

Director's Notes

Continente Viril is one of the most symbolic theatrical pieces of today's Argentina. Its vision synthesizes three of the most typically Argentine characters: the Civil Servant, the Military and the Scientist. Action takes place on the Antarctic continent; specifically, that geographic portion of Antarctica assigned to Argentina; and within a military frontier base. This is an open territory that has attracted men - both military and civilian - from distinct countries with two dominant goals: Exploration, and Protection of frontiers. It takes place at the precise moment when a climactic distortion causes an entire penguin colony to commit suicide.

The play is divided into four irregular scenes. The writing style falls within the range of Satire, and the acting styles will range from surrealism to grotesque, including Chaplin-esque slapstick. The plot contains various conflicts, most of which are unresolved by the end, and each of which encompasses a specific fundamental truth.

Characters include an Argentinean Colonel and Sergeant, stationed on the base, a Civil Servant who serves as secretary and general workhorse, and a visiting Scientist. The Scientist's character speaks of clear and scientific possibility; of concrete evolution and firm progression. It can also be said that the Scientist is being used to justify or promote a certain power's interests, including the Scientist's own egotistical desire for fame. The Civil Servant refuses to accept responsibility for his own actions, much less any action that maligns or mistreats his society; he has been immersed in questionable obedience without question. And last the Military: that omnipotent power that created Argentinean society's chaos and the power present in all societies - and all countries - in similar circumstances. The two military characters - the Colonel and Sergeant - are depicted as caricatures, incapable of taking care of the land within their supervision. All their knowledge, order, discipline and status are converted into conformity, with little personal risk. Science, art, education, culture and all labor movements are controlled and modified by this one simple Power.

In *Continente Viril*, another irrepressible ingredient - sure and eternal - is added: Nature. Through and by Nature, Man creates an irreverent exposition on his personal environment. It is through this that Mankind's preoccupation with Power, and with the men who hold Power, is demonstrated. Although it is also true that a related, constant preoccupation with 'doing' can become mankind's highway of self-inflicted collisions. In the end the Scientist must decide to publish his finds in order to become famous; the military needs the Scientist's silence in order to keep the status quo and care for their base, and the innocent penguins, who are losing their habitat due mankind - civil and/or military - continue their march to suicide.



Geography¹

Antarctica covers 14 million square kilometers. Its name comes from Greek, and means “opposite the Arctic”. It is the fifth largest continent, and is the coldest place on earth. It is slightly less than 1.5 times the size of the United States. East Antarctica is colder than the West, as it has a higher elevation. Higher temperatures occur in January along the coast and average slightly below freezing. Most of the land of Antarctica is a frozen desert, with less precipitation than the Sahara Desert (under 2 inches = 5 cm a year). Oddly enough, 70% of the world's fresh water is frozen in the region of the South Pole. About 98% of Antarctica is covered by a thick continental ice sheet, with 2% barren rock. Average elevations are between 2,000 and 4,000 meters; with mountain ranges up to nearly 5,000 meters; ice-free coastal areas include



parts of southern Victoria Land, Wilkes Land, the Antarctic Peninsula area, and parts of Ross Island on McMurdo Sound; glaciers form ice shelves along about half of the coastline, and floating ice shelves constitute 11% of the area of the continent. The coldest, windiest, highest (on average), and driest continent; during summer more solar radiation reaches the surface at the South Pole than is received at the Equator in an equivalent period. Antarctica is mostly

uninhabitable. A triangular sector (see Argentine stations on map below), with vertex in the South Pole, only 500 km from Tierra del Fuego, is occupied by the **Argentine Antarctica**. The triangle includes the Antarctic Peninsula and numerous islands and archipelagos that surround it.



In 1998, NASA satellite data showed that the Antarctic ozone hole was the largest on record, covering 27 million square kilometers; researchers in 1997 found that increased ultraviolet light coming through the hole damages the DNA of icefish, an Antarctic fish lacking hemoglobin; ozone depletion

¹ Data comes from the CIA-The World Factbook website

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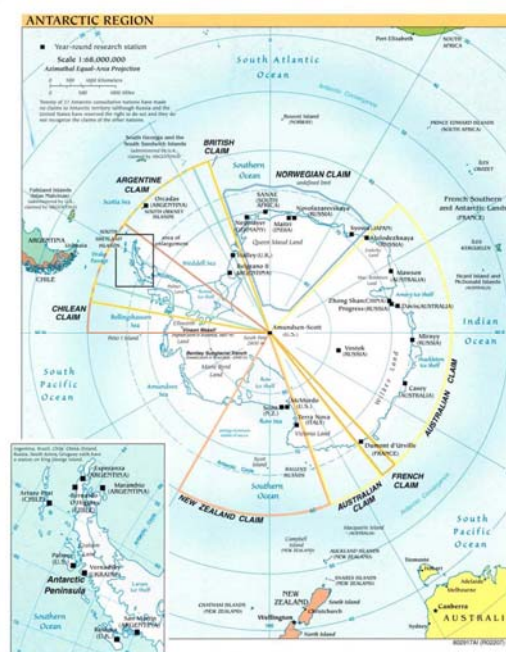
earlier was shown to harm one-celled Antarctic marine plants; in 2002, significant areas of ice shelves disintegrated in response to regional warming; this was compounded in 2003 and 2004.

Twenty-six nations operate seasonal (summer) and/or year-round stations on Antarctica. The continent is administered through meetings of the 27 consultative member nations, which include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, China, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Uruguay, and the United States. The Antarctic Treaty prohibits any measures of a military nature, such as the establishment of military bases and fortifications, the carrying out of military maneuvers, or the testing of any type of weapon; it permits the use of military personnel or equipment for scientific research or for any other peaceful purposes.

There are no developed ports and harbors in Antarctica; most coastal stations have offshore anchorages, and supplies are transferred from ship to shore by small boats, barges, and helicopters. A few stations have a basic wharf facility. There are no developed public access airports or landing facilities; 30 stations, operated by 16 national governments party to the Antarctic Treaty, have restricted aircraft landing facilities for either helicopters and/or fixed-wing aircraft; commercial enterprises operate two additional aircraft landing facilities.

Study Questions (Use this guide, plus website research, to answer)

1. Does the United States operate a seasonal or year-round research station?
2. How big is Antarctica?
3. What are the coordinates of the Argentine sector of Antarctica?
4. What is the Antarctic ozone hole?
5. How are supplies moved to Antarctica?
6. How much precipitation does Antarctica receive a year?
7. In what months does Antarctica's summer occur?
8. How many airports are there on Antarctica?



Biology²

Animals: Many animals make their home in the oceans and seas surrounding Antarctica, from microscopic plankton to the blue whale.

All Antarctic animals have adapted to life in extremely cold conditions. Some, like the whales, seals, and birds, have an insulating layer of fat to protect them from the cold. Others, like many fish and insects, have special chemicals in their blood (natural antifreeze proteins) that keep them from freezing. Many animals (like penguins and seals) have a compact body form and thick skin to help retain body heat. Birds also have waterproof plumage (feathers) and downy insulating feathers.

Some animals leave Antarctica during its horrendous coldest months, from June until August. Animals like the Humpback whale migrate to warmer waters to reproduce after eating huge amounts of krill in Antarctic waters. Many other animals (like the Emperor penguin) remain at the South Pole year-round.

Land and sea animals from Antarctica include:

Crustaceans - krill (euphausiids) amphipods, isopods, crabs, shrimp, sea spiders, and many others. The Antarctic Krill (right) is the best known of the 85 species of krill. Although only 6cm in length, they form a vital link in a long and rich food chain. Krill swim in huge swarms (thousands of meters across at densities of thousands per square meter) feeding on diatoms (usually seen as a yellowish color in sea ice), algae and phytoplankton. They are in turn eaten by seabirds, fish, seals and whales (a baleen whale can eat tons of krill each day).



Other marine invertebrates – squid, cuttle-fish, octopus, marine snails, limpets, sponges, sea stars, sea squirts, nudibranchs, sea anemones, comb jellies, corals, hydroids, sea urchins, zooplankton, and many others

Insects and Arachnids - Springtails, mites, the midge *Parochlus steineni* (the only winged insect native to the Antarctic), and others



Fish - Antarctic cod, ice fish, crocodile fish, dragon fish, robber fish, rat-tailed fish, skates, eel-pouts, sea snails, and others

Mammals - Fur seals (including the Elephant seal - left, Leopard seal, Weddell seal, Crabeater seal, Ross seal, and Fur

² Information for this section came from Factsheet: Penguins website; Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; and www.cybamuse.com;

seal), Whales (including the Blue whale, Fin whale, Sei whale, Southern right whale, Humpback whale, Minke whale, Sperm whale, Killer whale or Orca, Southern bottlenose whale, blackfish, Dusky dolphin, Cruciger dolphin, and Spectacled porpoise)

Birds - many penguins (see below), many albatrosses (including the Lightly-maned sooty, Wandering, Gray-headed and Black-browed), many petrels (including the Blue, Kerguelen, Gray, Great-winged, White-headed, White-chinned, Snow, Southern giant, Wilson's storm, Black-bellied storm, Gray-backed storm, and pintado), many prions (including the dove, fulmar, and thin-billed), Antarctic fulmar, Antarctic cormorant Kerguelen cormorant, Dominican gull, Brown skua, McCormick's skua, Arctic tern, Kerguelen tern, Wattled sheathbill, Lesser sheathbill, South Georgia pintail, Kerguelen pintail, and South Georgia pipit (the only Antarctic songbird).

Penguins: Flightless sea birds, penguins have a heavier skeleton than most birds. They have waterproof feathers, which even cover their bills and feet, and a thick layer of insulating fat. There are seven species of penguin in the Antarctica: the Adelie, Gentoo, Macaroni, Chinstrap, Rockhopper, King, and Emperor. When they swim, penguins look as though they were flying in water. Their wings, which have evolved into almost-flippers, flap forward, while they guide themselves with their tails. Although most penguins submerge for only a minute, Emperors can stay under water for up to 18 minutes. Penguins are highly social animals that recognize individuals easily. They live together in large colonies, and breed closely together. All adult penguins help guard the young. Adult penguins return to the colony where they were born to repeat the cycle. The Chinstrap penguin, mentioned in the play, gets its name from the thin black band under its chin. Chinstraps are far from endangered; approximately 10 million breed throughout the Antarctic region. They stand about 30 inches tall, and weigh approximately 11 pounds.



Plants: The **Antarctic flora** is a distinct community of vascular plants which evolved millions of years ago on the supercontinent of Gondwana, and is now found on several separate areas of the Southern Hemisphere, including southern South America, southernmost Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Tasmania, and New Caledonia. Based on the similarities in their flora, botanist Ronald Good identified a separate Antarctic Floristic Kingdom, that included southern South America, New Zealand, and some southern island groups (Good identified Australia as its own floristic kingdom, and included New Guinea and New Caledonia in the Paleotropical floristic kingdom, because other floristic communities had mostly supplanted the Antarctic flora).

Study Questions:

1. What are vascular plants?
2. How many species of penguins can be found in the Antarctic region?
3. Why is the Antarctic krill important?
4. Which fish found in the Antarctica are endangered?
5. What do Chinstrap penguins eat?

History³

The continent of Antarctica is one of the oldest on earth; part of the original mega-continent, Gondwana; it has slowly traveled from Australia to its current location. Many of the rocks found in East Antarctica are at least three billion years old.

Since the Arctic was first discovered, man had thought there was an equal land mass in the South.



In fact, Antarctica's name comes from the Greek for "opposite the Arctic". Scientist Edmund Halley, sailing south in September 1699, was the first European to tabular icebergs, which he sketched into the ship's logbook. In 1771, under a mandate from the French crown to discover the southern continent, Yves-Joseph de Kergulen-Trmarec sailed south from India. On February 12, 1772, he sighted a fog-shrouded land at 49°40'S but failed to land due to bad

weather. A sister ship launched a boat that was able to land, claiming the island (Kergulen Island) for France. James Cook tried several times, in 1768, 1772, 1773 and 1775 to find the southern continent, but though he discovered and named several islands (including Willis' and Bird Islands, as well as exploring the South Sandwich Islands), and proved that, if there, the continent was significantly smaller than supposed, he failed to find the mainland. In 1775 Cook did become, however, the first human to circumnavigate Antarctica.

However, in his logs, Cook noted the large numbers of seals and whales he observed. Before long, hunters headed south. Whalers and seal hunters took millions of seal skins from South Georgia, the Falkland Islands, the Cape Horn region, the South Sandwich Islands, and the coast of Chile between 1784-1822.

While the extermination of seals continued further and further to the south, by Argentinean, British and American sealers, the British Royal Navy sent Edward Bransfield to determine if solid land lay beyond the string of islands that were being discovered. On January 30, 1820, Bransfield, or a shipmate, sighted the mountains of the Antarctic Peninsula, a place he called "Trinity Land." Meanwhile, Russia's Captain Thaddeus von Bellingshausen, also exploring to the south, discovered the Finibul Ice Shelf on January 16, 1820 – two weeks prior to Bransfield - and this occasion was the first sighting of Antarctica by human eyes.

³ Sources for this section include Eco-Photo Explorers website; www.antarcticaonline.com; www.coolantarctica.com

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The first recorded landing on the Antarctic continent took place on February 7, 1821. Men from the American sealer *Cecilia*, under Captain John Davis, landed at Hughes Bay (64°01'S) looking for seals. Though they were on shore for less than an hour, they were the first humans to set foot on this new southern land.

Ninety-one sealing vessels were operating in the Shetlands during the 1820-21 season, and all remaining fur seals were systematically exterminated. However, some of these sealers also took scientific readings and samples, when time permitted. One of these 'sealer-scientists' was James Weddell, captain of the brig *Jane*. An avid explorer, naturalist, and geographer, he was also the first Antarctic conservationist, noting that with a little sensible management the South Shetland fur seal population could have provided a sustainable annual harvest of about 100,000 skins, instead of wiping out the population. Weddell took his ship further south than anyone before, 74°15'S. It would be over 80 years before anyone could get that far south again in the Weddell Sea.

Inspired by Weddell's voyage south, and by the tantalizing glimpses of land reported by the sealers, the French, British, and United States governments launched exploratory missions. All of them had two goals: discover new land and locate the south magnetic pole. Throughout the 1800s, many explorers and hunters searched for land, traveling further and further south; decimating seal and whale populations as they went. Towards the end of the 1890s, there was a veritable race to the South Pole by Belgium, the United States, France, Great Britain, Norway and Russia, among others. Finally, on December 14, 1911, Norwegian Roald Amundsen (right) reached the South Pole ahead of all competition. Since then, many have tried and achieved the Pole, with or without dog, with and without modern technical assistance.



In 1923, the British government established the Discovery Committee, alarmed at the rapid reduction of whale numbers. This was the beginning of the first major scientific study in Antarctica, and led to whale regulations and conservation.

The advent of steel-hulled ships, airplanes and radios greatly facilitated Antarctic exploration (and exploitation). The first Antarctic flight was made on November 16, 1928 by Sir Hubert Wilkins, and financed by William Randolph Hearst.

Throughout the history of Antarctic exploration, most early expeditions were privately funded. Most also owed their existence to strong, self-motivated leaders. However, as the search for whales and seals dried up, governments began to lay claim to vast tracts of land, basing their claims mainly on prior discoveries by their countrymen. World War II interrupted research efforts in Antarctica, but the continent was not immune to wartime activity. The German Navy used the waters of the Peninsula and the sub-Antarctic islands as a base from which they attacked allied shipping. Great Britain set up a base on Deception and Wiencke Islands and at

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Hope Bay to fight the Nazis. Their involvement in these islands later led to their war with Argentina over the Falkland Islands and South Georgia in 1982.

Right after World War II, modern government-sponsored Antarctic activities began. In 1946 the United States launched the U.S. Navy's Antarctic Developments Project. By the late 1940s Antarctic exploration had entered a new phase. For the first time, permanent bases were established. On January 29, 1947 Argentina established a base at Gamma Island. A week later, a Chilean expedition set up a base on Greenwich Island in the South Shetlands. As of 1996, there were 26 consultative nations and 16 accedent nations, for a total of 42 countries involved in Antarctic affairs.

Study Questions

1. In groups, put together a timeline of the exploration of Antarctica.
2. What role did whale and seal hunting play in the discovery and exploration of Antarctica?
3. Which countries were most involved in exploring Antarctica?



VOCABULARIO ESPAÑOL/ARGENTINO (Spanish/Argentinean Vocabulary)

<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>	<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>
abarloarlo	_____	autoinmolarse	_____
abrigado	_____	autopista	_____
aclimatando	_____	aves criollas	_____
acontecimiento	_____	baba	_____
acostumbrarse	_____	bahías	_____
acurrucado	_____	bicho	_____
ADN	_____	boina	_____
aduanas	_____	bosta	_____
aumente	_____	boleo	_____
agarrar	_____	botamanga	_____
agilicemos	_____	británico	_____
alambre	_____	buen tomar	_____
alarido	_____	bulto	_____
alcahuetes	_____	cancha	_____
algarrobo	_____	canjear	_____
alojamiento	_____	cañaverales	_____
aparentemente	_____	carabinero	_____
apurando	_____	carnet de vacunación	_____
anales	_____	castidad	_____
anguila	_____	cavar	_____
anonadado	_____	cae de maduro	_____
ansiedad	_____	chajá	_____
aparataje	_____	chupar	_____
aquerencia	_____	científico	_____
arrepiento	_____	cimentar	_____
arrobamiento	_____	cizañera	_____
asquerosa	_____	coadyuvar	_____
Atlántida	_____		
austral	_____		

<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>	<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>
colocar	_____	escupir	_____
combustible	_____	esparcimiento	_____
congelao	_____	especular	_____
congoja	_____	espeso	_____
contador	_____	estado de sitio	_____
contagiosamente	_____	episodios	_____
cría	_____	estiércol	_____
crónicas	_____	estilar	_____
cuadrante	_____	extraditar	_____
damajuana	_____	faena	_____
de a poquito	_____	frecuencial	_____
de cabo a rabo	_____	galán	_____
demorar	_____	gemela	_____
depto	_____	gestionar	_____
derretir	_____	goteando	_____
desagradecido	_____	gravo	_____
descolgar	_____	guerrero	_____
desembocar	_____	guirnalda	_____
desenvolvimiento	_____	hembra	_____
desfile	_____	hígado	_____
deshielo	_____	Holanda	_____
descifrar	_____	hormiguero	_____
divulgar	_____	hornero	_____
dotaciones	_____	huellas	_____
efemérides	_____	imperar	_____
emisora	_____	impuestos	_____
ensoñador	_____	incautar	_____
entelequia	_____	inenarrado	_____
entrañable	_____	iniciático	_____
entregar	_____	inundación	_____
escasos	_____	islotes	_____
esclerótico	_____	jalonado	_____

<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>	<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>
jarra medidora	_____	peaje	_____
jerga	_____	perfoverificador	_____
joda	_____	pertrechar	_____
jubilo	_____	pibes	_____
lema	_____	pingüino	_____
Liberia	_____	pingüino de barbijo	_____
lobos marinos	_____	plazo	_____
lograr	_____	polaco	_____
lo que se daba	_____	porquería	_____
lupa	_____	postergar	_____
macanudo	_____	prócer	_____
machimbire	_____	procuraduría	_____
manija	_____	quilombo	_____
maniobra	_____	rasgo	_____
me da calor	_____	rastrillaje	_____
medir	_____	razzia	_____
menguando	_____	rebosa	_____
minucia	_____	redondeando	_____
momia	_____	reputísima	_____
moquear	_____	rescatar	_____
muchachada	_____	restringir	_____
muelle	_____	reventar	_____
naipes	_____	risco	_____
nene	_____	rodeado	_____
nimiedad	_____	salpicar	_____
Noruega	_____	sellado	_____
obstaculice	_____	semejante	_____
ojeada	_____	semilla	_____
orgullo	_____	sobacos	_____
paradoja	_____	soplete	_____
paraguazo	_____	suministros	_____
pavada	_____	superpoblación	_____

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<u>Palabra en español</u>	<u>Palabra en inglés</u>
tapando	_____
témpano	_____
térmico	_____
terremoto	_____
tiniebla	_____
toneladas	_____
trámite	_____
trayectoria	_____
trepaba	_____
trineo	_____
truco	_____
tropa	_____
una vez por todas	_____
untar	_____
vacío	_____
vaho	_____
varón	_____
vaya nomás	_____
vencía	_____
víbora	_____
vicio	_____
vidrio	_____
villeros	_____
yanqui	_____
yema	_____
yergue	_____

Styles of Acting



In the United States, we are most familiar with the **Realistic** style of acting. This is what we generally see on TV, in films and in plays by our 20th Century masters, O'Neill, Williams and Miller.

However, Realism is only one of a myriad of styles. Latin American theater regularly explores other aspects of the human condition, creating characters bigger, broader and more stylized than many Americans are accustomed to.

In *Continente Viril*, Teatro de la Luna director Mario Marcel has chosen to emphasize differing aspects of the various characters, building each character via a specific style of acting in order to generate an ensemble wholeness. In this regard the style of acting used in *Continente Viril* might be referred to as **Surrealistic Grotesque Satire**.

Surrealism had its beginnings in the art and literature of the 20th century. French poet and critic André Breton published the *Surrealist Manifest* in Paris in 1924, marking the official beginnings of Surrealism. In written form, surrealist authors feel that a free flow of thought establishes a rapport with the subconscious mind of their readers. Symbols derived from Freudian psychology are also used. In *Continente Viril*, the Employee's relationship to his military overseers is surrealist, taking place almost in a vacuum. One might also see a surrealist quality in the Scientist's stream-of-consciousness musings into his recorder.

Grotesque is a style that began in the Middle Ages, with Auto-Da-Fes and the Commedia dell'Arte. It was popularized during the Romantic Era by Victor Hugo. The Grotesque style combines ugliness and ornament, the bizarre and the ridiculous. Both military officers, the Colonel and the Sergeant, are examples of grotesque caricatures in *Continente Viril*, maintaining military tradition without regard to circumstances, insisting things be done 'right'. The Employee also has an aspect of grotesque in his character.

Satire is possibly a better known style of acting, and certainly comes to us from the ancient Greeks and Romans. Today, satire is best known within political context. The essence of satire is aggression or



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criticism, with a specific moral lesson or didactic purpose. Satire does not seek to harm, but to nudge by biting humor. *Continente Viril*'s Scientist, who is, perhaps, the character who has the opportunity to change most during the course of the play (it may be argued whether he does, in fact change at all), embodies satire by his pointed conduct, his exaggerated viewpoints and his one-dimensional obsession.

Study Questions

1. What other styles of acting can you name?
2. What makes Grotesque different from Surrealism?
3. Write a short paragraph on the history of satire.
4. How is written surrealism different from the visual art form of surrealism?

