Ariel Dorfman was born on 6 May 1942 in Argentina. His parents gave him the name Vladimiro, after Vladimir Lenin, but Dorfman tells readers of his memoir, *Heading South, Looking North*, that when he was a nine-year-old boy in the United States, he adopted the name Eddie to be all-American. When he moved to Chile, where he finished high school, he decided to go by his middle name Ariel. These name changes run parallel to the three nations he lived in as a young boy, and they indicate some of the reasons why his literature often deals with problems of identity.

After a 1943 pro-Axis coup in Argentina stripped Marxist Adolfo Dorfman of his position as a professor of industrial engineering, his family moved to the United States. As a young exile, Dorfman caught a terrible case of pneumonia and was hospitalized and quarantined. He was isolated from his family for three weeks, and when he returned home from the hospital he spoke only English. What’s more he refused to communicate in Spanish altogether. Thus began a linguistic tension between Spanish and English that would persist throughout his literary career.

Dorfman grew up in Manhattan in the home of political leftists. His father had obtained a position with the United Nations, and the family had strong connections to many political activists and intellectuals who often visited the Dorfman home. In contrast to his parents’ world of foreign languages, Eddie/Ariel favored cultural assimilation. Although Ariel’s grandparents were Jewish émigrés from Eastern Europe and his parents were the victims of cultural and political intolerance, Ariel lived in English and enjoyed U.S. culture. However, Ariel’s cultural peace was short-lived; it ended when the political tide of McCarthyism reached the Dorfman house, and Adolfo Dorfman found himself the subject, again, of political persecution. Adolfo fled to Chile, and the family established itself in Santiago in 1954.

It is no wonder that Dorfman returns again and again in his writings to the themes of cultural independence, solidarity, and the desire to belong. Before he was a teenager, he had lived in three nations, with three names, and in two languages. The territorial upheavals of his childhood, along with his family’s experiences with anti-Semitism, help explain Dorfman’s eventual embrace of all
things Chilean.

Dorfman spent his first months in Chile nostalgic for New York. He felt stripped of his cultural identity and uncomfortable in Spanish. Nevertheless, as he continued his studies in Chile, he became close to fellow students and developed a sense of community. Dorfman decided to study literature at Berkeley, where he underwent a literary and political conversion. He refused to write fiction and focused on politics. While in the United States, he witnessed the increased politicization of students on campus, but he held back from becoming too involved, because he was concerned about deportation. Upon his return to Chile, Dorfman (who had previously obtained Chilean citizenship) became actively involved in national politics, supporting the candidacy of Salvador Allende.

The success of Salvador Allende, socialist president of Chile from 1970 to 1973, had a profound effect on Dorfman’s writing. Toward the end of the Allende government, Dorfman accepted a position as the administration’s communications and media advisor, and he quickly became engaged in advertising campaigns intent on communicating Allende’s message to the people. He was also involved with publishing projects, which included releasing international classics in Spanish in affordable editions. In addition to his contribution to Allende’s projects, Dorfman began work on one of his most internationally read pieces of writing—the critique of North American cultural imperialism, How to Read Donald Duck, co-authored with Armand Mattelart. At the same time, he also completed his first novel, Hard Rain.

After struggling with exile and displacement early in life, Dorfman felt that he had truly found his home in Chile and in the Unidad Popular, Allende’s party. Yet Dorfman’s history of exile repeats itself: Allende was overthrown by the military coup of Augusto Pinochet in 1973, sending Dorfman into exile again. Dorfman explains in his memoirs that he barely escaped death on the day of the coup, and he left Chile reluctantly in 1973. Escaping to the Argentine embassy in Chile, he fled first to the country of his birth, Argentina, then to France, Amsterdam, and the United States. After Chile’s vote to oust Pinochet in 1989 and since the transition to democracy in 1990, Dorfman has split his time between the United States and Chile. No longer an exile, he now considers himself an expatriate.

Throughout his travels, both forced and voluntary, Dorfman has been an unceasingly productive writer, teacher, and activist. He constantly engages in a multifaceted intellectual program that involves grassroots activism, scholarly writing, literary writing, journalism, media projects, teaching, and public appearances. He has
been a professor of Latin American literature at the University of Chile, in Amsterdam, at the Sorbonne, and currently is the Walter Hines Page Research Professor at Duke University. He has published in a variety of newspapers and magazines, and his regular commentaries for *El País*, the leading newspaper in the Spanish-speaking world, are syndicated around the globe. He has published six novels, a memoir, numerous essays, short stories, poetry, and three plays. He also continues to work with visual media collaborating with his son Rodrigo on a number of video projects and co-authoring the screenplay for the film (based on his play) *Death and the Maiden*.

To read Dorfman’s work chronologically is to have the uncanny experience of seeing Latin American history revealed in fiction before it was enacted in life. Sadly, many of Dorfman’s pessimistic literary works have prefigured Latin American history. His first novel, *Hard Rain* (1973), was released at the same time that signs hinted at an impending coup in Chile. The text is composed of a number of fragments—literature dealing with the socialist revolution in Chile, reviews of such literature, film scripts, criticism of the novel itself, and extensive correspondence among authors, publishers, and editors. The pieces are largely disconnected and comment in highly oblique ways on the relationship between aesthetics and politics. They create a whirlwind of artistic and critical voices at the same time that they unite in a metacommentary on the historical moment. The most disturbing aspect of the text is that, before the coup and at a moment when Dorfman himself was highly committed to the success of Allende’s government, it highlights antagonisms and questions the strength of Chilean solidarity.

The novel received a tremendous amount of criticism. Many of his colleagues chastised him for having written a novel critical of Chile under Allende. The novel was also criticized for its highly intellectual style; *Hard Rain* was clearly aimed at an educated elite, which frustrated a public accustomed to the easier style of *How to Read Donald Duck*. Dorfman protested that the grim world of *Hard Rain* was a fictional exploration of disharmony and that the aesthetic complexity of the novel was consistent with his interest in creating literature that avoided simplistic social characterizations. Criticisms notwithstanding, the novel would turn out to be a remarkably accurate prediction of the social antagonisms that would soon overtake Chilean politics.

Dorfman wrote his next three novels in exile; each novel progressively reflects his sense of political disempowerment. Initially exile was particularly difficult for Dorfman because he had strongly believed in Chilean national sovereignty and the Unidad Popular.
However, it became increasingly clear to Dorfman that the socialist experiment of the Unidad Popular was doomed by the requirements of transnational capitalism. He began to see a need to rethink Marxist strategy for achieving economic and social change, and he questioned the notion of historical agency. Alice Nelson explains that, “After his exile, Dorfman experienced a tremendous difficulty in writing, as all of the structures used to describe reality before the coup seemed to fall along with the Utopian impulse of the Allende years” (n.10). Still, the literary aesthetics of Dorfman’s three exile novels, *Widows* (1981), *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* (1982), and *Mascara* (1988), are marked not only by a deep sense of loss, but also by a persistent hope. Even as these novels describe a seemingly ubiquitous authoritarianism, they tell stories of successful, although minor, resistance to official history.

Like *Hard Rain*, Dorfman’s exile novels also foretell history. *Widows* narrates the experiences of a small village in Greece on the eve of World War II. Caught in the grip of a repressive dictatorship, this small village has lost practically its entire adult male population; they have simply “disappeared.” The plot is centered on the claiming of bodies that are found in the river. It was only after Dorfman wrote the novel that unidentified bodies were first found floating in the rivers of Chile.

Dorfman’s wrote his second exile novel, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero*, more than a decade after the coup. A far more complex text, it reveals the increasing disillusionment of the Chilean exile community. Where *Widows* has a fairly clear sense of perpetrator and victim, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* destabilizes the issue by including descriptions of political conflict in ethical terms that range from premodern Manichaeanism to postmodern relativity. Moreover, the structure of the novel is more intricate than *Widows*. Apart from its narrative frame, *Widows* follows a traditional linear format with multiple narrative voices. In contrast, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* alternates between two sections, “Inside” and “Outside,” and footnotes, myths, and a number of interrelated narrative lines. “Inside” focuses on a fetal rebellion. The unborn fetuses stage a revolution, refusing to be born until the adults clean up the mess they have created. Inspired by memories of how his father fought similar battles, the son of Manuel Sendero returns to aid in the rebellion. “Outside” revolves around the reunion of two Chilean exiles, David and Felipe, who meet in Mexico City to work on a comic strip together. Their dialogue about the failures of Allende and the nightmare of Pinochet, interspersed with comments on their own personal failures and hopes, exposes the frustration and tension common to the exile condition. In essence, one section holds
the promise of revolution, and the other deals with its failure. Most important, *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* is a novel that bears the marks of prolonged exile and foretells the impossibility of return.

Dorfmans environment for creative production underwent a number of substantial changes during the initial stages of his exile. Having been exiled to France and the Netherlands, Dorfman took up exile residence in the United States in 1980. *Widows* was written while Dorfman was in exile in Europe, whereas *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* was funded in part by a grant from the Wilson Center at the Smithsonian. In 1983, as a result of international protests, his exile was lifted, and he was able to return to Chile. In 1986 Chilean news reported Dorfman as dead. After that, he visited his country only briefly and with much caution. This was the atmosphere of Dorfman's third exile novel, *Mascara*, a deeply disturbing narrative about a protagonist totally disconnected from society.

The protagonist of *Mascara*, while not officially in exile is irredeemably isolated. "Your eyes will slip over my face as if they were made of soap, sliding through my features like rain on a darkened waterfall" (8). Even his own family leaves him outcast: "People I have known for years stumble against me, push me. If I'm lucky, they'll apologize... One day, in front of our home, my own father gave me a shove. Not only did he not recognize me, on top of that he insulted me" (27). *Mascara* depicts the increased frustration of prolonged exile.

The treatment of exile in Dorfman's work is also related to his Jewish background and his parents' persecution. His emphasis on storytelling as a way of preserving history and memory also suggest the influence of his Jewish background on his writing. Dorfman has spoken at various times about the effects of his Jewish heritage on his writing, and his understanding of the effects of his background have shifted over time. He explains: "For most of my life I thought I was Jewish merely by accident, that I was Latin American by choice, and that it had befallen me to be an English-speaking person... If for decades I thought of Jews simply as being very much the observers of a series of religious habits and I observe none of these... now I've discovered I might be Jewish in the deepest sense. [So] while I used to answer that I'd be Jewish until the day when there was no more anti-Semitism, today I am more conscious of my background" (qtd. in Stavans 310-11). Jewish themes appear in Dorfman's work, especially in *Konfidenz* (1994), which is set in World War II. It is noteworthy that all of the exiled characters found in Dorfman's work place their faith in storytelling as the only antidote to the evils of tyranny.
Shortly after the release of *Mascara*, Chile held a plebiscite (1988) to vote "yes" or "no" to Pinochet remaining as the nation's leader. Dorfman flew to Chile to vote and was joined by 55 percent of the population who voted against Pinochet's rule. Since the transition to democracy, Dorfman has continued to write prolifically. His first significant work after the vote was *Death and the Maiden*, which he wrote in three weeks while in Chile.

The play deals with the crisis of a torture victim, Paulina, who believes that her husband, Gerardo, has unwittingly allowed her torturer, Doctor Miranda, to spend the night in their home. Since she was blindfolded during her detention, her proof rests on the man's smell and verbal ticks, which her husband, a lawyer, finds unconvincing evidence. Paulina has no faith in a judicial system which she sees making intolerable concessions to brutal criminals, so she tries to take justice into her own hands. In the play Paulina believes that she has found her torturer. But the play asks: How can she be sure? Is justice possible for her? Or is it possible that her measure of truth and justice are incompatible with national reconciliation?

Depicting some of the most critical crises facing a nation in transition to democracy from a dictatorship notorious for human rights violations, the play was an extraordinary success internationally, even though it was not well received in Chile. Dorfman explains Chile's resistance to confront the issues revealed in *Death and the Maiden* in an interview with Carlos Reyes and Maggie Paterson:

In a transition to a democracy as in Chile, Bolivia, South Africa, there are different reasons why people do not want to remember. They say, Look, if we keep on stirring up the past it's going to destroy us. This includes many who were themselves repressed, hurt or part of the resistance. Gerardo in *Death and the Maiden* does that, and the Captain in *Widows*. There's a future ahead, let's turn the page, let's forget this, let's start over again. This is a desire to reach a consensus about where the country is going, and it means excluding those who continue to remember. But the conflicts are real; you can submerge them but not erase them.

Set in an unknown location that very closely resembles Chile, *Death and the Maiden* anticipates important events in Chilean history. As we know, the play was written after the announcement in 1990 by newly elected moderate president Patricio Aylwin of the National Commission for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as the Rettig Commission, which was established to investigate the disappearances that resulted in death. Many tortured victims still alive were ignored by this process. Moreover, while the commission provided a lengthy report on atrocities committed during the dicta-
torship, most of the crimes named in the document were not prosecuted or punished. The atmosphere of immunity is part of the historical landscape within which Death and the Maiden was written. But at the time Dorfman wrote the play, he could not have foreseen that Pinochet, having served during the transition as head of the armed forces, would step down on 10 March 1998 to assume the position of senator-for-life, which ostensibly ensured his immunity from prosecution. Nor could Dorfman have known that on a trip to London in October 1999 for medical treatment, Pinochet would be arrested on behalf of the Spanish government, and like Dorfman’s character Doctor Miranda, Pinochet would avoid punishment and would resume his life in Chile. The ending of Dorfman’s play, where Paulina and her torturer Miranda are both in the audience of a Schubert concert, is a chilling foreshadowing of recent events in Chile. In 1991 Dorfman wrote in the postscript to the print version of the play: “If the play revealed many of the hidden conflicts that were just under the surface of the nation, and therefore posed a clear threat to people’s psychological security, it also could be an instrument through which they explored their identity and the contradictory options available to us in the years to come” (59-60). He could scarcely have known that years later, Pinochet’s arrest would send the country into conflict and turmoil yet again.

After the success of Death and the Maiden, Dorfman published his memoirs, Heading South, Looking North, which describes his life prior to the 1973 coup, interspersed with eight sections dealing with the events of the coup. Subtitled A Bilingual Journey, his memoir is a meditation on his dual identities in English and Spanish. It is also a text that explores the need to expose the private self to the public eye.

Dorfman’s second novel after the vote, The Nanny and the Iceberg, also reflects Chilean history. In this case Dorfman, in an epilogue to the novel, elaborates at length about the connections between the novel and recent events. The one clear connection, he states, is “the fact that in 1992 the Chilean government did indeed exhibit an iceberg from Antarctica in its pavilion in Sevilla as part of the World’s Fair” (355). Yet unlike Death and the Maiden, The Nanny and the Iceberg undermines a traditional treatment of history and accords it no more importance than cybersex. In fact, the novel is framed as an extraordinarily long letter/suicide note to an Internet girlfriend. If Death and the Maiden dealt with the pain of reconciliation, The Nanny and the Iceberg deals with the pain of alienation under hypercapitalism and focuses more on the cultural landscape of Chile postdictatorship. In this way The Nanny and the Iceberg has connections to the section of The Last Song of Manuel
Sendero that describes a dystopic Chile of the future named Chilex. Chilex is “a country whose authoritarian and capitalist-oriented leaders have turned the nation into pure commodity. The imaginary product of David (an exile) and his friends, Chilex is the subject of a comic strip. It is a fictive vision of Chile under Pinochet constructed by exiles who are coming to terms, in various ways, with the legacy the dictator has left their country” (“Chilex” 90). In The Last Song of Manuel Sendero and The Nanny and the Iceberg, Dorfman pursues the clash between utopian and dystopian visions of the future as opposed to the critical examination of the present offered in work like Death and the Maiden.

Despite such a rich literary landscape, the critical study of Dorfman’s work has been scant. Unsurprisingly, most of it has been directed toward Death and the Maiden due to its extraordinary success. Central critical concerns have been the treatment of violence (Castro), truth (Maree), politics (Gregory), voice (Glickman) and memory (Alcides Jofré and Hildebrand). The only book-length study of his work to date has been Salvador Oropesa’s La obra de Ariel Dorfman: Ficción y crítica. Oropesa’s text provides a useful guide to many of the structural concerns one faces when working on an exiled and bilingual writer, but his use of theory is often unsupported by the texts under analysis. Drawing on the work of Julia Kristeva, Oropesa sees Widows as depicting a Manichaeian, yet modern ethics. He then analyzes The Last Song of Manuel Sendero through the critical theory of Derrida, concluding that Dorfman’s second novel in exile represents his literary move to postmodernism. His analysis of Mascara rests on the theory of Lyotard, etc. As I have argued elsewhere, Oropesa fails to appreciate the subtlety of Dorfman’s work. In attempting to place Dorfman’s writing into preestablished critical categories, Oropesa misses the most interesting features of Dorfman’s work, namely his emphasis on the crisis and tension between history and writing.

Writing Exile

Exile leaves an indelible mark on writers’ literary careers. Dorfman’s third exile occurred at a formative moment in his writing career—after the release of his first novel Hard Rain and as a consequence of his subversive text How to Read Donald Duck. He first decided to flee the country when he saw How to Read Donald Duck being burned on television. Dorfman’s exile literature is marked by traditional themes—alienation, loss, nostalgia—in addition to the problems of belonging, nationalism, language and identity. Most studies of exile literature either concentrate on the positive aes-
thetic experience of exile or describe exile narrative as nostalgic and creatively restricted. Dorfman’s treatment of these themes separates him in significant ways from this traditional binary of exile writing. Because Dorfman’s writing does not fall neatly into the main categories of exile writing, his work requires the critic to reassess divisions such as modern/postmodern, nostalgic/vanguard, realist/formalist, etc. Not only does his work transcend these common critical categories, it also depicts some of the most pressing crises facing a writer whose work is both politically and aesthetically complex.

We must remember that Dorfman’s exile coincided with the rise of poststructuralism, with its attendant influence on the literary form, and of postmodernism, with its radical questioning of any systematic way of understanding the world. Dorfman’s exile literature lies at an intersection between a loss of faith in politics and a loss of faith in literature’s ability to describe history or the self in crisis. What is important to note, though, is that his condition of exile and his history as a politically active writer continue to influence his writing, and he remains committed to social change. His literature written in exile is neither freely deterritorial in some Derridean or Deleuze-and-Guattarian sense, nor is it purely nostalgic, dreaming of a seamless return and employing language as epic, romantic, or transparently realist.

Dorfman does not simply convey his exile experience through linear narrative; his linguistic and narrative complexity results, in part, from the political crises he witnessed. Authoritarian regimes often control language through propaganda and censorship in order to maintain power. In these situations the chasm between what is experienced and what language describes causes a crisis of language, the trauma of which continues even after the author has left his country. Consequently, Dorfman’s exile texts struggle to narrate; yet, they are uncertain about language’s ability to account for history. Dorfman develops this tension through his narrative investigation into the relationship between the author, the authority, and the authoritarian.

*Widows*, Dorfman’s first novel in exile, begins with the problem of authorship and authority. Dorfman’s writing was censored during the Pinochet regime. Hoping that his text could reach a Chilean public, Dorfman used a pseudonym and located the novel on another continent (a small town in Greece) and during another period of political turmoil (the eve of World War II). He planned to publish the novel under the pseudonym of Eric Lohmann. As Dorfman explains in the prologue to the novel, he wanted to replace his forced physical absence with a literary presence, even if it were under a
false name. Unfortunately, the South American publishing house that had originally agreed to the project decided not to risk publishing the novel. Dorfman then chose to publish the novel in Mexico under his own name, but keeping the false frame. Dorfman's obsession with being read in the very country he had to leave broadened the social critique of his novel considerably. Exile showed Dorfman how the author and the authoritarian are linked in their efforts to communicate. How, Dorfman asks, can one tell a story without being authoritative? And how, further, can one do this and still reach a public living under authoritarianism and censorship? Widows asks: Who has the authority to tell the story? Who is the author of the story? Who has the authority to alter history? And most important, which version will prevail? These questions continue to weigh heavily in his second exile novel, The Last Song of Manuel Sendero. As Dorfman himself explains, "...I've always felt that the struggle against the dictatorship of the author upon the reader is one of the central questions in my work" (qtd. in Incledon 99).

Set in a small village in Greece, Widows investigates many of the issues that were to plague the Southern Cone during the period of the Dirty Wars. One day, a dead body in an advanced state of decay appears in a river, and the central conflict revolves around who has the right, and the authority, to explain the existence and identity of this body. The novel turns on the issues of identity, memory, power, and loss. The women of the village, using their roles as mothers, wives, and daughters, argue that they must have the right to give their loved ones a Christian burial, while the authorities argue that the women cannot prove the identity of the dead men.

The Last Song of Manuel Sendero is significantly more complex than Widows. It is not a linear narrative with closure, but rather a series of narrative lines that intertwine and circle one another. The many levels of narrative include the myth of Manuel Sendero and the story of the fetal rebellion, the dialogue between the Chilean exiles David and Felipe, the story of the comic strip David is writing, a series of critical footnotes from scholars analyzing the dialogue between David and Felipe thirty thousand years later, and the legend of David and the Dragon Pinchot. Each of the narrative lines relates in some way to the notion of exile, inner or external, and each comments on the problems of being socially outcast.

This novel displays far greater doubt and despair than Widows. Dorfman wonders whether the Allende years were only an illusion of political possibility. Two of the novel's characters in exile, David and Felipe, debate this issue while stuck in a traffic jam in Mexico. David says: "I hope you told them that our experiment failed." Felipe: "Failed? I wouldn't say that. You learned a lot. People were
educated.” David responds: “Failed, Felipe. [Nothing we did] has any permanent value. . . . Not valid. And I don’t see where we did much consciousness raising, do you?” (83). Later David describes Pinochet’s Chile as a postmodern space of hyperconsumerism: “Ex-Chile: it was, but is no more. A trademark, a copyright, a department store more than a country. Like a supermarket of underdevelopment. . . . Third World Shopping Center, continuous show. . . . Who will buy the first Chil-child?” (92-93). This vision of Chile is far bleaker than the case of the disappeared in Widows, because now Pinochet has invaded the consciousness of an entire country, stealing their dreams. For instance, Dorfman describes his vision of Chile under Pinochet in a scene where a cartoonist, Carl Barks, has been asked to help in the project of national reconstruction. Barks watches TV, which speaks directly to him. “God, announced Reverend Rex, is like a giant computer, a screen filling infinity. . . . The faithful have to facilitate God’s labor, so that his work will be advanced. That’s why His ideal man is being fashioned in this exceptional country. . . . What better imagination for that man than your own? . . . To live forever, my dear friend, is to Colonize the Great Beyond” (369). Barks will create the perfect citizen and help God as well as Chile’s leaders to rule the world. Here Dorfman critiques the role of God while also attacking colonialism, cultural imperialism, and postmodern levels of technology.

The key to this cultural colonization is found in the figure of the father/author/authoritarian and its complex relationship to modernity. Dorfman’s work in exile suggests the intricate ways that Pinochet’s symbolic fathering of modern Chile is directly tied to a profound national identity crisis. Pinochet’s regime was founded on the championing of capitalism over Allende’s socialism. The Pinochet regime’s combination of dictatorship, a premodern form of government modeled on sovereignty, and capitalism, a modern form of economy that requires a sense of individual freedom, created a divided and conflicted sense of national identity. Augusto Pinochet was an advocate of capitalism, but, as a dictator, he also expected unconditional obedience from the populace. Economically, Chile practiced modern capitalism, but socially, Chileans were expected to remain premodern with none of the rights associated with modern society.

Pinochet was the central figure for the premodern and modern ideologies that formed the basis of his regime. Calling himself the Second Father of the Nation, Pinochet’s depiction as a benevolent father was crucial to the foundation of his authoritarian government. As he viewed from a distance the construction of Pinochet’s image, Dorfman felt a need to combat it. In fact, in an article writ-
ten after the 1989 plebiscite which called for a presidential election to be held in 1990, Dorfman explained the persistent centrality and complexity of the image of Pinochet sixteen years after his initial takeover: “In all cases, the general weighs at the center of one’s life, a dark anchor narrowing the range of every choice. . . . He is burned into our memory, in our customs, into the way we speak, into our dreams. How are we to exorcise him?” (“Adiós General” 76). Here Dorfman describes Pinochet as a devil inhabiting the body of the Chilean nation. Yet at the same time that Dorfman writes hoping to challenge Pinochet’s image as a savior, by describing him as a devil, he also combats his modern image as a statesman, an advocate of capitalism, and a father of the nation: “Even for exiles, Pinochet, by taking possession of our landscape and the people we loved, became the owner of our future” (75). Dorfman emphasizes here his vision of Pinochet as the ultimate capitalist consumer, one who purchases not only land but also people and their dreams.

In The Last Song of Manuel Sendero Dorfman’s critique of Pinochet occurs on every symbolic level that Pinochet himself tries to occupy. In so doing, Dorfman rejects the concept of nation that Pinochet represents. The nation should not be a space of oppression. The leader should not be an authoritarian father, and its people should not be treated as naive children. When Dorfman works on these issues, he does not reject the concept of nation, but instead argues for a different nation that contrasts that of the military regime. In The Last Song of Manuel Sendero Dorfman narrates two alternative nations. The first refers to Chile under Allende and is nostalgic for the past: “You take charge of the government, the poor take over, and one of those unique and miraculous periods opens up for the first time ever, and there’s a real possibility of putting an end to the misery of all of those kids . . . “ (32). But as we know, this utopic nation came to an end and was replaced by tyranny: “they throw you out. And these sons of bitches take your place.” So the vision of Chile under Allende does not provide a solution to Pinochet’s nation. Elsewhere in the same novel, Dorfman narrates a mythical nation where the good are able to defeat the forces of evil: “Once upon a time there was a land of meanwhile, a time between parentheses. . . . Once upon a time Manuel Sendero had dreamed that his voice could rescue his beloved from Hell and resurrect his son and move the beasts to pity. Once upon a time . . . Manuel Sendero believed that he was immortal” (407). Here Dorfman equates nation with myth, as did Pinochet. Just as he contrasts Pinochet with Allende, Dorfman tries to suggest a version of the nation that is benevolent and holds the possibility of peace: these alternative nations are meant to counter Pinochet’s official
version of Chile.

Yet even as Dorfman endeavors to provide an alternative view of his nation's history, his ultimate critique of Pinochet's patrimony of Chile is postmodern. While the term postmodern has been taken to mean many things, here I mean specifically that in postmodernity, the nation is not the center of social organization as it was in modernity. Because of the effects of technology and multinational corporations, information, culture, and people flow across national borders, thereby reducing the importance of the nation. So, on a postmodern level, Dorfman rejects the image of Pinochet by defining him as a puppet of multinational corporations. For instance, in The Last Song of Manuel Sendero the figure of the Caballero, an evil tyrant, is about to shoot the son of Manuel Sendero when the narrative breaks. Who gave the order to shoot? "The Caballero, or someone identical to him—there were so many of them, so many of his twins in this universe..." (403). In postmodernity the source of evil is dispersed and fragmented; the only solution is to question radically the basis of modern civilization. David, an exile from Chile, sums up a fellow exile's thoughts on Pinochet's persistent presence: "He said... that revolutions have failed because we haven't taken into account that the ones who made them were old men. That exploitation starts in everyday life, in the family, in sexual relationships, in emotional unhappiness, in the authority of the father over the child and the husband over the wife. That while that wasn't changed, revolutions would go on reproducing the same old structures of domination" (264). So domination is a function of modern civilization. And it is doomed to premodern cyclical repetition, because modernity relies on the premodern social organization of the center and the margin. Such critiques of modernity are the most forceful features of Dorfman's attack on Pinochet's regime, because he does not simply argue for substituting Pinochet with a symbolic Allende.

For writers, the postmodern has also meant a deep distrust in language's ability to represent as well as communicate. Because Dorfman recognizes that language is also a source of authority, his writing leaves gaps where the reader can negotiate personal conclusions. The Last Song of Manuel Sendero is not a linear narrative with closure. It has many levels of narrative. One of the footnotes states that the text under analysis is "of uncertain authorship and obscure national origin" (79). While the author and national origin of the novel are not totally occluded in the text, Dorfman has tried to problematize the connections between authority and writing by fragmenting his narrative and questioning the notion of fathering a text.
Thus to confront Pinochet as father of the nation, Dorfman's narrative uses a combination of premodern, modern, and postmodern cultural referents. For instance, to counter the premodern image of Pinochet as national savior and predestined monarch, Dorfman tells the myth of Manuel Sendero, suggesting him as a hero for Chileans. The son of Sendero calls out to his father and reaffirms that he believes in his father and not in the evil Caballero: "Tell [the Caballero] he doesn't exist . . . that he has all of the power and none of the love . . . he'd have to be left all alone on the planet in order to be successful . . . tell him that my father your father our father who art on the earth that is not yet ours will find us . . . [D]o anything but surrender . . ." (412-13).

Manuel Sendero's song is able to affect all who hear it deeply, and he has been asked by the Caballero to sing on behalf of the regime. If he refuses, he, his wife, and his unborn son will all die. There are many versions of this tale told throughout the text, but in each one it is clear that Manuel represents good and the Caballero represents evil. When the son of Sendero returns to finish the battle that his father lost, he still lives in the time of his father's mythical legend, but the rest of the country has forgotten about him: "He tried to calm himself down, thinking that the same thing happens to every traveler who returns with anticipated nostalgia after years of distance and finds that someone has poisoned the wells in his holy places" (177). Now Eduardo, who was part of the first rebellion of the unborn, has the chance to overcome the Caballero. The Son of Sendero thinks, "it was the country Eduardo had inherited and the one that would be his grandchildren's if he were lucky, and if things went badly, it would be the Caballero's grandchildren, depending on who was stronger and more cunning . . ." (177). Strength and cunning are the tools of mythical heroes. This story, as it is told to children of the future, is meant to teach children about the evils of tyranny. Dorfman uses this premodern form of myth where good fights evil in a timeless, nameless place to counter the image of Pinochet as the benevolent father of the Chilean land.

Moreover, in the same novel he offers two competing visions of a modern leader each wishing to be the symbolic father of the nation: Pinochet and Felipe. Felipe represents the new generation of the Unidad Popular, one that, after the tragic death of Allende, recognizes the need for compromise and caution. David, on the other hand, represents the idealist who is unable to adapt to the new realities of the Pinochet government: "his imagination knew no bounds" (322). Felipe describes David after the coup: "I confess I was fed up with him. That failure to observe the norms of security was typical of David, who went on living as if we still had the gov-
ernment in our hands, as if the coup hadn't happened, not to mention the terror that followed it" (321). It is the conflict between David and Felipe—representative of leftists unable to reach a unified position—which allows people like Pinochet to remain in power. The crisis for Chile is that only those willing to advocate repression and order can remain in power; because Felipe and David bicker over the correct role for their party—because they are fragmented—they are unable to pose a true threat to Pinochet. David is no longer a member of the party: "If you only knew what a relief it is to not be connected to anybody. . . . I'm going back and I can't do anybody any harm. . . . What happens depends on me and nobody else." Felipe counters: "If everybody felt like that we'd have Pinochet for a thousand years" (387). The political idealism of the Allende years has been shattered. Political activism, in crisis, gives way to Machiavellian leaders like Pinochet. Pinochet is the modern statesman, making deals with foreign corporations and increasing tourism. He knows that to succeed, he must present himself as the perfect leader capable of bringing peace and prosperity to all "good Chileans."

In *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* the transnational reach of both pop culture and technology has made the notions of individual and cultural identity extremely fragile. For instance, in a grim comic strip written by David, technological achievements have made it possible to create perfectly capitalist societies. Medical advances have been able to locate the source of individual will, the x-factor, which causes people to rebel, and governments have learned how to sap it from the populace. Carl Barks explains to his wife: "The total solution. . . . A scientific model for conduct, finally, for the improvement of the human race" (308). Hitler's Final Solution becomes the "total solution." In this version of postmodernity it is no longer a question of choosing between Allende and Pinochet, but of recognizing that now the Allies and the Axis powers are all in favor of capitalism.

Analyzing Dorfman's exile narrative is difficult because of the hybrid temporalities his work occupies and the contradictory strategies he uses to challenge the power of Pinochet. Most critics prefer to focus on only one aspect of his project, disregarding the rest. For instance, Salvador Oropesa has described *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* as a postmodern novel with none of the Manichean impulses of Dorfman's previous work (16). Yet, as I have shown, the novel has elements of premodern Manichaeanism and postmodern relativity. It is necessary to consider all of the elements of his narrative, even when some of them seem to contradict each other. *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* narrates myths that compete with
those proffered by Pinochet, it tries to give a different view of history and the nation, and it questions the value and meaning of such quests: Dorfman’s novel simultaneously faces, defaces, and effaces the image of Pinochet as father of the nation.

Not only does Dorfman challenge Pinochet as father, he also questions the role of the author. Beginning with the frame of Widows and the academic footnotes to The Last Song of Manuel Sendero, Dorfman’s exile literature represents the crisis of authorship within the context of authoritarianism. This type of challenge to the authority of the author is continued in Mascara, where the novel is in three parts, each narrated by a different character. In the first part the narrator is speaking to a doctor who cannot hear him: “So this story that I’ll tell to the face of yours that’s in my head will have to do” (4). The tone of the narration suggests that the narrator might be confessing. Yet it is clear that he does not expect to be heard by anyone. The second part begins with the narrative of Oriana, an amnesiac, who has taken refuge from two men trying to capture her with the unnamed, faceless narrator of the first part. Yet while the first narrator addresses himself to the Doctor and the Doctor addresses himself to the faceless man (in the third part), Oriana’s audience appears vague, almost as though she is merely speaking to herself. In the end of the novel, which, unsurprisingly, Dorfman names “A Sort of Epilogue,” the outcome of the story also remains unclear.

Despite these narrative maneuvers meant to undermine a totalizeable novel, Dorfman’s novels in exile engage in a totalizing attack on the power of authoritarianism. In Widows the fight for the disappeared reveals the evils of dictatorship. In The Last Song of Manuel Sendero the different narrative lines all converge upon tales of evil men who are challenged, but not necessarily conquered, by benevolent heroes. And in Mascara two men each desire to increase their authority, one over a nation and the other over a woman. Each of Dorfman’s exile novels progressively treats the problem of evil men and finally suggests through the representation of ambiguous heroes that evil is intrinsically connected to power.

**Writing after Exile: Between Global and Local**

Dorfman’s exile was extremely long, seventeen years, and it is not surprising that he was unable to return to live in Chile after the first presidential elections since the coup. His children had grown up in the United States, and he had become increasingly estranged from his counterparts who had never left Chile. While Dorfman con-
tinues to spend time in Chile, he no longer thinks of return as an option. You cannot return to what no longer exists, and the Chile that lives in Dorfman's heart and his memories is long gone. Moreover, the Chile of today may no longer have Pinochet as the official head of state, but his economic practices have become firmly entrenched. Marc Cooper points out that "Pinochet's military dictatorship may have been voted out by the 1988 plebiscite, but his economic and political model has triumphed" (12). Dorfman's writing has adapted to this new condition, and his work has achieved an interesting balance between global and local resonance. In fact, the more specifically local the tale, the more global the impact, as evidenced by the play Death and the Maiden.

A number of specific changes have affected Dorfman's postexile writing. The most important is the absence of a clear enemy. With Pinochet out of power, the military regime and its dictator are not the most visible source of oppressive power. Intellectuals like Dorfman who had blatantly opposed Pinochet now have to contend with the fact that his legacy is far more pervasive than the human rights violations he authorized and encouraged. In an article on the contemporary cultural landscape in Chile, I explained the primary dilemma for oppositional culture: "Leftist intellectuals in Chile today no longer confront censorship from the regime, but, instead, face the political apathy and materialist desire of a public mesmerized by Chilean capitalism"("Chilex" 91). The fight to remove Pinochet was at the center of the exiled writers' struggle. But, as we have seen, the prolonged battle to bring Pinochet to justice has eluded closure.

The role of Pinochet in shaping the writing of Chilean postexiles is only a part of the complex social terrain these writers live on. Not only has the end to the dictatorship not provided closure, this false ending has come at a time when the dawn of global economics has long since entered full daylight. If scholars wondered at the possibilities of late capitalism and globalization of markets in the early 1990s, those musings have been left aside as we recognize that the twenty-first century ushered in the almost complete reign of capitalism controlled by a small number of multinational corporations. What this has meant for socially committed writers like Dorfman is that the object of their critique has become far more dispersed, moving beyond the issues of oppressive political regimes. Moreover, Dorfman's work combines a balance between critiques that resound at the global level with fictional accounts aimed at representing specifically local experiences.

The setting for Death and the Maiden is described as follows: "The time is the present and the place, a country that is probably
Chile, but could be any country that has given itself a democratic government after a long period of dictatorship." From the outset the reader is drawn to the parallel between the events in the play and the events in Chile after the first presidential elections in seventeen years. Yet, as the description makes clear, the events may suggest Chile but they also reflect a common condition suffered by nations recovering from brutal military regimes. We are told that the play is both local and global. The way in which the play is able to represent the local and the global simultaneously is testimony to Dorfman's success at delving into the deepest psychological and social crises faced by a nation in the postdictatorial psychological and physical torture when the perpetrators remain anonymous and unpunished?

In countries like Chile the torturers and the tortured have lived, with difficulty, on the same terrain for centuries. Much fiction from the region has represented the social crisis that results from living with those who were responsible for committing atrocities. Marta Traba has a particularly interesting description of the problem in her novel En cualquier lugar (In Any Place), in which a woman flees into exile and is followed by her torturer because his identity depends on her. In Juan Rulfo's Pedro Páramo a young man learns from his dying mother that his father raped an entire town and her as well. So it is not the shock of this uncomfortable situation that sets Dorfman's work apart; instead it is the way that Death and the Maiden circles around the question of justice and vindication. In the other examples the protagonist may always be denied justice, but the roles of victim and victimizer always remain clear. Death and the Maiden destabilizes these roles.

Paulina, a torture victim, is married to Gerardo, who has recently agreed to serve on a truth commission that will investigate the disappearances that resulted in death during the dictatorship. Experiencing car trouble on the way to his house in the country, Gerardo is aided by Doctor Miranda. Later when Miranda stops by the house, Paulina recognizes his voice and knows that this man who has befriended her husband raped and tortured her while she was held in detention. She decides to make this man confess. The play revolves around the questions of whether Paulina is insane and whether Doctor Miranda actually is her torturer. Moreover, the play presents the reader with a central dilemma. If Paulina was blindfolded and never saw her torturer, how will she ever be able to prove his identity? The only evidence she has is that she recognizes Miranda's voice; she remembers his verbal ticks and his smell; he
used to play Schubert for her before he raped her, and she has found a tape of Schubert in his car. For some, it seems that Paulina has incontrovertible evidence, but for others, it appears that Doctor Miranda is being treated in exactly the same way that Paulina was treated. If Paulina uses the methods of her torturers to extract a confession from Miranda, then is she no better?

The characters in the play take on an archetypal symbolism. Paulina and Doctor Miranda represent the poles of the left and the right with Gerardo standing in for the moderate center. Yet another way to understand the structure of the play is to see Paulina as the victim caught between the physical abuse of Miranda and the mental abuse of Gerardo, who refuses to believe that she is right. Or we can see each character as a variation of the same characteristics, where each will lie (see Alcides Jofré 93), and where each is interested in attaining his or her own goals. Dorfman divulges to his readers that he has constructed these characters carefully so that they are both similar and diametrically opposed, so that we reject them and identify with them:

In times such as these, when the more miserable and distant lands seem to disappear from the horizon, it may help us a bit, perhaps a teensy weensy bit, I would hope, to think of the Paulinas, the Gerardos, the Robertos, of the world—to figure out for ourselves which of these three we most resemble, how much of our secluded lives are expressed in each of these characters and in all of them. Until finally, I would also hope, we would realize that what we felt when we watch and whisper and ache with these faraway people from faraway Chile could well be that strange trembling state of humanity called recognition, a bridge across our divided globe. (61)

The recognition of the characters and their conflicts made possible by Dorfman's text accounts, in part, for why the play has enjoyed so much global success.

The global reach of the text is also explained by the way that Dorfman is able to ask timeless questions through the specific case of Chile after Pinochet. As the first text written by Dorfman after the official end of the Pinochet regime, Death and the Maiden represents a postexile literary aesthetic. One can never know if Doctor Miranda is the evil man who raped and beat Paulina. The crisis that Paulina faces cannot be easily resolved. Even though she knows that Miranda is the man who abused her, she has been denied the ability to accuse him publicly.

This dilemma is emphasized in the ending of the play. Demonstrating that Paulina has undergone a measure of healing, the play ends with Paulina attending a Schubert concert. However, Paulina's
tenuous healing process is underscored by the presence of Dr. Miranda in the audience. The ending demonstrates how Paulina occupies a liminal place in the new Chilean social order: she has not been forced into hiding or an asylum, but she has not been vindicated either. Meanwhile, Gerardo speaks with an acquaintance at the concert and discloses the experiences of another woman who, unlike Paulina, was heard by the commission he served on: “The dignity she had always privately possessed was now conferred on her publicly, her words were really worth something. Now that’s priceless. She and her family have been vindicated, publicly re-integrated into the community” (55). These words are spoken as Paulina notices Miranda in the room. The disparity between the woman Gerardo describes and Paulina alone in her pain functions as an indictment of a justice system unable to ameliorate the experiences of victims like Paulina.

Yet the play, homonymous with the Schubert quartet, represents more than the story of Paulina, Gerardo and Miranda; it also demonstrates how fiction has emancipatory possibilities. If traditional justice eluded Paulina, perhaps symbolic justice in the form of a fictionalized account will work to bridge the gap. Paulina wants to hear Miranda’s confession—the acts etched in her brain must be moved to the realm of discourse by her rapist. She does not need to punish him; hearing the words will be enough. The account of Paulina’s attempt at revealing the truth also associates the play with testimonial or the theater of social protest. The testimonial form is a literary strategy for bearing witness and, while critics have debated the successes and failures of this project, it is generally understood to be liberating precisely because it allows the speaker to tell his or her story and to be heard. Death and the Maiden demonstrates that while the testimonial is crucial to healing, it is important to recognize that many are denied the opportunity. Paulina’s story is not a testimonial because that space has been closed to her. The only way for stories like those of Paulina to be heard is through complex literary strategies that recognize that the testimonial form must take on multiple variations. These new variations focus on the crisis of truth that faces victims, like Paulina, who will never have the kinds of physical evidence required by the system.

Konfidenz, like Widows, deals with political repression and authoritarianism on the eve of World War II. Framed as a novel of suspense, the text begins when a woman receives an anonymous phone call from a man who knows every intimate detail of her life. The man tells her that he is calling on behalf of her lover, Martin, who can’t come to the phone. For the first half of the book, the
reader does not know the time or location of the narrative. Once these facts are revealed, the novel appears to be located in a very specific historical moment, Paris in 1939, and around a specific set of characters, anti-Nazi Germans who are working to fight Nazism from France. The reader's attempts to locate the specifics of the narrative are further frustrated when, after the first chapter, the narrator interrupts and begins to draw connections between global politics and the events in the story that might seem to be specific to pre-World War II France.

Throughout the novel, the narrator continuously breaks the dialogue and explains certain key elements of the drama from his own clearly biased perspective. During the first break in the narrative, the narrator informs the reader that this story is not invented but discovered. He therefore questions the idea of fiction. According to the narrator himself, he functions as a conduit for a timeless, yet historical tale of desire and deceit, politics and love. This simple notion of the narrator as an objective instrument of the facts becomes complicated when the narrator explains that he knows that he has a double, another man, with sinister intent who also wants to take charge of the lives of the characters. In this way the naive narrator is shown to be false, for he must always respond to external pressures. The sinister other man does not want to tell the story of the characters; he wants to annihilate their story. Intercalated throughout the novel, the reader finds confessions by the narrator, who is terrified of this other man. The figure (whose identity is eventually revealed as the Police Inspector) functions as a ghost for hegemony and authoritarian power. He symbolizes that which in the 1990s no longer had a face or a name. In the novel the man is clearly a reference to fascism, but as the neo-Nazis of the 1990s demonstrated, the source of evil and the desire to impose power on others did not end with the death of Hitler or the fall of the Berlin Wall, in Germany or anywhere else.

The narrator who wants to reveal the story of his characters must contend with the other man who wants to silence them. This interplay between the two figures is central to Konfidenz and indicates essential ways that this novel displays a postexile aesthetic. Even though the narrator challenges the sinister plans of the other man, his evil twin, the other man has a degree of power and control that the narrator refuses to impose on his characters. The issue of the power to disseminate a story versus the power to silence history is dramatized through the relationship between the narrator and the unknown other man. This tension also exposes Dorfman's concern about the liberating possibilities of storytelling: even though his literature depends on the possibility that literature has liberat-
ing potential, after exile, the painful realities of Chile's past were still being silenced. Now, though, it was not only the figures like Pinochet who wanted to keep history quiet, it was also the members of the moderate center, like Gerardo from *Death and the Maiden*, who were willing to sacrifice the truth for a false peace. *Konfidenz* explores the ways that power controls the forces of historical memory, except now the division between those with power and those without is far less clear.

One of the central ways that Dorfman explores this problem in *Konfidenz* is through the protagonist, Leon, who is both a victim and a victimizer. He seduces Barbara by trying to convince her that she is the woman of his dreams at the same time that he is running from the Nazis. Barbara travels to Paris to visit Martin, her lover, but upon arrival at her hotel, the phone rings and it is a man she has never met. This man knows an extraordinary amount of personal information about her, including the way she likes her clitoris touched. She is understandably distressed. Later, he explains to her that she is the woman of his dreams, Susana. He believes that it is his right to enter her private world. When she becomes angry, his response is that under the current government in Germany there is no privacy. Like a fascist government that takes away the rights of its citizens at will, Leon believes that his violation of Barbara's rights is justified. Leon, then, is not just the victim of the Nazis who want to arrest him; he is also a threat to Barbara. Similarly, the narrator of the novel is not simply the man who is afraid of his evil other; it is actually a combination of both forces, one which wants to tell this story and one which wants to silence it. Evil is both faceless and ubiquitous. Most important, evil is now found within those characters presented as on the good side, like Leon who is anti-Nazi. Dorfman’s posttextile writing establishes that the source of evil is dispersed and that evil is located everywhere. Those aspects of a character's identity, which could be fixed in Dorfman’s earlier writing, now cannot be isolated or contained.

For this reason, the reader does not learn the national origin of Barbara and Leon until the middle of the novel when the narrator also discovers their identity. Modernist certainties like evil and nationality are disrupted by the postmodern, posttextile aesthetic that preoccupies Dorfman. Nevertheless, the postmodern aesthetic of dispersion does not mean that evil does not exist or that it is not important to fight it. Dorfman constructs a tactic of literary guerrilla fighting. A dispersed enemy requires dispersed forms of insurrection. Therefore, as the narrative of the phone conversation between Barbara and Leon progresses, the narrator slowly explains certain orienting features of the story. The nationality of the char-
acters, the year the novel takes place, and other local referents are revealed only after the global reach of the story has been established.

Dorfman’s next postexile work, *The Nanny and the Iceberg*, once again toys with a Chilean locale and its global context. Unlike *Death and the Maiden* and *Konfidenz*, both of which deal with the difficulty of dialogue and the relationship between power and communication, *The Nanny and the Iceberg* discards dialogue in favor of a modified version of the epistolary novel. In this case, though, the letter is not a series, but one very long suicide note sent to a woman the protagonist communicates with via the Internet.

The epistolary genre has often been associated with an investigation into the construction of the self, and the protagonist of *The Nanny and the Iceberg*, Gabriel McKenzie, is unquestionably in search of his identity. Returning to Chile at the age of twenty-three after spending almost twenty years in exile with his mother in New York, Gabriel hopes that a reunion with his father will help him lose his virginity and find his sense of self. Janice, the supposed recipient of this suicide note, represents Gabriel’s only link with another, and this link is highly tenuous. He has not seen her since he was fifteen and he does not know if she will even read the text he is sending to her. In the meantime, people with whom he is expected to have deep and intimate relations surround Gabriel: his mother, his father, his uncle, his nanny, family friends, etc. This extraordinary sense of alienation is explained as the consequence of post-Pinochet Chile, where community has been so thoroughly fragmented that the youth react by social withdrawal. An epigraph to the novel by Deena Metzger explains that young men and women become paranoid, violent and antisocial in the face of war or the disintegration of community. In this way *The Nanny and the Iceberg* must be read as Dorfman’s musings about the problems facing Chile almost ten years into the transition from dictatorship, where practically none of the necessary healing work has been done by the nation and where the most common tactic for handling the past is amnesia.

It is noteworthy that Dorfman decides to narrate the disjointed social landscape of Chile with a variation on the epistolary form. The text in the form of the letter underscores not only the protagonist’s problem with his own identity but also the problem of addressee. Janice is clearly an inadequate recipient of the text. As discussions on Internet identity have made clear, the chat room participant is never totally honest and usually manipulates the truth for personal gain. Gabriel really knows nothing about Janice (they haven’t seen each other in years), and she only knows what he wants to tell her. For instance, he has neglected to tell her that he
has not aged and that he has a "baby face," a face with no history or experience. So the sender is himself absent of meaning. Even though Gabriel creates a version of his identity through writing a letter, he is a fragment; his life has been fractured and his community is largely uninterested in his problems. This situation contrasts with the typical setting of the novel of letters. The use of the epistolary form in this novel actually serves to disrupt the concept of communication because it emphasizes that a unified subject is not writing the text, nor is a unified subject, who will learn from the adventures of the writer, going to receive it.

Yet the premodern form of the epistle is not the only driving narrative construct behind this text; it is also a picaresque novel. Typically considered to contain unscrupulous characters lacking morals, the picaresque is also a form that deals with the disintegration of society. Gabriel is amoral and self-absorbed, but his social alienation is also the result of a neoliberal consumer society that has sacrificed community in favor of fostering individualism and materialism. Gabriel, representing the disenfranchised youth of Chile or New York, is concerned only with instant self-gratification, and this social context resonates with the general global decline of community in the face of transnational capitalism. The fragmentation of society has become so complete that Gabriel's letter may not be the most important letter of the text. The protagonist's story has to vie with another narrative thread for novelistic centrality. Shortly after Gabriel arrives, his father is called to meet with his friend Pablo Barón. His father's ties to Pablo bear directly on Gabriel's identity since a bet made the day after Gabriel was conceived has ruled the lives of his father, his uncle, and Pablo Barón. The vanity and egoism of the bet is shown to be symptomatic of Chilean macho society: Gabriel's father would have sex every day; Pablo Barón would become the most powerful man in Chile; and Gabriel's uncle would see socialism rule the continent. But Pablo thinks that he will lose the bet since he needs the Chilean exhibit of an iceberg at the World's Fair to be successful, and someone is sending threatening letters about the project. Tagging along with his father, Gabriel sees the first of many letters written on blue paper with a hostile message about the iceberg. Wanting to impress his father, he agrees to investigate the matter. As a result, while he is writing his suicide letter, he is also writing about the other letters. The possible suspects for the threatening letters, who are also disenfranchised members of Chilean society, displace the primacy of Gabriel's story, and the novel effectively investigates the complete destruction of community that takes place when there is no faith in justice or hope for the future. These literary tactics also disrupt the typical
picaresque protagonist so thoroughly that the novel ends with another narrative voice, that of Gabriel's nanny, who watches him prepare a mass bombing/suicide from the other side of the grave and with the company of Che Guevara. Like most of Dorfman's prior literary works, this novel places its hope on the storytelling process. The most directly Chilean (because it is unmistakably set in Chile) of his exile or postexile novels to date, *The Nanny and the Iceberg* is told in a way that allows Dorfman to connect events in Chile with those around the globe. As the narrative moves to the World's Fair in Seville, the story is thrust into an international frame where the nihilism of youth culture can be understood as a global phenomenon. This novel demonstrates how the global only makes sense within the local, and the local only makes sense within the global. After exile, the separation of global and local is no longer comprehensible.

*The Nanny and the Iceberg* was preceded by Dorfman's memoirs, *Heading South, Looking North*, and it is important to understand the two as complementary. The memoir captures history and the novel seems to abandon it. In the novel a young man, who has been revealed as immoral and immature, performs the abandonment of history. His character is not meant to function as a role model but as a foil that renders the apathy of youth culture as destructive and, in the case of Gabriel, suicidal. Such moral weakness contrasts *Heading South, Looking North*, which elaborates on the need to tell one's story, to be responsible for one's actions and their impact on history. While he ponders many possible reasons why he is alive today, Dorfman explains that he feels that he was spared in the coup so that he would later be able to bear witness through writing and storytelling:

It makes sense of what I forged with the life that had been given to me, loaned to me, chosen for me by chance or providence or whatever you want to call it the day I should have died.

If it is not true that this was why I was saved, I have tried to make it true.

In every story I tell.

Haunted by the certainty that I have been keeping a promise to the dead. (40)

Dorfman's postexile literature also includes the play *Reader*, which was adapted from a short story of the same name, written during exile. The play deals with the problem of censorship and explores in a highly experimental way the dialectic between oppressor and oppressed. As the censor plans to prohibit a novel, he realizes that his own life requires that the subversive novel exist. The exist-
ence of the censor, the reader, and the writer is shown to be mutually dependent. Like Dorfman’s other works after exile, Reader investigates the connections between the local events in Chile in a global context. His work also takes these issues and deals with them in a manner that is sufficiently broad so that they relate directly to other events in other countries. The suspicion that history is both linear and cyclical, that time progresses but that power dynamics are replicated, has haunted Dorfman’s own life of multiple exile as well as his own observations of power shifts, which might change the source or shape of oppression, but never seem to annihilate it.

**Beyond Bilingual: The Problem of Language**

Ariel Dorfman’s ability to write easily and fluently in either English or Spanish is a consequence not only of his exile from Argentina to the United States as a young boy but also of his critical approach to language and communication. As Ilan Stavans points out in an interview with Dorfman: “[Dorfman] is a proud member of what could be called the ‘Translingual Literary Club,’ also populated by Vladimir Nabokov, Jerzy Kosinski, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, and Franz Kafka, writers who consciously, and sometimes as a result of political circumstances, switched from one language to another to shape their creative oeuvre” (303). During the same interview, Dorfman remarked that he was working on a screenplay for BBC in English, a play in Spanish, and his memoir, which was later released in English and Spanish simultaneously.

The role of language in Dorfman’s writing is highly intricate and a detailed study of it reveals how the crisis of language goes beyond the tension between English and Spanish. Rather, the crisis of language relates most closely to a crisis between signifier and signified, between the word and that which it represents. Throughout his work, Dorfman has struggled to find words that can more closely communicate the pain and beauty of life. His awareness of the slippage between his writing and that which it attempts to depict only serves to frustrate his sense that language cannot transparently convey meaning. Moreover, his literary aesthetic is not strictly realist; Dorfman’s complex imaginary worlds indicate that he is committed to a literature that goes beyond strict realism and investigates, through fantasy and imagination, a variety of communicative methods. Dorfman’s literary use of language exemplifies the tension between a poststructural desire to destabilize meaning and a political desire to communicate and educate through telling stories. As a result, the place of language in his work does not oc-
cupy a fixed and immutable position, nor does it float freely, absent of signification. For these reasons, Dorfman’s struggles with translation and battles between English and Spanish must be understood as integrally related to his suspicion that the signifier is never the signified and that language is never that which it wishes to represent.

The role of English and Spanish in his writing provides useful markers for understanding the broader problems Dorfman has with linguistic representation. As the title to his memoir makes clear, Dorfman’s life has been a bilingual journey. Bilingualism has had a very real impact on his writing: certain texts appear first in English; others are changed in translation. For instance, Dorfman prefers the English translation of *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero*, which he and George Shivers worked on, to the original Spanish version. With *Mascara*, he began working on original English fictional writing. He explains: “*Mascara*, published in 1988, is the first of my novels that I wrote in Spanish, then rewrote in English, only to then use what I had redone in English to change the Spanish version” (qtd. in Stavans 305). Or in the case of *Hard Rain*, the English translation of *Moros en la costa*, we find that the transformation from one language to another also includes some significant changes to the text. Dorfman himself acknowledges some of these changes in the foreword to the English translation where he points out that the book was published as he was taking refuge in the Argentine embassy in Chile. He was unable to make final changes to the copy before the text went to press (“who cares about editing the niceties of a novel if you think you, your family or your friends may all be killed tomorrow?”[viii]). But a closer look reveals that the English version is not only shorter, it also includes some significant changes, beginning with a different set of epigraphs. The Spanish version includes four epigraphs, three of which deal with the question of criticism of and contradiction within artistic production. In English we receive only one of these, along with a quotation from Bob Dylan (“A hard rain/is going to fall”). By changing the citations that serve as a frame for the novel, Dorfman places the text in a different context and a different historical moment. The novel can no longer be seen merely as the ruminations of a leftist intellectual concerned about the role of art in revolutionary struggle. Now it is testimony to the cultural crisis that led in part to a terrible dictatorship.

As I pointed out in the opening, *Hard Rain* prefigures historical events and specifically imagines the possibility that the Allende period will end badly. In the first section of the novel, which is presented as a review of *Concentrations* (a fictional fiction), the narra-
tor/reviewer explains that the novel being reviewed deals with the murder of a woman in a concentration camp. The reviewer explains that a notable textual device is the fact that the novel shifts location from a Nazi concentration camp to another extermination camp located in South America: "The continuity of plot is evident. What occurred in Latin America is an exact replica and at the same time a prolongation of what happened in Dachau or Auschwitz" (15). In this way, even from the opening pages of the novel, Hard Rain presents an eerie foreshadowing of atrocities that were to take place under Pinochet's rule. It would seem that Hard Rain contains a sufficient parallel with events that occurred after the novel's release to catch the attention of even the most historically disinterested reader. Nevertheless, as John Howard points out, Dorfman also adds pieces to the English text (40). In particular, in a section where the novel presents an interview with Dorfman and a literary reporter discussing the novel we are reading as well as other works by the author, Dorfman refers to one of his texts and states: "It portrayed a savage dictatorship in our country—one that lasted some twenty years. How could I write something like that—when I knew we'd win, that we'd never have that sort of tyranny in our Chile. So I started writing Hard Rain" (245-46). Despite Howard's observation that these lines were absent in the original Spanish, the way that the text shifts from Spanish to English, from a version in 1972 to a version in 1990, reveals that language in Dorfman's work goes beyond a sense of literal translation and is also imbued with a sense of the historical moment in which and about which the text endeavors to communicate to an audience. The distinction between the use of Spanish or English, then, is not a question of which of two languages. The distinction is not between two variables but, rather, a multiplicity, since the word is not fixed for Dorfman in either English or Spanish.

Exile has an acute impact on the writer's audience and an equally significant impact on the exile's literary language. These issues become clear in Widows, where Dorfman tried to employ a less Chilean Spanish so that, with the words safely enshrined behind a pseudonym, the novel would pass by the censors, and Chileans would read the novel. These concerns for language and audience persist in The Last Song of Manuel Sendero: "I'm interested in something else David. All of a sudden I wonder who in the devil are you writing that for, David?" . . . "Who for? . . . I wish I knew. Who for? I don't have the slightest fucking idea!" (109). Angel Rama explains that the exiled writer addresses three publics: "that of the country or culture in which he has temporarily settled; that of his native country, with which he tries to maintain communication in spite of
dictatorial restraints; and the public of his compatriots, who make up the people of his Diaspora . . .” (“Founding” 12). The history of *Widows*, with its attempted pseudonym, is an excellent example of an exiled writer who hopes to reach the audience of his native country. In the prologue to the novel Dorfman explains that he had tried the pseudonym ploy: “para que el hijo creciera allá donde debía hacerlo: en su tierra verdadera, entre los suyos” (“so that the son could grow up over there where he should: in his true land, among his own people”) (7). Later, in the prologue to *The Empire’s Old Clothes*, Dorfman indicates how exile changed his opinion about the appropriate audience for his writing: “these years of exile and defeat have taught me some new things. It is essential, above all, to go beyond the sphere of those who are already convinced” (11). The question of audience weighs on Dorfman: “For me the perfect audience would be one made of forty to sixty million people as bilingual as I am. I honestly think that if I had that audience I would write in an entirely different way” (qtd. in Stavans 305). Dorfman confesses to Stavans that he is still unable to write in the way that he lives.

Dorfman’s work also projects a theory of language full of contradictions. He has described his linguistic aesthetic as “socialist irrealism”: writing full of hope where there often seems to be no reason to have it (qtd. in Boyers and Lertora 154). Dorfman’s writing provides many visions of the same story, fragmenting the narrative line. In his opinion, “language is what allows us to reveal reality and to hide reality. In other words, language is full of lies and full of revelation” (qtd. in Wisenberg 199). Even though Dorfman remained idealistic in the face of exile, such idealism did not result in a belief in unmediated and untainted representation. The entire novel *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* questions the validity of the tale of Manuel Sendero. Did he sing or didn’t he? As the son of Sendero returns to his country and confronts his father’s friend, Skinny, the latter denies both his story and his existence: “The first thing is that things didn’t happen the way you said . . . . The fact is, young man, that Manuel Sendero never had a son. The only one he had, the one he and Doralisa were going to have, they killed . . . .” (21-22). The narrator in this part of the novel, the son of Sendero, an exile, is denied both his ability to represent history and his existence. But, as the novel begins, these problems of being and representation are counterbalanced by the children who are listening to the tale of their great-grandfather, Manuel Sendero, from their grandfather, the son of Sendero, and are sure that they know the true story: They blurt out: “How do we know all this? Very simple. I found it out, we all did, from the mouth of my grandfather . . . and he was unquestionably present in the middle of the story from begin-
ning to end” (7). So truth and fabrication are at constant odds in Dorfman’s work, even though he retains an aesthetics of hope and a hope in communication.

Beyond the frame of the novel and the issue of the pseudonym, Widows is a novel which, throughout the narrative, constantly questions the authority of communication. The novel’s setting is a small village in Greece where all of the men have disappeared. One day, a dead body appears in a river and the central conflict revolves around who has the right to explain the identity of this body. The body functions as a signified and the text embarks on a tale of war, where two sides fight for control of the signifier.

Sofia Angelos appears in the office of the Captain after hearing about the appearance of a body, and before she has actually seen it. She comes to his office requesting the right to bury her father, Karoulos Mylonas, who has already been buried by the soldiers. They declare that the dead man is not her father—not even her relative. She hears them but doesn’t pay attention: “The captain scrutinized her to see how she would react, but it was as if she’d heard the words before and now it made no sense to waste time listening and responding to them” (27). Whose version is right? These are different discourses that do not intersect: what means father to her is a dead revolutionary to them. Her response finally is to reaffirm her authority to claim the body as her father: “Do you think, Captain, that I can’t recognize my own father?” (28). Dorfman then complicates the issue even further when the reader learns that the body found was totally unrecognizable.

Two weeks later Sofia appears in the same office requesting the right to bury her husband, Michael Angelos, even though, once again, she has not even seen the cadaver: “She hadn’t even seen it and she was already declaring to the four winds that it was her husband. Which is impossible, first of all because Michael Angelos isn’t dead, second because nobody could even positively identify a body in that state, and third because in this case, as in the other, the ages just don’t match up” (49). The novel continues to stress the crisis of signification for those living under dictatorship. Sofia substitutes a body for her husband and feels peace: at least he can have a proper Christian burial. But the government wants scientific proof, even though the Captain admits that such proof is impossible. By focusing on the notion of disappeared bodies, Dorfman stresses the linguistic crisis that is a result of such atrocities.

Who has the right to decide if Sofía can claim this man as her husband? As Sofia and the government battle over the right to choose which signifier fits the body of the dead man, Dorfman’s novel reveals the way in which history challenges the claims of
poststructuralism: the sign is not freely arbitrary. Sofia is challenging the authorities, i.e., those who have the power to decide what this body means. In this case the instability of the sign is only disempowering for those who endeavor to challenge authority. Because it is not clear whom the body signifies, it is even more difficult for the women to claim that they "know" the name of the dead man. Moreover, the politics of signification are made clear by the appearance of the unnamed body. No matter who claims the right to name the body, the problem remains that a man has been murdered. The issue of language is important but cannot overshadow the horrible fact that this town has lost every man capable of threatening the authoritarian government.

In the beginning of part 5 of the novel, another woman from the village, Katherina, goes to claim that the second body is actually her husband, thereby further complicating the question of who can name this body. As she speaks to the Captain, she undermines his authority by using his own rhetoric: "Captain, I am a woman. I would expect that an officer of the nation's army wouldn't use violent methods and foul language against a woman. I'm merely exercising my rights. When I married, I swore to be faithful to my husband until death us do part" (89). As in the case of the "Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo" in Argentina, which occurred some years after the publication of this book, the women, because of the profound absence of men, are forced to take charge and rebel against authority. But the foundation for their arguments rests on their self-identification as mothers and wives. Even though the women attempt to challenge the patriarchal government, they do not try to improve women's rights, nor do they challenge the patriarchal biases of language. Their actions stem from their roles as wives and mothers, which actually coincide with the rhetoric of the Captain himself: "A woman's place is in the home. Or in bed. That's where women belong" (181). The Captain believes that women should do nothing to endanger their families. Yet the women, following Sofia's lead, are acting on similar principles because they believe that claiming these dead bodies is the only way to protect the souls, through Christian burial, of their families.

Many theories of language argue that being and language are inextricably linked. Nevertheless, through the disappearance of these men, their names have become detached from their beings. Widows emphasizes that this crisis of language is also a crisis in identity. Who will identify these bodies? These men have been robbed of their existence—like the exile who cannot return or be read by his public. The power to choose the signifier for the signified is not merely a rhetorical game; it is a matter of life or death. The
women of the village challenge the authorities, but the Captain has
more power. He will erase the conversations he has had with these
women. He can even erase their existence. As he arrests Sofía and
her grandson Alexis, he explains: "And this conversation, this con-
versation never took place. I'm erasing it just like that. Nobody's
going to remember it. Because you people don't count. You don't
count, understand? Look at what all of your efforts have accom-
plished. Look at this. Look" (190). As the novel concludes, the
women have gathered around yet another body. But this time there
will be no talking. The Captain arrives at the beach with a large
group of soldiers and proclaims: "It's time to put things in order,
Lieutenant. Proceed at once" (202). The reader never learns the out-
come of the Captain's orders, but the text suggests that these
women were massacred. However, the open ending of the novel
leaves the reader to ponder yet another question: Will the children
of these women come to the Captain and claim the authority to bury
their disappeared loved ones? How will the battles over the signi-
fied end?

In The Last Song of Manuel Sendero Dorfman continues his lin-
guistic and political project. In 1991 Dorfman explained the prob-
lem of language and politics as a persistent dilemma in his work: "I
think that Pinochet is going to be a central issue weighing on our
country for a long time.... [In The Last Song of Manuel Sendero he]
seeps into the language, contaminating it to the point that he be-
comes part of the dictionary" (qtd. in Incledon 96). Language for
Dorfman is not divorced from the reality of Pinochet's dictatorship.
Similar to the frame that begins Widows, The Last Song of Manuel
Sendero begins with a disclaimer: "I am always suspicious of au-
thors who, at the opening of their books, without flinching, separate
fact from fiction in what is to follow. How can they be so sure?....
Like myself, and so many characters in my novel, [David, the pro-
tagonist] is submerged in historical circumstances and haunted by
political figures who, alas, are not the product of my imagination." It
is important to note that, even though Dorfman begins his novel
with a profound insecurity about authorship and the authority to
tell history, he still writes a novel which attempts to give an alter-
native view of the connections between Chilean history and
humanity's history of tyranny and resistance. In this way the
reader notes that the theories of Barthes and Derrida influence the
work of Dorfman but appear in his work with a twist, an adapta-
tion. Poststructuralism complicates language and formally affects
the structure of narrative in Dorfman's work, but Dorfman does not
become an unquestioning disciple of these theories. His own experi-
ence makes an apolitical approach to language impossible.
In addition to the disclaimer, Dorfman includes a variety of textual twists that undermine what appears to be the principal narrative line. First, as we have seen, the novel is divided into two parts, “Inside” and “Outside.” The “Inside” is the story of Manuel Sendero, while the “Outside” refers to the exile of David from Chile. Nevertheless the “Inside” and the “Outside,” while supposedly representing opposites, literally, do not. The two tales are actually quite similar in many respects. Both tell of resistance to a terrible despot: one is Pinochet (Outside) and the other is the Caballero (Inside). Both tell of exile: David (Outside) and the son of Sendero (Inside). These two sections simultaneously question how it is possible to form a collective and find peace from tyranny, both ask how far you must compromise with power in order to defeat oppression, and both pose the dilemma of how much you can trust your comrades.

In addition to the linguistic trick where “Inside” is not opposite to “Outside,” Dorfman complicates the narrative even further by including footnotes to the dialogue between David and Felipe which supposedly accompany a text used in a course thirty thousand years later for Prehistoric Amerspanish III, “commenting on a text which is . . . of uncertain authorship and obscure national origin” (79). The problem of a text representing a historical moment is emphasized in the following commentary of the footnotes: “To have to construct an entire epoch of human effort by means of these fragments can be compared to the task which would face an extraterrestrial visitor from a superior civilization attempting to recreate our entire present culture by examining a kitchen recipe” (79). Interestingly, in another part of the novel, the tale of David and the Dragon Pinchot is also told thirty thousand years after the dialogue between David and Felipe. Therefore the events of 1973 in Chile yield two distinct textual accounts which remain thirty thousand years later as part of cultural history: one is the dialogue itself as it appears in a textbook, and the other is the mythical tale of a hero who fights an evil Dragon Pinchot.

As the title reminds us, the central question of authority and authorship revolves around Manuel’s last song. Did he sing or didn’t he? Did he refuse to sing and thereby condemn himself, his wife, and his unborn son to death? Manuel has a powerful voice. He is able to move those who hear him, like an author who is able to inspire his reader with his eloquence. Yet Manuel has gone mute: “He had tried to change the world with his song . . . and when the world, far from changing, had gotten worse, Manuel Sendero had fallen back on that extreme recourse of muteness, in order not to have to collaborate” (406). Eduardo believes that Manuel lost his voice because of his failure with a fellow comrade, Gringo. Manuel inspires
Gringo to join him, and then Gringo is killed. So, according to Eduardo, Manuel loses his voice, "Because he wasn't prepared to continue the struggle, at least not with the politicians who had guided so many innocents... to the slaughterhouse.... But he had not taken responsibility for his voice. Gringo wasn't the only one he had involved in this mess" (73). At least this is one version of the story.

Skinny provides another version: "he spoke of Manuel Sendero's last song, confirmed that he had heard it. It makes no difference that there aren't any proofs or traces left, he said..." (10). In these lines Skinny rejects the importance of both scientific proof and Derridean traces. He also rejects the existence of the son of Sendero, who, he claims matter of factly, was never born. Yet the reader is supposedly reading the account of the son of Sendero's experiences as he himself has told them to his children and grandchildren. Moreover, the last song was supposedly sung by Sendero to save his family's life.

There are more than two versions to this story, as Skinny explains: "People make up a lot, especially about Manuel Sendero" (20). In a scene where the son of Sendero narrates his encounter with the Caballero thirty years after "the question of the song," the son tells the children, "He could have sung. But he didn't, kids. I remember now that he didn't" (405). This revelation would then imply that the son never was born, and yet he still is telling his story. The novel, by questioning the connections between existence and storytelling, forces the reader to ask how history is preserved: What are the connections between language and life? How important is it for such stories to be factual? Moreover, given the multiple versions of Manuel's story, the novel asks how a story can be told in a way that is not authoritative and yet still manages to provide hope for the future. The story of Sendero is "ever-changing" yet it also manages to instill hope. Pamela, the girlfriend of the son of Sendero, uses the tale to inspire her and, significantly, she is the storyteller at the end of the novel who has passed the legend onto her children: "Pamela had repeated that legend like any other child, to give her strength when things were going badly and nobody understood her..." (435).

Nevertheless, even though Skinny, Pamela, and Papa Ramón believe that Manuel sang, "the world had not changed by Manuel's last song" (444). In this sense the novel grapples with the difficult and tenuous hope that an act of rebellion could succeed in transforming the world. Such a notion requires a sense of free will and a belief that the future is not predetermined, but the novel refuses to promote such a notion with any sense of certainty. As Skinny puts
it, “exile is like being in an insane asylum. Everybody believes he’s been in the Battle of Waterloo” (20). There can be no certainty about one’s ability to remember the past, and consequently, there can be no certainty that one can tell stories that will affect the future. The Last Song of Manuel Sendero is a novel full of hope, full of dreams that Manuel Sendero’s story will build a better future, “when pretty little men and pretty women are born who can’t understand that there was once a time when such monsters were the only masters of the next to the last word” (412). The novel fights to have the last word, but undermines its success by making the “Last Epilogue” the “First Prologue,” sending the novel on a circular journey to find the sendero (path) that will end the cycles of tyranny.

These examples of Dorfman’s use of language indicate how his writing maintains a complex relationship to language and communication that goes beyond questions of translation. Perhaps the most telling instances of Dorfman’s linguistic aesthetic revolve around the issue of naming. Latin American writers often depict problems of language and identity that are part of the postcolonial condition. Nominalism, the belief in naming, has been an extremely important aspect of Latin American writing. Even as early as the colonial period, writers grappled with the problem of naming. The Spanish language seemed inadequate to describe the Latin American region. What names would be used for flora and fauna that didn’t exist in Spain? Centuries later, the writers of the Latin American Boom used naming as a means to reclaim conquered territory. For these writers, semiotics and the theories of the structuralists were integral to the literary project of creating an autochthonous language. The figures of Ariel and Caliban from Shakespeare’s The Tempest have grown to exemplify the debate over language in Latin America. In 1971 Roberto Fernández Retamar wrote Caliban as a reaction to José Enrique Rodó’s Ariel (1900). The School of Caliban included third-world, postcolonial writers, like George Lamming and Aimee Cesaire, who advocated the notion that to sever ties with colonial imperialism, it was necessary to focus on the ramifications of using the language of the colonizer. Fernández Retamar asked that Caliban become the symbol of Latin America, a symbol exemplified by Caliban’s exclamation that, having been forced to speak the language of his conquerors, his only recourse is to use that language to curse them.

The legacy of Caliban is part of the reason why language is a complex issue for writers like Dorfman who cannot advocate first-world versions of poststructuralism because of their experience that language is always tied to relations of power that have real consequences in the external world. Nevertheless, they are also dis-
tinct in their approach to language from the practices of the Boom writers who, in agreement with Angel Rama’s theories of transculturation, saw writers as an important part of the process of renaming Latin American history through an autochthonous literary language capable of restoring a regional vision of the world (Transculturación 43). This type of literary confidence is no longer possible for Dorfman. Nevertheless, the influence of such theories of language on Dorfman’s writing are made clear when he states that exile has had positive effects on his writing: “... I turned the distance into language. I was able to look at some of the terrors and give them names” (qtd. in Incledon 96). Yet, as his texts show, naming has become a problem for him, a problem that demonstrates a crisis of representation and a crisis in linguistic confidence.

Beginning with Hard Rain, the reader recognizes Dorfman’s playful, yet serious, investigation of naming. Throughout the novel, names of fictitious characters appear alongside the names of famous writers, Dorfman’s friends, and actual historical markers. The result is a destabilization of the importance of the name. This name game appears in addition to a radical questioning of the ability of artistic representations to have any impact on the outside world. For instance one review of an exhibit reads: “The literary-artistic exhibition SHIT has just completed its third successful week at the Carmen Waugh Gallery. ... [W]e should clarify at the beginning that it consists of a long narrative written on a roll of toilet paper and should be read continuously as it is unrolled” (160). The review goes on to detail how people who come to the exhibit have to begin reading the roll in the middle of the narrative, how it is uncomfortable, etc. At the end of the review, though, the reader learns of the basic problem with the exhibit. According to the reviewer, the audience thwarts the artist/author’s intent. What should have happened is that the first reader would unfold the toilet paper while reading, then let it lie in a pile on the floor. Then the next person “would come, and seeing the useless pile on the tiles, would toss it in the garbage can and smile, and upon seeing that in this picture entitled SHIT there was no toilet paper, just another example of pop-art, he would yawn and leave” (165). So according to the reviewer the author’s intent was undermined by the viewer’s serious effort to engage the work of art. The word SHIT, then, is taken to refer to a number of signifieds, none of which actually are shit. For the artist, the show SHIT means artwork, narrative, tension between art and life, for the spectator, it means something else, and then for the reviewer, it is something else again. So SHIT in this work of art is a name that the artist has catapulted to another realm of signification. Thus naming for Dorfman can include self-conscious manipu-
lations of the word in order to question the relationship between name and thing.

The playful investigation into names found in *Hard Rain* turns deadly serious in *Widows*. Here, the crisis of signification revolves around the unnamed bodies of the dead men which appear in the town's river and how their absence of names is a consequence of authoritarianism. The bodies found in the river are unnamed, and yet the protagonist, Sofía, whose name is not revealed to the reader until page eighty-three, wants to bury her father with his name: "... I'm going to bury him with a priest and with his name. With all the letters of the name he gave me ..." (18). Yet it is not clear that this body/signified can be represented by the name/signifier of her father. Dorfman continues to complicate these issues in *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* when the son of Sendero is never named: "Grandfather had no name. He'd had no baptism, religious or pagan. Nobody had received him with a couple of syllables so he'd know when to answer, when to obey commands, or when to declare himself guilty" (342). The lack of name for this character allows Dorfman to pursue the notion that those without names are not ruled by the symbolic order. Yet, as the novel makes explicit, the nameless son is incapable of threatening the system if the system is unable to recognize him.

In *Mascara* the protagonist remains nameless throughout the text. He is also faceless. In contrast with the emphasis on sound, song, and voice in *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero*, in *Mascara* Dorfman focuses on the eyes and the image. The protagonist explains, "This is not the century of sound. I'm not denying that people still listen to songs, sure they do, but what really matters is elsewhere: the image, the lipstick, the tanning lotions. Sounds are like maids: they travel second class" (18). Names have less value in this bleak world: "Any name—which is no more than a sad jumble of sounds ... can be hidden in the great jungle of unknown names, as a tree can be hidden in a forest" (60). Throughout the text no one uses his or her real name, and those who attempt resistance are hunted. Oriana has been given a false name because she cannot rememher hers. Even the setting of the novel remains nameless.

In *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* David is asked by Felipe to change the name of one of the cartoon characters in the strip they are working on from Carl Barks, who really did illustrate for Walt Disney, to Carl Starks. Yet the change of name is insignificant, because the character still represents the same thing. Similarly, in *Mascara* the faceless man constantly changes the doctor's name. He is alternately named, Marvirelli, Maravelli, Mentirelli, Moronevi, Mearelli, etc. The narrator changes the doctor's name according to
his wishes, attempting to challenge the connection between political power and linguistic power. In this small way, by renaming him again and again, the narrator attempts to threaten his identity. Yet as the novel ends, it is not clear whether the protagonist was able to challenge the doctor’s power effectively. Salvador Oropesa reads these name shifts as the deconstruction of the connection between name and referent and as a sign of Dorfman’s practice of Lyotard’s theory of the “differend.” He claims that verbal and physical violence are placed in this novel on the same plane (90). Yet I would argue that we must read these shifts in name as attempts to reveal that linguistic nonfixity does not lead to an equation between language and the physical world. In fact, the name shifts suggest that an unnamed or a multiply named character can still retain a coherent identity, one which may be read as a challenge to the historical relations of power and its need for linguistic control.

In addition to refusing to name characters and to pointing at the irrelevance of names by shifting them, Dorfman also includes figures of evil that receive general or nonspecific names. Dorfman’s Lieutenant (Widows) is like the Caballero (The Last Song) who is like the Doctor (Mascara and Death and the Maiden). Beyond the generic/general names that are used to represent evil male figures, Dorfman also uses names with great symbolic meaning. In Widows the matriarch is named Sofia, for wisdom, Angelous, for angelic messenger, the priest is named Father Gabriel (Judgment Day), the orderly is Emmanuel, and Fidelia, the granddaughter of Sofia, is the trustworthy narrator of much of the novel.

Dorfman’s postexile literature continues to pursue the problem of the name. In Konfidenz the protagonist does not want to reveal his name to the woman he is calling. Barbara receives a mysterious call as soon as she steps into her hotel room. When she asks the caller’s name he tells her that she can call him Leon. When she asks if that means that isn’t his real name, he questions whether a person’s name is important at all. Then, when the reader learns that the French call him Leon and that he has also manipulated Barbara’s trip, that he has been a danger to her, the symbolism of his name moves from destabilized to generic. Like a lion, he hunts her. Or, in The Nanny and the Iceberg, the protagonist is named Gabriel and he later passes judgment on his father and his father’s friends. In contrast, Dorfman’s latest play, Purgatory, currently in production but unpublished, has two characters—man and woman. Dorfman continues to use naming as a way of investigating meaning.

Dorfman’s literature alternates from using highly symbolic names, to not using names, to using generic names. This complexity
of naming is added to his overall concern for the disconnection between signifier and signified, most obviously manifested in his tension between English and Spanish. It is important to note, though, that the fragmentation and linguistic games in these texts do not lead to a plurality of meaning where each version has equal value: the use of language in these texts never loses sight of its object of desire. From a variety of linguistic vantage points, Dorfman uses language as a weapon of defense against the extinction of the margins and of their history.

The Problem of Culture: Criticism and Construction

If it had not been for Susana la Semilla, a cartoon character I invented, I would not have survived the coup.

—Dorfman in Heading South, Looking North

Ariel Dorfman did not die in Santiago on the day of the coup because of Susana la Semilla (Susana the Seed), a cartoon character he had created. At least that is one possible reason Dorfman gives for his survival when so many of his colleagues were brutally massacred. According to his memoirs, he had a meeting scheduled for 10:30 on 11 September 1973 with Augusto Olivares, the director of National Television, and that appointment kept him from being at the presidential palace, La Moneda, which was brutally bombed at the start of the coup. At this meeting Dorfman had planned to pitch Susana and her counterpart, Federico el Fertilizante (Fred the Fertilizer), who he hoped would air over twenty-five one-minute spots weekly. The characters were a socialist utopian depiction of the possibilities for growth and rebirth in Chile. These lovable images were meant to challenge the strikes and food shortages Chile suffered as a consequence of the CIA-supported antisocialist movement.

Susana la Semilla is an important figure in Dorfman’s creative past not only because she ostensibly saved his life, but also because she provides an important key to understanding Dorfman’s relationship to media culture and cultural critique. Since his infamous collaboration with Armand Mattelart on How to Read Donald Duck, Dorfman has been a vociferous critic of media culture. Dorfman’s position vis-à-vis media culture, however, is not merely one of negative criticism; he has also worked on projects like Susana la Semilla. His attitude regarding media culture is both critical and constructive.

Most of the main aspects of his cultural critique can be found in How to Read Donald Duck and in The Empire’s Old Clothes (1983). In both of these texts Dorfman emphasizes the ideological role of cartoon characters in controlling consciousness. Mattelart and
Dorfman’s text dismantles the seemingly innocuous characters of Donald Duck and his pals and demonstrates how they serve to colonize Latin America through a repeated litany of tales favoring capitalism, U.S. imperialism, and the infantilization of the reader-receiver. One of the key strengths to their analysis is the way that they deconstruct the world in which Disney characters live. Formulaic in their ethics, the characters are always able to resolve their problems in simplistic ways. Dorfman and Mattelart critique this view of the world as well as the role that the third world and the working classes play in Disney Comics.

Years later, Dorfman recast his thoughts from How to Read Donald Duck in The Empire’s Old Clothes. Dorfman adds insightful criticism of the characters of Babar and the Lone Ranger to his critique of Disney, and he demonstrates the ways that the overly reductive resolutions to conflict employed by these cultural products serve to reinforce the capitalist superstructure. Dorfman’s work in this text also indicates how the experience of exile from Chile affects his understanding of media culture. In the prologue to the text he explains that he observed how Chile had been used by imperialist culture as a test case to experiment economically and culturally. He also differentiates his work in Empire from Donald Duck by articulating a broader audience for his critique; history has taught him that successful subversion requires that one’s message go beyond the sphere of the already convinced. The influence of both Brecht and Althusser on Dorfman is clear: he argues that the receiver should be actively involved in the production of meaning, and he analyzes ways that the cultural content of most mass media is aimed at fortifying the strength and ideological hold of the social system. An elaborate explanation of these thoughts can be found in the chapter, “The Infantilization of the Adult Reader.” Analyzing Reader’s Digest, Dorfman details the ideological world fostered by such “light” reading: “whatever is faraway and famous is reduced incessantly to its most comprehensible, immediate, not to say vulgar, form. . . . Whatever the reader might not be able to handle is never presented” (144-45). The consequences of creating a reading public that has no skills in critical thinking are that the public loses its ability to interpret other forms of information received via the media. In an interview in 1991 Dorfman explains that media culture closes the universe and presents a distorted image of the world, one that keeps the reader in the position of naive and pre-critical child (Incedon 100).

This critique of the media ties directly to Dorfman’s literary criticism. While some may see the two critical projects as operating in different spheres, Dorfman’s writing about literature intimately in-
tersects with his assessment of the social role played by media culture. In *Some Write to the Future*, a collection of literary criticism, Dorfman's commitment to the emancipatory possibilities of literature is clearly differentiated from his critique of Donald Duck. In this text Dorfman reveals his tendency to favor the aesthetically complex. Following his assessment of the problems of facile conflict resolution in the mass media, Dorfman argues that politically committed literature can and should be aesthetically complex. Such a literature enables the creation of active readers who can resist the oppressively simplistic worlds inhabited by Disneyesque cartoon characters. In the introduction Dorfman articulates the relationship between reader and text, explaining that he is interested in "a literary strategy that demands of the reader an unceasing birth, that calls for him or her to go beyond the enclaves of the past, the monoproduction of ideas and emotions and urges the reader to leave behind passivity and apathy and—in a word—to develop" (xiii). Not only should literature work to challenge the reader, it should work to challenge the hegemony of the Western canon, thereby creating a space for the power of local narratives. In an interview in *Chasqui* in 1985 Dorfman explains that an autochthonous Latin American literature implies an ability to read critically and to resist the dominating narratives emanating from the United States (Prieto Castillo 9-10). Folk stories, myths, and other local ways of understanding the world can be integrated into a complex literary project that is committed to resisting cultural imperialism. In these ways the potentially disconnected projects of literary criticism, cultural criticism, journalism, and literary production all coincide in Dorfman's aesthetic project.

If, as Dorfman points out, one of the most significant dangers posed by media culture is the fact that the superhero always wins, then how does his literature challenge the hegemony of the media-culture formula? A brief exploration of the role of media culture in his literature demonstrates how his writing subverts the media-culture aesthetic of happy endings, closure, and the success of the hero. In *Some Write to the Future* he recognizes the real obstacles to such a project: "To begin with most Latin Americans are non-readers: millions don’t know how to read or write and the majority of those who do spend their intelligence on mass-produced, easily digested words that instead of impelling them to question their society demand that they accept it" (xii). Nevertheless he maintains that "only an exploration of the ways in which our contemporary fiction subverts prevalent power, or submits to it, can reveal the fiction’s true character" (xii). Most of Dorfman’s writing is a direct attack on those forms of culture that submit to preexisting power
structures. His fiction, in its complexity, represents an important feature of this critique because it indicates the ways that Dorfman is committed to creating as well as critiquing culture. Media culture is treated specifically in a number of his texts, most notably in *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero, Mascara, and The Nanny and the Iceberg*.

In *The Last Song of Manuel Sendero* the story of the Dragon Pinchot is told by an anonymous adult to a group of children. The story, a mythical reconstruction of the tale of the dictator Pinochet, demonstrates Dorfman's point about the power of folk stories and the ways in which they are a necessary part of the social imagination. But this tale is not simply told, nor is it simply digested in the novel. The power of this legend is contrasted with the use of television in order to program the way that people think. In the development of the cartoon strip about Chilex, David creates the character of Carl Barks (which is the actual name of a cartoonist for Disney and occasionally appears with the last name Parks or Starks), who has been asked to draw and design a country and consequently a national consciousness. Yet on his visit to this foreign land he becomes ill. The men who have invited Barks to help ask if they can connect their computers directly to his brain. In this way he won't die; he will remain alive in the hopes and dreams of an entire populace: "The fundamental thing is that your soul, the part of your spirit where your capacity to dream, to create, imagine landscapes and animals, resides, the recorder will be there, inside, the radar of the mind, and here on the outside, what you dream, imagine, will be projected, like a cinematographic production in which it's enough to think something for it to exist for the spectator" (368). The critique of the passive spectator found in Dorfman's essays is magnified here to demonstrate the idea that media engages in purposeful mind control. While the irony of this passage is clear, it also exposes how Dorfman contrasts complex literature with the media: these few lines of conversation between Carl and Reverend Rex are intercalated with lines from a totally different narrative line between Sarah, Carl's wife, and a member of the secret police, in addition to narrative describing the process David is going through as he is creating this comic strip.

The above passage describing how the imagination of Carl Barks will try to colonize an entire country is not only challenged by the style of the narrative; it is also contrasted by stories about the Dragon Pinchot. The power of media culture is juxtaposed with the power of an oral tradition of folk stories. These tales preserve history in nonwritten ways, and their role in the text indicates the influence of Lévi-Strauss as well as the important history of folklore.
for Latin American literature. Within The Last Song of Manuel Sendero, the oral tradition is powerful, and it is one of the most successful ways that history is passed from generation to generation. Nevertheless, the oral tradition has flaws as well: facts become distorted and the stories are often co-opted by media culture and transformed into antihistorical messages. Dorfman suggests that folk tales are important but that they will always have to battle against the seductive strength of the media empire. Consequently, the attack on media culture will not be won only through counternarrative.

The character of the son of Sendero actually tries to use the power of television to communicate his message. Recognizing that he is woefully unprepared in his fight to help the fetal revolution, he decides to appear as a guest on the TV program Search, Search. The program is advertised as a show that can solve all your problems, which alludes to Dorfman’s disgust at media culture’s facile solutions to complicated realities (the title Search, Search seems to refer to the need to find the disappeared): “The program that’s at your service and for your entertainment pleasure. Are you looking for something? For someone? . . . Every decent, reasonable, and clean wish can be fulfilled on this program” (296). The media’s promise to solve every spectator’s problem contrasts with the son of Sendero’s mission to try to solve the problem of the fetal rebellion. The son of Sendero knows that his appearance on the program will cause a ruckus, but it will also draw attention to his mission. He hopes that the viewers will be shocked out of their passivity for a moment. As the emcee calls for security and the son of Sendero prepares to be arrested, he has a moment to spread his message: “If all of you would follow me, life wouldn’t be a search, my friends. Life would be an endless encounter. In a flash, the camera left him” (304). The son of Sendero has his moment, and the camera captures his plea, but within seconds the program has resumed its normal broadcasting: the tenuous task of challenging media hegemony is made abundantly clear in this scene.

The fragile place of complex literature versus the overwhelmingly successful seduction of public attention by media culture enters an even darker world in Mascara. The faceless, nameless, photographer-narrator lives in a world that is almost totally dominated by media images. His mother is a makeup artist for television, where her job is to facilitate the trickery of the public: “One face after the other, all afternoon and evening, painting the smile on one to deceive the other and the smile on the other to continue the deception and both smiles to deceive the fools in the audience . . .” (31). His father sells medical instruments to people like the plastic sur-
geon Dr. Marivelli, the narrator's nemesis: "I did not want ever to be like you, Doctor, when you submerge yourself inside the face of someone who intrigues you, unpeeling her enamel layer by layer, with all your technical contrivances and your implants and your X rays and your incisions, all of you descending mercilessly upon your patients" (23). Dr. Marivelli practices a form of plastic surgery that totally controls the patient's image: he changes their appearance, which changes their memory and, consequently, their sense of history and their understanding of the world. The doctor creates the perfect people to appear on the media and to consume it.

As indicated earlier, the pessimistic world constructed in *Mascara* is a result of prolonged exile as well as of the media's false reports in Chile that Dorfman was dead. Written after *The Empire's Old Clothes*, this novel barely suggests that a biting critique of the media could lead to social change. The only hope for destroying the media monopoly of the social mind exists in the possibility that this dystopic vision of the future might shock or frighten the reader into action. Nevertheless resistance to the system is not enacted successfully in *Mascara*, and the rebellions within the novel are presented as absurd. In a scene that establishes the importance of the media for the faceless man, he turns on his television to watch the news cover a gruesome death. A bank vice president has blown his brains out in front of television cameras, and the faceless man rushes home wanting to catch it on the news: "Too bad I had only one television set" (12). He switches from one channel's coverage to another, but neither is showing the actual footage of the suicide. He is enraged that the suicide has been censored and calls it a fraud: "At that very moment, the journalists, the personnel of each network, were enjoying the scene, enjoying their supposed horror of the scene. What right did they have to interpose themselves between the dead man and these eyes of mine?" (12). He rebels against the networks by switching to another channel, one that is not transmitting anything: "I stayed there looking at that colorless shit, that meaningless static for a long time. . . . Lies, only lies. Everything a lie" (12-13). The narrator voices some of the same observations that Dorfman makes about the way that the media manipulates the viewer. However, unlike Dorfman, who advocates an active spectator capable of challenging the draw of the media and interested in art forms that are more aesthetically involved, the narrator's only rebellion is to watch a gray screen.

The faceless man's obsession with watching the event on television allows Dorfman to depict the growing importance of visual media. Similar to the case of Carl Barks who must watch TV or the son of Sendero who makes contact with the Caballero by appearing
on a TV show, in *Mascara* the relationship between literature and media culture indicates the reduction in power of the printed word. Practically everyone in the novel is involved in the production of images, except for Oriana who preserves memory. The faceless, nameless man is a photographer, his mother is a television makeup artist, and the doctor he is speaking to is a plastic surgeon. True to its title, *Mascara* investigates appearances, masks, and image production, seeking their connections to identity, history, politics, and community. The text explores how visual media is replacing textual forms of culture, especially such almost extinct artifacts as the experimental novel. Self-conscious about the arrogance of writing a novel meant to challenge the lure of media culture, Dorfman creates a narrative world that unmasksthe oppressive nature of the media, just as he unmasksthe false heroism of the Lone Ranger (the masked man) in *The Empire's Old Clothes*.

Dorfman's work after exile also proposes a counter to the media. In *The Nanny and the Iceberg* Gabriel arrives in Chile, and on his first day he burns out his computer by forgetting to use a transformer. Here, the new kid on the media block—the Internet—joins the reign of television, plastic surgery, and image production articulated in *Mascara*. After Gabriel loses his cybercommunity, he is forced to pay attention to the real human beings who surround him. The result is that he becomes acutely aware of his solitude and isolation. As an individual with an on-line girlfriend, he had the illusion of a life. Now he realizes that he is a virgin, whose father is more interested in his own personal pleasures than in helping his son. Dorfman uses the situation of a cyberhuman forced to intersect again with the outside world as a way of commenting on the lack of community that exists in the late stages of capitalism and as a result of forms of technology that make even phone calls obsolete.

The entire novel is a long snail-mail letter to Janice, Gabriel's Internet girlfriend. Off-line Gabriel must admit to himself that he has no way of knowing whether Janice will even be remotely interested in his story or will read his suicide letter at all: “You could decide not to read till the end, not to reach the climax, so to speak. But I've tried to make sure you will. This is a promise I can deliver on: besides my own death at the end, there'll be violence and murder. More murder than I bargained for when I set out on this voyage back home. And sex. Real sex” (7). Gabriel resorts to classic forms of media manipulation to entice her to read on: he promises sex and violence (traditional mass media seduction)—but the novel does not deliver exactly what he promises. The sex and violence do not “look” like mass-media sex and violence. In trying to seduce Janice to read on, he recognizes that he has falsely presented his story: “Not that I
haven't done my best to keep you in suspense, displayed every narrative trick. . . . This is a mystery story or at least the story of a mystery, so maybe I ought to be able to seduce you a bit more, Janice, my one and only reader even if you'll never be my lover" (95). Janice is a woman whom Gabriel has communicated with only on-line since a failed attempt at seducing her when they were fifteen. The total disconnection between the writer and his reading community is exacerbated by the truly pathetic way that Gabriel tries to trick Janice into reading. Like Janice, we also have little investment in his tale and might find the narrative far less interesting than the Internet or MTV or the latest blockbuster at the cineplex. Speaking to Janice directly after he discloses that he is planning to kill others when he commits suicide, he underscores the chasm between himself and his reader: "I have other plans. But you don't have a chance in hell in finding out about them until it's too late to stop me" (175). The question is, who would want to stop him? Janice has demonstrated no commitment to Gabriel. As products of media culture we are not inclined to read something and then act. Dorfman uses the cry for help/dare of Gabriel to suggest that while we may have no sympathy for his narrator, we should be aware of how the problem of apathy and cultural alienation has become exacerbated by the Internet.

Perhaps the most telling way that Dorfman intersects his literature with his cultural criticism, essays, and journalism is through his refusal to end his novels. The open endings force the reader to take an active role in the interpretive process. His works do not provide facile solutions to complex problems as in the predictable formulas found in media culture. Widows ends with another unidentified body surrounded by grieving women who are being held at gunpoint. The Last Song of Manuel Sendero ends with the "Last Epilogue and First Prologue," sending the story on a circular path. Mascara ends with "A Sort of Epilogue" where a couple of men visit a woman and ask questions, which remain unanswered. Dorfman's most recent novel has built its climax around the moment when Gabriel kills himself, his father, and his father's friend (and many more), but we never know if he actually does it. These narrative strategies are carefully chosen to differentiate Dorfman's texts from the types of easily digested cultural products he so vociferously opposes. Moreover, in keeping with Susana la Semilla, Dorfman does try to narrate hopeful worlds, where utopic dreams are possible, even if these are shown to exist in extremely hostile territory. Consequently, Dorfman's literature and his cultural criticism combine into a project with many common goals. It is important to note that he does not just critique and deconstruct media.
culture but also works to create alternatives and to construct compelling stories which do not trap the reader in ideology but, rather, offer a multitude of possibilities from which the reader can choose.

NOTES

1 The novel was translated into English in 1990 and significantly shortened. Its title was also changed from the Spanish Moros en la costa (The Coast Isn’t Clear) to Hard Rain, a reference to the Dylan song. Though Dorfman states that the English version is essentially the same, a close reading reveals that Dorfman has brought his knowledge of events subsequent to the novel’s first release to the later version.

2 The synchronicity of these two projects reveals much about Dorfman’s literary projects. How to Read Donald Duck reached an extremely broad audience, whereas the highly experimental Hard Rain was poorly received by the Chilean public, despite its winning literary prizes. Nevertheless, these two texts are complementary. Donald Duck argues against the simplistic, yet insidious, form of much media culture, and Hard Rain avoids simplicity in favor of complex depictions of complex situations.

3 Even in the postexile novel Konfidenz the protagonist is a solitary man whose main companion has been his fantasy woman, and in Dorfman’s most recent novel, The Nanny and the Iceberg, the protagonist is an outsider and loner.

4 For a detailed critique of Oropesa, see “Out of Bounds.”

5 See Guillén and Seidel.

6 See Foucault, Madness and Civilization and The Birth of the Clinic, for the connections between center/margin social organization in premodern and modern times. His main point is that modernity learned from the premodern that those who do not conform to the dominant order must be expelled or confined.

7 The fact that Gerardo is speaking of another woman also underscores the problem of loyalty and betrayal. Upon release from prison, Paulina returns to their apartment to find Gerardo in bed with another woman. His betrayal stands in stark contrast to her loyalty to him while being interrogated and tortured. He has now betrayed her again by supporting the story of this other woman and disregarding her story. His ability to compromise is tied to his lack of integrity.

8 The most famous Latin American testimonial is I, Rigoberta Menchú. For an overview of the debates over the testimonial form’s relationship to truth and storytelling, see Gugleberger.

9 I have included the original Spanish here because it speaks more directly to my point. In translation Dorfman changed the sentiment and eliminated the reference to the text as his son, whom he wants to see grow up in his native land. In English he states that he used the pseudonym because, at the time, texts with his name on them could not circulate freely in Chile or the other countries of the Southern Cone.

10 The Latin American Boom is associated with such writers as Gabriel García Márquez, Carlos Fuentes, Alejo Carpentier, Julio Cortázar, and José
Donoso. Receiving international attention in the 1960s, the Boom is often considered to be the Latin American high-modernist period. Writers in Dorfman's post-Boom generation have been associated with postmodernism. For more on the debates over such labeling, see Shaw and Williams.

11For an analysis of the Ariel/Caliban debate, see Saldívar, especially the chapter "The School of Caliban."

12For an analysis of the variations of the doctor's name, see Oropesa (86).

13Kellner explains the difficult terminology relating to this topic. In his opinion, and mine, the term media culture describes a form of culture that is mass produced and mass consumed more adequately than mass culture or popular culture. Media culture refers more specifically to the conditions of production and dissemination of these cultural forms and makes a clear distinction between these types of "low" art and folklore or mythology.

14Dorfman's treatment of the oral tradition differs from that of his Latin American Boom predecessors. Boom writing often incorporated the narrative style of oral tradition as an autochthonous voice that could counter official versions of Latin American history.

15I call the faceless, nameless man the narrator even though the text is in three sections, each with a different narrator, because he is the narrator of the section I am analyzing.

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Ariel Dorfman

Photograph by Jay Thompson
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