Lewis Carroll:

> In essence, Picnic on the Battlefield represents Arrabal's adaptation of Lewis Carroll's chapter on the subject of Tweedledum and Tweedledee. At the risk of simplifying somewhat, it could be said that these two boys have been reincarnated in Zapo and Zepo, Alice in Mr. and Mrs. Tepan, and finally the Walrus and the Carpenter in the stretcher-bearers.[66]

Zapo and Zepo have much in common and, except for the color of their uniforms, are virtually indistinguishable: they are the same age, they are both engaged to be married, and they were drafted in the same way. They are strongly aligned to Tweedledum and Tweedledee who view their battle as a game that provides them with an opportunity to dress up. Zapo and Zepo are at a complete loss to answer Mrs. Tepan's question: "Why are you enemies?"[67] Like them, Tweedledee and Tweedledum have no real understanding of why they are fighting. It falls to that intrepid veteran of previous wars, Mr. Tepan, to hit upon a solution: "It's

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[66]Irmgard Anderson, "From Tweedledum and Tweedledee to Zapo and Zepo," Romance Notes, XV, No. 2 (Winter 1973), p. 220.

[67]"Picnic on the Battlefield," p. 121.

very simple. (To Zapo.) You tell your pals that the enemy soldiers don't want to fight a war, and you (to Zepo) say the same to your comrades. And then everyone goes home."[68] All agree the solution has merit and set about to celebrate this momentous decision with a gay dance. Unheard by the happy quartet, the sound and fury of war recommences and all are felled by machine-gun fire. Martin Esslin describes Picnic as "a Chaplinesque comedy without the redeeming happy end."[69]

Antonin Artaud spoke of the surrealist quality of the Marx Brothers and described their escapades as "unrelated short events which comprise a kind of exercise of intellectual freedom in which the unconscious of each of the characters, repressed by conventions and habits, avenges itself."[70] In other words, their unrestricted zaniness exposes better than moralizing words the inhibiting phoniness of the well-rehearsed pomposity around them. Arrabal aligns himself with this point of view by grouping some of his characters in the Marx Brothers image. In The Tricycle, it is Apal, Climando, and the Old Man who form the irrepressible trio, in Fando and Lis it is Namur, Mitaro, and Toso, and in The

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[68]Ibid., p. 125.

[69]Esslin, p. 186.

[70]Antonin Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), pp. 142-43.

Car Cemetery it is Emanou, Tope, and Fodere, the three musicians. In each case, one of the men appears more lucid than his two companions, paralleling Groucho's function vis-a-vis his two more innocent brothers. In the case of Fodere, the saxophone player, the parallelism is extended to Harpo, who is mute and has to let his actions and gestures speak for him. On the other hand, Jacques Guicharnaud points out the Chaplinesque quality of many of Arrabal's characters by stating:

> Like the tramp, they are gentle and innocent; they do their best within their poverty and their clumsy love affairs. Proud of their meager success, they soon lose any benefit they might have derived from them. They love and betray what they love with the same innocence. They are often cowards, but have spurts of dignity. They are always bewildered by the world, sometimes manage to cheat it, but instead of happily or doubtfully going off into the sunset, they end by being crushed in some frightful way.[71]

The figure of the circle has a symbolic relevance in Arrabal's theatre. The outright circular structure of many plays has already been noted. It remains, however, to comment on the implied circularity of even those plays where something progressive "happens." In The Car Cemetery Emanou is crucified on a bicycle (having been betrayed by Tope, the modern-day Judas) but this climactic moment is followed by a return to life exactly as it was before, with the athletes

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[71]Jacques Guicharnaud, "Forbidden Games: Arrabal," Yale French Studies, No. 29 (1962), p. 116.

Lasca and Tossido still jogging across the stage, and the cries of a newborn infant are heard to suggest that although one being has left a life of violence and suffering, another is just beginning it. In The Tricycle, although Climando is apprehended by the police, his friends divide up his worldly possessions and plan to continue the existence they had known up to that time. Fando buries Lis, but continues with the three men on the road to Tar, that mythical city which everyone seeks but which no one has ever reached. It seems fitting that the word "cycle" (bicycle, tricycle, motorcycle) should occur so innocently and often in Arrabal's plays. Many of his plays are in fact cycles composed of recurring sets of sequential events, as for example in Fando and Lis in which scenes of tenderness alternate with scenes of cruelty. With few exceptions they are illustrations of that principle of human conduct elucidated by Micaela in The Labyrinth: "As people have a natural sense of direction they manage to come back to their point of departure."[72]

Arrabal's theatre abounds with the symbols of circularity. In her essay, Beverly De Long-Tonelli observes:

> As dramatic structure, the circle is eminently appropriate to contemporary theatre, for it aptly parallels modern man's effort to extricate himself

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[72]"The Labyrinth," p. 41.

> from the chaos left by the dissolution of traditional values.[73]

Miss De Long-Tonelli stresses the negative symbolism of the circle as a human trap and also by juxtaposing its orderly geometric arrangement with the disorderly arrangement of the universe. It also must be remembered, however, that the mere act of trying to extricate oneself implies movement and that the concept of movement is an important ingredient in Arrabal's concept of individual salvation.[74] Like the round objects on the stage, the people on the stage refuse to stand still. Life, as they perceive it, demands perpetual motion. They rush out to meet the indignities of fate and the man-made adversities head-on, and if they are not the traditional heroes, they nevertheless are fighters in their own cause and the cause of the human race.

In Arrabal's theatre, the circular shape often encloses multipurpose items which can be operated at both ends of the pole between bondage and freedom, between strife and harmony. Bicycles, tricycles, and other types of carriages can be used to carry prisoners off to their confinement (Bicycle), but they can also serve as conveyances in the human

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[73]Beverly J. De Long-Tonelli, "Bicycles and Balloons in Arrabal's Dramatic Structure," Modern Drama, XIV, No. 2 (September 1971), p. 204.

[74]Ibid., p. 209.

pilgrimage to some type of satisfactory destination (Fando and Lis) and to give joy rides to children (The Tricycle).

Finally, balloons can burst and dissolve into shreds, but they can also rise towards some unlimited space of personal fulfillment (Guernica). And, in an Arrabal play, these balloons are not only filled with some gaseous substance, but also with childish laughter and thus the essence of innocence and the hope for a new beginning.

Memory, as was previously noted, is present as a dramatic force in the early plays. It is present, however, only as autobiography, as specific thematic inspiration: the brutality of war (Guernica), the martyred but sadistic mother (The Two Executioners), the attempted elucidation of a code of ethics (The Car Cemetery, The Tricycle, Orison), the acute sense of guilt and lack of privacy (in most of the aforementioned). This thematic material has its origins in Arrabal's early experience and is projected directly into the child-creatures who represent him. But memory is absent in the early plays as a viable force in the dynamics of character. Arrabal's children exist in complete innocence. Fresh, sensual, possessing an inexplicable grace, they are nonetheless unidimensional, cut off from their pasts, their intelligence, and their creativity in such a way as to severely limit the scope of their ability to deal with life. They are the victims of chance rather than the exploiters.

They struggle courageously, though ineffectually, with problems of morality, freedom, knowledge.

CHAPTER III

THE PANIC PLAYS: FUSION AND CONFUSION

The Panic Movement was founded at the Cafe de la Paix in Paris in 1962 by a group of avant-garde artists. Among them were the theatrical designer Roland Topor, the director-writer Alexandro Jodorowsky, the author Jacques Sternberg, and Fernando Arrabal.

The name "panic" lends itself to a variety of interpretations. It alludes with equal validity to the Greek god Pan who acted the clown while suggesting horror and the Greek word "pan" which means all, everything, all-inclusive. One can even apply Guicharnaud's explanation that panic, like Artaud's cruelty, is the intended reaction the author looks for in his audience, that is, "the sacred horror that springs from the black sanctification, through ritual, of the evil within us."[1]

Although all definitions and explanations seem acceptable in one way or another, it is in the figure of Pan the clown that Arrabal best summarizes his own disenchantment with the hypocricy of his fellowmen. The clown, an integral part of the illusionary world of the theatre,

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[1]Jacques Guicharnaud, Modern French Theatre (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1967), p. 187.

has indeed a firmer grasp on reality than those who have come to watch his antics and to laugh at him in a mood of relaxation and escape. Objects and people may trip him up temporarily, but somehow he manages to emerge undaunted. He survives because he concentrates on survival rather than on success. We applaud his endurance and his immortality although we are reluctant to acknowledge the lesson he teaches us. The laughter he evokes, however, is both a humiliation and a hope: only by facing our failure can we ultimately go beyond it. And just as the clown draws us into the world of the circus to show us the theatricality of the world around us, so does Arrabal draw us into the confusion of the stage to show us the lack of harmony in our own lives.

In August of 1963, in a lecture he gave in Sydney, Australia, on the occasion of the opening of his play Fando and Lis in that city, Arrabal gave an explanatory lecture on the theories of the Panic Theatre. The key words of this theory are memory and chance.[2]

Along with other contemporary writers, Arrabal recognized that time is not a dateline, but the memory one lives in. Thus, time is fragmented rather than continuous and horizontal rather than vertical. On this new horizontal

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[2]Donahue, p. 29.

time line, the artificial barriers are broken down and past, present, and future are integrated into a total experience. The past is dominated by memory and the future by chance. To a degree both elements are merged in the present.

In the Arrabalian concept of time, the present is relatively unimportant, as its lasting impact cannot as yet be evaluated. It is the past and future which have illuminative qualities, and they are connected by the mechanism of memory. According to Arrabalian definition, memory is the faculty to remember the ideas and notions of objects which have produced sensations in the past, gives importance to our experiences and, by nourishing our imagination, enriches also our future. Even the dreams and nightmares, which are an integral part of Panic Theatre, must be firmly rooted in experience or memory because purely aesthetic flights into fantasy belong to the realm of fairytales and fairytales have nothing to do with real life.

The other important concept of Arrabal's theatre is the element of chance. An inveterate game player, he claims to have obtained the following sentence by selecting words at random from various printed materials: "The future is acted out in coups de theatre."[3] The future is a series of dramatic events, capricious, unpredictable, frightening,

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[3]Ibid., p. 30.

exciting, and exhilerating, all at once. And while one can anticipate certain recurring sensations, one cannot anticipate the form in which they will present themselves. Results are unpredictable and control is impossible, and it is the mission of the artist to confront his audience with this evidence and show them the futility to regulate the future. Concerning chance and the artist, Arrabal says:

> In order to instill chance into his work, the artist is the only man on earth who tries to show what is unpredictable, the future, tomorrow. The artist has always created with the two vital and fundamental problems at hand: bring together the mechanisms of memory and the rules of chance. The more the work of an artist is filled with chance, confusion, the unexpected, the richer, the more exciting, the more fascinating it will be.[4]

If chance is the only reality of life, then all attempts at perfection are not only doomed to failure, but they are inhuman as well because they aim to create an artificial situation of nonconfusion and therefore, sooner or later, will collide with man's true human instincts and desires. On the other hand, a theatre which admits chance and confusion as an integral part of life is the authentic realistic theatre of our times and of all times. It will also serve to expose the hypocricy of the power elite (Church, State, Business) who wish to disseminate the mistaken notion of a harmonious universe for self-protection and self-perpetuation.

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[4]Ibid., p. 31.

Such a theatre will wish to draw on life, its double, for its illumination and its techniques. If life is multifaceted and has to be considered in all its conflicting components, then theatre must mold itself in the image of life by admitting all forms of theatrical practices and expressions.

Thus Arrabal pleads not only for tolerance in the world at large, but also in the world of the theatre:

> You would think that dramatists today are faced with a real dilemma, that they must choose between two formulas: Jouvet's that "the theatre is a dialogue" and Artaud's that the theatre is a combination of gesture, movement, and mise-en-scene. Personally, I dream of a theatre where humor and poetry, panic and love would be fused. Poetry is born from the nightmare and its mechanism, excess. The theatrical rite—the panic ceremony—must be looked upon by the spectator as a kind of sacrifice. This infinitely free type of theatre which I envisage has nothing to do with antitheatre or with the Theatre of the Absurd. It's a vast domain, shrouded in ambiguities, and patrolled very carefully by the mad hound which stalks the night.[5]

Clearly Arrabal does not believe that there is a need to make a choice, but that the artist, as well as the common man, is entitled to follow his particular vision. As far as his own vision as a playwright is concerned, it is that of a total theatre, the Panic Theatre, a theatre which, though it may quarrel with existence, nevertheless is willing to abide by its reality:

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[5]Fernando Arrabal, "Auto-Interview," trans. Bettina Knapp, Drama Review, XIII, No. 1 (Fall 1968), p. 75.

> I dream of a theatre where humor and poetry, panic and love would be only one. Theatrical rites would then change themselves into an opera mundi like Don Quijote's dreams, Alice's nightmares, K.'s delirium, indeed, the humanoid dreams which might haunt the nights of an IBM machine.[6]

Between 1959 and 1962 Arrabal stopped writing plays and instead busied himself as an actor and novelist. When he returned to playwriting in 1962 he did not visibly change the content of his plays, but merely concentrated on refining some of the techniques with which he had already started to experiment in his pre-panic period.

The most notable change occurs in the concept of the protagonists. He abandoned his child-like adults, who had served, up to now, as spokesmen for man's inner reality, and entrusted their function to dreams, nightmares, delirium, and fantasy. These dreams are an expression of man's most intimate desires and needs, on the one hand, and an expression of the memory of past experiences and sensations on the other. With each succeeding play of this period, they assume an ever-increasing importance until they actually achieve equal status and fusion with what is generally termed outer reality.

In the earlier plays we noted that the Arrabalian protagonist was a multifaceted entity and had become so in response to the multifaceted demands with the difficult task of survival. In trying to adapt to ever changing

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[6]Thiher, p. 174.

circumstances, these creatures had no fixed attitudes and no fixed roles. The master turned into the slave, the victim into the executioner, and the prisoner into the warden. In the plays of the panic period this fluidity of character even includes astounding feats of legerdemain: the ability to change roles in midstream, complete metamorphosis, and even androgyny.

In Garden of Delights, Lais and Miharca exchange roles, assume the personalities of other people, and finally fuse into one and the same person. Miharca is at various times Lais's confidant, her foe, her appeaser, and her oppressor who tries to teach her the will of God. In the same play, Zenon, the ape-man, alternately plays the role of Lais's mother, father, child, and irate lover. On the other hand, Teloc, Lais's mentor and protector, turns into her tormentor and inquisitor, and then again into a sort of circus trainer who orders Miharca and Lais to jump through a ring of fire.

Probably the most uninhibited amount of role changing takes place in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, especially on the part of the Emperor who plays a woman complete with brassiere, garter belt, and stockings, simulates a childbirth complete with mother, child, doctor, and priest and, later on impersonates all the witnesses to his crime of matricide: his mother, brother, wife, neighbor, and numerous others. The most complete metamorphosis takes place in the

final act in which a scene of transubstantiation is enacted. The Architect, upon devouring the body of the executed Emperor, takes on the total appearance and personality of his late friend.

Another interesting aspect of Arrabal's prediliction for impersonations is their bisexual quality which extends to both secular and nonsecular personalities. In a mock marriage ceremony between Zenon and Lais (Garden of Delights), Lais plays the role of the bridegroom and Zenon is a sort of gorilla bride. Cavanosa (The Grand Ceremonial) dresses Sil up as a female Christ and we have already noted the numerous bisexual impersonations in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria.

In Arrabal's universe people move, change, and fuse. Sil and Lys of The Grand Ceremonial, Lais and Miharca, and later Lais and Zenon of Garden of Delights, and the Emperor and the Architect all seem, in the end, reduced to a synthesis of all the essential aspects of both personalities. In other words, humanity seems just one great pool from which character traits emerge on a temporary basis, propelled to the surface by some accidental combination of circumstances, and come to rest in one body or the other by coincidence rather than by design. Perhaps it is Arrabal's way of suggesting that we have a common origin and a common destiny.

This surrealistic tendency in Arrabal's panic plays can be related to his claim that his writing is actually a

triumph of the subconscious, and that he never creates according to a preconceived plan, but is guided, like his protagonists, by the spontaneity of his imagination:

> When I write, I have nothing precise in mind. I simply try to write something which will surprise me when I reread it, which will make me laugh or cry, excite me, displease me, make me happy. . . . My plays construct themselves. Just like when I set up a chess problem. I set up my pieces and I do not know what will become of them. I feel irritated, fascinated. . . . Suddenly, there is a spark. Everything starts to move. And then it is finished. Afterwards, I do not change anything about it.[7]

Arrabal's description of the creative process unavoidably brings to mind the term "automatic writing" which is so intimately linked to the surrealist movement. As during a dream, during periods of intense artistic creation, the exercise of control is suspended and relinquished to the element of surprise. Yet, according to Arrabal, dreams are not completely arbitrary and neither is the creative process. Both are guided by past experience, memory, obsession, and need. This accounts for the basic homogeneity and repetitiousness of his works. As a matter of fact, he claims to harbor a secret wish: to break away from the monotony of his inspiration and to penetrate into some strange and unexplored territory, to be totally different and totally original in his next play. This hope, however, is often

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[7]Marowitz, p. 101.

destroyed by his own wife who is the first to read a new work. According to Podol, Mrs. Arrabal

> . . . repeatedly and regretfully informed him [Arrabal] that his latest literary endeavor was invariably very much like his previous ones, that the author's personality and subjective concerns still constituted the singular essence of his work.[8]

This process of putting words together not according to logic, but rather according to spontaneous association, has resulted in some strange dialogues on the part of Arrabal's characters. For example, Lais, in Garden of Delights announces the lovely things she will do for her sheep:

> On some I'll put wings so that they can fly around the house and on the others I'll put fins so that they can become sheep-sharks and be the envy of all. And I'll buy them each a chateau so they can contemplate the countryside from their terraces. And those who get sick I'll send to the hospital in a city with canals so that they can get well while bathing with the storks. And I'll buy each of them sunglasses and a tanned boyfriend, at night they'll sleep in a bed and their little heads will rest on pillows and they'll have sweet dreams![9]

This monologue seems to respond to the free flow of an imagination which has disassociated itself from the restraints of logic and which moves from object to object without any preconceived plan.

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[8]Podol, p. 142.

[9]Fernando Arrabal, Garden of Delights, trans. Helen Bishop (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 46.

In spite of Arrabal's protestations, there is at least some evidence that his heightened interest during the 1960's in the element of chance and his attempts to neutralize outer reality by means of the surrealist experience, is the direct result from his contact with Breton and his group in 1962. In fact, there is a certain similarity between Arrabal's declaration: "I am absolutely convinced that there do not exist two separate worlds, the one real and the other imaginary,"[10] and Breton's words in his second manifesto that: "Everything leads us to believe there exists a certain point in the mind in which . . . real and imaginary . . . cease to be perceived as contradiction."[11]

Arrabal proceeded to put this theory into practice in such plays as The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria and Garden of Delights, both wirtten after 1962. In these plays, the Arrabalian characters, by leaping the barrier between the real and the imaginary, between time and space, create a world of their own which defies all established norms of reality.

Role playing, games, and religious ritual provide much of the action in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria, establishing its tone and atmosphere. The play opens with

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[10]Orenstein, p. 241.

[11]J. H. Matthews, An Introduction to Surrealism (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1965), p. 48.

an explosion of sound and light which heralds the arrival on a desert island of the Emperor, sole survivor of a plane crash. The island's sole inhabitant, the Architect, a man of nature, is terrified by the noise of the crash. He hides his head in the sand and responds to the Emperor's request for assistance with undecipherable babblings. When the second scene opens, two years have elapsed, and the Emperor has educated the "noble savage," instructing him in the ways of the civilized world. It is now that a series of transformations begins and it is left to the spectator to determine what is real and what is imaginary.

The polymorphism of the two characters in this play constitutes the basic element of the piece, since their transformations support the structure of the play and serve to reveal the content through the characters. Their function in the first act of the play serves to introduce us to these characters as they reveal their fantasies through the game of mimicry. Their relationship is based on the diverse series of ritualistic games they play with one another, involving domination, sado-masochism, war, and death. Central to this role playing is the Emperor's agonized love-hate relationship with his mother which functions like a Wagnerian leitmotif. The first act concludes with a lengthy monologue in which the Emperor, having driven away the Architect, expresses his need for him, for God, and for his

mother. During this scene the Emperor is forced to play both himself and his partner. He sets up an effigy of himself on the throne and proceeds to play successively the Architect, a humble servant, a Carmelite nun, a mother giving birth, and a young man trying to prove that God exists by scoring a thousand points on a pinball machine. It is here that we learn that the Architect is over two thousand years old and that the Emperor is a mountebank. He is not the Emperor of Assyria, just as he is not a Carmelite nun, nor any of the other characters he portrays. When he starts to tell of his life in Assyria, he can never remember the exact details of an event, so he changes them at will. When he speaks of his life in another place and time as a minor bureaucrat, he reveals what is perhaps the truth:

> EMPEROR: Of course, in the end, I didn't see my friends any more. I had a lot of work and I couldn't keep up with them. When you slave away eight hours a day and take the train and the tube . . . I hadn't time for anything and then I was indispensable, or so my bosses told me.[12]

Thus, we see that it is probable that all of the roles that the Emperor plays are fictional—including his role as Emperor.

The Architect begins the second act by playing the role of a judge in a psychodrama manifesting a fusion of reality

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[12]"The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria," p. 40.

and game. The Emperor stands trial for the murder of his mother and when all the witnesses (played by both characters) have testified, he confesses his guilt and demands that he be killed and eaten by the Architect. The latter agrees and, after carrying out the cannibalistic ritual with its suggestion of the Eucharist, metamorphoses into the Emperor, losing his former powers over the forces of nature. His voice changes and his expressions become those of the Emperor. He becomes the master of the Emperor's memory, dreams, and thoughts. When the transformation is complete, the play ends as it began. There is a deafening crash, and then the new Emperor arrives to report to the terrified Architect that he is the sole survivor of the accident.

The successive scenes in which the two characters play diverse roles creates a basically theatrical situation, since they are not only involved in role playing, but wear masks and are costumed. The theatricality of the play helps to reinforce the illusion. It permits the spectator to waver between the illusory and the real, and forces him to face up to reality. But not reality on the level of the superficial masquerade of the games played, but rather the reality of the profound drama that is the basis of this play. Guicharnaud points out the importance of the play of masks such as we see in this work:

> The play of masks leads to questions about life, theatre and their reciprocal relations. It is not

> the creation of a new art but the return with the help of new forms to a simple and ancient conception outside of which there is no theatre, only entertainment.[13]

There is a strong bond present on both the conscious and the subconscious level between the two characters of the play. They express great tenderness to one another, especially in the Guignolesque scene in which the Architect fulfills his promise to devour the Emperor: "You know, I miss you very much . . . I feel all alone without you. You were very good company. Promise me you'll come to life again."[14] Arrabal suggests that the play may be a game of solitaire invented by the Emperor and that the Architect never really existed; he then adds that the reverse may also be true.[15] Both possibilities permit a cohesive interpretation of the work; the nature of the characters' metamorphoses as well as the intensity of their emotions and desires reinforce their inseparability, whether they be individuals or merely aspects of a single anguished psyche seeking resolution of its schizoid existence. That the whole action of the play and the doubling of characters was a fantasy generated either by the Architect or by the Emperor is suggested by a "dream" which the Architect relates to the

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[13]Guichanaurd, Modern French Theatre, p. 16.

[14]"The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria," p. 91.

[15]Podol, p. 76.

Emperor: "I dreamed I was alone on a desert island and suddenly an aeroplane came down and I was in a panic, I ran everywhere, I was even trying to bury my head in the sand when someone called me from behind."[16] Here is a dream within a play which is that dream, its author a single consciousness.

Garden of Delights is another example of a play within the framework of illusion. It includes all the elements that are part of the Arrabalian panic repertory: ceremonies, polymorphism of the characters, and the love-hate relationship.

Like the Emperor, Lais, the protagonist of the play, reveals her most secret life—both her past and her fantasies and obsessions. In response to an interviewer's question about her parents, Lais, an orphan, replies:

> . . . but actually my parents became a marvelous dream. I have always felt sad and sorry for all those people who have had to endure the dull reality of their real parents, most of whom are banal and boring. But I was free to imagine mine as being strange and fascinating; I could be the bastard daughter of Einstein, or the child of Neptune and a Roman slave, a creature come alive from the imaginings of a mad genius of a poet.[17]

To another question by an interviewer who asks her with whom she is living at the moment, she responds: "With my memories,

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[16]"The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria," p. 55.

[17]Arrabal, Garden of Delights, p. 13.

my ghosts too. I speak to them and they live with me as though they were flesh-and-blood people."[18] She is a retired actress whose only contact with the world is the telephone. Surrounded by her nine lambs, she lives with her ape-like companion, Zenon, in a world where little or no distinction is made between dream and reality. As an actress she is a master of illusion, a creator of worlds that could not exist without her, a god on earth who may assume and recreate, as Teloc tells her, "all the worries and the wonders of the whole world."[19]

The play is a ceremony of initiation to adulthood and to the freedom of self-determination. Miharca, Lais's childhood friend, and Teloc, a magus-musician, each play an important part in Lais's "past" (although in the alternation sequences of past, present, and future, time is caught up in a continuous on-going present). In order for Lais to enter the "garden of delights" the sacrifice of Miharca will be required, for as Teloc puts it:

> She wanted to infuriate you, to show you that you're nothing and a nobody. That your only reality is the world of your childhood and that your success and celebrity today are nothing but lies and illusions.[20]

Teloc, the visionary, the master of ceremonies of confusion, whose heart consists of a series of cinematographic

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[18]Ibid., p. 8.

[19]Ibid., p. 29.

[20]Ibid., p. 83.

projections, is king of the marvelous. He is the source of the freedom which Lais seeks. He teaches her hope, contained in the intuitive sense of inexhaustible possibility: "The future surprises you as it should."[21] And he teaches her the technique for fusing moments of the past, present, and future. Lais confirms this in answer to a question posed by an interviewer: "Everything I know, even in the theatre, is thanks to him."[22]

Miharca is no less a part of Lais. She is childhood and memory. Memory has been incarnated in this play only to be destroyed for it is Miharca who contains and personifies the specific material of the unconscious: the fantasies and actual events of childhood which imprison, paralyze, and suffocate. Thus, the freedom which Lais seeks is not only that from the repressive surveillance of the "good" sisters of the convent, but from the obsessional and driving forces of her own inner limitations. And Miharca knows from the beginning that she will be sacrificed as though her role is already prefigured for her. Once again this "future" is announced in terms of a dream: "I dreamed that you killed me."[23]

Zenon is as much a part of Lais as is Teloc. If Teloc is man in his effort toward the sublime, then Zenon is man

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[21]Ibid., p. 80.

[22]Ibid., p. 24.

[23]Ibid., p. 38.

as beast. He is both awe-inspiring in his rage and violence and touching in his tenderness. Between these two lost beings, Lais and Zenon, there develops a love-hate relationship similar to the relationship that evolves between the Architect and the Emperor. They cannot survive emotionally without each other. Zenon's need for affection is just as great as Lais's, if not more so, because he cannot relate to anyone else. Consequently, in the love-hate battles no holds are barred for him. It is he, who through his insane jealousy, kills innocence in the form of the sheep (they are resuscitated in the final love apotheosis).

The apotheosis in love is reminiscent of that in The Architect and the Emperor of Assyria. Lais instructs Zenon to eat the jar of jelly which contains her soul. When he does so, he acquires his humanity as Lais loses hers. Thus, her initiation into the world of panic is complete: she is now at peace with herself. As the curtain falls, Lais and Zenon are seen ascending toward the sky in a huge egg, a new version of the balloon.

As we have already noted the characters in the early plays are devoid of memory, they are locked into an ever-present "present." In the Panic plays, however, memory becomes a viable force in the dynamics of character. In these plays Arrabal takes into account the hidden recesses of the characters' being and introduces them in the amorphous

world of dreams. To Arrabal, dream, in order to be valid in the context of reality, must be part of a person's experience, of things remembered and stored away for future reference. Since it is the function of our memory to nourish our imagination and since it is the function of our intelligence to make use of past impressions and emotional reactions, dreams are an authentic expression of our true self, of our true desires, and of our particular way of looking at life and the universe. In dreams, we betray our most hidden fears and fulfill our most ardent wishes.

No longer content, as he was at the beginning, to send his characters on the impossible quest for perfection in an imperfect world, the question of what we are and what, according to the rules of the game, we think we ought to be, has been enlarged to include yet another dichotomy—what we are and what we truly want to be.

Don Quixote, faced with the same dilemma some centuries ago, found in the world of chivalry a temporary abode for his own vision of what he wanted to be. On the other hand, the protagonists of Arrabal's Panic plays, rebellious at reconciling to the purely external conditions of their being but unwilling to play the fool, have retreated into themselves and into a domain where inner and outer reality fuse and it is no longer possible to distinguish between the act and the wish. In this way, they not only can nurture their individual

dreams and needs and resolve otherwise irreconcilable conflicts, but they do not have to fear defeat at the hands of the Knight of the White Moon.

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