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Effigies of Return in Spanish Republican Exile Theatre and Performance Cultures

This chapter deals with a particular stage of exile, that of return, ranging from the ways in which theatre was used to deal with its perceived impossibility, through theatrical responses to the experience of repatriation and the journey home, to recent reception and re-presentation of exile theatre on the Spanish stage. However, instead of just seeing theatre as a mode of representing exile and return, as in the case studies traced earlier by José Sainz and Francisca Montiel, there will be greater focus here on the way in which it presents, embodies and performs different stages of exile, constructing a space of encounter in which the limits of experience are inscribed and incorporated into the bodies of actors negotiating a theatre space that is somehow shared with an audience. Thus, though the material discussed will contribute to the study of how exile has been represented in literature, art and film, reflecting on the epistemological and ontological implications of these representations, it will also provide grounds on which to interrogate the assumptions underlying such an approach: namely, that literature, art and film (and within this theatre as 'literary' or 'dramatic' text) can only aim to represent,

that their only status is as attempted 'places of memory' that might be considered to stand for a particular individual or group experience and, if recovered from the archive, stand in either metaphorically or synecdochically for national history or memory (Cándida Smith 2002: 11). The examples studied here could, on the whole, be approached from such a perspective, and have been to varying degrees by other critics. However, these cases can also be treated as documentary traces of the performance of exile and return, through focus on their status as orature and on their performativity, on the way in which they open a space for remembrance, providing windows onto environments of memory.

The main theoretical frame for this chapter is, then, that of contemporary theatre studies, in particular the notion of the 'effigy' developed by Joseph Roach from performance ethnography to account for the relationship between performance and memory. Performance's characteristic of standing in for something that preexists it, however unrecoverable that something might be, is what leads it to mimic notions and understandings of memory, in its perceived nostalgia for authenticity and origin. From such a perspective the question underlying the largely testimonial focus of research into Spanish Republican Exile writing – of the extent to which an adequate representation or performance of exile or return is possible – is decentred, for the question of adequacy depends on notions of origins and authenticity which are always recognized as illusory in performance. Indeed, for Roach:

> Genealogists resist histories that attribute purity of origin to any performance. They have to take into account the give and take of joint transmissions, posted in the past, arriving in the present, delivered by living messengers, speaking in tongues not entirely their own. Orature is an art of listening as well as speaking; improvisation is an art of collective memory as well as invention; repetition is an act of re-creation as well as restoration. (1996: 286)

Once performance is seen as a process that always contains excess, difference and supplement, through the links it sets up with the bodily, with the environments and individuals in which it takes place, the whole question of adequacy becomes more problematic. Instead, a genealogy of performance has to take into account the multiple media which construct and facilitate its mode of communication, its presence in 'living messengers' who repeat and restore behaviour whilst at the same time inventing and re-creating it.

After a brief discussion of the genealogy and operation of the effigy in Roach, I will go on to consider a series of relatively well-known effigies of return: Max Aub's representation of return in his series of *La vuelta* plays, which have often been read in conjunction with his real experience of return to Spain in 1969; the function of returning exiles' bodies as surrogates during the transition to democracy; and the creation of effigies of exile and return in recent peninsular theatrical culture, focusing principally on the example of Jerónimo López Mozo's *El olvido está lleno de memoria* (2002) in which he imagined the apocryphal return of the actor Edmundo Barbero to the Madrid stage in 1980. The first case study addresses the strategies adopted in exile to deal with the impossibility of return, as proposed in Sainz's chapter, going beyond testimonial readings of Aub's work to identify the traces it contains of group environments of memory. The second deals with the experience of return, both from the perspective of repatriated exile theatre practitioners and of the authorities and communities in Spain. Whilst it attends to the use of prominent figures of exile, such as Rafael Alberti or – as explored in the previous chapter – María Casares, to represent a suturing or re-membering of the national body, it also shows the ways in which these bodies resist incorporation, pointing to the excessive supplementarity and liminality of the effigy that is performed in López Mozo's play. Each will involve slightly different perceptions of the function of the effigy, but it

will be argued that all ultimately open a space for memory that simultaneously exceeds the more overtly recognized function.

For Joseph Roach performance 'discloses an urgent but often disguised passion: the desire to communicate physically with the past, a desire that roots itself in the ambivalent love of the dead' (1998: 23). His ground-breaking study of circum-Atlantic performance, *Cities of the Dead* (1996), examines 'how culture reproduces and re-creates itself by a process that can be best described by the word *surrogation*', drawing on a wide range of theories from performance ethnography (above all Turner 1982 and Schechner 1985; 2003) to Derridean deconstruction. For him 'the doomed search for originals by continuously auditioning stand-ins – is the most important of the many meanings that users intend when they say the word performance' (1996: 3). Roach's recognition of the importance of surrogation both for performance and for cultural history leads him to construct a genealogy of performance based on the different types and functions of effigies encountered in the urban centres that fed and thrived upon the circum-Atlantic migration of peoples thrown up by the slave trade, interrogating the ways in which these effigies contributed to both construct and legitimate and deconstruct and multiply concepts of identity and community. In *Cities* he works through a number of different definitions of the effigy (33–41): as a noun, the first is a sculptural or pictorial likeness that is used to stand in for a dead person and the second a crudely fabricated image of a person, commonly one that is destroyed in his or her stead. Thus, an effigy is both a 'surrogate', the 'monstrous double' found in René Girard's *Violence and the Sacred* (1981), and a means of reincorporation. It is a way of engaging with the past through embodiment in order either to maintain continuity or to differentiate. However, before incorporation can take place and become legitimated as a place of memory, Roach observes that there is always the liminal, in-between space of the dying, of difference, of the liminoid, and that this

can be traced through exploration of how performance is imbricated with its social milieu, as the contributors to this volume on 'Stages of Exile' have all endeavoured to do.

As a verb, meanwhile, to effigy means to evoke an absence, to body something forth, especially something from a distant past. Like the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, then, and the dialectical image in Walter Benjamin, the 'effigy' both recognizes and fills a need in the present and attempts to negotiate and make a space for the past. It is a process that 'fills by surrogation a vacancy created by the absence of an original', the most powerful of which, Roach suggests, are fashioned from flesh in performance (36). In a later article he further develops this notion of performance as related to the need for embodiment – to flesh out past words and stand in for past corpses – through identification of effigies with stages in an 'erotics of memory' that attempts to 'preserve a sense of the relationship with the past by making physical contact with the dead' (1998: 29).

In this chapter I will draw on the different notions of the effigy put forward by Roach, and look at the interplay between them, as a play between places and environments of memory. This liminal, in-between space underlies my approach to the documentary traces selected for analysis. For whereas for the Annales school and Pierre Nora (1989), a division is drawn between literate and oral societies, so that the former are distinguished by their propensity for creating places of memory, this is to ignore the centrality of performance within many of these societies or – even where it may appear marginal – its remainder in many key processes from the burial of the dead to the performative pronouncements of the legal system, let alone the 'expanding power of the quotidian rites of secular society – institutional, familial and recreational' (Roach 1998: 25). Thus, the writing and documentary traces related to performance will be treated as a form of orature, as spaces that contain the relationship

between places and environments of memory of their particular cultural milieu. As such they help to make visible the play of difference and identity within the larger ensemble of relations, always exceeding attempts to contain and incorporate them. Using them to explore different 'performances' or 'effigies' of return should, in this way, be a very fruitful way of uncovering and pushing at the fraying limits between past and present, self and other, home and exile, centre and margins, expressed in the unease both of return narratives and in the receiving culture. Indeed, as I will suggest, this fraying is present even in the most apparently unproblematic cases of reincorporation.

Case 1: Max Aub's *La vuelta 1947*

It could certainly be argued following some taxonomies of exile theatre (Aznar 1995; 1999), that all theatre written in exile constitutes an effigy of return, to the extent that it attempts to embody, incorporate and perform a relationship to the past home, and through the traces of bodily memory contained within dialogues intended for performance. However, attempts to perform Spanish Republican exile plays have often led to the problematization of such an assumption, in the testimonies of many directors who point to the over-wordiness of many works, the sense that they are not entirely theatrical. Though this sets up interesting avenues for further study, as the writing of theatre is thus highlighted as a desire for embodiment, even if denied or frustrated, here I am going to take a brief look at a play that was performed soon after it was written and yet even so has been presented as somehow less than theatre, as tied to its circumstances. *La vuelta 1947* was written by Max Aub, an author considered in exile literary historiography to be one of the paradigmatic cases for the representation of return, above all in his narrative work *La*

gallina ciega of 1971. The symptoms he identifies in the latter have been used retrospectively to read other works in which he 'imagines' the journey home, most famously those of the 1940s, in which he explores the experience of exile as one of being in a kind of no-man's land, adrift or in transit, and of course the three short *La vuelta* plays of 1947, 1960 and 1964, in which he evokes different scenarios of return to Spain. It is the first of these short plays that will be read here, in terms of its creation and embodiment of an absent reality, that is the possibility of return. Later categorized as 'teatro de circunstancias', tied to the contingency of its creation, the piece responds to the immediate context of the loss of any hope for the liberation of Spain in 1946; it stands in for an absent presence. This has been identified by many critics, and used as a basis for reading the poignant reflection by the returning Isabel on how the passage of time has led to almost complete disjunction between her way of being and the daily rituals of her former home, a place that has continued without her. Her former space as wife and mother has been filled by her husband with that of another body, that of the former house-keeper, who Isabel nevertheless insists on humanizing. At the end of the play, just as she is about to be re-arrested and returned to prison, she reflects to her husband:

> Me da gusto verte despertar... Pero a fuerza de hablar y de oír, la gente se olvida de cómo son las cosas. No hay nada peor que la costumbre. El hábito de mirar y de ver siempre lo mismo embota el entendimiento. Lo saben los dictadores, y machacan, machacan... ya no sabéis distinguir lo cierto de la propaganda... Se habla, cada día, de cárceles, de fusilamientos: creéis sentirlo. Pero, no. Estáis parados, mudos, ciegos... Solo reaccionáis cuando os atañe personalmente... El dolor de los demás pasa inadvertido, o se convierte en miedo. Para vosotros... (Aub 1968: 265)

However, as I have suggested elsewhere (Buffery 2008: 142–3) such a reading fails to engage with the full ecological context of the play, which forms a complex and overdetermined performance moment. *La vuelta*

1947 was written after the family reunion that followed Aub's recognition that he would be unable to return to Spain, that the Franco regime and its oppression and privations would continue unchallenged. Having written to his wife and daughters, passage was arranged for them to travel to Cuba, where he met them before returning together to Mexico. He had hardly seen his three daughters in a decade, due to his deep involvement in Republican cultural politics and then his detention in France and later Algeria after his Spanish citizenship was revoked in 1941. What has not been remarked upon is the extent to which this context might have contributed to the effigy of return presented by the play, its embodiment of an encounter between the different temporalities experienced there and in those lost years, and above all of his re-encounter with his daughters.

All three daughters were to perform in the version of the play staged in Mexico City by El Tinglado, a Spanish student amateur theatre group, in the Teatro del Sindicato de Telefonistas, on 18 June 1948. His eldest daughter, María Luisa, to whom the play is dedicated, played the imprisoned, and only temporarily freed school teacher, Isabel; his youngest daughter, Carmen, played Isabel's ten-year old daughter, who has little or no memory of her mother (remember that Aub himself would have seen his youngest daughter for mere months in her life by then); his middle daughter, Elena, was Isabel's sympathetic former pupil, Nieves. The poignancy of this moment is no doubt unrecoverable; however, the range of meanings activated by the encounter with memory undoubtedly go beyond the theme of the play, if we imagine the bodies and their context. For these were bodies who until recently had been in Spain but had now come back to Aub, bringing news of the past seven years in Valencia, on stage becoming effigies who stood in for Spain for the Spanish community in Mexico. As actors with their own memories and their own meaning at personal, collective and family level, they both drew

attention to the paradox of absence/presence for all concerned, and contributed to map the physical sense of community.

The usual narrative that is read into this play is to see it as a step in Aub's output towards increasing pessimism about the possibility of return; yet the elements of hope within the play, articulated around the possibility of Damián's awakening, should also be read as part of the performative context. It is a play that creates an environment for memory, and a space for the negotiation of different memories – Aub's, those of the girls, those of their fellow actors and of their audiences. When the sisters talk on stage about the Falangist 'señorita de las flechas', and about Isabel's unhomely encounter with home, theirs is a voice of testimony to their own recent experiences in Spain; whereas the representation of the moment of misrecognition doubtless repeats more recent re-encounters after years of separation. It is within this context that we ought to read the ending, and Isabel's matter-of-fact acceptance of her inevitable return to prison:

> Lo malo, para ellos, es que el olvido no se despacha en la botica. Qué gran negocio harían vendiendo olvido!... Dime a mí que olvide quién me espera ahí afuera, y lo que sigue... *(Se asoma el cabo.)* Pero no te preocupes: volveré. Pero descuida, esta vez... avisaré. *(Lo ha dicho con gracia. Damián se desconcierta).* (266)

Whilst there are elements of the play with a very clearly modernist commitment to a changing of consciousness, to awakening, to social and political progress, contained above all in Isabel's insistence on straight-talking in contrast with the euphemisms of the 'señorita de las flechas', even so it creates a diverse space for multiple memories as an antidote to forgetting, that can be detected in its documentary traces.

Case 2: Alberti and *El Adefesio*

The second type of effigy is that created out of returning exiles' bodies, both as surrogates and as a means of reincorporation, and here I take a

case explored previously by Mari Paz Balibrea (2008), that of Rafael Alberti, whom she contrasts with José Bergamín in terms of the treatment they received on their return to Spain. Like other figures, such as María Zambrano and Francisco Ayala, Alberti was courted by the new democracy after the death of Franco, and when brought back with the legalization of the communist party, came to signify a poignant symbol of the suturing of Spain. However, as Balibrea shows by contrasting his status with that of Bergamín, this was because Alberti did not publicly question the new democracy, and his presence thus became a way of consigning an aspect of the past to oblivion, that is the political memory of the Republic.[1] Bergamín, in contrast, was unprepared to be involved in what he regarded as a process of symbolic violence, and soon learned to avoid all the homages. His criticism of the monarchy led him to be sidelined from the mainstream press and only celebrated for his literary prowess, with publication of new editions of his works. His own reflexivity on this use of bodies, particularly marginal bodies, as a way of constructing a fictional and forgetful nation, is made abundantly clear in the response he gave to the idea of bringing back Machado's remains from France. There he attacked 'el macabro trasiego, el tráfico indecoroso de cadáveres ilustres que inició el franquismo para enmascarar malas conciencias, gusaneras, tal vez, de remordimientos. Los muertos caídos fuera de España, porque no pudieron o no quisieron volver a ella en vida, deben quedar en los sitios donde cayeron, dándonos ese testimonio histórico de su destierro que honra su vida entera' (Bergamín 1979, cited in Balibrea 2008).

Whilst Balibrea contrasts official 'uses' of returning exile memories with the actual experience of Spain as living effigy expressed in Aub's *La gallina ciega* (1971), opening her article with reference to 'un país

[1] Both Balibrea, briefly, and Barriales-Bouche (2008) at more length discuss how his unease in this role spill into his personal memoirs and also his poetry.

irreconocible y desolador: lugares y personas que están en su memoria, ya no lo están en la realidad, y viceversa, la realidad presente ha sido ocupada por personas y lugares que usurpan los espacios reservados a otros en la memoria del autor' (2008), she perhaps overstates the hegemonic legitimacy of such effigies. Her reading of phenomena like that of the 'use' of Alberti as a sign of the unwillingness of new democracy to engage with its past, and in particular of its reliance on simulacra, as if they constituted a screen behind which to hide everything else, fits in with Aub's radical modernist reading of Spanish society in the 1969 diary; however, it fails to engage both with the extent to which Spain's modernity is imbricated with that of other modern western societies, and particularly with the slippery and shifting notion of postmodernity, and the society of the spectacle more generally, but also with the performativity of performance. The performance of effigies changes with each repetition, always containing the possibility for difference, for the awakening of different memories, contributing to changing sensibilities and epistemes. As Roach reminds us: 'The boundaries of national consciousness are invented to include and exclude, as any boundaries must, but they are also subject to complex negotiation and adjustment in the presence of others: they advance to meet external and alien cultures on the cusp of empire, and they contract to define internal affiliations of party, religion and class' (1996: 165).

An example of this negotiation and adjustment can be found in the changed ending to Alberti's own *El Adefesio*, originally completed and performed in Buenos Aires in 1944, but only first performed in Spain in Madrid in 1976. Based on a memory of his Andalusian youth, as most studies remark, drawing links to memory-theatre and, in particular, nostalgia, *El Adefesio* has been read as a mythical translation of the struggle between progressive liberalism and repressive catholic traditionalism, playing between the poles of the freedom-seeking youth of

Altea and Castor and the nightmarish, authoritarian fates that are their expressionist witch-like aunts, Gorgo, Aulaga and Uva. However, when Altea is sacrificed in the 1944 version, only able to achieve escape when her dreams and illusions are shattered by throwing herself from the tower in which she is entrapped, there are nevertheless glimpses of hope at the end, in the sense of remorse expressed by Gorgo and her sisters, their self-recognition of their monstrosity, and the pale reflection of a new dawn. When Alberti re-writes the ending, in response to the new production in 1976, all hope is removed. The circle of fate is closed, and all we can hear is Castor shouting from beyond the walls.

> (*Gritos de*: «¡Altea!, ¡Altea!» *a lo lejos. En el balcón de la torre aparece la sombra de* ÁNIMAS cerrándolo. Un vacío profundo en el jardín; iluminada débilmente la figura de ALTEA. *Beben imaginariamente. Las risas desgarradas están en su punto máximo y los gritos fuera de* CASTOR *llamando*: «¡Altea!, ¡Altea!», *y los golpes de las puertas que cierra dentro* ÁNIMAS. *Todo lo preside el cuerpo de* ALTEA, *con los brazos extendidos como un espántapajaros*. (1992: 316)

As published in 1977, *El Adefesio* appears to clearly limit the operation of authority to a superstitious, Catholic, authoritarian Spain, embodied in the three sisters, thus removing any sense of indeterminacy. This is a period and effigy now completed, dead and gone: the play evokes it in its absence, thus appealing to its Spanish audiences to critically distance themselves from this past reality rather than identify with it. However, the performance itself, with its slow pace and realist playing disrupted by the alienating, anti-naturalist declamatory style of María Casares on her first return to Spain as a professional actress, exceeded such containment and led to a great deal of reflection on what it might stand for, on the presence of memory both in the recovery of exiled texts and in the effigying of exiled bodies. This is nowhere more evident than in the positioning of the body of Altea in the final scene, like a crucified Christ-like figure, completing the reading of the play and presenting her as an expiatory

sacrifice. The image is not there in the stage directions of either the 1944 or 1976 versions; as a place of memory the figure is recycled, indicating the unpredictable proliferation of meaning of the surrogate. For, who, in fact, does she stand for? The returning exile Casares – met with rapturous applause on her first appearance before the Madrid audiences – here plays the role of the authoritarian Gorgo; does that make Altea the effigy of return, or is it deferred in Castor, and his cries from beyond the garden wall? In Alberti's own reading in an interview with Monleón, it is the latter: they are the desperate pleas of somebody exiled from that space, and the effigy is Spain:

> "La literatura debería poder hablar de lo fantástica que es la vida, del canto de los mirlos. Y, sin embargo, la pasión política nos obliga a ocuparnos, tiempo y tiempo, de lo que está bien, de las cosas que están mal. Este tratamiento de la España adefésica, de la acumulación de adefesios que se interponen entre nosotros y la vida, nos convierte en los creadores de una literatura para la vida, pero no, como uno quisiera, de una literatura de la vida. Franco –y ya no sé incluso si lamento haberlo perdido como tema– me ha impedido hacer la literatura que yo hubiese querido." (1990: 458, also cited in Alberti 1992: 319)

Case 3: *El olvido está lleno de memoria*

The concluding case study is a play written by a dramatist who was not an exile, although his politics meant that his work was only rarely performed under the Franco regime (Malonda 2003). Jerónimo López Mozo is known both for his socially-aware theatre and for his work on the training of actors. His 2002 play, *El olvido está lleno de memoria*, forms part of a trilogy on historical memory, that includes one – *El arquitecto y el relojero* (1999) – about the use of former non-places, the spaces of torture under the Franco regime, in new democratic urbanization plans, and another on the experience of exile (*Las raíces cortadas*, 2003). Here it is the experience of return that forms the core of the play, centred on the

bodily experiences of a returning actor, the real historical figure Edmundo Barbero. However, whilst López Mozo admits that he met Barbero on his return to Madrid in the 1980s, unlike the playwright's fictional protagonist the actor himself did not attempt to resume his career on the Spanish stage, instead going back into exile. As the dramatist explains, he became interested in evoking the figure of the actor to stand for a number of different experiences of exile and return (2003: 1), including those of Aub, Alberti, Xirgu and Zambrano, as can be gleaned from the stories the actor recounts and re-members. In this way, the Edmundo Barbero constructed within the play, and hence by the actor playing him, is overtly an effigy of return: the actor as 'monstrous double' who provides a new skin in which to provide contact with a past presence. At the same time, the work plays continuously with the possibility of 'effigying' – of holding a place open for memory through performance – in its staging of Edmundo's own negotiation of his memories of the Second Republic, the Spanish Civil War and exile, and of the different roles he has played throughout his life. All of this is incorporated into the actor's body, presenting ample scope for diegetic exploration of the relationship between performance and identity. In addition, the audience witnesses the other actors/characters' negotiation of this actor's 'monstrous body', his representation of an 'other' uncomfortable reality.

Most readings of the play have focused on it as a place of memory, as a way of showing the need for historical memory in contemporary Spain, and of exposing the disjunctive relations between different generations (Pérez Rasilla 2003; Villán 2003; Fox 2004; Doll 2007; Gabriele 2007). Nevertheless, here I would like to point to the way in which the play interrogates what happens when memory is re-presented, exploring competing versions of reality and illusion. Its use of metatheatrical techniques, such as the representation of a play within a play, the diegetic focus on actors and on the psychological effects of

acting in different roles, shows how meaning changes according to temporal and spatial context (see also Gabriele 2005; 2007). Such self-reflexivity ultimately exposes the relationship between the body and memory that is assumed within the notion of performance as recoverable behaviour, always already pointing to the illusory quality of its absent presence.

Other readings of the play, such as that of Fox (2004), focus on Barbero's relationship with the other two characters who speak within the play – his director, Antolín Alvar, and a journalist called Julia – as aids to memory and reminiscing. The old actor teaches Julia to remember the experience of exile and to begin to incorporate it into her own version of contemporary Spain, whereas she teaches him to recollect his past in order to achieve authenticity. Here I am more interested in the way in which the 'monstrous double' is constructed and portrayed on stage, both through exploration of the troubling duplicity or paradoxology of acting – as Barbero remembers his roles, puts on and takes off costumes and persona and reflects on how far he fits into the second skins that are forced on to him – and through Alvar's construction of the actor as the effigy of his own doubt, uncertainty and unease about what the return of such marginal, troublesome figures might mean. The narratives constructed by the director to contain his own traumatic past lead him to present the old actor as a monster whose only desire is to display his own superiority, thus reducing the experience of exile to little more than cultural tourism, whilst those at home suffered the real privation. In contrast, Barbero himself ends by removing and deconstructing the role of Clotaldo he is forced to play for the production of Calderón's *Life is a Dream* on stage,[2] because of his age, because of his invisibility in Spain, because of the passing of time:

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[2] See Doll (2007) for fuller discussion of the intertextual relationship between the two plays.

> Me he despojado de sus [Clotaldo's] ropas sin esperar a que la función acabe. No las he doblado cuidadosamente. Con ellas he ido asumiendo, casi sin darme cuenta, ser menos de lo que soy. A fuerza de retroceder, he alcanzado la condición de meritorio. Dentro de unos días la compañía sale de gira. Como no lo he hecho mal del todo, me han ofrecido un papel con mayor enjundia: el de rey Basilio. No lo haré. ¡Me niego a empezar desde la nada! ¡Soy alguien en el teatro! ¡Reclamo mi sitio! Tienen derecho a saber quién soy, como era antes de que me metieran en la piel arrugada de estos personajes. Llevo en la cabeza a todos los que he interpretado a lo largo de mi vida. Puedo ser cualquiera de ellos. Elíjanle ustedes. (2003: 65–6).

His disappointment at being prevented from playing the role of Segismundo and thus consigned to being a nobody on stage and in life – '¿sabes, Julia? Yo no pinto nada aquí. Ni siquiera soy un bicho raro. Al menos, hubiera sido algo. No soy nadie. ¡Nadie!' – is doubled in his performative re-membering of Faustus, as sarcastically prompted earlier by Alvar. Barbero's reenaction of the part – '¿He de llenar yo ese hueco? Ahí van a consumirse mis años de trabajo y de gloria? No es posible que la huella de mis días terrenales vaya a perderse para siempre en esta ciénaga putrefacta. ¡Así se quiere reducir a la nada cuanto he creado?' (2003: 68) – gradually gives way to growing consciousness of his own approaching death:

> No quiero morir aquí en medio de tanta indiferencia. Regreso. Esta no es mi casa. Estoy tiritando. ¿Hace frío? Mi verdadera casa está lejos. Me he alejado de ella... ¡Todo un océano por medio! ¡Pienso irme dando un portazo! ¡Un portazo sonoro, que le espabile!
> . . . En América me esperan mi personajes. Y mi público. No te comportes como ese perro. A él le gustaria verme morir aquí, entre las tablas de este ruedo, humillado como un todo, de mala manera... No voy a darle ese gusto. Si tuviera alas... ¿Crees que podría llegar? (68–9)

His pathetic attempt to lift his wings and fly preludes his death on stage, which is followed by the image of Julia showing pictures of him at the end, as she attempts to fill the emptiness, to restore his memory. Though

some critics, like Fox (2004), see a more optimistic message in Julia's attempts to reconstruct a more inclusive past, the quality of improvisation with which it is cast simultaneously draws attention to its status as a meagre and inadequate patch over the wounds that have been opened. The question of the relationship between truth and illusion is left unanswered, as is that of what the actor stands for and how far he can stand for so many things simultaneously. Is he a returning exile; his experiences in exile; or any or all of the roles he has played, from Queipo de Llano in the 'teatro de urgencia' of the Civil War years to his triumphant performances in the Americas? What is he when he is on stage? Is he just the lines that he speaks and has memorized, just a medium for a place of memory?

Earlier in the play the actor himself reflects critically on the role of theatre and performance, looking back on the commercial theatre he ended up playing for a while during the war, before his role in Alberti's emblematic *Numancia*. In the former he was required to memorize lines but had no need to 'desentrañarlos' (29), meaning to get to the heart of them, but in the graphic, bodily image of disemboweling them. As indicated in the stage directions, *El olvido está lleno de memoria* is set from the beginning in the 'tripas' (2) – the guts – of the theatre; this is the space we must negotiate: the space of the (absent/present) dead, the space of the monstrous double, the marginal space of difference that is always conjured by the effigy. It evokes that moment of doubt and excess contained in even the most apparently innocuous of performances, that of the disruptive presence of embodied memories, doubly troublesome when standing in for the bodies of the dead. It stands for the same seed of doubt sown by Isabel in *La vuelta 1947*: '¿Y los muertos? ¿Crees que se van a quedar tan tranquilos?, ¿que no van a resucitar para cobrarse en tanto asesino?' (1968: 254)

Coda

There have been a number of more recent productions and performances of Spanish Republican exile plays and experiences, both as a result of the opening up of research to performative practice and that of the twentieth-century Spanish theatrical canon to dramatists of the calibre of Max Aub. However, it is above all the anniversaries that have brought a proliferation of productions, indicating their function as effigies in the cultural economy. Carles Batlle in a 2009 interview raised serious questions about the continuing lack of historical and cultural memory in Spanish theatre (Buffery 2009b), perceiving any exceptions to be little more than token efforts with no lasting repercussions.[3] The most famous exception in Spain, apart from recovery of the more challenging Lorca plays in the late 1980s and early 1990s, is undoubtedly the production of Aub's *San Juan* in Valencia and Madrid in 2002. However, I have recently had the fortune to witness the recovery of other texts and voices on the stages of Barcelona. 2008 saw the performance of works by exiled Catalan writers Mercè Rodoreda (*Un dia. Mirall trencat* at the Teatre Borràs) and Ambrosi Carrion (*La Dama de Reus* at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya), as well as reconstructions of the experience of exile in José Sanchis Sinisterra's *Terror y miseria en el primer franquismo* and LaBarni's *Ojos verdes. Miguel de Molina in Memoriam*. The 70th anniversary of the exodus at the end of the Spanish Civil War inspired short productions and showings for various exile conferences, including Birmingham (September 2008), San Sebastián (November 2008) and Barcelona-Cotlliure (December 2009), as well as the creation of a theatre prize for plays about the conflict by Catalonia's 'Memorial Democràtic' and a

[3] Like other Catalan dramatists of his generation, influenced by the frontier theatrical explorations of José Sanchis Sinisterra, his own work has been marked by evocation of this epistemological gap, resulting in an aesthetic discourse based on ellipsis, abstraction and liminality.

variety of commemorative events and performances in Barcelona: a stellar concert of *Música de l'exili*; Teresa Vilardell's compilation of 'exile voices' to form the more testimonial *La nit més freda*; Àngels Aymar's evocation of the figure of the Catalan Republican surgeon *Trueta*; Pablo Ley and Josep Galindo's recasting of the story of *La maternitat d'Elna*; as well as a reprisal of LaBarni's *Ojos verdes*, amongst others. Perhaps the most salient feature of these performances was the use of music to evoke a past space of difference. Their official employment to stand in for and incorporate an absent past was particularly clear in the case of the former, above all *La nit més freda* where the framing suggested an attempt to create a place of memory, drawing on the discourse of the museum or national archive. However, as we saw in the introduction to this volume, in the case of *Música de l'exili* this intention was subverted, when the former Republican soldier Santiago Piera decided to take far more than the ten minutes he had been offered symbolically at the beginning of the piece to share his memories, and the audience was left to witness the frantic attempts of the organizers to get him off the stage.

Even so, it is perhaps the plays of 2008 that best exemplify the indeterminacy of the spaces opened by such effigies. The production of *La Dama de Reus* at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya was commissioned as part of a response to previous criticism of the institution for ignoring Catalan theatre history, and thus contributed to the temporary rediscovery of a voice that had been important at the beginning of the twentieth century before all but disappearing in exile in France (TNC 2008: 2). The play's recovery was, then, inseparable from questions of Catalan identity and representation of the limits of community history. Yet, as in the case of Carner's *El ben cofat i l'altre* discussed by Montserrat Roser i Puig, *La Dama de Reus* is rather troubling as a place of memory, in its apparent foregrounding of individual fulfilment over the needs of the community. Like the Don Juan plays surveyed earlier by Laura Lonsdale and the work

of Álvaro Arauz, it draws on the myths and legends of home; except that in this case a myth of self-sacrifice for the common good is re-written so that the figure of the 'Dama' is not so easily read as a symbol of resistance against military power, for she falls in love with her oppressor during the night she spends with him in exchange for her husband's life. Though the execution goes ahead anyway, it is not the inert body of the husband that becomes the central effigy of the play, but the desired and desiring body of the 'Dama'. Indeed, the question of what her body stands for, the limits of propriety, autonomy and, ultimately, identity are at the core of the dramatic action and its symbolic impact. It was telling, for instance, that the poster and programme for the 2008 production both carried an image of the actress dressed as the 'Dama' with her left breast exposed, even though this did not correspond to any scene in the play. Furthermore, the ending in which she is reunited with the lover who had terrorized her people provoked audience ambivalence, highlighting the audacity of Carrion's 1949 re-writing of a popular legend whose versions normally allowed the heroine to take revenge on the duplicitous traitor. One way of reading the play, in the context of the time in which it was written, would be in terms of reflective nostalgia, addressing the diverse political positions adopted by different sectors of the Catalan population, alongside the heterogeneous effects of class, gender and sexuality on the constitution of identity. The body of the 'Dama de Reus' thus becomes a monstrous double, standing both for noble resistance on behalf of a community and for individual freedom. Yet the additional metatheatrical frame given to the play by the director, Ramon Simó, led to a proliferation of meanings, as it was set in Catalonia in the 1940s, in a hypothetical scenario of resistance by an amateur theatre group (TNC 2008: 6). As such it was not only a reminder of the place of theatre as an environment of memory and of the role of the effigy in opening an affective space for community, but also of the liminal nature of performance, its capacity to

stand for different things, and in this case take on a more positive reading due to the freedom achieved through acting and taking on different roles. Read in such a way, acting becomes resistance: a way of opening up a critical perspective on the world.

With *La Dama de Reus*, then, the Teatre Nacional was occupied by the evocation of amateur theatre, by a bottom-up rather than top-down model of cultural transmission. In a similar fashion, Salvat and Molins' reading of *Un dia* together with *Mirall trencat* became an effigy of the limits of the national, as journalists, critics and bloggers queried why it was put on in the Borràs rather than the Teatre Nacional (Abrams 2008; Simó 2008; Coca 2008; Bonada 2008, inter alia). Salvat's transformation of the blue-uniformed removal workers from Rodoreda's 1959 play *Un dia* into a Brechtian framing device for fragmentary scenes from the ruined bourgeois mansion was just one amongst many alienation techniques used to underline a reflective and critical relationship to the past, rather than the nostalgic reading often associated with *Mirall trencat* (1974). Most disturbing of all for some critics was what they perceived as the unnecessary focus on naked bodies in the production, which, though engaged in the carnal liaisons, taboo couplings and acts of infidelity woven into the network of secrets underlying Rodoreda's narrative universe, were nevertheless curiously desexualized, appearing cold, distant and doll-like rather than evoking living flesh and sexual desire. The love of the dead performed in these often doubled effigies provoked critical ambivalence, with objections ranging from alarm at the image of Lady Godiva/Maria mounting the dead Eladi Farriols (Ferré 2008) to criticism of the misjudged tone of the work, and its reminder of Rodoreda's strengths as a novelist and perceived weakness as a dramatist (Olivares 2008). Such breaks with naturalistic playing imbued the return of the dead with the same matter-of-fact inevitability as in Isabel's rhetorical question from *La vuelta 1947*, positioning the spectator as a

kind of detached and alienated voyeur, prevented from identifying with the action on stage. By refusing to allow the audience the comfort of nostalgia, the production perhaps failed to offer the kind of myth-reading expected to mark cultural anniversaries, especially the anniversary of a writer now placed at the centre of the modern Catalan canon. However, through association with the more maverick theatrical and political voices of Salvat and Molins and activation of her macabre sense of humour, Rodoreda was reclaimed as a profoundly dissonant voice who draws attention to the contradictions and discontinuities of community history through evocation of its ruins.

In contrast, Marc Vilavella's performance as Miguel de Molina in *Ojos verdes* was almost naïve in its intention to recover a lost voice through faithful reenactment of the *copla* singer's history and reappropriation of his most emblematic songs. Interspersing narrative drawn from the singer's memoirs (Molina 1998) with versions of his and other songs, the production transported its audiences back in time, producing strong kinesthetic responses in the spectators, who danced, clapped and sang along. The mix of audiences in attendance surprised everyone, above all those who doubted that the life of a *copla* artist could possibly appeal to a Catalan audience. However, the small, alternative fringe spaces in which it was initially played together with the use of social networking such as Facebook to garner wider audiences contributed to the sense of identification and recognition it achieved. When interviewed (Buffery 2010), Vilavella denied the widespread assumption that his performance was based on detailed study of Molina's voice and gestures, insisting instead that it drew on his own personal excavation of the memoirs and of the music. His experience draws attention to the re-creative as well as the restorative role of the actor's bodily memory work, and to the often unexpected affective power of the effigy as a living messenger of the past in the present.