

KAMCHATKA

REVISTA DE ANÁLISIS CULTURAL



Teatro y Violencias de Estado en América Latina y España

Maria Morant Giner ed. n. 23 / 2024

K A M C H A T K A

REVISTA DE ANÁLISIS CULTURAL

TEATRO Y VIOLENCIAS DE ESTADO EN AMÉRICA LATINA Y ESPAÑA

Theater and State violence in Latin America and Spain

Presentación. Teatro y violencias de Estado en América Latina y España 5-20
María Morant Giner

LAS DRAMATURGIAS DE LA MEMORIA EN ESPAÑA Y MÉXICO

Represión y violencia franquista en la escena gallega: el ciclo de la memoria de Teatro do Noroeste 21-45
Diego Rivadulla Costa

De la memoria histórica a la 'memoria de lo real' en la escenificación sobre la dictadura franquista 47-70
Alba Saura-Clares

Memoria y ausencia en el teatro de Alberto Conejero 71-87
Markel Hernández Pérez

La cristalización de la violencia mediante la palabra y su trauma: *Ushuaia* (2017) de Alberto Conejero 89-112
Miriam García Villalba

La "guerra sucia" en México: prácticas de la memoria en la escena del siglo XXI 113-139
Beatriz Aracil Varón

DE LOS FANTASMAS DEL PROCESO DE REORGANIZACIÓN NACIONAL AL ESPECTRO DE LAS MALVINAS

Morfología del encierro: obturación del espacio público y expresionismo en el teatro de Buenos Aires durante la última dictadura militar (1976-1983). El caso de *Visita* (1977) 141-166
Eugenio Scholnicov

Los cuerpos escénicos de la posdictadura argentina en las obras de Pompeyo Audivert y Pablo Caramelo	167-187
Maximiliano de la Puente	
Performance, espectralidad y ritual: <i>ANTIVISITA</i> como dispositivo escénico para representar la ausencia radical	189-215
Mariana Eva Pérez y Miguel María Algranti	
La guerra de Malvinas desde el activismo teatral. La soberanía, la deserción y el rol de los intelectuales en <i>Lógica del naufragio</i> (2012) de Mariano Saba	217-239
Mora Hassid	
Cuerpos y memorias transculturales de la guerra (de Malvinas) en <i>Two Big Black Bags</i> de Julieta Vitullo (2023)	241-261
Verónica Perera	

AFECTOS Y EFECTOS DEL TERRORISMO DE ESTADO EN EL TEATRO CHILENO

Violencia estatal y el teatro chileno durante la dictadura cívico-militar chilena. El caso de la carpa <i>La Feria</i> (1977)	263-282
Matías Alvarado Leyton	
Accessing Traumatic Pasts through Play: Children's Perspectives in Two Chilean Theatre Pieces	283-310
Marin Laufenberg	
"Memory is Not for Sale!" La Venda Sexy and Political Sexual Violence in Chile	311-337
Terri Gordon-Zolov	
Irán 3037. Entrevista a la directora	339-348
Maria Morant Giner	
<i>Irán #3037 [violencia político sexual en dictadura]</i>	349-376
Patricia Artés	

Portada: fotografía de la puesta en escena de *Irán #3037* realizada por Cris Saavedra.

KAMCHATKA

REVISTA DE ANÁLISIS CULTURAL

ACCESSING TRAUMATIC PASTS THROUGH PLAY: CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES IN TWO CHILEAN THEATRE PIECES

Accediendo a pasados traumáticos a través del juego. Perspectivas infantiles en dos obras de teatro chilenas

MARIN LAUFENBERG
Idaho State University (Estados Unidos)

marinlaufenberg@isu.edu

Recibido: 17 de noviembre de 2022

Aceptado: 14 de julio de 2023

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-2254-2452>

<https://doi.org/10.7203/KAM.23.25594>

N. 23 (2024): 283-310. ISSN: 2340-1869

RESUMEN: Este trabajo examina *El año en que nací* por Lola Arias (2012), y *Gemelos* por el grupo chileno La Troppa (1999), dos obras de teatro que se acercan al trauma y la representación de la experiencia de vivir durante la dictadura, a través de los ojos de niños. En ambas obras, las experiencias afectivas de la dictadura (un conocimiento difícil de documentar y fijar en la narrativa oficial) se comunican a la audiencia a través de la incorporación de los juegos y técnicas de aligerar, como el humor. Considerando momentos de jugar, la incorporación de juguetes, juegos de rol, el humor y la risa, un método más ligero de lidiar con los problemas sociales serios es sugerido. Concluyo que una representación lúdica del trauma y de la violencia pudiera ser una de las maneras principales en que la segunda generación se acerque a esta historia cargada y difícil de acceder mientras negocian con y evalúan pos-memorias y la memoria colectiva de su sociedad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Dictadura chilena, teatro, juego, humor, segunda generación, posmemoria.

ABSTRACT: This paper examines Lola Arias' *El año en que nací* (2012), and *Gemelos* by Chile's La Troppa (1999), two theatre works which both approach the telling of trauma and representing experiences of life during dictatorship through the eyes of children. In both works, affective experiences of the dictatorship (knowledge difficult to document and discern in the official narrative) are communicated to the viewing audience by incorporating game playing and lightening tactics such as humor. By considering moments of engaging in play, the incorporation of toys, role-playing, humor and laughter, a lightened mood of confronting serious social problems is suggested. I conclude that a ludic representation of trauma and violence may be one of the primary ways that the second generation approaches this charged, difficult to access history while negotiating with and evaluating post-memories and their society's collective memory.

KEYWORDS: Chilean dictatorship, Theatre, Play, Humor, Second Generation, Postmemory.

“The novel belongs to our parents, I thought then, I think now...While the adults killed or were killed, we drew pictures in a corner. While the country was falling to pieces, we were learning to talk, to walk, to fold napkins in the shape of boats, of airplanes. While the novel was happening, we played hide-and-seek, we played at disappearing.”

Alejandro Zambra, *Ways of Going Home*

In *El año en que nací* (*The Year I was Born*, 2012, Lola Arias) two characters, Soledad and Ana, play hopscotch on a world map projected on the stage's surface as they playfully illustrate the various travels of their exiled families (México, Perú, USA...). Bananas, water guns, and wooden student desk surfaces are used as 'guns' when various characters reenact military actions. Toy soldiers, toy tanks, and miniature cars and airplanes function as stand-ins for the real-life objects, animated as toys are by the hands of children. Characters dress-up, donning fake moustaches, and their parents' oversized clothing from the 1980s. A Barbie doll representing Chilean Miss Universe is interviewed as if for a televised audience on the topics of repression and student uprisings. The effect of these gestures, embodiments, and actions is to produce a world of childhood playfulness.

A second theatre work, *Gemelos* (*Twins*, 1999, by the group La Troppa), brings toys to life on stage, establishing from the onset an aesthetic which mixes conventional puppetry with characters who appear to be living puppets. A small, intricate, and magical stage reminiscent of toy theatre (literally called “el teatrino” in the stage notes) is located in the center of the larger stage space, framing the smaller stage space to concentrate audience attention. From this toy theatre emerge characters wearing half-masks which imitate exaggerated facial expressions (enlarged cheeks and noses in particular). They move at times like dolls too, as when the mother is first seen, “gira como bailarina de cajita de música” [she spins like a dancer in a music box]. These same characters at time operate puppets conspicuously on stage, for example, animating blue fabric trout puppets attached to metal wires to imitate a scene in which the twin boy characters fish. Later, the postman delivering letters is a small wooden mannequin riding a wooden bicycle. Additionally, a stuffed animal cat, conspicuously false, and a rubber chicken, the pinnacle of falsity, are used on stage to represent these dead animals. Both visually toy-like, and incorporating miniature puppet toys, this piece also dialogues with a playful, child's perspective in portraying its story.

The years of the Chilean Dictatorship (1973-1990) constitute a trauma on both social and political levels, which wounded not only individuals, but the nation as a whole.¹ Seventeen years of authoritarian military government impacted all strata and all members of society, albeit in distinct ways. In the return to democracy in the 1990s, some effects of this period on citizens were immediately discernible; other impacts took time to unfold. While many studies have examined the effects of trauma on individuals directly involved and the legacy of a dictatorship's reign on a nation, there remain some more marginalized groups and segments of society whose interaction with the memory of trauma merit closer examination.² Specifically, the youngest generations born under the Pinochet regime or growing up during that same time carried with them a legacy of violence which has long been overlooked and understudied. Those young people are now adults and some are processing their experiences of trauma through cultural and artistic mediums.

In this essay, I consider the dilemma of how and why subsequent generations feel and process the trauma of the Chilean dictatorship differently from the individuals directly affected and involved (the first generation), and evaluate the outcomes of their mitigation of that trauma in performance. To approach the question of how the trauma of dictatorship is processed from a child's perspective and from the perspective of adults who experienced trauma as children, I turn to two theatre productions: Lola Arias' *El año en que nací*, and *Gemelos* by Chile's La Troppa. Both approach the representation of traumatic life experiences under dictatorship through the eyes of children, and though the works employ different poetic and aesthetic strategies to tell their stories, they share a similarly playful tone and a return to a juvenile perspective that makes them a natural pair. Frequently, this approach incorporates game playing and humor, which can help these younger generations negotiate with and evaluate their own memories of youth along with those memories inherited from their parents. I propose that a ludic

1 "Trauma" is often experienced by the subject in times of crisis, or is the result of crisis. Trauma is often associated with pain, whether felt physically or emotionally by the subject. Cathy Caruth defined "trauma" in her well-known study as, "a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or set of events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event.", noting that, "the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it" (4-5). Caruth's insistence that trauma is dissociated could be rephrased, "trauma lingers". The very existence of theatre works which reach back many years to crisis moments is evidence that trauma lingers, continuing into the present, continually reproducing the need to deal with it.

2 In the case of studies which examine the effects of trauma on individuals, Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* or Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* are indispensable resources. While many works have been published that fill out the story of national trauma in Chile due to the dictatorship, one paramount study that explores the trauma inflicted upon the Chilean nation is Steve Stern's *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006*.

representation of trauma and violence may be one of the more productive ways that the post-Pinochet generation can deal with this charged and obscure history. Furthermore, I contend that the distance which inherently separates these generations and their post-memories from the epicenter of trauma plays a role in both the capacity for theatrical humor and play to arise in relation to such dark topics, and in its success as a means of communicating knowledge which is more affective than quantifiable. In order to undertake the research for this project, I turned to newspaper and journal interviews with both playwrights and acting companies, previously published critical studies on both, and also had the opportunity to “participate” in both productions as an audience member in 2014. Live-spectating these pieces lead to the inspiration to undertake this research.

***EL AÑO EN QUE NACÍ* AND *MI VIDA DESPUÉS*: PRODUCTION OVERVIEW AND RECEPTION**

The collectively created documentary theatre work, *El año en que nací*, conceived and directed by the Argentine artist Lola Arias takes a documentary approach to the memory of the trauma inflicted upon Chilean society during the dictatorship. Arias premiered the Argentine work *Mi vida después* in 2009, a biodrama which uses actors playing themselves as real people and additionally, real documents and artefacts from their lives to tell their stories of growing up under dictatorship in Argentina. Their testimony was gathered and assembled from interviews conducted by Arias, and reworked into a flexible script by the playwright. And while a text of the work does exist, it is liable to change on stage from performance to performance since moments embedded for improvisation are incorporated or present themselves, especially when unpredictable elements such as a child or a turtle emerge. Documentary theatre involves actors playing the part of themselves and retelling nonfiction narratives in the theatre space, so with each performance, documentary theatre actors reenact, relive, and re-inscribe events through which they have lived. Furthermore, the actors in *Mi vida después* both act the role of themselves as well as embody the roles of their blood relatives, including their own parents. In this way, it is as though they bear both a responsibility and a sort of genetic fiat that enables them to speak for themselves and to be the voice of those to whom they are related. Therefore, this very genre then exposes what happens on stage as a continued part of the spectators’ reality instead of as a fiction separate from reality.

After its success, Arias exported the format to the Chilean context as an invited artist to participate in the theatre festival, *Santiago a Mil*.³ In Chile, she disseminated a call for participants (actors and non-actors alike) who had been children during the dictatorship, and who represented all strata of society. She then worked through her documentary theatre process to interview them and acting as director/curator, selected a group to represent themselves as actor-characters on stage. The final work is based on the experiences of eleven people who lived through the dictatorship years as children, who relate different family stories to the audience, both mundanely personal, and historically resonant. Most importantly, these “hijos de Pinochet”, or members of the “secondary character generation”, elucidate how they watched their parents (the protagonist generation) living under the Pinochet regime.⁴ They reconstruct memories and family stories on stage, and speak frankly to the audience in a sort of confessional mode. Delivering their stories, the actors use a playfulness reminiscent of childhood that appeals to their audience’s own childhood experiences. Theatre reviewer Isabel Castro explains the resulting affective environment saying, “Graphic candid accounts of the cast members were real life experiences: tragic, disturbing, comical and catty as they called each other without malice or censorship like a childhood romp in a middle school line up” (“Radar L.A. Review: *‘El Año en Que Nací’* At The LATC”). It might seem odd that a piece based in the real, the documentary, would also establish a key part of its poetic in the humorous, playful, and child-like.⁵ A balance is struck that is observed between the subjective and objective, emotional truth and factual truth, as, “the piece moves with a

3 For further reading on the translation and adaptation of this process of documentary theatre creation in Chile based off the successful original Argentine production, see Jean Graham-Jones’ article “Lo real no siempre se rehace de la misma manera: *Mi vida después y El año en que nací* de Lola Arias” in *Revista Apuntes de Teatro*. Number 138, 2014.

4 I take and adapt “secondary character generation” from Chilean author Alejandro Zambra. He uses the allegory of the novel to view the people and history, or, characters and plot, that have unfolded and continues to unfold in Chile. Instead of referring to direct victims of trauma and violence under the dictatorship as the first generation, he refers to his parents’ generation as the protagonists of the story and to his generation, the generation of children growing up under dictatorship, as the secondary characters or supporting characters’ generation. See his novel *Formas de volver a casa* for further references to these terms. Zambra, Alejandro. *Formas De Volver a Casa*. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2011.

5 New documentary theatre seems to make one distinct break from historic theatre of the real in that emotions are allowed to enter and imbue objects with affective knowledges which are presented in all of their conflicting essence to the audience. Both Carol Martin and Paola Hernández have noticed this tendency of new documentary theatre by which, “espacios críticos desvanecen y desestabilizan el sentido de lo real hasta muchas veces llegar a la parodia.”, signaling the playfulness and humor that we may experience in today’s theatre of the real. Hernández, Paola. “Biografías escénicas: *Mi vida después de Lola Arias*”. *Latin American Theatre Review*. Fall 2011. 115-128.

delicate rawness between the real and the fictitious.”⁶ Nevertheless, through this playful mode of approaching ‘truth’, the piece affectively communicates with the audience as, “We are invited to experience the intimacy of the actors”, establishing a temporary community with those who choose to come and bear witness to this performance.⁷ It is worth noting too that this piece has been performed in the international circuit as well and has received wide recognition abroad as well as locally.⁸

GEMELOS: PRODUCTION OVERVIEW AND RECEPTION

The other theatre piece treated in this study, *GemeLOS*, by the Chilean theatre troupe La Troppa, does not directly depict the topic of the military dictatorship, and is in fact an adaptation of the 1986 novel *Le grand cahier* by Hungarian Swiss author Agota Kristof. Twin boys are sent to a rural village to live with their grandmother and wait out a war that rages on in the periphery of the play. The relationship between the boys and their grandmother is anything but loving or nurturing, and the story focuses on the survival techniques and coping strategies developed by the ingenious and yet strangely callous brothers. The novel does not explicitly state its setting either, though the readers come to assume the war in the background is World War II through cues about the nature of the fighting, weapons used, and the impact on citizens. While La Troppa adapts the piece with their recognizable style and poetic, there are no explicit markers that suggest definitively that the geographic location of this story is now Chile. Similarly, by choosing to adapt an international text, La Troppa elects to take on a project that now gains specific resonances for the Chilean public while also resonating at the global level. This may also have been reflected in the international success of the production which has toured to more than fifteen countries, reaching more than 300,000 spectators.⁹ I was fortunate to be able to view a performance of this piece in July of 2014 in Montreal,

6 Original text: “La obra se mueve con delicada crudeza entre lo real y lo ficticio.” Quoted from “*Mi Vida Después: Cómo Enfrentar la Historia Familiar a Partir de los Recuerdos*” January 14, 2011. (All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.)

7 Original text: “Somos invitados a vivir la intimidad de los actores”, Ibid.

8 The piece toured the United States in 2014, reaching cities such as Seattle, Portland, New York, and Chicago. In the Museum of Contemporary Art’s program of the Chicago presentation, the work is framed in a way very similarly to the production of the piece in Spanish that is being treated in the present analysis. The Chicago program states that the piece is, “Both playful and political, the explorations of *El año en que nació/The year I was born* reveal complexity and dark secrets alongside the joy and humor of lives recovered.”

9 J.L.F. “*GemeLOS, la obra más exitosa del teatro chileno reciente, regresa al Teatro Municipal de Las Condes*”. *La Tercera*. Nov. 2012.

Quebec. The troupe members perform *Gemelos* in a distinctively visually engaging, colorfully saturated, storybook aesthetic, and from a place of enunciation of their bodies and voices, bringing the story to life from this troupe's specific perspective. As Franck Gaudichaud, scholar of the Chilean postdictatorship, declares of their recognizable aesthetic, "with them the dictatorship and repression become metaphors, magical realism, a space of illusions transformed into reality by way of puppets and disjointed actors (my translation)."¹⁰ In the Chilean context, the allegorical link was certainly recognized by local audiences, something troupe member Juan Carlos Zagal has acknowledged stating that, "*Gemelos* illustrates a little of the history of Chile, of ourselves and our relationship with militarism, repression, and death" (De la Luz Hurtado, "*Gemelos: un Prodigio de La Troppa.*")^{11,12}, making conspicuous to their local viewing audience the historical context, even through the highly ludic visual presentation.

Throughout the performance, the experience of childhood is mediated by puppets and a rich and visually striking aesthetic which mimics toys that have come to life in what might be described as playful and dreamlike. The twins are crafty, agile, and witty, learning to survive, despite hard conditions of daily life contrived by the neglectful grandmother. They invent violent games to pass the time and to prepare themselves to resist hardships. While Kristof's novel establishes a way of seeing trauma from a child's point of view, it generally does not contain ludic or playful elements. In fact, troupe member Jaime Lorca explains the adaptation process, saying, "The story was already frightening and the way that the novel was narrated made it even more difficult, horrible to digest. We asked ourselves how we could change this dose of sordid, very grim, cruel things, so that people would not be completely destroyed, so that it did not provoke fear but rather engagement" (De la Luz Hurtado, "*Gemelos: un Prodigio de La Troppa.*")¹³ Therefore, they alter the tone drastically, bringing about playfulness into the

10 Original text: "Con ellos la dictadura y la represión se convierten en metáforas, en realismo mágico, en un espacio de ilusiones hechas realidad por marionetas y actores desarticulados." Quoted from: Gaudichaud, Franck. (Translated by Laura Abad for the journal *Rebelión*). "Chile: 30 años después del golpe de Estado: Retrato de una memoria desgarrada". Report done in Santiago de Chile for the journal *Politis* (Paris- Sept. 2003).

11 Original text: "*Gemelos*...grafica un poco la historia de Chile, de nosotros mismos y nuestra relación con el militarismo, la represión y la muerte. Por eso la hicimos en ese momento (1999)."

12 When re-presenting three of their most popular pieces in 2015 in Chile for the Museum of Memory in Santiago, thereby closely linking the memory of the atrocities of dictatorship to their reflective work, troupe members Juan Carlos Zagal and Laura Pizarro stated this explicit reference to the context of the dictatorship overtly present in their work.

13 "Ya era espantoso el cuento y la manera que estaba narrado en la novela lo hacía más pesado, terrible de digerir. Nos preguntábamos cómo cambiar esa dosis de cosas sórdidas, muy descarnadas, muy crueles, para que la gente no terminara completamente destrozada, para que no provocara el espanto si no

originally somber piece. For example, while in the novel the boys must fish with their bare hands to acquire food to survive, this same activity is hypnotically depicted with the use of puppet fish that seem to dance together with the twins' feet below a watery environment drenched in a blue light – something that seems out of a dream. Together, theatrical details such as lighting, staging, gestures, costuming, and music all radiate an aspect of fantasy and fable. I intend to show in this article that La Troppa's adaptation is more fantastical than the novel and has incorporated this more playful tone to transmit memories of trauma imitating the “unrealness” (or, a reality that is unable to be fully comprehended) experienced by children growing up during the Chilean dictatorship. Furthermore, I believe that this playful and humorous tone can be a possible affective crack to communicate memories of trauma. This is especially effective in illuminating the perspective of the newer generations to communicate with audience members that also relate in a non-primary way to trauma.

DISTANCING THROUGH SECONDARY-GENERATION AND POST-MEMORY

The study of post-memory teaches us that memories can be transmitted between generations, especially when they are powerfully charged, as is the case with memories of traumatic experiences. Secondary generations are often burdened with the inheritance of a time they do not fully understand or cannot recall well but with which they nevertheless must contend.¹⁴ Though Marianne Hirsch has established the idea that, “Post-memory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that *preceded* their birth...” (22, my emphasis), I exercise a more flexible understanding of the idea of a second-generation, broadening its reaches to include all children born under or growing up in the years of the Chilean dictatorship in addition to those who

la emoción”, In María de la Luz Hurtado's article, “Gemelos: un Prodigio de La Troppa.” *Revista Apuntes* 116 (1999).

¹⁴ Besides the work done on this topic by Marianne Hirsch (principally in her work, *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*), Susana Kaiser and Ana Ros have also carried out connected studies, especially looking at this secondary generation. Kaiser also interrogates what it means to have belongs to this in-between generation: a group of youngsters who grew up during Argentine dictatorship without full comprehension, but who directly lived these years as well. See her book, *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the “Dirty War”*. Ros focuses more on the manners of cultural production that the in-betweeners have turned to in order to make sense of dictatorship times in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina. See her book, *The Post-Dictatorship Generation in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay*.

received as inheritance the memories of their parents.^{15,16} This more ample definition of post-generations seems to be supported by Hirsch's view that, "postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection" (22). In this light, the actors in *El año en que nací*, along with their director and collaborative playwright, Lola Arias as well as the actor/co-creators of *Gemelos* (Juan Carlos Zagal, Laura Pizarro, and Jaime Lorca) belong to the secondary generation. Similarly, the child characters portrayed on stage in the two theatre pieces depict the same youth living under war or dictatorship conditions.

Children instinctively find innovative ways to cope with trauma they may directly face or that they may perceive in their surrounding environment. Moreover, "Children who have experienced complex trauma often have difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing emotions, and may have limited language for feeling states" (the National Child Traumatic Stress Network online), which points to the extreme difficulty of assigning language to feelings associated with trauma. In both theatre pieces treated here, youth attempt to overcome the inherited experiences of trauma indirectly. They do so poetically and aesthetically, appealing instead to the languages of gestures or corporality, or allegorical language for example. "Dissociation" or mental separation is another way to understand the children's response, a coping strategy which is often described as being "in a dream or some altered state that is not quite real" (the National Child Traumatic Stress Network online). Trauma experienced by children even tangentially, is difficult for them to express, and at times a simple speechlessness may accompany this overwhelmingness.

The activity of play provides one possible solution to overwhelming feelings when events evade description. In *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games Among the Shadows*, George Eisen finds that for the interred Jewish population in concentration camps during World War II, the interaction with playfulness provided a welcome distance from the very real surrounding trauma. He states, "Though it could not provide total insula-

¹⁵ Scholars like Jens Andermann, Susan Suleiman, and Cara Levey have developed a way of speaking about this blurry zone between generations as an often overlooked yet productive space for post-memory formation, evolution, and transference. Children found in between the primarily affected generation of adults directly victims of the violence of authoritarian regimes and those who have zero first-hand experience of such conditions as they were born after the end of this time, children who simultaneously and unavoidably incorporate their own memories with their parents' memories, and their lived experiences with the narrative of experiences passed on to them from their parents, are denoted as the 1.5 generation by Susan Suleiman.

¹⁶ In the play *El año en que nací*, for example, those who hold postmemories were born between 1971 and 1989. The Chilean dictatorship lasted from 1973-1990. Therefore, some were children during the dictatorship or grew up under those conditions, while others may not have personal memories until after the dictatorship has ended. Postmemories were nevertheless inherited by them through their older relatives.

tion from the surrounding reality—and perhaps was not intended to—the sight of playing children was a tonic for the persecuted population. As a form of a psychological defense mechanism, it was more than just escape from reality” (49). Though Eisen’s observation focuses on adults viewing children play, nevertheless, I wish to glean from this the ability of play to disrupt the traumatic situation. The children of the secondary generation experience the trauma of their social and historical context, though often not as directly, viscerally, or clearly as their parents. These experiences are absorbed during a time before a stable formation of identity that we associate with adulthood, as Susan Suleiman points out, and then are processed later, leading to memory reconstruction that blends history, experience, and most importantly, emotion.¹⁷ Daniela Jara explains that when children experience living with the trauma of state violence, such as that experienced during the Chilean dictatorship, “The traumatic events were overwhelming to such an extent that they seemed unreal” (62) concluding that, “Frequently, children had to cope with fear and silence without being able to rationalize their experience” (66). Imagination, play, and laughter form a style, aesthetic or way of understanding how children experience their world and can therefore process their experiences. An element of creativity and fantasy come to stand in for the inexplicable in terms of our existing world. In the same Holocaust study cited above, Eisen observes, “in many of these games the element of imagination [...] played a striking role in their psychic world” (73). Sometimes children who have experienced trauma are actually unable to process in words that experience, however they are “able to reenact these events in their play with extraordinary accuracy” (Herman 38) according to a study done by psychiatrist Lenore Terr.¹⁸

AFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: HUMOR TO JOIN GENERATIONS AND DRAW IN THE AUDIENCE

Considering then the importance of play in accessing traumatic memories for children, it can be said that the post-generation connects frequently to trauma via not purely fact-based memory, but rather more affectively. Affect allows here for a more powerful connection with the stories told. Not only do the children access their parents’ experiences through emotion, they also portray and pass on this emotionally charged narration to the audience for further consideration. As the audience participates in the performance moment of both works, there is a constant process of transmission of affect

17 See for further information on the processing techniques undertaken by the 1.5 generation: Suleiman, Susan .R. “The 1.5 Generation: Thinking about Child Survivors and the Holocaust.” *American Imago*. 59, 2002. 277-295.

18 This study is quoted in Judith Herman’s work *Trauma and Recovery*, P.38. Lenore Terr studied 20 children with documented trauma in their early lives and found them able to play-enact their experiences even when incapable of verbal expression of their trauma.

taking place. Teresa Brennan reminds us that “our thoughts are not entirely independent...the person is not affectively contained” (2), and while she references thoughts, as an extension of this idea, emotions are not contained either. In fact, the emotional states associated with humor and laughter, exist typically as a result of interaction between humans, in potential in that space between us. Supporting the interpersonal and communal trait of laughter, in a Radiolab podcast on the topic of laughter, Robert Provine points out that laughter, “is about social relationships”, adding, “When you’re alone, laughter basically disappears” (“Laughter”). Laughter is located in that in-betweenness. In the same segment, Provine claims that all that is necessary to cause laughter is laughter itself. In other words, in the case of affect surrounding humor, laughter does much of the communicating work, transmitting and reverberating between us instinctively. Humor may be one of the easier affects to observe (literally: hear) in its latent phase, as we can perceive the sound waves of laughter between us, before the sonorous input has been translated mentally into emotions that are qualified.

Affect is ever-existing between the bodies of the spectators and actors, corporally, vocally, sensorially, innately. These are emotional modes of communication that have not yet come to be cognitively identified with articulate words, yet exist. Raw impressions, or as affect theorist Brian Massumi would say, the potentiality or intensity in the air, are our first connection to an emotional moment. This raw affect is physiological, though not yet mentally or cognitively evaluated. According to Massumi, opposed to affect, “emotion is qualified intensity...it is intensity owned and recognized” (88). Before one mentally arrives to evaluate their feelings, they receive sense messages affectively, in a nearly automatic, innate manner. As the audience engages affectively with the actors and stories told on stage in a very present moment, they aid in reformulating and reconsidering the legacy of the past in the present in togetherness as an audience body. Affect connect minds and bodies, helping to put us in contact with those around us, to reconsider our surroundings in togetherness. Brennan explains, “The origin of transmitted affects is social in that these affects do not only arise within a particular person, but also come from without. They come via an interaction with other people and an environment. But they have a physiological impact” (3). The emotional reactions to the performances on stage which rely heavily on humor, playfulness, and pleasure, succeed in connecting us, when at first evaluation, trauma might appear to tear apart and distance bodies.

Distance such as that between the stage and the spectators is not necessarily an obstacle to be overcome through affect. Approaching the concept of “distance” through a different lens, the generational distance created between the most heightened experience of trauma and the secondary generation provides a necessary distance to af-

fectively choose to express these memories through the mood of humor, a mood that would often be considered too irreverent or impossible for those directly connected. This “distance” is then a difference in the experience of dictatorship by adults or children. Similarly, much of the observing audience of these pieces also experiences tangential (non-primary) distance from the epi-center of trauma. It is pertinent to remember Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* here as a reference too. Patrice Pavis explains that, “[Brecht] saw this device as capable of transforming the spectator’s approving attitude, based on identification, into a critical one.”, continuing, “The alienation-effect makes a transition from aesthetic device to ideological responsibility in the work of art” (19). This kind of distance experienced by the audience to evaluate mirrors a distancing experienced between generations, allowing for audience understanding of this chosen ludic mode of presentation.¹⁹ Finally, as these pieces are performed multiple years beyond the end of dictatorship, a temporal distance has come to settle between trauma and the present when the piece is performed. Each form of distance is not an obstacle to understanding, but rather a necessary space for humor or play to place themselves between trauma and perceiver.

TRAUMA AS UNDERSTOOD THROUGH HUMOR AND GAME PLAYING

Referring to the shocks of World War I and the indescribable nature of the trauma experienced, Susan Sontag observes that this war, “seemed to many to have exceeded the capacity for words to describe.” A journalist for the New York Times even commented that “The war has used up words” (25). This feeling of the incomprehensibility, indescribability, or inability to be artistically represented, haunts nearly every attempt to convey or communicate trauma. Perhaps the most accurate and productive representation of trauma demonstrates, “not only the immeasurability of the loss, but the imperfect structure of memory itself” (Patraka, 103). I believe it is important to acknowledge the difficulty of communicating and relating trauma, both for first hand sufferers of trauma, and for those trying to artistically communicate their own stories or the stories of others.

Theatre’s advantage to addressing trauma is that it takes a multidirectional approach to representation. Through a combination of dialogue, sound effects, musicality, corporeality, lighting, and other strategies of communication, the theatre has advantages over more uniform or one-dimensional forms of art that may try to depict or communicate

¹⁹ While a Chilean citizen not directly victimized under the regime of Pinochet may have had trouble articulating how they were affected by a society that was entirely saturated with trauma, they realize through these children’s stories and experiences that they too carry with them residual trauma, even while tangential.

trauma. One unique element made possible through the art of theatre, is the possibility to achieve affective responses from the audience, involving them in the telling and evaluating of the trauma which is never hermetically contained but which by its very nature affects those surrounding it in an endless web and which cannot be undone or completed. Trauma continued to be experienced in aftershocks as time grows, evolving, and traveling, but never being erased. Recently, the term “transgenerational trauma” has been used to explain the transmission of trauma between generations, showing how trauma moves between humans and is tangentially experienced. I contend that theatre which approaches trauma plays a key role in exploring the role of trauma moving between group members with shared interests, history, and relationships. In the case of both *El año en que nací* and *Gemelos*, I explore how playfulness and other experiences of pleasure, such as humor, are able to capture an affective state that fills what would otherwise be the void left for incomprehensibility and indescribability regarding trauma. This affective conduit to processing, remembering, and understanding trauma relies on our human abilities to relate to one another emotionally and to communicate in extra-linguistic ways, which, as Sontag has suggested, may be the most productive pathways to dealing with trauma.

The theatre provides a space of togetherness, an interaction that creates temporary community among spectators and the bodies bringing stories to life on the stage which critically assesses and addresses the evaluation of being Chilean together. Both the experience of a work of theatre and the contemplation of something humorous which is laughter-producing require a gathering of people and therefore are naturally linked to the collective. It is my contention that the sense of belonging to a nation and examining one’s citizenship do not occur in an isolated vacuum, but rather depend on our interrelationships. The experience of humor is similarly born in the in-between space as individuals and groups position themselves in concert, offering a pointed mirroring of the microcosm of the nation that the audience experiences when participating in the theatre. Finally, community is necessary in the theatre of crisis in Chile in order to consider what to do with the weight of having experienced trauma. As a group, recovery can be approached and togetherness can be conceived of outside of the theatre space, that is, as a nation.

Encountering humor alongside traumatic themes is not a new pairing. In fact, humor, playfulness, and other pleasure-producing affective experiences have a natural propensity to lightening dark moments. Humans often employ humor or turn to play when dealing with unpleasant and difficult themes.²⁰ I argue that humor is permissible

²⁰ André Breton’s 1940 *Anthology of Black Humor* collection may be the most well-known contemporary focus on this theme.

and advantageous in these particular theatre works, even surrounded by the trauma referenced mainly through dictatorship or more obliquely through war. Humor is one possible emotional approach in both instances due to a distancing effect provided temporarily, generationally, and aesthetically.²¹ Furthermore, I argue that that humor works to make space for curiosity, understanding, and draws the audience closer to the discussion on stage instead of shocking them into silence, as a more sober and somber tone might. Youth growing up under dictatorship in this way express their desire to further explore the impact of those years on them. They play and laugh to open the discussion again and allow for many possible versions to coexist, multiplying experiences and layering those emotionally instead of denying any one individual's story. Humor and play re-situate our affective responses in the face of trauma, creating an emotional knowledge that informs a renewed perspective in relation to the dictatorship years and the master narrative and officially sanctioned versions of this moment of trauma in Chile.

Play and encouragement of humor are common coping strategies in the field of trauma recovery and also are used in theatre which approaches traumatic subject matter. Laughter nearly instinctually becomes linked with traumatic subjects, as can be proven by the vast field of Holocaust Humor, or psychology studies focusing on trauma recovery such as Judith Herman's classic study in which she relates the experiences of groups of rape or PTSD survivors approaching their stories together through laughter, saying, "sometimes the most painful feelings can be detoxified by shared laughter" (229). In order to explain why humor is often present in the treatment of disturbing topics, or violence, Peter McGraw proposes what he calls the Benign Violation Theory.²² He argues that humor only occurs when three conditions are satisfied: (1) a situation is a violation,

21 An "aesthetic" distance I define as one in which reality is presented through highly filtered and fictional visualization, such as that which is crafted in *Gemelos* by employing bright, ethereal colors and by substituting conspicuous masks and puppets for real human bodies.

22 This theory is outlined in the following book: McGraw, Peter. *The Humor Code: A Global Search for What Makes Things Funny*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014. On his website, McGraw explains, "The benign violation theory builds on work by Tom Veatch and integrates existing humor theories to propose that humor occurs when and only when three conditions are satisfied: (1) a situation is violation, (2) the situation is benign, and (3) both perceptions occur simultaneously. A violation occurs when a situation threatens the way that you believe the world "ought" to be. Simply put, something seems wrong. Violations take many forms, ranging from tickling and playfighting to the violations of linguistic norms, conventions, and rules that take place in puns. There are also many ways to make a violation benign. In the paper, we tested three: 1) A violation can seem benign because of a lack of commitment to the violated norm, such as when people who are not religious laugh when a church gives away a Hummer SUV; 2) A violation can seem benign because of distance from the violation, such as when it occurs to someone else, happened long ago, or doesn't seem real; and 3) A violation can seem benign because of an alternative interpretation, as occurs in the case of playfighting and tickling. The benign violation theory suggests that primates often laugh when play fighting and tickling because both are mock attacks — laughter signals a threatening situation is okay." From, McGraw, A.P. & Warren, C. (2010). "Benign violations: Making immoral behavior funny". *Psychological Science*, 21, 1141-1149.

(2) the situation is benign, and (3) both perceptions occur simultaneously. This means, the slightly disturbing or morally wrong situation is presented, yet, there is enough distance present for the violation to be able to evoke laughter. Of the many examples given in his work, one should suffice to illustrate the concept here. McGraw explains that, “tickling involves violating someone’s physical space in a benign way. People can’t tickle themselves—a phenomenon that baffled Aristototele—because it isn’t a violation. Nor will people laugh if a creepy stranger tries to tickle them, since nothing about that is benign” (11). While McGraw’s theory bears resemblance to the traditional incongruity theory (that which is incongruous or doesn’t make logical sense strikes us as funny), the way in which the idea of distance is framed in relation to humor is of particular relevance here.²³ In different ways, the humor that comes about during each performance can be seen to create benign violations. *Gemelos* makes the terror of war safe for viewing by creating a visual lens of the toy-like, placing the horrific events in an oneiric and fantastical world, instead of using realism. *El año en que nací* safely distances the audience from the trauma by highlighting the temporal distance between the dictatorship and time of presentation, both years and generations later, and also by conspicuously creating metatheatrical moments which highlight the falsity of the reenactments. Humorous and playful affective modes of communication are chosen by both Chilean groups here to dialogue with audiences on the topic of the lingering horror of dictatorship by “making safe” each trauma experience, which can be seen to work following the Benign Violation set up by McGraw.

The laughter and humor circulating through both productions depends closely on the affective relationship built with the audience as they observe and feel the experiences of childhood. Knowledge or understanding can be created and solidified through playing games and communicating through humor and laughter. Catherine Larson observes that, “The games represented symbolically in the theatre allow authors to explore the social world and expose some of its most profound problems” (17) revealing the power of playing to unbind knots surrounding tense subject matter. In both pieces, humor and game playing function as epistemological approaches to narrating and communicating trauma. That is to say, the experience of play and humor allows for a way of knowing and understanding trauma that I argue is both natural and effective when

²³ “The Incongruity theory can be traced to Francis Hutcheson’s *Reflections Upon Laughter* from 1750” (3), says Simon Critchley in his succinct and thorough study on humor. (Critchley, Simon. *On Humour*. London: Routledge, 2002). John Morreall believes however that James Beattie is the first to have described the concept and to have used the term ‘incongruous’ to do so in 1779, while pointing out that Aristotle hinted at the idea much earlier without using the precise phrasing. Many other philosophers of humor have described variations on this theory, such as Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Søren Kierkegaard. For more on this theory, see: Morreall, John, “[Philosophy of Humor](#)”, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.).

perceived by secondary generation sufferers of trauma. Finally, as Sonja Julia Wandelt maintains, laughter provides a subversive historiography by confronting official state history with personal, intimate, family traumatic memories and experiences of the past (86). Alternate stories are offered as new perspectives on the master narrative, tipping over “officially sanctioned knowledge” of that truly came to pass during the years of dictatorship, so that the audience might examine it again. Spectators are asked to consider a certain kind of liminal and alternate memory, that of youth, of that which is supposed to have come to pass in one distinct light.

GENERATIONAL PERSPECTIVES FACILITATE LAUGHTER: *EL AÑO EN QUE NACÍ*

While playing games of their youth, nostalgically recovering their naive perspective as children, or by swiftly and surprisingly juxtaposing the very historic with the very quotidian, the characters in *El año en que nací* work with techniques that tell a complex story of searching the present for a truth about the past. This theatre production does not intend to merely document trauma, but rather to raise a knowledge-inspiring and productive curiosity and to create an original posture from the perspective of the youngest and current generation towards the legacy of the Chilean dictatorship. How and what do children and young adults remember of those years of darkness? What is passed from adults living under systems of control and fear, on to their offspring, even and perhaps especially unknowingly? Does the cycle of trauma ever end, as the audience witnesses 20 and 30 somethings in *El año en que nací* continuing to struggle with the legacy of the dictatorship in the present of 2012?

What playwright Lola Arias deems “remakes” are moments in which the actors re-enact a scenario from the imagination or childhood, often using techniques of dress-up and embodying others in mini-theatre pieces.²⁴ One character, Soledad, holsters a banana as if it is the gun that her militant mother carried during the Pinochet years and for which she was eventually arrested. Of course, the clash between the appearance of a banana and the idea of a metal instrument of death (a pistol) cause laughter from the audience. Another character, Fernanda, constantly rides a bike around stage, entering and exiting by bike, the mode of transportation most used by her father in his own youth during Chile of the coup. This playfulness on stage causes a nostalgic and knowing smile from the audience members who associate the riding of a bike with simpler times or their own youth. These meta-theatrical moments of play-acting within the play itself reflect much of the child-like nature of the narrating character when they observed this scene in their past or when adults related it to them. The remake is playful, ironic, and

²⁴ Lola Arias explains the concept of the remake briefly [on her webpage](#).

might be likened to children playing dress up, imitating what they envision real adult life to be like. Remakes access emotional truth, even if factual, historical truth about a very specific incident may never be known. Many moments of humor emerge from the juxtaposition that an adult audience can see in these moments when comparing the child-like interpretation of the years of dictatorship to their present-day knowledge. That is to say, the distance provided between childhood and adulthood, and between the years of dictatorship and today, are both necessary distances to make the presented scenarios benign and therefore foment humor in spite of (or perhaps because of?) small transgressions, or violations, according to McGraw's theory.

One remake scene shows a crashing toy truck and a toy airplane that collides with a table, which are projected on a large screen on stage, filmed live on stage to one side. This scene explores the many ways that one character, Viviana, was told her father, who was absent from her young, life had died. The lens of a child's imagination creates this scene. Viviana has been told so many versions of her father's death that each seems possible, no matter how ridiculous or dramatic. The child envisions toys colliding, but cannot fathom any of the grim, violent truths surrounding the concept of "death". The reconstruction of a memory or of an experience of the past unavoidably blends fiction and "truth", a quality that Ricardo de Querol sees uniting the literary production of the "hijos de la dictadura", or children of the dictatorship. De Querol observes that in their narratives, "the border between the autobiographical and fiction is very hazy."²⁵ Other techniques that are silly and playful are found within the remake and allow the audience to access to the child's eye view. The incorporation of toys or figurines, playing dress up in oversized adult clothing, imitating adults via corporal gestures, mimicking ironically the language or sayings of adults, and creating drawings of family members are some of the various moments in which the recuperated perspective of children is incorporated. These moments of childhood are remembered by adults who still struggle to understand the past, but who pull that past forward into the present, anchored by being able to reenact memories through play. Playing is often seen as a way in which children rehearse for, test, and practice for the real world. However, in this case, playing allows an audience member a way to return to the past, rehearsing the moment of childhood retrospectively and inquiring into the state of the world then and how it affected the youngest generation. Play is a pleasurable mode of interaction, enjoyable because of the inherent safety, even when engaging with what would be deemed "risky subjects".²⁶

25 Original text: "la frontera entre lo autobiográfico y la ficción es muy difusa." De Querol, Ricardo. "Los niños de la represión chilena llenan los silencios: Los jóvenes criados durante la dictadura de Pinochet ya son una destacada generación literaria. Comparten una reconstrucción de la memoria entre lo íntimo y lo político" *El País*. July 13, 2015.

26 Morreall, John, "Philosophy of Humor", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2013 Edition),

Finally, the acts of play in which the characters on stage engage highlight the natural element of the theatre that permits for “playing” as a mode of artistry, practice, rehearsal, and testing alternate possibilities, thus revealing the cracks and weaknesses in what we might otherwise deem as “truth”.²⁷

Approaching the experience of the years of dictatorship here playfully makes perfect sense upon realizing that the performance’s guides (the actor/characters) were mere children during the Pinochet years. The spectator may feel the environment lighten as the actors play games and certainly feels as if they are taking part in playing with the actors, all the while aware that the dictatorship lingers nearby, woven throughout all of the storytelling, no matter how tangentially. The piece does not pretend to narrate the darkest and more violent of the tragedies of dictatorship (torture, disappearance, censorship, repression), but rather look into the emotional legacy of dictatorship on a generation, and over the long-term, on society. The seemingly mundane begins to be revealed as significant. For example, Pablo explains that he was named after his godfather, Pinochet’s lawyer, or, Ítalo mentions how his family struggled economically in 1984 when he was born, the same year that Pinochet constructed a mansion in the outskirts of Santiago. Subtle forms of violence, such as covered-up disappearances, being forced into exile, every-day fear, and lack of safety on the streets, begin to take on star roles. Minor disturbances and forms of oppression, such as growing up without the presence of one parent, or contending with a confusing double identity, begin to reveal how they form a part of the fabric of the social trauma endured by the Chilean populace during the dictatorship.

Additionally, an array of actors representing differing social spheres and political affiliations have been chosen to portray themselves, from those whose parents were perpetrators, kidnapping for the military, as well as those whose parents were kidnapped and disappeared. Some actors’ parents were neutral bystanders during the dictatorship, refusing to get involved in any way, while others grew up with parents that expressed strong political leanings or whose jobs necessitated certain political leanings. These 11 actors truly represent the array of ideologies in Chilean society during the dictatorship years, as they tug their parents’ stories onto the stage through their bodies. The varie-

Edward N. Zalta (ed.). In the segment entitled “Humor as Play, Laughter as Play Signal” Morreall claims that, “the play activities that seem the most fun are those in which we exercise our abilities in unusual and extreme ways, yet in a safe setting.”

²⁷ The idea of play as closely linked to the nature and foundation of performance art and theatre has been revisited and reframed by many theorists, such as Victor Turner or Richard Schechner. A philosopher, Bruce Wilshire says in his 1982 study, *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*, that “theatre is play which is earnest” signaling the close bond between the two acts.

ty of perspectives allowed to mingle in this same time and space (children of: military officials, “subversives”, poor, rich, exiles, leftists, communists, Catholics, etc.) provides openings for all audience members to find a space in which every spectator will find something relatable. As a spectator, I naturally and unavoidably undertake the task of inserting myself into the provided narrative more easily, due to this open and inclusive atmosphere, augmented by the playful and the jovial. It is then left up to the audience member to complete the tales told with their own evaluation, which I argue is more easily attainable due to a strong affective communication.

At the end of the performance in a scene titled “El juego de la democracia”, or, the game of democracy, the actors narrate the years from the end of the dictatorship onward into the post-dictatorship period. They each offer a piece of this historical time-line, followed by a personal anecdote of a moment marked by that same time in their individual life. For example, Jorge proclaims, “2006. Bachelet wins, Pinochet dies. I buy myself a house and remain in debt for twenty years.”²⁸ Delivery of these lines are key to understanding the humorous tone. They are spoken in a dry and matter of fact way, mixing the political and the personal unexpectedly. The way in which their small offering of a personal anecdote alongside a major historical happening seems to hit the crowd with a slightly ironic tickle. That is to say, the audience is amused by the juxtaposition or intersection of two so different planes of information. This is a clear example of a playful humor as brought about by the unexpected or the incongruous. In these examples, personal time and historical time intersect to find themselves meeting at the plane that is unexpected and new, therefore, humorous as the serious and quotidian mingle. Moreover, by manifestly connecting the personal and the political, the affective communication able to be achieved through this humor of the unexpected pairing is emphasized.

As Arias reflected on the humor and playful tone of the performance in an interview with *La Tercera* newspaper, she stated, “It was very important that it was not a dark, propagandistic theatre piece about the dictatorship, but rather that it had the humor and confidence with which our generation treats the theme. Humor seems to me to be a very corrosive element to face horror and tragedy, an element that sometimes makes you reflect much more than pain.”²⁹ For the playwright, a playful tone was nothing short of intentional and intricately woven into the telling of tales of living through and now

28 Original text: “2006. Gana Bachelet, muere Pinochet. Yo me compro una casa y quedo endeudado por veinte años.”

29 Original text: ““Era muy importante que no fuera una obra sobre la dictadura oscura, panfletaria, sino que tuviera el humor y el desparpajo con la que nuestra generación toca el tema. El humor me parece un elemento super corrosivo para enfrentar el horror y la tragedia, un elemento que a veces te hace reflexionar mucho más que el dolor.” Echeverría, Estefanía. “Debuta El Año en que Nací, la obra sobre la historia personal de Chile bajo Pinochet”, *La Tercera*, January 20, 2012.

remembering the dictatorship. Admittedly, there is a difficulty in accessing the dictatorship period and conveying the lasting impact of the time period to others. Thus, Arias suggests that the treatment of such horror with humor might bridge a divide, break down walls, and allow for even more complex reflection than pain does. The term “reflection” implies a sort of looking back, creating temporal distance while remembering, and considering or evaluating again. Such a temporal distance I believe is bridged with humor for this group, re-envisioning a secondary understanding of the dictatorship.

In *El año en que nací*, the past, including memories and history, is continually recycled. Through modeling play and ironic juxtapositions, the audience gains knowledge through feeling. Thus, they are brought into a complex dialogue about the lasting emotional impact of these years of dictatorship on Chilean society. *El año en que nací* reveals powerfully the unendingness of dictatorship as an experience and the activity of grappling that has been inherited by the second generation.

AESTHETICS OF TRAUMA FICTIONALIZATION: *GEMELOS*

When speaking about the personal connections between the troupe and the piece, member Juan Carlos Zagal stated that they wished to capture the troupe members’ personal feelings and experiences of being children who had lived through and during the dictatorship in Chile. In large part, La Troppa’s recognizably unique aesthetic achieves an immersive child’s perspective. As Carola Oyarzún explains, “The aesthetic design of La Troppa gives us an unforgettable spectrum of scenes of childhood, of the rawness, the optimism, the goodness; all of them have touched fibers of our sensibility that one rarely feels, and because of this, they remain for a long time in our memory.”³⁰ The entire piece is steeped in a fable-like environment that resembles what might happen if toys came to life. A small and ornate theatre box is set in the middle of the larger dark stage. The large stage space frames the small “toy theatre”. At times, characters are contained within the space of the mini-theatre, and in other moments, they escape these confines and make use of the larger surrounding stage. The grandmother’s house is represented by the main toy theatre compartment, while the surroundings represent the rest of the village, the forest, and neighboring houses. As intricate as a jewelry box, the ‘toy theatre’ is sub-divided into multiple spaces and contains wings that open and close, different windows and moving parts, creating a highly dynamic space to frame and focus the storytelling that takes place within it. The miniature, compact, magically unfolding and

30 Original text: “La propuesta estética de La Troppa nos deja una gama inolvidable de cuadros de la infancia, de la crudeza, del optimismo, de la bondad; todos ellos han tocado fibras de nuestra sensibilidad que pocas veces se sienten, por lo mismo, persisten por largo tiempo en nuestra memoria.” Oyarzún, Carola. “El talento creativo de La Troppa”. *Taller de Letras*. No. 37: 193-199. 2005. P. 196.

transforming qualities of this unique staging space assist in focusing attention, drawing the audience hypnotically into the tale.³¹ Inside the theatre box, the actors are dressed to both appear physically like puppets, and also perform actions in gestures that are marionette and doll-like. In fact, in a similar vein of representation through the use of miniatures in *El año en que nací*, scenes that are exceedingly difficult to deal with or more violent often recur to the use of toys, figurines, dolls, or actual puppets, handled by the characters on stage, with no attempt to hide the fact that the twin boy characters are operating the toy figures as the puppeteers. It is worth noting that a purposeful blurring between character and performer/actor takes place. In these moments where small puppets are used, their puppeteers are the characters from within the inner-narrative. This emphasizes the characters' decision to recall or interact with trauma through the de-humanizing filter of puppetry, distancing the difficult.

For example, when village boys cruelly kick and abuse their wretched and pathetic friend, Labio Leporino, wooden mannequins with articulated limbs are operated by the twins to portray the violence carried out on their friend in a more indirect, playful light. Similarly, miniature dolls and figures are used as the performance closes and the boys' mother returns to the grandmother's house with her new husband, a military general, on a motorcycle. Upon arriving, a bomb falls and kills the two, in the front yard of the grandmother. Here, stage notes describe, "Twin I appears with a miniature motorcycle with side-car in which the mother rides with a baby in her arms and a soldier, Twins I and II make the noise of the motor with their voices and also do the voice of the mother."³² It is almost as if the two boys are playing with toy cars, and suddenly, when a bomb falls, "Twin II grabs the motorcycle with his hand and flips it over."³³ This play-acting creates a conspicuous moment of ludic behavior on stage, which creates distance between the violence and the performance moment, softening the reality through the fantasy as portrayed in a child's mind.

In a separate moment, the twins take part in role-playing with their grandmother. The school officials come to their home to inquire into the absence of the twins from school. Knowing the official will come, the twins rehearse an act with their grandmother to cleverly avoid school, stating they learn all they need on their own at home. The

³¹ This mesmerizing experience of focusing on the small, delicate, toy-like stage set again inside the large stage space like Russian nesting dolls, is explained in the context of the toy-theatre phenomenon by John Bell as he deems the toy theatre, "a giant spectacle on a small scale." in the article, "With Toy Theaters, Small Is Beautiful" by Gary Shapiro. *The New York Sun*. June 14, 2005.

³² Original text: "Aparece Gemelo I con una motocicleta con side-car en miniatura en donde viene la madre con un bebé en los brazos y un soldado, Gemelo I y II hacen el ruido del motor con sus voces y también la voz de la Madre."

³³ Original text: "Gemelo II coge la motocicleta con la mano y la voltea."

twins script what they and their grandmother will say, claiming one is deaf and the other blind, and that both suffer from psychological trauma. Putting an end to their practice role-play, the Abuela commands, “Enough, cut it out with this little game, and turn off that monotonous music. I’ll save myself for that moment.”³⁴ indicating the moment of performance is over. This meta-theatrical scene shows both the twins’ talent for pretending, and the degree to which play is incorporated into their understanding of their surroundings.

The aesthetic used to portray the characters heightens the contrived and artificial appearance, likening them to toys; the twins don oversized hats and whimsical, matching jackets, while all of the characters’ faces maintain exaggerated expressions (a scowl is plastered on grandmother’s face while the twins at times purse their lips, or hold their mouths open for extended periods of time). Also, the use of half-masked worn by the actors links their exaggerated and twisted appearance to the clown-like or grotesque. The comically ugly or repulsive, the distorted and twisted, the close relationship between laughter and misery: these are all aspects of the grotesque that we can observe in *Gemelos* and which bring the laughable and the painful into closer contact.³⁵ In grotesque theatre pieces, the characters themselves infrequently take part in the laughter, but rather laughter is restrained to the off-stage space, something the audience partakes in as they observe the painfully comic unfold onstage. This is certainly the case in *Gemelos*— the twins take themselves incredibly seriously, and the grandmother maintains an unbending harsh attitude throughout. The audience may appreciate their twisted nature, even smiling while observing the cruel treatment of the grandmother towards the children, but the characters themselves are oblivious to this darkly comic attitude. To understand how spectators could feel amused, light hearted, smile, or even laugh, a description of the aesthetic of presentation of the grandmother’s “cruelty” will help to reinforce this. The grandmother is an overly wicked, fairytale-like caricature of a witch. Simultaneously cruel and also strangely caring towards her grandsons, she is a curious contradiction and aesthetically she can be seen as a grotesque figure. I contend that the grotesque aesthetic which works to distance the piece from the audience’s reality, allowing for pleasure and enjoyment to be experienced, is a privilege the audience alone enjoys. All the while, the characters stuck within the world of the theatre piece may only experience misery.

34 Original text: “Ya, córtela con este jueguito, y apaga esa música machacante. Me guardaré para ese momento.”

35 For further reading on the characteristics of the grotesque, see the following two sources: Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966. Thomson, Philip J. *The Grotesque*. London: Methuen, 1972. And on the role of masks as they intersect with the comic: *Glasgow, R. D. V. Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy*. London: Associated University Presses, 1995.

The twin brothers also spend much of the performance working through exercises, or games of strengthening themselves, corporally and emotionally. They begin to perform these hardening “games” in order to withstand the cruel treatment of their grandmother. They take turns hitting each other so the pain will feel less; they stay outside in the cold to be able to stand the cold of the house and their lack of appropriate clothing. Eventually the games develop from physical exercises to strengthen their bodies into those which develop emotionally hardening. The twins learn to kill animals and not care, in order to not suffer in other emotional ways. They have experienced emotional pain in the separation from their mother and family and they would be in danger of again experiencing this at the conclusion of the performance when they separate their identical bodies and part ways, if not for the rehearsal of emotional numbness. It is odd and striking to the audience which observes that the language and framing of “playing” is used in these contexts of pain. A juxtaposition is viscerally present: spectators are aware that the twins are but young boys and are engaged in playing together, but simultaneously realize their depth of mental maturity that does not match their physical age, as they prepare for emotional pain by unlearning how to feel. In these moments of “cruelty practice”, a rubber chicken is used on stage to represent the recently strangled bird, and a similar overly-artificial and stuffed cat is used to portray a cat they kill. The utter falsity and fakeness that is exaggerated by such hideous, campy props brings the death they represent and a silly irreverence into contact. Once again, an aesthetic of toys nested into the context of merely “playing games” allows for what would amount to a truly heinous story to be perceived in a silly, light-hearted mode by the audience. Finally, these hardening games which the twins rehearsed prepare them for the end of the piece in which they must go separate ways and live separate lives, the hardest trial they have had to endure during the war years. Thus, turning the practice for separation into a game has lessened the emotional and physical blow of this culminating moment.

CONCLUSIONS

Distance between violence and trauma and the experience of its portrayal on stage is shown in *El año en que nací* via generational distance underscored on stage by the character’s insistence on their quality of secondary-character generation. In *Gemelos*, the poetic of play establishes a distance which makes possible the experience of a traumatic moment perceived by children. The world of fiction and fable, the visual and gestural insistence on falsity and feigning are exemplary of this aesthetic. In the case of both performances examined here, distancing violence and trauma from the gathered audience enables a lightened emotional atmosphere. The lightened mood can be characterized as humorous and fits the description given by the theory of benign violation. In other

words, though these scenes defy the morally acceptable or normal, nevertheless the altered emotional context makes them safe to interact with.

However, these pieces also differ in many important ways. One (*Gemelos*) takes an entirely fictional world aesthetic, while the other (*El año en que nació*) is distinctly based in reality harnessed by documents. *Gemelos* also jumps much further back in time, placing abuses and traumas associated with the World War II era in Europe in conversation with the human rights abuses in the later 20th century in Chile. *El año en que nació* remains firmly planted in the present of the production (2012), and rooted at that point, questions the dictatorship past but also offers jumps towards the yet unknown future, especially in the final scene titled “El futuro”. In this scene, the characters toss a Chilean coin during each performance to determine if the left or right will win in the next election, but they end by sadly declaring they will all shortly be killed by another earthquake before we can know the outcome of the election. This insertion of fate and act of guessing about the future also leave lingering feelings about the ability to know the past.

As Lola Arias indicated and was quoted earlier, humor and play may be the modes of communicating about the trauma of dictatorship most common to the subsequent generations, those of the 1.5 generation and second-generation. In conclusion, both pieces examined here have in common a treatment of the context of the years of the Chilean dictatorship and approach that period through various manners of playful, game-induced tones that often provoke laughter, if not on stage, then certainly in the gathered audience. Moreover, these works approach the common context from the perspective of children, observing the world of adults and the fear, trauma, pain, suffering and general state of crisis. By employing both a child’s perspective and a playful tone, these post-dictatorship pieces reformulate and reinterpret memories of living under dictatorship: violence, terror, confusion, trauma, loss.

I conclude that the affective experience of each performance which relies principally on engaging us with play and humor, helps the gathered audience to reconsider the traumatic events of the past in togetherness. Cecilia Sosa notices how the Argentine version of *El año en que nació* (*Mi vida después*) works as, “an encounter that stages the uncanny pleasures of being plural in grief.” and goes on to suggest that the piece, “proposes not only a vehicle for addressing trauma but also a way to transform it.”, as a community which the microcosm of the theatre creates, imitating nation (“*Mi vida después: Non-Kin Affects in Post-Dictatorial Argentina*”). *Gemelos* and *El año en que nació* are novel as they consider a more complex way of emotionally processing and communicating trauma than simple melancholy. Laughter and play establish an affective state with which we can relate to one another and create a sense of community, sharing a past history instead of looking back at what may have separated and distanced various factions. The

humor and insistence on play does not shock, it does not assert superiority of one party over another, it does not evade difficult situations, it does not provide escapism from reality, nor does it rebel against authority or resist a higher power. Rather, we disarm tensions to reconsider the oft-repeated history of the dictatorship. Against all preconceived notions, the audience gains new information and forms of knowledge as memories, samples, and moments are re-presented on stage.

The memories depicted in both works are recuperated as both the actors and the audience members reach back to the past, remembering events, people, and interactions, but unavoidably weaving those “truths” of their past with the emotion of the experiences in a tone which allows for an affective transmission of memory. The past, including memories and history, is continually recycled. A new present is created at the moment of performance as the audience focuses on the second generation’s affective relationship with the dictatorship. While often considered the secondary characters in the narrative of the dictatorship, they struggle to find their place, in this often confusing, contradictory history in which “truth” and “fact” are impossible terms to grapple with.

BIBLIOGRAFÍA

- Andermann, Jens. "Expanded Fields: Postdictatorship and the Landscape." *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies: Travesia*, 21:2, 165-187, 2012.
- Arias, Lola. *Mi vida después y otros textos*. Reservoir Books, 2016.
- Arias, Lola. Website.
- Brennan, Teresa. *The Transmission of Affect*. Cornell University Press, 2004.
- Breton, André. *Anthology of Black Humor*. 1940. City Lights Publishers, 2001.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. John Hopkins University Press, 2016.
- Castro, Isabel. "Radar L.A. Review: 'El Año en Que Nací' At The LATC." 2013.
- Critchley, Simon. *On Humour*. Routledge, 2002.
- De la Luz Hurtado, María. "Gemelos: un Prodigio de La Troppa." *Revista Apuntes*, 116, 1999.
- De Querol, Ricardo. "Los niños de la represión chilena llenan los silencios: Los jóvenes criados durante la dictadura de Pinochet ya son una destacada generación literaria. Comparten una reconstrucción de la memoria entre lo íntimo y lo político." *El país*, July 13, 2015.
- Echeverría, Estefanía. "Debuta *El Año en que Nací*, la obra sobre la historia personal de Chile bajo Pinochet." *La Tercera*, January 20, 2012.
- Eisen, George. *Children and Play in the Holocaust: Games among the Shadows*. University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.
- El año en que nació/The year I was born*. Play Program, 2014.
- Gaudichaud, Franck. "Chile: 30 años después del golpe de Estado: Retrato de una memoria desgarrada." *Politis*, Paris, September, 2003, Translated by Laura Abad for the journal *Rebelión*.
- Glasgow, R. D. V. *Madness, Masks, and Laughter: An Essay on Comedy*. Associated University Presses, 1995.
- Graham-Jones, Jean. "Lo real no siempre se rehace de la misma manera: Mi vida después y El año en que nació de Lola Arias." *Revista Apuntes de Teatro*, Number 138, 2014.
- Gutierrez, Melissa. "*El año en que nació*: la obra que investiga la vida de los padres durante la dictadura." *The Clinic*, January, 2013.
- Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence- from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 2015.
- Hernández, Paola. "Biografías escénicas: *Mi vida después* de Lola Arias." *Latin American Theatre Review*, Fall 2011, 115-128.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *Family Frames: Photography, Narrative and Postmemory*. Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Hutcheson, Francis. *Reflections Upon Laughter*. The Dublin Journal, 1725.

- J.L.F. "Gemelos, la obra más exitosa del teatro chileno reciente, regresa al Teatro Municipal de Las Condes." *La Tercera*, November, 2012.
- Jara, Daniela. "The aftermath of violence: The Post-coup second generation in Chile." *Peripheral Memories: Public and Private Forms of Experiencing and Narrating the Past*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2012.
- Kaiser, Susana. *Postmemories of Terror: A New Generation Copes with the Legacy of the "Dirty War"*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
- Kayser, Wolfgang. *The Grottesque in Art and Literature*. McGraw-Hill, 1966.
- Kristof, Agota. *Le grand cahier*. Seuil, 1986.
- La Troppa. *Gemelos*. 1999.
- Larson, Catherine. *Games and Play in the Theatre of Spanish American Women*. Bucknell University Press, 2004.
- "Laughter." *Radiolab*, Season 4, episode 1, February, 2008.
- Letelier, Jorge. "El punto de inflexión de Teatrocinema: "Nos sentimos más sueltos, más lúdicos, más risueños"." *El mostrador*, January, 2015.
- Levey, Cara. "Documenting Diaspora, Diasporising Memory: Memory and Mediation among Chilean and Uruguayan Hijxs del exilio." *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, December 2021, pp. 1-15.
- Martin, Carol. *Theatre of the Real*. Palgrave, 2013.
- Massumi, Brian. "The Autonomy of Affect." *Cultural Critique*, no. 31, 1995, pp. 83-109.
- McGraw, Peter. *The Humor Code: A Global Search for What Makes Things Funny*. Simon & Schuster, 2014.
- McGraw, A.P. & Warren, C. "Benign violations: Making immoral behavior funny." *Psychological Science*, 21, 2010, pp. 1141-1149.
- "*Mi Vida Después*': Cómo Enfrentar la Historia Familiar a Partir de los Recuerdos." January 14, 2011.
- Morreall, John, "Philosophy of Humor", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Spring 2013 Edition, Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
- Oyarzún, Carola. "El talento creativo de La Troppa." *Taller de Letras*, No. 37, 2005, pp. 193-199.
- Patraka, Vivian M. "Spectacular Suffering: Performing Presence, Absence and Witness at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum." *Performance and Cultural Politics*, Routledge, 1996, pp. 89-107.
- Pavis, Patrice. *Dictionary of the Theatre: Terms, Concepts, and Analysis*. Translated by Christine Shantz. University of Toronto Press, 1998.
- Ros, Ana. *The Post-dictatorship Generation in Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Collective Memory and Cultural Production*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.
- Shapiro, Gary. "With Toy Theaters, Small Is Beautiful." *The New York Sun*, June 14, 2005.

- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding The Pain of Others*. Picador, 2003.
- Sosa, Cecilia. "Mi vida después: Non-Kin Affects in Post-Dictatorial Argentina."
- Stern, Steve. *Reckoning with Pinochet: The Memory Question in Democratic Chile, 1989-2006*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Suleiman, Susan. "The 1.5 Generation: Thinking about Child Survivors and the Holocaust." *American Imago*. 59, 2002, pp. 277-295.
- Teatro a mil. Website.
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network online.
- Thomson, Philip J. *The Grotesque*. Methuen, 1972.
- Wandelt, Sonja Julia. *The Translation from Memory to Postmemory: The Mother-Daughter Dialogue in Post-Holocaust Literature*. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008, Doctoral Thesis.
- Wilshire, Bruce. *Role Playing and Identity: The Limits of Theatre as Metaphor*. Indiana University Press, 1982.
- Zambra, Alejandro. *Formas De Volver a Casa*. Anagrama, 2011.