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THEATRICAL SPACE AND LANGUAGE: J. HUMBERTO ROBLES'S *LOS DESARRAIGADOS*

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Los desarraigados (1956) by the Mexican playwright J. Humberto Robles is discussed in terms of five separate linguistic codes that intersect in the theatrical domain as primes in the drama of bicultural conflict: 1) contemporary cultivated Mexico City speech; 2) an archaic register of formal, mostly provincial, "poetic" or "flowery" elegance; 3) lower-middle class colloquial Mexican Spanish, marked by English interference; 4) Pachuco Spanish: the slang of post-World War II urban Mexican American youths; 5) aspiring middle-class radio/TV English of the early 1950s. The conflictual intersection of these registers of the linguistic manifestations of the sociohistorical conflict with which the drama deals is in the play a dominant theatrical sign of theater space as the battleground in which this conflict is represented.

Les cantaré un corrido
de todos los deportados,
que vienen hablando inglés
y vienen de desgraciados. [...]
Por eso yo me quedo
en mi patria querida,
México es mi país
y por él doy la vida.
(*Los deportados*, cited in Sommers et al., 232-33).

One of the more lamentable aspects of the Chicano experience in the United States is the discrimination against Chicanos –whether first generation or Southwest residents since back before the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848)– at the hands of Mexicans. Mexican nationals, especially those who accept with profound earnest the ethnic, racial, nationalist identity promoted by the hegemonic ideology put in place following the Revolution of 1910, view with concern the historical fact that half of the territory of Mexico became part of the United States in 1848 and that millions of individuals with some claim to Mexican identity (whether self-attributed or imposed as an Anglo designation of the Other) live in the American Southwest –and now, in reality, throughout the

United States. Both those who continue the Mexican diaspora in the search for the American dream, against what is perceived as the nightmare of dismal economic and social opportunities in Mexico, notwithstanding the promises of the hegemonic ideology, and those who perforce became American citizens, albeit American of a distinctly second-class status throughout most of Chicano history, have all too frequently been characterized as traitors to the ideals of Mexicanness. Contaminated by the hated North –the Revolution may have deposed the dictator Porfirio Díaz, but it certainly did not abrogate his famous dictum about "Pobre México, tan lejos de Dios y tan cerca de Estados Unidos"– both "historic" Mexican Americans and recent arrivals from Mexico have had to defend themselves against not only the charge that they are less than American, but also against the charge that in some way they are deficient Mexicans –or that they are not even Mexicans at all. Even those who return to Mexico (as is often the case of all returning Latin Americans) must often suffer a discrimination based on the double tarnish of having become de-Mexicanized and having become Americanized.

Octavio Paz, while he may be subtle enough not to characterize the Mexican American of California as a deficient Mexican, chooses, after all, to focus, in a legendary inaugural essay of sociocultural analysis of Mexican identity in *El laberinto de la soledad,* on the Pachuco, the youthful rebel-without-a-cause who was often a source of embarrassment to, at least, the more established or conservative members of the Mexican American community, who felt that the zoot-suiter brought unneeded attention if not shame to the community: "Incapaces de asimilar una civilización que, por lo demás, los rechaza, los pachucos no han encontrado más respuesta a la hostilidad ambiente que esta exasperada afirmación de su personalidad" (13). Underscoring the sociohistoric space occupied by Mexican Americans characterized in their own language with the brutal adjective *pochos* (a sobriquet attached to the mestizo masses by a Hispanic social elite that touted themselves as "Spanish" in order to fend off the general discrimination of which they were also, inevitably, the victims), Paz sees the Pachuco as the doubly-marked *chingado* that is the fundamental condition of Mexican selfhood: if the Mexican of Mexico is *chingado* by virtue of the historical circumstances of the national experience, the Pachuco is *chingado* to a second degree by virtue of the compounding of that historical experience in the context of American racial discrimination. Therefore, the defiance and the internalized violence of the Pachucos, and the violence they provoke in the Anglo because of the violence the Pachucos project, are more heightened enactments of the condition of the *chingado,* a circumstance Paz is not very sanguine about avoiding, abolishing, or transcending. And, it does not require an extensive review of accounts of Chicanos in Mexican social and historical writings to grasp the fact that Paz's intellectual subtleties all too quickly fade away in the discourse of those of lesser intellectual powers (see Carranza's response to Paz's analysis). Even Carlos Fuentes, who spent a good portion of his childhood in the United States and continually markets himself as a spokesman for binational understanding, was not above the facile stereotype of the returning Mexican in *La región más transparente* (1958): as a sign of his economic well-being, Gabriel returns to

his family's Mexico City slums laden with the latest in electrical appliances from the North, jejunely unmindful of the fact that slum households are without electricity (reference might also be made to José Revueltas's *Los motivos de Caín* [1957], on Chicanos in the U.S. armed services; see Bruce-Novoa for a discussion of other Mexican works).

Chicano literature is filled with characters and situations in which either Mexicans view with disdain the corruption of Mexican values in the context of the North or Chicano characters live through experiences in which they are as much stung by discrimination at the hands of "true" Mexicans as they are at the hands of their Anglo masters. It may well be that one of the felicitous spinoffs of the Free Trade Agreement will be not only a greater respect on the part of Anglos for both Mexicans and Mexican Americans, but also a greater sensitivity on the part of Mexicans toward the Mexican American experience and the considerable efforts on the part of Mexicans in the United States to maintain a legendary Hispanic culture in the face of a host of pressures that have contributed to undermining, repressing, and oppressing anything not quintessentially Anglo.

It is within the context of these considerations that the play *Los desarraigados*, by J. Humberto Robles (1921-?) exercises an almost morbid fascination on a contemporary audience. The play was first performed in 1956 at an official theater and published six years later by Mexico's Instituto de Bellas Artes. Perhaps it could be considered unfair to focus on this text. After all, it is almost forty years old, and it is signed by a dramatist of no particular distinction. However, the fact that it won the 1955 Premio "El Nacional" in Mexico may be taken as a significant indicator of mixed feelings in Mexico over Chicanos. Antonio Magaña Esquivel, at the time Mexico's most important theater critic, wrote in *El Nacional*, the newspaper sponsoring the prize Robles's play won, that:

> *Los desarraigados* muestra no sólo un asunto que afecta íntimamente a México, sino una habilidad y una fuerza de composición de buen dramaturgo; sin grandes alardes nacionalistas, sin caídas ni exaltación discursiva, Robles plantea el drama de la población mexicana que radica en las poblaciones del sur de los Estados Unidos, los desarraigados de México por diversas causas siempre lamentables, que ni allí logran fundirse totalmente a un medio y a un temperamento extraños, ni aquí tratan de encontrar sus auténticas raíces. Son los "pochos", gente un poco al garete, desorientados, indecisos o indefinidos. (Reproduced in appendix to Robles 159.)

To the best of my knowledge, the play has deserved no more than passing mention in academic theater criticism, probably strictly for the fact that it won a prestigious prize. Nevertheless, my interest in the play is motivated by a production in the Phoenix area in 1992 by a Chicano theater group, Teatro Hispano de Friendly House (directed by Luis Mier), and as I watched the play, I became fascinated by why a Chicano theater group would be interested in producing a play with such a derogatory message about the Chicano experience, without any trace of metatheatrical commentary (e.g., like a Jewish theater group's production of *The Merchant of Venice* or an African American theater group's production of *Othello*), and why a Chicano audience might be willing to

accept the image of their sociohistory without an evident indignation. I have no immediate answers to offer to these questions, beyond the possibility that the play is so dated that a contemporary audience cannot identify with its political ideology. Perhaps the way in which *Los desarraigados* deals with the omnipresent question of the disintegration of the family and the alienation of the young was the key to its engagement for the Phoenix production, and the dimension of Mexican/Mexican American relations that sustains it were overshadowed by the immediacy of the abiding problems of the Pacheco family, as much pertinent in the 1990s as they were in the 1950s.

Nevertheless, what I would like to do in this essay is to restore the central political ideology of the play and to approach that ideology through the image of the Spanish language as it is played out in the microcosmic theatrical space of *Los desarraigados.* Robles's play focuses on the Pacheco family, a figure of the typical American family of the postwar years: a working father (a hotel night clerk), a mother whose entire life centers on satisfying devotedly the needs of husband and children, and three rebellious teenagers, a daughter swept up with postwar consumerist Anglo culture, intensified by the emergence of large-scale mass media (the radio, popular music, mass-circulation magazines, and the movies), and two sons, both of whom suffer all of the castration of the excluded male in American society, with the result that one turns to petty drug dealing and the other to alcoholism. Into this casebook study of the underbelly of the American dream, rewritten in the language of Chicano marginalization, steps Elena, a young, elegant woman from Mexico City. Elena is travelling in the United States, and her car breaks down outside the Pacheco home. When she arrives at their door to ask for help, she crosses the threshold into a Mexican domain totally alien to that of the comfortable, upper middle-class, urban existence, complete with feminine independence, that has brought her to the Pacheco doorstep. Fascinated by the Pacheco family and entranced by the sincere affection of the mother (Aurelia), Elena, in a dramatic suspension of disbelief, stays on in the Pacheco household, only to witness its increasing dissolution. At the end of the play, as Alice asserts her "liberation" from Mexicanness to marry an Anglo; as Jimmy, already a combination of defiant Pachuco and Anglo hipster, lapses back into drunkenness, wanted by the police for theft; and as Joe, the father, loses his opportunity to become manager of the hotel where he works because of his son's problems with the law, Elena coolly steps outside the family romance of the Pachecos, announces her return to Mexico, packs her bags, and drives off, leaving what had become her adoptive Mexican American family to sink into the quicksand of their historical necessities.

From a Mexican point of view, Elena washes her hands of the Pachecos of the American Southwest; from a Mexican American point of view, Elena abandons them to their fate, totally bereft of the ameliorating Mexicanness she has graciously provided them with during her brief tenure in their household as an honorary daughter and as a revered token, most especially for the father, of lost –or at least, eroding– cultural origins and their promise of dignity and happiness within the context of shared communal values. Elena's disappearance is, quite stunningly, less the sacrifice of Mexicanness to the Anglo monster than it

is the repudiation of the Mexican American bastard by the patriarchal law of an authentic Mexican culture, represented both by Elena and by the shadowy father with whom she maintains telephone contact and to whom she must in the end return, having put out of her mind the dilema of the Pachecos. That is to say, Robles's play is as much a severing of the Mexican from the Mexican American (who will more and more live the *American* nightmare of postwar U.S. society) as it is the expulsion of the Mexican American from the mind of the Mexican. It is as though the modernization of Mexico after Cárdenas turned away from a pan-Mexican ideology (the mythology of the cosmic race and its derivatives) and, under the pragmatic renewed capitalization of a desocialized Mexico in the 1950s, no longer had any place in its structural dynamics for the plight of the "lost" Mexicans of the El Paso del Norte diaspora (cf., Maciel 108-21, Acuña 269-72).

The ideological principles I have identified for Robles's *Los desarraigados* are borne out by the enactment of sociolinguistic parameters within the claustrophobic confines of the Pachecos living room, the only set of the play. This space, as one would expect of the sort of neorealist representation on which Robles's play is grounded, leaves little room for imaginative re-creation. It is exactly what it purports to be in the excruciatingly precise details of its decor: a poor but unmistakably decent, a Mexican but distinctly Americanized common meeting ground for emotionally scarred individuals for whom the wear and tear of that meeting ground is an objective correlative of their lives:

> Toda la acción tiene lugar en la sala de la familia Pacheco. La casa es de madera, de esas que se construyen en serie y que forman el prototipo de los hogares norteamericanos de clase media. [...]
> Un sofá, una mecedora, un sillón de descanso, una mesa de centro con revistas, otra con lámpara y algunos objetos decorativos, adquiridos en tiendas de cinco y diez centavos, complementan el decorado de la habitación, en la que predomina un gusto heterogéneo. Sobre una de las paredes y de manera bastante visible, cuelga una imagen de la Virgen de San Juan de los Lagos. (13)

Operant terms here, like mass-produced housing, an easy chair of similar furniture, five-and-dime knickknacks refer to American prototypicalness and an image of taste drawn from the five-and-dime, contrasted with the signal presence of the icon of the Virgin. Even before the dramatic action begins, the theatrical space of the play marks the cultural conflict that will constitute its major organizing principle.

The overlapping of linguistic codes in *Los desarraigados,* so characteristic of Chicano narrative, especially that written during the period, is as much a metonym of this space and the conflict enacted within it as the space is a metonym of that overlapping. Let me set aside, first of all, the obvious psycholinguistic principle that each individual embodies a specific language code: this is what we understand by the term idiolect. However, for purposes of a cultural text, there is a necessary underdifferentiation of idiolects in favor of underscoring differences that contribute to the semiotic process of the play. Five

separate linguistic codes intersect in the theatrical domain established by Robles's play; these codes, I am proposing, must be understood as primes in a drama of bicultural conflict.

The first codes may be characterized as contemporary cultivated city speech; this is the Spanish spoken by Elena, and it serves to posit one fundamental cut in the sociocultural space of *Los desarraigados:* the radical disjunction between the Mexicanness of *there,* Mexico and, paradigmatically (especially with the increasing urbanization of the country from 1950 on), Mexico City, and the Mexicanness of *here,* an insignificant city somewhere in the American Southwest. Whatever the former is, it need do nothing to establish its primacy, for there can never be any question that the Spanish of *here* is both a lost and a bastardized language that is doomed to an insuperable difference with the Spanish that Elena speaks. When Elena arrives at the Pacheco door, she is confronted by two teenagers, one who confesses she does not speak Spanish (43-44) and the other who seems to speak Spanish, but whom Elena cannot understand:

JIMMY. –Cualquiera diría que es usted bolilla.
ELENA. –¿Qué soy qué?
JIMMY. –Bolilla... Ni parece chicana.
ELENA. –¿Qué es bolilla, y qué es chicana?
JIMMY. –¿Bolilla?... Pos amerecana [*sic*]. (45)

By contrast to the Spanish spoken by Jimmy, Elena speaks what any Spanish professor would readily accept as an example of the *norma culta* taught in classrooms. She may make some use of contemporary vocabulary in keeping with her status as an independent citified woman, but without ever crossing the threshold that separates linguistic, and therefore social, propriety from *lo ordinario.*

Jimmy's speech, by contrast, is precisely an exemplar of the linguistic Other that Elena's Spanish seeks to contain and to exclude, both along an axis of Mexican vs. Chicano and along an axis of the unacceptable and the acceptable. Jimmy's *pocho* Spanish is a hodgepodge (from the sociolinguistic standard incarnate in Elena) of archaic regionalisms (an antiquated Northern Mexican Spanish that is already substandard even before it ends up literally over the line in the American Southwest), solecisms complemented unfavorably by limited discourse resources (vocabulary and sentence structure), such that he can barely carry on a sustained conversation in Spanish, and, the fatal mark of the *pocho,* a speech peppered with infelicitous English calques barely assimilated to one degree or another to Spanish.

If Alice (and not, please, Alicia), caught up in the American world of the radio, popular songs, and movie magazines, barely speaks any Spanish at all and probably only understands a conversation made up of simple sentences, Jimmy (a name likely pronounced in Spanish, but one that nevertheless aggressively replaces what must have been a Spanish name at the time of his baptism) is Robles's caricature of the worst Mexican nightmare of what Spanish had degenerated into "on the other side." The social circumstances of the United

States in the postwar years and the increased social margination of the Chicano in the context of the enormous changes and attendant aggravations experienced by American society, leave a profound mark on subaltern societies like the Mexican Americans, and the aggressive "rawness" of the Pacheco children's Spanish in the face of the "natural" and essentially unconscious superiority of Elena's linguistic expression is a profound index of the conflicts that are engendered in the 1950s and that will, in the next decade, redirect themselves in terms of brown pride, Aztlán singularity, and Chicano linguistic distinctiveness. Thus, the world of *Los desarraigados* can only be one of multifaceted lack: lack of identity, lack of power, and lack of language, all in the context, as Magaña Esquivel would have it, of their failure to find in Mexico their "auténticas raíces."

It is interesting to note for purposes of a play directed to a Mexico City audience not familiar with *pocho* Spanish, that the dialogue of all three of the children is remarkably free of Anglicisms, a necessary artistic compromise and deviation from sociolinguistic facts that in a rather perverse way confirms how *Los desarraigados* is a Mexican version of Chicano reality, mediated by all of the limitations of a Mexico City audience, beginning with insufficient linguistic knowledge, in acceding to that reality in anything like strictly documentary terms.

Radically divergent intermediate codes are exemplified by the parents of Alice, Joe, and Jimmy. Aurelia, manifesting her double margination as a Mexican American and as a woman, speaks a Spanish that is essentially fluent and adequate, in a self-contained way, to her expressive needs. In real sociolinguistic terms, she is likely also to make abundant use of English calques, but without either the assaultive slang of her male children or the normative instabilities of their scant formation in the language. Her register may be marked by what the Mexico City norm considers solecisms and limited vocabulary, but there can be no question about her basic fluency in a language that for her is still a native tongue. Aurelia's *mother*-tongue Spanish is reinforced by contact with an older generation, by Church and other cultural spaces in which supple stylistic usages are to be found (traditional songs, sayings, and, perhaps, even some poetry and narrative prose), and sporadic contacts with relatives still back in Mexico, and it is some sense of this linguistic tradition that she communicated to her children as babies, at a time before school and street turned them away from the maternal language (Barker 1982). The bond that forms between Elena and Aurelia is, of course, a woman-to-woman, a daughter-to-mother (surrogate) bond, but there is also some sort of continuity at a deeper level between them on the basis of a shared Spanish that, from Aurelia's point of view, has not yet been burdened down by the sociohistorical reality of the Pachuco/*pocho* or, from Elena's point of view, functions on a level prior to the sophisticated additives of her urban life. Although, as in the case of all of the characters of *Los desarraigados,* Aurelia can never be anything more than the stereotypical Mexican maternal martyr, it is important to stress how hers is the only Spanish that, despite all of its substandard traces, has anything like a subjective coherence about it.

By contrast, Pancho Pacheco's Spanish points in three sociolinguistic directions at once. Needless to say, Pancho exemplifies the older generation's

horror at the crises of its youth, especially, to emphasize once again the sociohistoric backgrounds of the play, the conflicts for Mexican Americans generated by postwar racism in the United States in the 1950s. As a consequence, there can be no possibility of his ever subscribing to the Pachuco code or to lapse into the interlingual no man's land of the *pochismo*. Yet, Pancho moves in the real social world, unprotected by the shabby but comforting confines of the hearth available to Aurelia, and as an employee in the Anglo world, Pancho more than anyone else in the play is exposed to the dominance of English in all of its social, economic, and political power, in ways in which his children, still on the margins of American life, are not yet fully aware of. Pancho's resistance to the real world of Anglo English is substantiated by his movement between two Spanish codes. On the one hand, he shares the realm of humble discourse centered on Aurelia and the continuity of the maternal tongue. But on the other hand, Pancho avails himself of a masculinist stylistic register that is unavailable to Aurelia and one that, therefore, excludes her by seeking to aspire toward a higher discourse realm. This higher discourse realm is that of a florid, highly formalistic and essentially fossilized register of expression that traces itself back to the rigorous demands of the public sphere in which an individual's social standing was immediately discernible from the control *he* exercised over the subtleties of expression as complicated stylistic formula. Pancho's reaction to Elena's arrival is to resort to this speech of the cultivated public man, although of course, despite its origins in a standard of social privilege, it is totally disconsonant with the relaxed urban parlance that she as a modern *woman* makes use of. Moreover, and at the risk of simply ridiculing Pancho, Robles makes most of his dialogue an uneasy mishmash of Chicano colloquial diction and the pretentious speech of the courtly gentleman:

> PANCHO. –¡Pero qué molestia ni qué nada! Si pa' nosotros es una satisfacción muy grande tenerla entre nosotros y poderle envitar nuestra humilde cena, que onque pobrecita, se la ofertamos con mucho corazón. [...] ¡Bueno! Pos si no le gusta el cuarto, después la llevamos a otra parte; pero orita usted es mi envitada y usted se queda. Así que, espero nos merezca el honor con su compañía, que nos agrada, nos cuadra y... y... [...] (62-63).

Finally, the multiple Spanish linguistic registers of the Pacheco household are undercut –or overlain– by the aspiring radio/TV English of the early 1950s, with its collateral manifestations in popular song, the movies, magazines and mass culture in general. As I have already noted, *Los desarraigados,* as a consequence of its presumedly basically Mexico City audience, cannot make much direct use of English, either as a language in its own right or as the substratum of the Pacheco family's Americanized Spanish. Nevertheless, English is constantly in the background as one of the most palpable indexes of the fact that the Pachecos inhabit American and not Mexican society. The first spoken voice of the play is that of a radio announcer for a station in Corpus Christi. Although he speaks in Spanish, his referents are to American culture: a plug for war bonds and a cue for "Don't Step on My Blue Suede Shoes" (15). When the phone rings, Alice answers it in English (16), and then she makes a comment to Jimmy about an article she is

reading in the magazine about Marilyn Monroe: "¿Ya vistes esto de Marilyn Monroe?... Gee!... Con ese shape sí que podría pescar un millonario..." (16).

In a Chicano play –say, Luis Valdez's *La conquista de México* or Teatro de la Esperanza's *La víctima*– one would expect to find a dense network of code-switching categories: dialogues completely in Spanish or completely in English, alternating with dialogues that move back and forth between English on the basis of the sociocultural triggers that control complex bilingualism. Since *Los desarraigados* cannot fully represent Chicano codeswitching and must rely principally for the image of disjunction between Elena's linguistic domain and that of the Pachecos on the details of modern urban vs. archaic provincial features, the omnipresent weight of English in and around the Pacheco household as the private microcosm in which they enact their Chicano experience, must be present by implication. I have already referred to the panoply of mass media phenomena through which especially the three children live. On another level, Pancho aspires to be General Manager of the Harlington Hotel, where he has worked for twenty-five years, only to lose out to an "americano [que] estuvo en el servicio" (148). Although it is never mentioned explicitly, the implication is that after twenty-five years at the hotel, and as one of the reasons for which he can aspire to a promotion, Pancho must have become fairly fluent in English: this never seen sphere, a public rather than a private domicile, embodies the public arena of English as the dominant language against the private domain of the Pacheco household and its folk Spanish. This disjunction in another text might be made far brutally evident by having a fellow worker or superior from the Harlington showing up at the Pachecos on some pretext, which would allow the spectator to see how well Pancho speaks English, while at the same time demonstrating the home-bound Elena's shaky command of the dominant linguistic code.

Alice, Joe, and Jimmy, of course, move in much more English-dominant circles, beginning with their school experience, which in those days involved corporal punishment for speaking Spanish. Moreover, Joe has served in the army. All three are, therefore, experts in street English, and although it may intersect their Spanish in diverse ways, it is that English which has become their primary mode of daily existence. They carry English into the home. While it cannot ever be a principal means of communication between them because of Robles's primary audience, we are always aware of its presence, in virtually a threatening manner, as for example when we accompany Aurelia in overhearing her daughter, outside on the doorstep, pleading with her Anglo boyfriend Fred, not to take sexual liberties with her (103). Aurelia reacts violently in Spanish: "¡Alice!... ¡Métase pa' dentro!" (103). At the end of the play, when Jimmy has been arrested by the police, the most menacing face of English has become a reality to the Pachecos.

The particular impact of Robles's play as the representation of the social conflicts of the Chicanos in an alienating Anglo society is the presence of Elena as a witness for the play's primary Mexican audience. Through her they have access to the Pacheco household and the problems it harbors. Chicano culture must to a great extent have been more alien to Mexico City's middle class audiences in the

1950s than to Anglo society in the United States because of all of the opportunities provided by the internationalization of American popular culture for foreign consumption, primarily through the movies. Elena enters into a strange world in which only superficially overlaps with her own in linguistic terms and daily customs. Although a deep personal bond is forged between her and the Pachecos, even to the extent of a budding romance between her and Joe, she receives a call from her father, from the higher, patriarchal authority of Mexican society, that it is now time for her to return to her own world. The departure of this agent of true Mexicanness, on whom members of the family have come to depend –Aurelia because she is a nonrebellious daughter, Pancho because she represents a lost, "authentic" Mexican culture, Joe because he is falling in love with her– corresponds with the moment of their worst crisis: Jimmy's arrest, Pancho's loss of his promotion and subsequent drunkenness, Joe's lapse back into alcoholism. The message is chillingly clear: Mexico cannot assume responsibility for Chicano society, and there is nothing for Elena to do but walk away, returning to the paternal realm, an uncontaminated Mexican society and an uncorrupted Spanish: "Adiós... y gracias por todo. [...] ¿Joe?... ¿Quiere indicarme la salida?" (150). Her final words are the most simple of social formulas and a request to be shown the way out of town: her manner, and her Spanish, could not be more glacially correct, as she departs a household coming down around its inhabitants. Certainly, *Los desarraigados* is not a play about linguistic clash, but rather it focuses on the pathos of life for Mexican Americans in a hostile society. But the single microcosmic set of the play and the way in which multiple linguistic codes of both English and Spanish are enacted within its lived space provide exceptionally powerful vehicles for the representation of Chicano pathos and the condescending view taken toward it by Robles, Elena, and, ultimately, their primary Mexican audience.

It is necessary at this juncture to return to the question of theatrical space. My point would be that the area of the Pacheco household in which this drama of Chicano life in America is played out is not simply something like a hyperrealistic setting. The elements of decor as they are described in the staging instructions represent every bit as much the cultural clash to which the Pacheco family is subject as the linguistic registers that they embody. One surveys this space as the play opens and then subsequently fixes on one metonymic detail after another as it develops: the living room is one of the communal domains of a Chicano family within the basically American envelop of the house; the radio and Alice's magazines as vehicles for American popular culture are juxtaposed to the quintessential Mexicanness of the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe; the five-and-dime knickknacks are a jumble of American and Chicano icons; and while the furniture may bespeak the American dream, those who use it inform us otherwise. In one sense this space is conventional, and in another sense the linguistic registers of the characters are also conventional. But when Elena stands in the middle of this domain and cocks her ear to hear Spanish as it is spoken in multiple but strange registers by the Pachecos, there can be no escaping the overdetermined way in which theatrical space and linguistic codes signify the

alienness of the Mexican culture she witnesses, intervenes in, and ultimately abandons.

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