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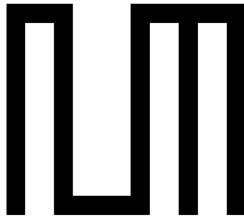

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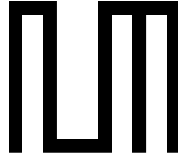

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NÚMERO ESPECIAL SOBRE LA VIOLENCIA Y LA AGRESIÓN / SPECIAL ISSUE ON VIOLENCE AND AGGRESSION

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ENSAYOS / *ESSAYS*

THE LEGALITY OF AGGRESSION: SELF-DEFENSE IN THE DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Claudio D. Salas

Introduction

When is deadly aggression justified by the law? This paper addresses the question by focusing on self-defense, beginning by discussing the principles of personal self-defense under domestic U.S. law and moving on to an analysis of the Bernard Goetz case, a case that underlines the difficulty juries sometimes have in applying the principles of self-defense. The initial discussion of domestic self-defense informs the rest of the paper, in which self-defense in the international context is addressed.

In general, international law is often murky and in flux. Certainly this has been the case with the law of self-defense since the end of World War II. In the second part of the paper, I discuss the development of international law on self-defense, with primary focus given to the United Nations charter. The third part discusses some of the world changes and events that have taken place since the creation of the United Nations that have affected the international community's understanding of self-defense. I conclude by focusing on the Bush doctrine of preemptive self-defense and the ways in which it differs from traditional understandings of self-defense.

Throughout my discussion of self-defense in international law, I will refer back to the concepts first discussed on the domestic law section of the essay. Domestic law is more settled than international law, and the domestic setting is less complex than the international setting. For this reason, there is greater clarity in the domestic setting with respect to self-defense, and this clarity can shed light on the international self-defense context.

Personal Self-Defense

A. Excuse vs. Justification

Our discussion of self-defense should begin by distinguishing between an excuse and a justification for having committed an apparently criminal act.[1] For the pragmatist there is not much difference between an excuse and a justification—proving either one leads to a criminal defendant's acquittal (Kadish 749). Philosophically, however, the two are quite distinct. An excuse reduces a defendant's responsibility for his crime by showing that he was not acting fully of his own volition or that he did not know what he was doing (750). The law in such cases affirms that the act was wrong, but finds that the defendant's situation at the time of the act excuses him from responsibility. If an act can be justified rather than excused, however, then no crime occurred at all (750). Thus, the moral stakes for justification are higher because in finding justification the law affirms that a particular, apparently wrongful act was not merely excusable but in fact the right thing to do.

Two examples of excuses for a wrongful act are insanity and duress. When mental illness prevents someone from distinguishing right from wrong, he or she will usually be acquitted of having committed a crime.[2] Duress occurs when a person of reasonable fortitude commits a crime because others have compelled him through threats of imminent harm to him or to others (Kadish 844). Unlike duress or mental illness, self-defense is considered a justification for actions, such as the use of deadly force, which would otherwise be crimes.

A concrete example will help further illustrate the difference between excuse and justification and the sometimes fine line which separates them. Let us imagine a woman who has suffered years of physical abuse at the hands of her husband; one night she kills him as he peacefully eats dinner. In such a case, the woman's defense attorney would most likely introduce evidence regarding battered woman syndrome, a psychological state of learned helplessness

[1] "It is customary…to distinguish sharply between…justifications and excuses" (Kadish 749).

[2] The exact test for demonstrating insanity varies depending on jurisdiction. A defendant who is acquitted because of insanity must usually spend a significant amount of time in a mental hospital, i.e. until he can show that he no longer suffers from mental illness. This hospital stay is not considered punishment but rather a necessary precaution taken for the defendant's health and safety as well as the safety of the general community (Kadish 882-883).

that leaves a woman incapable of recognizing alternatives to an abusive relationship and susceptible to fearing physical attack even when one is not forthcoming (Burke 215). This syndrome explains why a battered woman remains with her tormenter despite great abuse, and why she could honestly believe that murder was necessary. Because the life of the woman in this example was not in imminent danger—her husband was peacefully eating—under traditional conceptions of self-defense it would be hard for the jury to justify her actions. Nevertheless, the jury could still excuse her actions by finding that she was suffering from battered woman's syndrome. At least one legal scholar has suggested, however, that the use of battered woman syndrome as an excuse should be abandoned. Alafair S. Burke argues that the existence of the syndrome is poorly supported by scientific research and that battered women should be seen as rational rather than irrational actors who, in many instances, are in fact justified in killing their husbands under a theory of self-defense (218-220). According to Burke, a battered woman's actions of self-defense should be found reasonable if the defendant had legitimate reason to believe, based on past experience with her abusive partner, that there was no safe way to exit the relationship and that the only way to escape further abuse was to kill him when he was not looking (295).

B. The Legal Components of Self-Defense

Burke's argument for justifying rather than excusing a battered woman's killing her partner brings us to the question of what, under U.S. law, a jury must find to acquit a defendant under a theory of self-defense. This varies depending on jurisdiction, but the language of the Model Penal Code is generally representative. To use deadly force in self-defense a person must have the belief that such force is "immediately necessary…to protect himself against death, serious bodily harm, kidnapping or sexual intercourse compelled by force or threat." In addition, some jurisdictions require that a person considering the use of deadly force retreat if he can do so with "complete safety."[3]

To unpack this standard for self-defense further, we should note

[3] The requirements of self defense are in Section 3.04 of the Model Penal Code. The MPC is a proposed criminal code drafted on behalf of the American Law Institute by a group of law professors, judges, and lawyers. The MPC is not law and has no binding effect. It has, however, been "used as the basis for criminal-law revision by many states" (Black's Law Dictionary 420).

that the "immediacy" requirement, along with the duty to retreat, implies that the use of deadly force is justifiable only when violence is unavoidable. But the task for a jury is not to determine whether violence was unavoidable; rather, it must inquire into the defendant's *belief* that violence was unavoidable. The first part of this inquiry is no different than what juries often do—decide credibility. In the case of self-defense, the jury must determine whether the defendant honestly believed that his life was in imminent danger. The inquiry, however, does not stop there. All jurisdictions also require that the belief be reasonable in addition to honest (Burke 286).

This reasonableness requirement presents at least two problems. The first is that each juror will have a different and somewhat idiosyncratic view of what reasonableness means. This problem is particularly acute with respect to a vague standard such as reasonableness, but it exists to some extent in all jury trials and the system compensates for the problem by having many jurors, often twelve, to arrive at notions that the general population can accept. The second problem with reasonableness is determining from whose perspective to evaluate it: the subjective perspective of the person acting in self-defense or the objective perspective of a hypothetical reasonable person. Both perspectives would take into account the immediate circumstances surrounding the defendant's actions. The completely objective perspective, however, would ignore the defendant's individual circumstances, his experience, knowledge, background and physical attributes. This seems too harsh—a little old man and a professional boxer would of course assess the danger to their lives very differently when confronted by a street thug. However, if we swing too far in the direction of judging reasonableness purely from the subjective perspective of the defendant, if the jury is to think like the defendant, then the reasonableness inquiry becomes indistinguishable from the honesty of belief inquiry.[4] The jury must find a middle ground between these two extremes.[5]

C. The Case of Bernard Goetz

People v. Goetz, 68 N.Y.2d 96 (1986), is perhaps the most notorious case of self-defense, and one that shows a breakdown in a jury's inquiry into reasonableness. The facts of the case, as de-

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[4] People v. Goetz, 68 N.Y.2d 96,111 (1986).

[5] Burke's article cited previously discusses what could constitute an appropriate middle ground (286-95).

scribed in the court's opinion, were as follows. On Saturday afternoon, December 22, 1984, four black youths boarded a subway in the Bronx that was heading south to lower Manhattan. Two of the four youths had screwdrivers in their pockets, which they said were for breaking into the coin boxes of video machines. At 14th Street in Manhattan, Bernard Goetz boarded the subway car occupied by the four youths and sat down. Two of the youths approached Goetz and told him to give them five dollars. Goetz responded by standing up and firing four shots in quick succession, one shot aimed at each youth. In a taped statement to the police, Goetz recalled that the first two youths he shot "tried to run through the crowd [but] they had nowhere to go." The third youth "tried to run through the wall of the train." The fourth youth, Darryl Cabey, made himself inconspicuous and "tried pretending he wasn't with [the others]," but Goetz shot at him anyway. Goetz then checked to make sure he had hit all four youths. He in fact had missed Cabey who was now sitting very still. According to his own police statement, Goetz then said, "[y]ou seem to be all right, here's another." This fifth and final bullet severed Cabey's spinal cord. Goetz fled the scene while the youths were receiving medical attention. He surrendered to police in New Hampshire several days later.

The legal point decided in this case concerned New York State's reasonableness standard. The court ruled that the jurors should be told that the standard for self-defense was not whether Goetz subjectively believed himself in imminent danger but whether a reasonable person in Goetz's circumstances would believe he was in imminent danger.[6] This ruling obviously favored the prosecution. Nevertheless, even when appropriately instructed on New York law, the jury at trial acquitted Goetz of all counts except that of carrying an unlicensed concealed weapon (Kadish 755). In other words, the jury found that Goetz's use of potentially deadly force was reasonable under an objective standard. Yet it would appear from the facts in the court opinion that the youths, at least the two who approached Goetz and demanded money, were guilty of no more than harassment. They made no attempt to rob or physically hurt Goetz. The other two youths were guilty of no more than being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Cabey especially seemed to want no part of what was going on, and he ended up the worst—paralyzed and brain damaged.[7]

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[6] Goetz, 68 N.Y.2d at 115.

[7] Goetz, 68 N.Y.2d at 101.

The Bernard Goetz case was the subject of extensive social and legal commentary (Kadish 755). It is not my intention to analyze the legal and social import of the case beyond a few observations necessary with respect to the law of self-defense. To acquit Goetz, the jury probably reasoned in one of the following ways:[8]

- No person can be expected to act reasonably when faced with potentially dangerous thugs; thus we should ignore the reasonableness requirement of self-defense because it is reasonable to be unreasonable in the face of danger.
- We live in a time of high crime and we cannot count on the police and courts to protect us; thus we should tolerate vigilantism and relax our expectations of reasonableness as it applies to self-defense.
- It is reasonable to conclude that young black men are per se dangerous; thus Goetz' actions were justified under a theory of self-defense.

These possible lines of reasoning are disturbing, especially the last one. Almost as disturbing was the jury's unwillingness to draw a line by, for example, finding that Goetz's first shot or two were justified, but that the last, more cold-blooded shot was not. Whichever line of reasoning the jurors used in their deliberations, they found it so compelling that they were willing to give Goetz carte blanche to shoot at will. The jury's deliberations were tainted by society's ills, whether it was racism or high crime. It is this human element of the jury, and prosecutors and judges, which makes well-established standards of self-defense less clear-cut than they may appear in statute books. The practical application of the legal standards is always more problematic than their articulation, and reasonableness is an especially slippery standard to apply.

National Self-Defense

If all countries used their armed forces solely for self-defense, there would be no war. As trite and naïve as this sentence may sound, judging from the way we use language in the U.S. self-defense is the primary role of the military. We have a "department of defense" rather than a "department of offense," and our national budget includes "defense spending" rather than "attack spending." Lexically at least, our cultural preference is for military self-defense,

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[8] I have based these possible ways the jury could have reasoned on the opinions of legal experts quoted in the *New York Times* shortly after the verdict (Berger).

even if in reality we use our armed forces for other purposes. As will be discussed, current international law also prefers self-defense, and outlaws other uses of unilateral force.

A. Using Force and Excusing the Use of Force

Before getting to self-defense specifically, we should explore the use of force more generally. Under U.S. law, killing another person is almost always a wrongful act; rarely is it excused or justified. With respect to nations, however, history tells us that wars have been waged for many reasons. Indeed, before World War II, there were many reasons under international customary law that legitimized a country's waging war (Toumala 10). But whether legitimate under customary law or not, I would argue that most wars boiled down to the acquisition of wealth and power. The acquisition of wealth and power would not justify or excuse an individual who commits murder, and there seems no reason for it to be justified or excused when done on a larger scale. It is hardly controversial to claim that in the arena of nations, as in the arena of persons, we should presume generally unlawful the use of deadly force. As we will see later, the United Nations charter accepts this principle.

Having said this, can a nation's use of deadly force sometimes be excused? Can nations claim insanity, duress, involuntariness, lack of knowledge, or some other excuse? I propose that nations cannot be excused for the use of force to the same extent that persons can be. Perhaps under a totalitarian regime, a nation could say its actions were not its own but those of a few insane individuals. Frankly, I am not sure this argument would make sense even in that case, but at least in a democracy, where leadership is diffused over many individuals, a nation cannot plead insanity or lack of knowledge. A small country, however, could claim duress if coerced by a larger country into waging war via the threat of invasion or the threat of complete financial ruin. A small country cannot be excused for waging war, however, when it does so to curry favor with, or gain financial assistance from, a more powerful country. The difference is one between coercion and bribery. The latter is not an excuse for committing a crime.

While a small country may have the aforementioned excuses for the use of military force, a powerful nation does not. It is either justified in its actions or its actions are unlawful.[9] Self-defense is not

[9] There might be an argument to be made that the U.S. was not justified in the

the only possible justification for a nation's use of force,[10] but it is the most established and most common.

B. Development of Modern International Norms of Self-Defense

Most of today's international law on the use of force was codified in 1945, but some of its roots can be found in customary international law. The right to self-defense, for example, was first clearly articulated in the 1837 *Caroline* incident involving the United States and England (Buergenthal, *Public* 328). At that time, Canadian insurgents were receiving private support from within the United States. In an act claimed as self-defense, British forces attacked and burned the *Caroline*, a ship in a U.S port that was used to support the insurgents. U.S. Secretary of State Daniel Webster protested that the British action had not been necessary: Britain had not attempted diplomatic efforts to stop the offending activities (Kearley 671). Webster further added that acts of self-defense must not be excessive or unreasonable. The dual requirement of necessity and proportionality remain part of today's international law on self-defense (671). Webster's statement on necessity also articulated a right to anticipatory self-defense, i.e. the right to fend off an imminent attack rather than waiting to be struck (671). Webster argued that force should be used only when there is no choice of means or moment for deliberation. A situation of imminent attack fits within Webster's formulation, but a situation in which the threat of attack is speculative does not.

Nations arguably lost the right to anticipatory self-defense with the framing of the UN charter. The charter has three key provisions with regard to the use of force, and these should be understood within the context of the United Nations' mission to safeguard peace and security after the horrors of two world wars. The first provision, Article 2(4), is a broad renunciation of force by individual members and it is one of the principles on which the United Nations was founded:

> All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the Purposes of the United Nations.

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atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but that its actions could be excused. Exploring such an argument, however, would lead us far astray from the main topic of this essay.

[10] Humanitarian intervention, for example, is a fairly new doctrine, with old roots, that justifies the use of military force to prevent human rights atrocities (Buergenthal, International 3-6).

Members thus eschewed unilateral force, preferring that the United Nations' wield collective force. Article 42 states, in part, that the United Nations "may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security." There is one exception to this preference for collective force over unilateral force. Article 51 reserves for each member state the right to act in self-defense:

> Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defense shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

For the purposes of our discussion, the important question regarding the Untied Nations scheme with respect to force is how narrowly to interpret the self-defense exception.

The narrowest interpretation of the charter posits that countries should depend almost exclusively on the United Nations for security. Therefore, countries should not act in self-defense unless they have suffered an armed attack (Kearley 669). The language of Article 51, "if an armed attack occurs," supports such a reading. Timothy Kearly, however, in a discussion of the history of the charter's ratification, argues that most nations viewed Article 51 as leaving untouched the right to self-defense under customary international law. According to Kearley, then, ratifying countries meant to keep a right to act in anticipatory self-defense (728-29).

The right to anticipatory self-defense in the present day remains controversial. The majority of scholars believe that this right does not exist under international law (McLain 267). Practice, however, indicates otherwise. A well-known example of anticipatory self-defense occurred in the 1967 Six Day War. Israel, threatened by massive troop build-up on its borders, initiated an attack on Egypt, Jordan and Syria. Because of the danger Israel faced, most countries did not find Israel's action unreasonable, and it can be claimed that "many states support a right of anticipatory self-defense in certain situations, particularly where there is strong evidence that an overpowering attack is imminent" (271).

A somewhat more recent Israeli action stretched the limits of anticipatory self-defense. In 1981, Israel struck Iraq's nuclear reactor

at Osirak, claiming self-defense. Israel feared that Iraq would launch an attack using nuclear weapons once the reactor became operational (271). The Security Council in this instance passed resolution 487, condemning Israel's actions. The United States voted for the resolution (271). Countries that believed in a right to anticipatory self-defense may have nevertheless felt that Israel's actions were not proper: the reactor was not operational, and thus the Iraqi threat was speculative rather than imminent (271).

C. A Recap of International Self-Defense Norms

We can summarize the history of international self-defense as follows:

- Before the United Nations Charter, international customary law emphasized immediate necessity and proportionality.
- This allowed anticipatory self-defense when the threat was immediate, as long as other avenues of resolving the matter, such as diplomacy, had been exhausted.
- This looks a lot like domestic self-defense in which the threat needs to be immediate, often there is a duty to retreat, and deadly force can only be used if the person is in severe danger (proportionality).
- Under the majority interpretation, in recognition of the destruction caused by nations using armed force, the UN charter modified the right to self-defense, restricting it so that it could only be exercised in very clear circumstances, when a country had suffered an armed attack.
- The UN made up for restricting individual nations' use of force by taking it upon itself to safeguard peace and security.

Today, almost 60 years after the formation of the United Nations, we find ourselves at a crossroads. Under domestic law, the right to self-defense is limited because, among other reasons, we have a police force to investigate danger, prevent altercations and step into a dispute when necessary.[11] When we read the United Nations charter self-defense provision narrowly, we should similarly remember that it was drafted as part of a scheme in which the UN would act as a global police force. The UN, however, does not have ready access to a military force, and it takes a long time to reach consensus on a course of action. Michael J. Glennon claims that the situation is even more dire: "Between 1945 and 1999, two-thirds of the members of the United Nations—126 states out of 189—fought 291 interstate conflicts in which over 22 million people were killed… The upshot is

[11] Indeed, as I suggested earlier, a perceived lack of police effectiveness might have led the jury in the Goetz case to be more permissive of vigilantism.

that the Charter's use-of-force regime has all but collapsed" (540). If we agree with Glennon that the UN system has failed, it seems unreasonable to expect that nations act in self-defense only in circumstances in which an attack has already occurred. Instead, the pertinent question now is whether to return to the customary international law notion of self-defense, which permits only anticipatory self-defense, or whether to expand the notion of self-defense further in recognition that we live in dangerous times.

A World That Has Changed

While domestic law on self-defense is relatively stable, international law on self-defense in a dynamic and complicated world is in dispute and in flux. Until fairly recently the points of contention were the legality of anticipatory self-defense and what constitutes an armed attack sufficient for Article 51 to take effect. More recently, controversy has revolved around the Bush administration's assertion of a right to preemptive self-defense, which would give nations a significantly broader right to act first than under anticipatory self-defense. To understand the rationale behind preemptive self-defense we must first touch upon how the world has changed since the UN charter was written.

A. The Cold War

During the cold war self-defense took on added urgency for the two superpowers. War between them had the potential for mass destruction. This reality kept the two superpowers from major conflict. Indeed the logic behind the nuclear arms race was one of self-defense. The U.S. and the Soviet Union both knew that if they launched a nuclear attack, the other side had stockpiled enough weapons to strike back in self-defense, leading to mutual destruction. Thus, because of the self-defense capabilities of the other, both countries had strong incentives not to strike first. This, however, was a precarious balance. If one country saw that the other had fallen behind in the arms race, the incentive would shift to striking first and eliminating a terrible threat without suffering counterattack.[12]

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[12] This cold war dynamic has been described by legal scholars such as Michael Riesman (84-86), and by the U.S. government itself (United States 13, 15).

B. The Spread of WMDs

The world today, with its one remaining superpower, looks quite different than it did during the cold war. The stage is no longer dominated by two nations on the brink of a nuclear war, which would take the whole world with them. The threats are smaller in scale now, but perhaps more likely to occur. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, its former republics were left with a stockpile of nuclear weapons and with weak governments to control them. We have also seen more countries develop nuclear weapons, most notably India and Pakistan. Then there are countries which may be seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, among them are what the United States has called "rogue nations" such as North Korea (United States 13-14). Finally, nuclear weapons are not the only threats around. The poor man's weapons of mass destruction, chemical and biological weapons, are almost as frightening and easier to acquire. Countries who have these weapons may not feel as much restraint in using them because they don't have the kind of firepower that the cold war rivals possessed. The lack of mass destruction potential may mean that neighbors will not reach the uneasy equilibrium of the cold war.

C. The Threat of Terrorism

By itself, the spread of WMDs would be cause for concern, but in combination with the threat of terrorism it becomes truly frightening. Like all nations, nations which possess WMDs are stationary and have neighbors that they must interact with. Nations depend economically on each other and this serves as some restraint on their actions, although perhaps not as much restraint as the threat of mutual destruction might produce. In any case, unlike nations, terrorists do not belong to the international community. They are beyond the law and have no natural constraints.

Terrorism occurs in the Middle East with numbing regularity. September 11, 2001 showed that terrorists were also capable of striking on U.S. soil. While the acts of terrorists usually directly affect only a small number of people, the fear which these acts are meant to engender is felt by entire populations. There would be no better way for terrorists to ply their trade of fear than selectively to use WMDs. They could acquire such weapons by exploiting some country's weak central control, by buying them from third world countries in need of cash, or by collaborating with governments with whom they share mutual enemies.

The problem of terrorism from a self-defense perspective is that

terrorists are hard to track down. Terrorists are not state actors nor are they usually controlled by state actors; thus they cannot usually be deterred by striking at a particular country. In fact, in the past, the Security Council has refused to qualify an act of terrorism as an armed attack that could trigger a valid act of self-defense under Article 51 of the UN charter (Knauft 773). Even in condemning the acts of September 11th as "heinous acts of terrorism," the General Council failed "to characterize the acts as an 'armed attack' under Article 51" (Glennon 543). The logic behind the refusal to characterize terrorist attacks as 'armed attack' is that no state has "effective control" over terrorists (Stahn 37), and that an armed attack cannot occur without "substantial involvement" on the part of a state actor (Glennon 543-44). This reasoning has been most clearly articulated by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in a somewhat different context—determining whether the acts of armed rebels rise to the level of armed attack.[13]

September 11th has changed the way the international community views acts of terrorism. Stahn claims that the ICJ "effective control test" articulated in the Nicaragua case has been overturned (37). Even though the Security Council did not authorize the use of force after September 11, 2001, it did reference the United States' inherent right of self-defense (Glennon 543). Finally, "the quasi-unanimous statements of support from the international community for the U.S. military action [in Afghanistan] were soon followed by unprecedented offers of airspace and landing rights" (Stahn 35).

Because of the close connections between the Taliban and Al-Qaeda, the Taliban's refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden, and the enormity of September 11th, the world community for the most part accepted the United States' attack on Afghanistan. It is unlikely that a situation in which a nation and a terrorist group are linked so tightly will repeat itself. Even in a case like Afghanistan, in which terrorists acted openly with the approval of the Taliban, the United States' military operation diminished but did not eliminate the Al Qaeda threat, demonstrating the difficulty of combating terrorism through traditional means.

Preemptive Self-Defense

To state the obvious, when one person acts in self-defense only a few lives are at stake. When nations use military force, the property

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[13] Military and Paramilitary Activities in and Against Nicaragua (Nicar. V. U.S.), 1986 ICJ 14 (June 27).

and lives of thousands of people are at stake. This can cut both ways. Acting rashly in self-defense can result in needless destruction. Not acting in self-defense, however, can expose a nation to great danger. Taking this into account, should the rules of international law allow nations to act with more or less discretion than a person has under domestic law? The majority understanding of the United Nations charter is that nations should have less discretion, i.e. they can only act after suffering an armed attack (Kearley 669). A minority of commentators, who support anticipatory self-defense, would argue that nations should have discretion similar to that of a person under domestic law (669). The danger has to be immediate, but there is no requirement to wait to be attacked. The recent position of preemptive self-defense advocated by the Bush administration would allow nations significantly more discretion than a person has under domestic law.

A. The Bush Self-Defense Doctrine

The State Department's "National Security Strategy of the United States of America," published in September 2002, describes the Bush administration's position on self-defense as follows:

> We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And as matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed (United States ii).

The document later adds that the traditional concept of "imminent danger of attack," the requirement for anticipatory self-defense, must be adapted "to the capabilities and objectives of today's adversaries" (15). Because these capabilities include "weapons that can be easily concealed, delivered covertly, and used without warning," the United States will "counter a sufficient threat to our national security" with "anticipatory action…even if uncertainty remains as to the time and place of the enemy's attack….[T]he United States will, if necessary, act preemptively" (15).

The United States' military action in Afghanistan could fit under international law self-defense doctrine, or at least it has been accepted as such by other nations. Therefore, the war on Iraq was the first real example of Bush's preemptive self-defense doctrine. According to the Bush Administration's pre-war rhetoric, the biggest threat Iraq posed to the U.S. was its alleged pursuit of weapons of mass destruction and its connection to terrorism (Wielder 13). As discussed before, the combination of the two make for a potent

threat. Prior to the war, however, there was significant skepticism about Saddam Hussein's connection to terrorism, specifically to Al-Qaeda. The editors of *The New York Times* opined that the administration jeopardized its credibility "with unproved claims of an alliance between Iraq and Al-Qaeda" (Elusive). They added that the one known terrorist group in Iraq, Ansar al-Islam, operated "in the Kurdish-controlled area of Iraq, beyond the control of Saddam Hussein" (Elusive).

After the war, the United States has still not shown that there had been a significant terrorist/Iraq connection. The search for WMDs has found very little. The editors of *The Economist*, supporters of the war on Iraq from the start, recently chastised Bush and Blair for their pre-war exaggeration of both the threat of Iraqi WMDs and Hussein's connection to Al-Qaeda (Wielders). The Iraqi threat was far from imminent. That is the point of preemptive self-defense. It gives countries the ability to go after threats not clearly defined.

B. Preemptive Self-Defense in Domestic Law

The notion of preemptive self-defense has no place in domestic law. As discussed previously, domestic law justifies deadly force only when the danger is immediate. Many jurisdictions go further and impose a duty to retreat, if safe to do so, on a person considering the use of deadly force. The underlying assumptions are 1) if the danger is not immediate there are ways other than using force to avoid it, and 2) almost any alternative, including retreat, is preferable to using force.

The Bernard Goetz case is probably as close as any domestic jury has come to endorsing a notion of preemptive self-defense. As it is, the case result was a clear violation of law. Alan Dershowitz, famed professor of criminal law at Harvard Law School, said at the time "that what Mr. Goetz did was by definition illegal in New York State and every other state" (Berger). Yet Goetz could at least make a claim, if weak, for self-defense. The youths approached Goetz, stood close to him and requested money, actions that a reasonable person could find uncomfortable and somewhat menacing, even if not imminently threatening. Bush's doctrine of preemptive self-defense is so broad that its domestic equivalent could encompass Goetz's seeing the youths in another car, deeming them potentially dangerous, going to their car and shooting them, all to prevent the possibility that they would come to his car and attack him.

Such actions would have landed Goetz in jail for murder, even

with a forgiving New York City jury. In the domestic context a well-equipped police force protects the citizenry, and we would not want vigilantes who answer to no one but their conscience and perception of reality to usurp the role of the police. Unless the threat is immediate and unavoidable, citizens have the choice of retreating and/or calling the police.

C. Preemptive Self-Defense and Potential Harm in the International Context

For nations, retreating when threatened is rarely possible. Troops can be withdrawn from occupied or leased territory, but a country cannot leave its own territory; allowing a violation of its territorial integrity would be tantamount to self-destruction.[14] More importantly, the UN does not have a police force constantly investigating potential danger, and a country cannot call upon a standing army of peacekeepers to come to its aid when it perceives a threat. In an age where perceived but shadowy danger can materialize quickly into the horrors of September 11th, it is understandable that some countries might want to exercise preemptive self-defense.

Nevertheless, preemptive self-defense presents serious problems in implementation. It eliminates the immediacy requirement of traditional self-defense under international customary law. Preemptive self-defense also runs the risk of losing the proportionality element of traditional self-defense. Since threats in preemptive self-defense scenarios are unclear and have not materialized, determining a proportional response is difficult. Indeed, a nation would be tempted to err on the side of overreacting to potential threat rather than under-reacting.

As mentioned before, the potential harm surrounding self-defense in the international context is exponentially worse than it is in the domestic context. If a preemptive strike took place upon mistaken belief, thousands of innocent lives could be lost and many thousands more terribly affected for no reason. If a preemptive strike did not take place and the threat materialized, the results would be equally disastrous. If the two scenarios are perceived equally likely and terrible, then a country will naturally prefer to strike preemptively

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[14] Perhaps an international version of retreat is appeasement, which was undertaken with disastrous results prior to WW II in Europe's interaction with Hitler. Because of this failure, appeasement has fallen into such disrepute it will likely never be revived on any significant scale.

leading to the loss of lives other than its own. Such calculus legitimizes anticipatory self-defense. In a situation where it is our lives or theirs, with no other alternative, nations will always choose to strike first as Israel did in the Six Day War. But the preemptive self-defense situation is different from that of anticipatory self-defense because the threat perceived may not actually materialize.[15] While in such a situation preemptive self-defense leads to the loss of their lives, not undertaking preemptive action does not necessarily lead to the loss of our lives; if the threat doesn't materialize, there would be no loss of life at all. Under a completely objective calculus, then, where all lives are valued equally, the use of preemptive self-defense is never warranted. But of course all lives are not equal in the eyes of a particular nation. The lives of nationals are valued more and thus preemptive self-defense might, in the real world, be an attractive option for a nation that feels threatened. If a nation values its nationals at least twice as much as it does the nationals of another country and calculates the probability of a threat materializing from that other country to be 50%, then the scales tip in favor of preemptive self-defense. While not making too much of this unseemly formula,[16] it does appear that even in a world where lives are valued differently preemptive self-defense loses legitimacy the less likely a threat will materialize. In other words, the closer it stays to anticipatory self-defense, the more legitimate preemptive self-defense becomes. Moreover, the closer preemptive self-defense stays to anticipatory

[15] William Safire, conservative commentator and proponent of preemptive self-defense, has kept the issue of self-defense alive in the public consciousness. In his most recent column on the issue, Safire draws attention to a comment made by Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean after Israel's strike against alleged terrorist camps deep in Syria's territory. When asked, Dean stated that he didn't have access to Israeli intelligence and thus didn't know if it was a terrorist camp or not. "If it was," Dean said, "[Israel is] justified. They have a right to defend themselves." This is a classic statement of anticipatory self-defense. Safire then draws attention to the preemptive self-defense dilemma: "[L]ittle intelligence data is certain. What if . . .evaluators had come up with an estimate of '75 percent likely'? Would a President Dean then find preemption justified? Or would he wait until trainees from the camp carried out their missions, perhaps killing thousands, when he could be 100 percent sure?" (Safire). According to Safire, then, anticipatory self-defense is not possible in today's uncertain world—it is either a preemptive strike or waiting for an armed attack to occur. Safire chooses a relatively high percentage to make his pitch for preemptive self-defense. Regardless, it is the percentage game and how easily percentages can tumble down a sliding scale that should concern us about preemptive self-defense.

[16] A nation will favor a preemptive strike when XYZ is larger than X, where X is the value of a national of the other country, Y is the factor by which a nation values its nationals more and Z is the probability that in fact a threat will materialize. In my example, Y is larger than 2 and Z equals 50%.

self-defense, the more likely it is that the preemptive action will be proportional.[17]

D. Standard of Proof

In domestic law, the way a jury or a judge decides a case depends on the standard of proof used in that particular type of case. For civil cases the standard is "preponderance of the evidence," i.e. it is more likely than not that one party is at fault (Clermont 251). This is the minimum standard for adjudicating a case—a more than 50% likelihood. In criminal cases, the standard for conviction is much higher, "beyond a reasonable doubt," usually interpreted as meaning 99% probability of guilt or "virtual certainty" (251). The "clear and convincing" standard lies somewhere between "preponderance of the evidence" and "beyond reasonable doubt" (251). There are other standards in American law, most notably "probable cause," the standard for police to obtain a search warrant. Probable cause has not been clearly defined, but it is less than 50%. To find probable cause, a magistrate has to find that "there is a fair probability" that the place the police want to search will yield evidence of a crime.[18]

These different standards of proof can be analogized to different theories of self-defense. The armed attack requirement of Article 51 requires proof beyond all doubt that the country undertaking actions of self-defense has reason to do so. Anticipatory self-defense has a somewhat lower threshold; it is beyond reasonable doubt that a country has reason to act in self-defense. The Bush doctrine of preemptive self-defense does not define a standard for determining what constitutes "sufficient threat." From the example of Iraq, however, it would seem that it might be along the lines of "probable cause." The Bush Administration had some reason to believe that Iraq had WMDs. We should remember, however, that the standard of "probable cause" is never used to convict anyone but simply to conduct more invasive police investigation. Immediately prior to the war on Iraq, the international community had agreed with the Bush administration that there was "probable cause" to believe that Iraq was hiding WMDs, and the UN authorized weapons inspectors to carry out searches in Iraq. But the Inspectors found no conclusive evidence of weapons of mass destruction. Bush and Blair then made

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[17] Despite world condemnation, Israel's bombing of Iraq's nuclear reactor in 1981, discussed earlier, was an act that, if nothing else, had the virtue of proportionately targeting a specific threat.

[18] Illinois v. Gates, 462 U.S. 213, 214 (1983).

"frightening allegations of a Saddamite nuclear bomb," proclamations which now seem exaggerations based on faulty intelligence (Wielders 13). Of course hindsight is 20/20, and without having access to state secrets it is hard to make a certain evaluation, but it does seem as if the evidence the Bush administration had about Iraqi WMDs and terror connections never amounted to much more than probable cause.

We should note one more thing about probable cause: the police, who want to conduct the search, do not determine whether probable cause exists. A "neutral and detached" magistrate, who in theory has a more objective perspective, signs the warrant.[19] The U.S., of course, had no third party to verify the validity of its suspicions. And this brings us back to reasonableness. In domestic self-defense the person acting in self-defense does not ultimately get to determine whether his actions were reasonable. A jury takes into account the individual circumstances of the person acting in self-defense, but ultimately the jury applies an objective standard. In international law there are no juries. With anticipatory self-defense this is not a terrible problem because the standard of proof is so high it is fairly easy to determine whether it has been met or not. But when the standard of proof that sufficient threat exists is as low as probable cause, as it appears to be in the Bush doctrine of preemptive self-defense, then it would be comforting to have an objective opinion regarding the reasonableness of determining that sufficient threat exists. Of course, the world has no such comfort as the US alone makes the determination of when to act in preemptive self-defense. It is as if Bernard Goetz had been allowed to decide for himself whether his self-defense actions were reasonable.

The Goetz case brings me to the last point I want to make about preemptive self-defense. In reading the Goetz case inevitably one wonders if the leniency the jury showed Goetz resulted from racism. Perhaps the jury believed that young black men are inherently more dangerous than other people and therefore injuring them is acceptable, even if done under mistaken or unreasonable belief. Perhaps something similar could happen with preemptive self-defense. Since the standard of proof for preemptive self-defense appears flexible, a lower standard could be used when the target country in question is Muslim.

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[19] Illinois v. Gates, 462 U.S. at 240.

Conclusion

The old joke about international law is that there is none. The combination of treaties and custom that constitute international law lacks clarity, while enforcement and adherence to international law is haphazard. In this sense, the Bush doctrine of preemptive self-defense fits well within international law. Under this doctrine, the standard used to legitimize an act of self-defense is both vague and subjective. Unfortunately, if we are unable to judge objectively whether an act of violence is justified, then no law of self-defense exists at all.

Claudio D. Salas
Yale University Law School
United States of America

AUTHOR'S POST-SCRIPT: While this article was in press, the International Court of Justice handed down its decision Concerning Oil Platforms (Iran v. U.S.) 2003 ICJ 90 (Nov. 6). In this case the ICJ ruled that the United States could not prove conclusively that its two damaged ships had been struck by an Iranian missile or mine. Thus, the United States retaliatory attack on Iranian oil platforms was not a valid act of self-defense. Moreover, even if an Iranian missile or mine had struck U.S. ships, these incidents would not have been "armed attacks" because they were not specifically targeted at the U.S. Finally, even if such incidents were "armed attacks," the U.S. retaliatory response was neither necessary nor proportionate. The most interesting aspect of this case is that the ICJ did not need to discuss self-defense, since the U.S. prevailed on other grounds. The ICJ opinion is thus best understood in light of the United States' war on Iraq. With the Bush doctrine of preemptive self-defense as backdrop, the ICJ felt compelled to reaffirm the traditional international law formulation of self-defense.

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“I WROTE TO EXIST”: EVE ENSLER Y *THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES*

Marta Fernández Morales

1. Ensler: vida y obra de una activista.

Eve Ensler, dramaturga, activista y *performer*, nació hace medio siglo en Manhattan, hija de padre judío y madre cherokee. Además de arrastrar dos holocaustos en la familia, como ella misma comenta con relación al origen de sus padres (Lesnes 12), Ensler lleva consigo una huella aún más profunda: la de la violencia de género. Creció en un barrio de las afueras de una ciudad próspera, dentro de una familia de clase media-alta aparentemente normal, y sin embargo, sufrió el abuso físico y psicológico, así como la violación sistemática por parte de aquél que tenía el papel de protegerla: su padre.

Como consecuencia de la situación de agresión continuada a la que estaba sometida, Ensler pasó por un proceso de negación de su propio cuerpo y supresión de su sexualidad. El contraste entre lo aparente y lo real, la fachada paradisíaca de familia perfecta cumpliendo el sueño americano frente al infierno interior de la casa, llevó a la artista a una situación traumática que ella explica en los siguientes términos:

> It was very insane making. I grew up in a beautiful community where on the outside everyone had everything, whereas on the inside I was confined and condemned by a cruel, sexually abusive father, who raped me from the time I was five until the time I was ten. And then he brutalized me on a regular basis until I left home at sixteen. I left my body then, too. I wasn’t sane by the time I left, and it’s taken me most of my life to recover and re-enter my body. (cit. en Greene 156)

Lo que Ensler denomina “abandonar su propio cuerpo” es consecuencia clara del trauma del abuso, concebido en la sociedad occidental moderna como la peor forma de violencia posible: “[L]a crueldad principal cometida con menores ya no es la violencia física, como a finales del siglo XIX, sino la violencia sexual como en el

tema del *child abuse*" (Vigarello 360). De entre todos los trastornos posibles en un caso como el suyo, la joven Ensler manifestó particularmente problemas de ansiedad, de relación con la propia sexualidad, y sobre todo, comportamientos adictivos. Cuando entró en la universidad (Middlebury College, en Vermont) ya era casi una alcohólica, y tras graduarse, añadió las drogas a su lista de recursos autodestructivos (Greene 157). A pesar de todo, Ensler cuenta que consiguió sobrevivir gracias a la palabra. La universidad había introducido en ella, además del alcohol y las drogas, el ansia de crear y de dirigir teatro, y reconoce que eso le salvó la vida. Igual que cuando era niña y plasmaba su confusión en un trozo de papel, en su juventud, afirma, "I wrote to exist" (cit. en Greene 156). La literatura y el drama parecían garantizar su permanencia en este mundo: "I instinctively knew that if I existed in words, I would somehow exist in matter" (cit. en Greene 156). Por medio del papel y la tinta Ensler venció la invisibilidad y el silencio típicos de las personas con su pasado abusivo, que "en muchos casos […] llegan a la edad adulta sin poder verbalizar el asunto" (Torres Falcón 85).

Los primeros trabajos impresos de Eve Ensler fueron poemas breves, y desde entonces la neoyorquina no ha dejado la pluma. Retomando el trabajo teatral que había empezado en la universidad, donde había actuado y dirigido algunas piezas, Ensler diseñó para sí misma el solo *When I Call My Voices*, que ella describe como "a one-woman show about a woman who has nine voices and is trying to integrate them" (cit. en Greene 158) y que reflejaba su estado emocional por aquel entonces. Eran los años setenta, y el siguiente espectáculo que intentó escribir se titulaba *Coming from Nothing*, el cual quedó inconcluso. La temática eran los fantasmas infantiles, y la autora no podía aún enfrentarse a los suyos.

Antes de ponerse cara a cara con sus recuerdos, Ensler decidió dedicar su producción dramática a temas más públicos y aparentemente de mayor envergadura política. Se entregó por completo al movimiento antinuclear, esfuerzo del que nació su obra *The Depot* y que significó un punto de inflexión en su trayectoria. Por recomendación de la actriz Joanne Woodward introdujo el humor en el texto, y ocurrió lo inesperado, que funcionó: "That was a turning point in my life, because it never occurred to me that you could make politics funny. […] And in that period, I began to learn how to be a playwright" (cit. en Greene 159).

Después de *The Depot*, Eve Ensler probó suerte en el teatro experimental con *Scooncat*, sólo para regresar inmediatamente al espectáculo comprometido con *Ladies*, resultado de muchas horas

de voluntariado en un refugio para mujeres sin hogar en Nueva York y cuyo eco está presente en *The Vagina Monologues*. Con su labor social y artística, Ensler trabaja desde hace más de una década construyendo un hogar, una comunidad para todas las mujeres, pero especialmente para aquéllas que han sido agredidas y rechazan su cuerpo como objeto de castigo y dolor. Su intención declarada como dramaturga, directora e intérprete es la de crear lazos dentro de un universo ginocéntrico para acabar con la opresión de las mujeres y la violencia que las encierra en sus casas y sus roles. Ensler es, en este sentido, heredera directa de los primeros grupos de teatro feminista que popularizaron la expresión *consciousness-raising*, confiando en promover un cambio en las relaciones entre los géneros tanto en la vida privada como en la pública. Gay Gibson Cima resume así la fe que movía a grupos norteamericanos como los pioneros Westbeth Feminist Playwright Collective, At the Foot of the Mountain o The Women's Experimental Theatre:

> I do not believe that theater alone can make a revolution, but it can help to make the revolutions in consciousness that lead to change. […] Through our feminist productions we can expose the universal as masculine, the natural as cultural, the textual as political, revealing the ideological and material bases of what is there, demonstrating what is not there, and adding what is silenced or marginalized" (93).

La violencia está muy presente en el primer trabajo realmente estructurado y publicado de Eve Ensler, que marca el momento en que ésta empieza a enfrentarse directamente con sus traumas: *Floating Rhoda and the Glue Man* (1993). Se trata de una pieza en dos actos donde algunos de los personajes protagonistas se desdoblan (*Rhoda/Rhoda's stand-in; Barn/Barn's stand-in*) como símbolo de su incapacidad para comunicarse y establecer una relación funcional. Con la incorporación de claros elementos autobiográficos, como la violación por parte del padre de Rhoda o sus adicciones a la cocaína y al alcohol, Ensler escribe una historia de amor y desamor donde las identidades fragmentadas impiden que los personajes conecten verdaderamente de igual a igual. En *Floating Rhoda* cabe destacar la estrategia de la mujer que da nombre a la obra, imagen de algunas esposas maltratadas que utilizan la disociación entre cuerpo y mente como estrategia de supervivencia durante los ataques de sus parejas. Explica la psicóloga norteamericana Lenore Walker, madre del concepto de *Battered Woman Syndrome*:

> Dissociative states are common among all victims of abuse and trauma. Victims learn this mild form of self-hypnosis in order to protect themselves from terror and physical pain; in short, *they learn to separate their minds from their bodies.* […] During an acute battering

> incident, the abused woman often does not feel the blows. (175, énfasis mío)

Como reflejo fiel de una mujer de carne y hueso, la Rhoda creada por Ensler confiesa, cargada de sentimiento de culpa: "He beat me because I'm never really here. […] I've come to know. That's why I leave as soon as it begins, that's why I go" (152). Cuando ella, "deja su cuerpo", aparece en escena su *stand-in*, la doble sin sensibilidad que aguanta los golpes de los hombres que conviven con Rhoda. Hacia el final del acto primero, mientras Coyote maltrata al otro yo de la protagonista para confirmar su virilidad, ella se columpia sobre la habitación, adoptando el papel de público intraescénico y *voyeur* que no actúa ante la brutalidad que contempla:

> (*[Coyote] [b]eats Rhoda throughout his speech*.) I'm patriotic, Rhoda. I want meat and a woman to cook it. […] I wanted to be with you, Rhoda, but you're already gone. […] (*After Coyote finishes hitting Rhoda's stand-in, he suddenly comes out of it, realizing what he's done. Rhoda's stand-in lies limp on the bed. Coyote shakes her, but she doesn't respond. As Rhoda swings over them on the trapeze, she lights a candle and swings into the stars*). (151)

Este texto puso en marcha hace diez años la línea temática que aún sigue vigente en el teatro de Ensler: la violencia de género como parte inseparable de la condición femenina. Su trayectoria personal y profesional desde entonces ha estado definida por una misión: establecer el diálogo entre las mujeres y provocar la concienciación sobre la agresión física y psíquica y sus consecuencias. La forma ideal de fundir en uno solo sus esfuerzos como activista y su creación artística llegó con *The Vagina Monologues*, texto y espectáculo que han logrado abrir un hueco en los escenarios de medio mundo para Ensler, para las mujeres y para el cuerpo femenino en su más plena presencia. Con trabajos como el de Eve Ensler se hace realidad el sueño de toda dramaturga feminista: "[W]omen see themselves and respond. They don't feel judged" (Greene 169). El juicio, si lo hay, se produce en este tipo de teatro no sobre las protagonistas, sino sobre quienes las agreden. Se trata, en fin, de que los labios de las mujeres puedan dejar de decir "slow down" o "too hard" y sean libres de gritar sin tapujos "I want" (Ensler, *Monologues* 19, 20).

2. Postmodernismo, teatralidad y compromiso contra la violencia de género: *The Vagina Monologues*

La época actual nos sitúa culturalmente en la debatida corriente del postmodernismo, cuyos rasgos más relevantes en relación con

la dramaturgia han sido recogidos por Deborah Geis en el libro *Postmodern Theatric(k)s*: primero, habla de la incorporación de la cultura popular y de la historia a una producción artística que no rechaza las nuevas tecnologías. Además, continúa Geis, el impulso tras el discurso artístico postmoderno es el de la fragmentación y la deconstrucción de la obra de arte en el sentido canónico que el término adoptaba en el *mainstream*. Se trata no sólo de crear nuevos significados, sino de descentralizar el proceso, dándole tanta importancia al receptor/a como al autor/a y entendiendo la obra como un proceso constante (Connor 134). En este sentido, al contrario de lo que sostenía la crítica tradicional, en el texto postmoderno el significado no reside en su representación predeterminada, sino en su recepción (Geis 33). En el acto comunicativo que se da entre actores y público durante un evento teatral, esto se traduce en "[the] self-consciousness of the spectator, the awareness of context and the dependence upon extension in time" (Connor 133).

La descentralización y la atención desplazada hacia nuevos focos se traslada también al discurso postmoderno en lo que se refiere al contenido. Se rechaza la "exotización" y cosificación del "otro/a", sea éste no-hombre, no-occidental, no-blanco, etc. Traducido al lenguaje escénico, este proceso de ex-centrización, según Geis, toma forma en la puesta en escena, donde existe la posibilidad de crear juegos visuales y metáforas (33). Para llegar a estas imágenes y manipulaciones lingüísticas se recurre a menudo al humor y la parodia, dando lugar a un metadiscurso crítico desde la propia obra representada. El énfasis en este momento de la historia teatral, por tanto, no estará en el texto dramático, sino en la puesta en escena, y ello tendrá un corolario lógico: el público y su capacidad cognitiva serán parte fundamental del proceso creativo del momento dramático y su significado (Geis 34).

Íntimamente ligado al rasgo anterior está el último de los que enumera Geis: "Subjectivity also demands increased attention" (34). El teatro postmoderno colabora en la búsqueda de nuevas identidades y formas no manidas de expresar la subjetividad individual. En el discurso actual no se habla ya de un sujeto unitario, fijo y supuestamente neutro (pero en realidad sexuado en masculino y no racializado); ahora el yo es múltiple y está en flujo constante, no se puede aprehender en la lista de dicotomías típica del pensamiento patriarcal ni conceptualizar en etiquetas en singular. En el centro de la teorización está la cuestión de cómo articular el sujeto-mujer sin reproducir las estructuras del discurso masculino tradicional. Haciendo un resumen de forma condensada, es posible afirmar que las

posiciones respecto a la construcción de la subjetividad femenina se dividen entre aquéllas que resaltan los puntos en común entre las mujeres de toda raza, clase y condición, y las que apuestan por el reconocimiento y la potenciación de la diferencia.

La producción artística de Eve Ensler, enmarcada en el momento postmoderno, no es ajena al debate existente respecto a las mujeres en este aspecto, y se inclina claramente por una política de identidad. En su teatro el acento se pone en lo que todas las mujeres, dentro de lo que Ensler llama "the spectrum of women", tienen en común como sujetos sexuados y socializados en femenino. Dos conceptos aparecen por encima de todos los demás a la hora de definir la experiencia común de la mitad femenina de la población del mundo: el cuerpo y la violencia. El trabajo de Ensler en *The Vagina Monologues* es el de fusionar estos dos ejes definitorios de la identidad femenina y subvertirlos, luchando a un tiempo por frenar la violencia y por construir una visión positiva del cuerpo de las mujeres.

El proyecto de *The Vagina Monologues* entronca directamente con las teorías de Hélène Cixous, feminista de origen argelino que acuñó la expresión *écriture féminine*. Para Cixous el momento de acudir al teatro ha de ser un gesto político, con las miras puestas en un cambio en los medios de producción y de expresión: "It is high time that women gave back to the theatre its fortunate position, its *raison d'être* and what makes it different - the fact that there it is possible to get across the living, breathing, speaking body" (Cixous, "Aller" 547). Con los *Monologues*, el cuerpo femenino toma literalmente el centro del escenario para expresarse desde lo que Eve Ensler considera la esencia de la mujer: la vagina.

La génesis de la obra está en dos centenares de entrevistas que Ensler realizó a mujeres de todo tipo después de constatar cómo las cercanas a ella hablaban con desprecio, o incluso con asco, de sus vaginas. Tras sus encuentros, la autora destilaba las palabras para escribir sus monólogos:

> First I interview and then I take those interviews, I read them, I let them filter through me, and from this process, I pick out a couple of lines here and there that speak to me. […] I never tape, I only write, because I find that, after sitting in a room with the women, I'll write the lines that matter to me. And then when it comes to the monologue, I'll take, let's say, a sentence, and that will be the catalyst to the monologue. So the woman's being is in it, her essence is there, but her words may not be. (cit. en Greene 161)

En los textos resultantes, la vagina se concibe como una sinécdoque para la mujer completa, entendiendo que en el vientre está la

esencia del "ser mujer", pero también la causa de la violencia ejercida sobre el género femenino en su conjunto. En el teatro de Ensler, como en la teoría de Cixous, el cuerpo de la mujer en el escenario es "a body in labour" (Cixous, "Aller" 547), luchando por destapar los tabúes y liberar a los demonios del lenguaje y la cultura patriarcales que aún sirven como excusa para violar, maltratar o mutilar a millones de mujeres en todo el globo. La tesis de la dramaturga es que si se levantan los velos de opresión a través de la palabra, la violencia remitirá hasta llegar a desaparecer. Para ello, las mujeres han de tomar conciencia de su situación como grupo, más allá de las diferencias y aprender a amarse, empezando por el cuerpo para conquistar la voz que la cultura falocéntrica les ha negado.

Aunque la intención declarada de Ensler es eminentemente positiva para las mujeres, puesto que se reivindica su posición como sujetos y su derecho a vivir libres de violencia, existe un peligro que acecha tras textos como *The Vagina Monologues*: el esencialismo. En un mundo donde el discurso se ha articulado históricamente en oposiciones duales jerarquizadas (Cixous, *La risa* 14) y se ha asociado a la mujer siempre con el término entendido como negativo de dichas dicotomías (*cuerpo vs*. mente, *pasividad vs*. acción, *naturaleza vs*. cultura), la insistencia en "la esencia de lo femenino" o "el ser mujer" puede actuar como refuerzo de estos esquemas de pensamiento. Si el énfasis en los procesos reproductivos de la mujer ha servido como base de su discriminación, cabe pensar que una propuesta como la de Ensler, centrada en el cuerpo como fuente de vida y de energía –ella misma define su vagina como "su segundo corazón" (cit. en "Art" 1)–, no hará sino perpetuar este énfasis, volviendo a atrapar a las mujeres en su biología como destino. Es la trampa ya denunciada por las teóricas contrarias a *l'écriture féminine*: "[A]lthough *écriture féminine* eloquently questions the feminine condition by virtue of its insistence on active erotic liberation, it nonetheless perpetuates that condition because it apotheosizes some innate essence that is woman" (Wenzel 266).

Caer en esa trampa, además de implicar un regreso a la biología como principio regulador de las relaciones entre los sexos, significaría desde un punto de vista puramente teatral condenar a los personajes y a la obra a escenarios marginales, con público exclusivamente femenino y sin comunicación posible entre hombres y mujeres. Precisamente de eso se ha acusado a Ensler desde algunos foros críticos. En análisis como el del peruano Reynon Muñoz se acentúa el lado esencialista del espectáculo cuando el hombre se pregunta "y para nosotros, ¿qué?". Debido a su énfasis

en la palabra "vagina", que aún resulta agresiva dicha desde el escenario por ser poco común en el lenguaje escénico, y por la temática exclusivamente centrada en la mujer, *The Vagina Monologues* pueden considerarse discriminatorios para la mitad de la población que no está presente en ellos: "No se utiliza el recurso de volver a la guerra de los sexos. Los hombres, simplemente, no están, se han ido" (Muñoz 1). Esto ha provocado un sentimiento de exclusión en algunos espectadores, que no estaban preparados para sumergirse en una pieza puramente ginocéntrica, formato hasta ahora inédito en las tablas occidentales.

En *The Vagina Monologues* la identificación habitual androcentrista con el héroe dramático, que lleva a una empatía clara y a una catarsis final, no ha lugar. Por ello, en vez de la comunicación profunda y espiritual que Ensler pretende cuando dice que "[e]l sexo es una ruta hacia es esclarecimiento y la espiritualidad" (cit. en "Eve Ensler" 1), en ocasiones el efecto ha sido exactamente el opuesto, y el distanciamiento del público masculino ha roto la dinámica semiótica de la puesta en escena: "[L]os hombres han sido olvidados y uno tiene la impresión de haberse colado en una fiesta a la que no ha sido invitado. […] Esta polarización es uno de los principales reproches que pueden hacerse a esta, por otra parte, emocionante y necesaria obra" (Muñoz 2). Esta cuestión se hace evidente, por ejemplo, en los intentos de interacción de las actrices Magdalena Broto y Maite Merino en la versión española de esta producción: en el Teatro Jovellanos de Gijón, dirigiéndose a las mujeres de las primeras filas durante su espectáculo del 8 de marzo de 2002, lograron sin ningún problema que éstas dijeran en voz alta la palabra "coño", dentro de su escenificación del monólogo "Reclaiming cunt". Sin embargo, en la puesta en escena del Teatro Alfil de Madrid unos meses antes, el juego se intentó con espectadores varones y la dinámica se rompió al negarse ellos a verbalizar la vindicación de la vagina, por sentirla ajena y excesiva.

Además de la relación polarizada con el público, y desde un punto de vista puramente formal, hay otros argumentos de crítica negativa que destacan en los escasos análisis de *The Vagina Monologues* que se han hecho hasta ahora, entre los cuales el fundamental es la poca profundidad del texto. Esta flaqueza, que se compensa habitualmente con la puesta en escena y el trabajo de las actrices, como reconocen casi todos los críticos/as, se ha puesto de manifiesto en diversas reseñas. Gabriel Guillén, por ejemplo, habla de un texto "que no llega a *penetrar*" (curiosa imagen para una crítica de *The Vagina Monologues*, por otra parte) y que deja "un

sabor agridulce en los infelices que pidan mayor trascendencia" (1). Lynne Truss, por su parte, afirma que "some of these monologues aren't even so great. They are often purplish, their hearts bleed on cue, and the true-life experiences they purport to relate […] would be arguably a lot more valuable as documentary than as drama" (cit. en "Current reviews" 1, 2). En España, Luisa Cortiñas opina: "[L]os diversos textos son en exceso irregulares, lo cual no es extraño teniendo en cuenta que son 18. Si unos monólogos son poseedores de una hilarante originalidad, otros están preñados de la zafiedad de lo anodino y los tópicos de lo cotidiano" (1).

Es cierto que Ensler, en su afán por incluir el mayor número de voces posibles en su montaje, cae algunas veces en sus propias trampas y juega con tópicos manidos como la ineficacia de algunos hombres en la cama, las agresiones sexuales constantes e inevitables a mujeres de clase trabajadora, etc. Al hablar de estos temas de una forma tan llana y sin tabúes, el texto puede llegar a resultar crudo y demasiado radical, rebajando la calidad global de la pieza como ejemplo de literatura dramática contemporánea. Al fin y al cabo, no hay mayor valor para un texto que el ser leído con placer, y fragmentos como "As a lesbian", donde se describe de forma explícita un coito entre dos mujeres, o "I was twelve. My mother slapped me", centrado en el tema de la menstruación, están aún muy alejados de los esquemas de placer estético interiorizados por los lectores/as occidentales de hoy.

En este marco paradójico de atracción por lo diferente, miedo al "otro"-mujer, rechazo a la ausencia del varón y fascinación por las novedades escénicas que ofrece *The Vagina Monologues*, la defensa más obvia del trabajo de Ensler vendría dada por la efectividad social y política de su teatro. La fuerza que mueve los *Monologues* tiene dos vertientes fundamentales: primero, se trata de promover una solidaridad entre todas las mujeres basada en su género, su cuerpo y su opresión, demostrando a través del lenguaje sin tapujos y libre de límites masculinizantes que, como grupo, "[n]o han tenido ojos para ellas mismas. No han ido a explorar su casa. Su sexo les asusta aún ahora. Les han colonizado el cuerpo del que no se atreven a gozar. La mujer tiene miedo y asco de la mujer" (Cixous, *La risa* 21). En este sentido, Ensler presenta en su obra varios impactantes *vagina facts* que muestran el *continuum* histórico de la violencia de género:

> At a witch trial in 1593, the investigating lawyer (a married man) apparently discovered a clitoris for the first time; [he] identified it as a devil's teat, sure proof of the witch's guilt. (31)

> Genital mutilation has been inflicted on 80 [million] to 100 million girls and young women. […] Short term results include tetanus, septicemia, hemorrhages, cuts in the urethra, bladder, vaginal walls, and anal sphincter. Long-term: chronic uterine infection, massive scars that can hinder walking for life, fistula formation, hugely increased agony and danger during childbirth, and early deaths. (63-64).

Lejos de caer en el victimismo, la artista compensa estos hechos violentos con imágenes de empoderamiento. Se les pregunta a las entrevistadas sobre sus vaginas, pero también sobre sus deseos, sus miedos y sus sueños, recuperando un foro inexistente hasta el nacimiento de los primeros grupos de *consciousness-raising* y hasta cierto punto ignorado en los últimos años con el argumento de que la liberación ya estaba conseguida. Los personajes de los *Monologues* lo agradecen una vez superado el momento de timidez y sorpresa inicial por las cuestiones planteadas: "You know, actually, you're the first person I ever talked to about this, and I feel a little better" (30). Además, se rechazan los tabúes que rodean a algunos momentos vitales en el ciclo femenino y que aún producen reservas a la hora de verbalizarse, como la menstruación: "I interviewed many women about menstruation. There was a choral thing that began to occur, a kind of wild collective song. Women echoed each other. I let the voices bleed into one another. I got lost in the bleeding" (33). Hay también un lugar para el orgasmo femenino sin la intervención del pene en "The Vagina Workshop" y "The Woman Who Loved to Make Vaginas Happy", celebraciones de la sexualidad libre de las mujeres.

La segunda vertiente sociopolítica de *The Vagina Monologues* que puede compensar las críticas de esencialismo está representada por el fenómeno mundial del *V-Day*. El movimiento nació durante la primera gira de la obra por los escenarios estadounidenses, cuando, cuenta Ensler, "[c]ada noche había decenas de mujeres que hacían cola para venir a contarme su historia" (cit. en Lesnes 12). La dramaturga, que desde el principio de su trayectoria no ha puesto nunca límites entre el arte y el activismo, se dio cuenta de que muchas mujeres necesitaban algo más que una hora y media de testimonios, risas y comunicación. Era urgente ayudar directamente a las víctimas de violencia de género, y su teatro podía hacerlo. Desde 1998, está en marcha el *V-Day*, "a consciousness-raising event and fundraiser designed to stop abuse against women" (Bourland 1).

Alrededor del día de San Valentín de cada año, Ensler, por previo acuerdo a través de su organización, cede su obra para una representación. El compromiso es que ella no cobra sus derechos, pero tampoco trabajan con ánimo de lucro las actrices, directoras,

etc. Tras la puesta en escena, que ya se ha llevado a cabo en universidades americanas, ciudades grandes y pequeñas de Europa, pueblos africanos, locales clandestinos en países donde aún hay una fuerte represión contra el movimiento de liberación de las mujeres, etc., la recaudación de taquilla se destina íntegramente a las asociaciones de lucha contra la violencia de género seleccionadas por las organizadoras del evento. Personas que han pasado por la experiencia de organizar, interpretar, diseñar, dirigir o asistir como público a las representaciones de los *Monologues* durante el *V-Day* demuestran con sus reflexiones que, lejos de promover el esencialismo y la vuelta a los esquemas de pensamiento patriarcales, la obra de Ensler despierta las conciencias y revive el feminismo militante allá por donde pasa:

> Brian: "I feel […] that V-Day is a very important cause, and I think it's a good strategy as well. It gets people who ordinarily wouldn't even think about women's issues to come to the play and most of them leave with a new understanding and a lot more respect for the experiences of women in our society." (cit. en "Testimonials" 1)
>
> Keri: "I am overwhelmed by the overall positive response that I have gotten for bringing this show to Lincoln. It will truly open some eyes, minds, and hearts!" (3)

El rasgo fundamental de *The Vagina Monologues*, por lo tanto, no es su valor como texto literario dramático, sino su peso como espectáculo teatral feminista. Es en la escena donde los testimonios sobre violencia y otros temas toman cuerpo y llegan a los ojos y las conciencias del público; la clave está en su teatralidad. Sobre las tablas se aprecia la riqueza polifónica del texto que quizá se pierde en el libro y que presenta un *crazy quilt* de voces contra la agresión sexista, "una visión multicolor [que] propicia que la obra discurra por diversos derroteros que, en conjunto, hacen que su calidad y riqueza aumenten sensiblemente" (Vega 1).

La decisión de Ensler de tomar el monólogo como forma de base para la obra es parte de los aciertos a la hora de lograr una alta efectividad. Para ella, el monólogo es la forma más verdadera, porque desnuda al individuo y es una forma de mirar hacia la propia vida (Greene 161). Además, concebida en un sentido amplio, esta forma dramática permite la comunicación directa con el público mediante la ruptura de la cuarta pared; lo que en castellano se llama "apelación directa", que "vulnera directamente [la convención del teatro tradicional] porque incluye a los espectadores como receptores explícitos y como contexto situacional igualmente explícito, provocando la ruptura de la llamada 'ilusión teatral'" (Cueto Pérez 519). En varios momentos de la pieza, como ya se ha comentado, las

actrices se dirigen al espectador/a, forzando una respuesta relacionada con la deconstrucción de tabúes lingüísticos o sociales y con la concienciación sobre los abusos al cuerpo femenino.

La apelación al público hace posible relacionar la obra de Eve Ensler con las prácticas feministas brechtianas, que a través de las teorías del *gestic criticism* de Elin Diamond y del trabajo de *performers* como la propia Ensler o Holly Hughes, se apropian de conceptos como el distanciamiento para conseguir sus objetivos de movilización y reflexión sobre los temas presentados. En el texto aparecen fusionados los principios del Teatro Épico y del drama postmoderno, compartiendo el énfasis en el papel del espectador/a (Geis 9). Yendo más allá, Eve Ensler se asocia también al Teatro de los Oprimidos de Augusto Boal, especialmente en lo que se refiere a su concepto del público como elemento activo no sólo durante el proceso semiótico del drama, sino en el conjunto de la sociedad.

En la dramaturgia feminista, como en la de Boal, "performance can be most usefully described as an *ideological transaction* between a company of performers and the community of their audience" (Kershaw 16). Durante el hecho teatral se producen una serie de negociaciones, no sólo a propósito de las convenciones tradicionales (principio de ficcionalidad, linealidad de la trama, identificación, etc.), sino también en relación con el intercambio de opiniones, principios y valores que se produce entre escenario y patio de butacas. El significado final de lo visto no vendrá dado sólo por la intención primera del autor/a o director/a, sino que tendrá que contar con la actividad perceptiva y cognitiva del público: "[P]erformance is 'about' the transaction of meaning, a continuous negotiation between stage and auditorium to establish the significance of the signs and conventions through which they interact" (Kershaw 16). En el caso concreto de *The Vagina Monologues*, lo que se pretende es que el espectador/a reestructure su concepción del mundo para incluir a la mujer como sujeto, des-centrando el discurso patriarcal y deshaciendo mitos y tabúes.

La consecuencia ideal de una práctica teatral comprometida como la que promueven Ensler y Boal es la conversión del *spectator* en *spect-actor*, el espectador/a activo/a, que toma parte en la acción (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz 2). Invitando al público a hacer sugerencias y participar directamente en la trama de sus obras, Boal descubrió que el público pasaba por un proceso de empoderamiento, no sólo porque podía imaginar un cambio, sino porque se le ofrecía la posibilidad de llevarlo a la práctica, reflexionando sobre las sugerencias propuestas y generando acción social (Paterson 1).

Ensler, trabajando en la estela del movimiento feminista, recoge el relevo de Boal al nivel de la acción en la calle, y anima a su público a tomar partido respecto de la violencia de género. Las mujeres, cree ella, están preparadas para retomar el control de su cuerpo, su sexualidad, sus relaciones con los hombres, con otras mujeres y con el mundo: "Women are hungry to feel liberation at this moment in time. Women sit in that theater every night and they are ready to go" (cit. en Greene 169). *The Vagina Monologues* les da esa oportunidad. La respuesta, está en sus manos… y en el resto de su cuerpo.

Marta Fernández Morales
Universidad de Oviedo
Asturias, España

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"¡MAL VENGA A TAL PADRE QUE TAL FAZE A FIJO!" LA AGRESIÓN CORPORAL COMO REPRESENTACIÓN ALEGÓRICA DE LA FE CRISTIANA EN *LOS MILAGROS DE NUESTRA SEÑORA*

Javier Muñoz-Basols

Gonzalo de Berceo elabora en *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora* un código de moral cristiana con el propósito de educar, instruir y aleccionar a la audiencia. Para llevar a cabo este objetivo dispone una serie de *figurae* o personajes que encarnan cualidades moralizantes y describen arquetipos sociales de conducta. A lo largo de los veinticinco milagros, la intención didáctico-cristiana integra aspectos de la sociedad de la época que manifiestan cómo la fe cristiana actúa sobre los mismos.

En el Nuevo Testamento se presenta a la colectividad judía desde el punto de vista de oposición al dogma cristiano, no sólo por profesar un tipo de fe distinta, sino también, por la ambigüedad que bajo el *modus operandi* del cristianismo posee el término "judezno" o judío en su función adoctrinadora. Por esta razón, el marco narrativo de 'lo judío' sirve para representar alegóricamente la espiritualidad cristiana que subraya la capacidad física de acción o motivo judío[1] de la comunidad en defensa de dicha fe, tal y como apunta Joel Saugnieux: "los mitos antisemitas aparecieron desde el principio del cristianismo, correspondiendo a la necesidad práctica de luchar contra el proselitismo judaico y de asentar la nueva religión cristiana" (75).

En la misma línea de significado Montalvo señala cómo:

> Toda la oposición contra la Iglesia se identifica con los judíos: por ello se les asocia a los herejes y a los incrédulos. Las representaciones artísticas dan testimonio de ello. A veces se representa a los herejes

[1] Con este término denominamos cómo se presenta la oposición entre lo judío y lo cristiano como hecho físico de acción. En el milagro que analizamos la colectividad cristiana arremete de manera violenta contra el padre judío ante la agresión física y moral perpetrada.

> con el perfil de judíos, en contraposición a los católicos. Asimismo en las representaciones dicotómicas, cielo versus infierno, aparecen los judíos junto a los herejes en el infierno. Esta permanente amenaza que suponen los judíos para la religión católica, unida a las acusaciones de otro orden y al estereotipo general negativo del judío, justifica la reducción de esta minoría. (134)

En ambas caracterizaciones, lo judío pone de relieve aquello que no es de fiar y que existe en la cultura popular como connotación de la desconfianza[2] hacia dicha tradición. Hablamos de "motivo" ya que se trata de un *leit-motiv* que centraliza la actuación de los personajes, al tiempo que dota a la trama de una justificación que se presenta *a priori* en el título, y que prefigura en el lector una representación condicionada de lo que se va a narrar a continuación.

Al realizar un análisis semántico-estructural del milagro XVI, "El judezno",[3] también conocido como "El niño judío", establecemos cómo se produce una agresión física que nos permite hablar de la importancia de "lo corpóreo" en la narración, que adquiere una interpretación no sólo funcional o espiritual sino también social, y cuyo propósito responde a subrayar el didacticismo cristiano presente en la obra. Igualmente, el hecho de que el arquetipo moral de este milagro sea una niño nos lleva a ilustrar cómo se articulaban en la sociedad de la época las creencias populares desde el punto de vista cristiano:

> The story of the Jewish boy thrown into the fire by his father is one which doubtless appealed to the imagination of Berceo's thirteenth-century audience. The belief that the Jews were prone to child murder was prevalent from the twelfth century onwards [...] most of the cases of ritual murder, of course, involved Christian children. What may have given added stimulus to the tale of the Jew killing his own son,

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[2] Saugnieux lleva a cabo un interesante análisis sobre la relación de Berceo con las culturas existentes en el siglo XIII, así como sobre el uso instrumental de adoctrinamiento de los mitos antisemitas que llevaba a cabo la iglesia en la época: "Los siglos XI, XII, XIII fueron generalmente en Europa de fuerte antisemitismo: el furor popular cargó a los israelitas todas las culpas, los hizo responsables de todas las calamidades (peste, crímenes, rituales, etcétera.) y, dirigido muchas veces por el bajo clero, trató de exterminarlos. La iglesia, por su parte, adoptó una actitud más suave y más ambigua a la vez, tomando a veces medidas muy duras contra los judíos y protegiéndolos en otras ocasiones [...] hay que perseguirlos para mostrar que Dios los ha repudiado, que la religión cristiana es la verdadera, pero es imposible exterminarlos, ya que de ellos, de su conversión, depende la venida de Cristo al fin de los tiempos" (76).

[3] "El milagro del niño judío enseña cómo un niño de la comunidad judía, atraído por la imagen de la Virgen, comulga a la vez que sus amigos cristianos. El niño se lo cuenta a su padre quien lo introduce en un gran horno encendido. Ante los gritos de la madre, la gente descubre lo ocurrido, pero el niño sale indemne del horno porque la Virgen lo había protegido" (Núñez 20).

> apart from the obvious ignorance, prejudice and religious bigotry, may have been the accounts of how during the pogroms Jews often preferred self-inflicted death to forced baptism or death at the hands of Christians. (Boreland 17)

El judezno como protagonista del milagro actúa de referente cultural instaurado en las creencias populares cristianas de la época. Berceo dispone dichas creencias en la narración mariana a partir de una recreación explícita y funcional de este personaje en el relato, así como por la caracterización del resto de los arquetipos[4] que conforman la trama.

Desde el comienzo del milagro el narrador, en un intento de establecer el hecho de manera incuestionable, insiste en la proeza y resonancia del mismo por lo insólito de la historia. Este recurso organiza el discurso a modo de *captatio benevolentiae*, es decir, al estilo de los cantares de gesta capta la atención de la audiencia introduciendo el caso de la historia:

> Enna villa de Borges una cibdat estranna,
> cuntió en essi tiempo una buena hazanna;
> sonada es en Francia, sí faz en Alemanna,
> bien es de los miraclos semejant e calanna. (132)

Con esta manera de iniciar la narración Berceo muestra que la hazaña es digna de ser contada, dotando a la misma de una extensión geográfica a modo de introducción. A pesar de conocer el título y de saber que el milagro trata sobre "el motivo judío", se incluye un elemento referencial en la trama que aproxima al lector a la fe cristiana al mismo tiempo que se objetiva[5] sobre la narración. Así, se acerca al receptor a la oposición existente entre la fe judía y la cristiana, caracterizando cómo el judezno se siente atraído hacia el cristianismo para subrayar el carácter antagónico entre los dos marcos religiosos y culturales. Se hace hincapié en cómo, a pesar de que los "christianellos" advierten que "el judezno" no pertenece a su

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[4] Anne Catherine McCormick hace referencia al carácter sociológico de los personajes a lo largo de los diferentes milagros: "To judge by the characters in the miracles that Gonzalo de Berceo puts to verse, his audience was clerical; there are eleven miracles that deal with the clergy, three with Mary's image or a church holding her image, and one with an image of Christ. There is one of a poor laborer, a pregnant woman, and a Jewish boy, but the characters mainly reflected the world of the Church" (19).

[5] Sobre el significado de la introducción, Josefina Albert nos dice que "el autor intenta despojar su relato de cualquier sospecha de subjetividad, presentando, antes de iniciar la relación de los hechos, al que escribió tal historia, calificándolo de verdadero. Por lo tanto el lexema verbal que mejor expresa esta situación narrativa es 'objetivar'" (222).

“cuerpo social”, éste es aceptado e integrado por los otros niños, acentuando el conjunto de la inocencia depositada respecto “al judezno” y a la audiencia:

> Tenié en esa villa, ca era menester,
> un clérigo escuela de cantar e leer; [...]
> Venié un judezno, natural del logar,
> por savor de los ninnos, por con ellos jogar;
> acogiénlo los otros, no li fazién pesar. (133)

Localizada la situación espacial que se introducía al comienzo del milagro, la narración refuerza que la hazaña tiene lugar durante la festividad cristiana de domingo de Pascua. También se insiste en la numerosa presencia de feligreses, lo cual dota a la trama de una significación no sólo espacial, como se nos relataba al comienzo del milagro, sino también temporal en el calendario cristiano:

> En el día de Pascua, domingo grand mannana,
> cuando van Corpus Dómini prender la yent christiana,
> priso al judezno de comulgar grand gana,
> comulgó con los otros el cordero sin lana. (133)

La figura del niño judío simboliza el hecho alegórico de la conversión[6] a la fe cristiana retratada en el acto de la comunión, además de enfatizar el efecto que dicha acción lleva consigo. Al igual que en el resto de los milagros, el lector prefigura la intercesión de la Virgen que aparece en la narración para subsanar la agresión moral perpetrada por lo judío: “En todos los casos, la devoción a la Virgen los salva, no importa cuál sea el pecado cometido” (Cvitanovic 49).

Se informa a los oyentes del efecto que la imagen mariana tiene sobre el niño judío. El judezno, pese a su condición, puede apreciar la “fermosura” de la Virgen, idea que reincide en la inocencia del protagonista:

> Mientre que comulgavan a muy grand presura
> el ninno judezno alzó la catadura,
> vío sobre'l altar una bella figura,
> una fermosa duenna con gente creatura. [...]

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[6] El hecho de la conversión debe ser llevado a cabo pese a sus consecuencias: “The Church's position on the Jews was based on the theology of St Augustine, who argued that they must be protected because they had a vital role to play in the divine plan for human salvation. They were the people of the Old Testament. They had played a part in spreading the word of God. Their stubborn refusal to accept the truth of Christ marked them down for the imposition of restrictions, which were duly imposed by the Imperial law codes. But it was believed that their repentance and conversion would signal the approach of the millennium. Without the Jews, there could be no salvation for the whole of mankind. So their conversion must be encouraged and facilitated” (Richards 93).

pagóse d'ella mucho, quando más la catava
de la su fermosura más se enamorava. (133)

Su hijo se ha transformando mediante el sacramento de la eucaristía, una transformación espiritual para dejar de pertenecer a la comunidad judía e integrarse en la cristiana[7]. El judezno llega a su casa y revela a su progenitor que ha estado con los "christianellos", y que ha participado en la celebración de la eucaristía siendo uno más de ellos:

Padre –dixo el ninno– non vos negaré nada,
ca con los christianiellos fui grand madrugada;
con ellos odí missa ricamente cantada,
e comulgué con ellos de la ostia sagrada. (133)

El padre rechaza a su hijo y se ve preso de la ira al enterarse, por su propio hijo, del ultraje religioso cometido que sirve de representación alegórica a la conversión cristiana, además de subrayar el valor moral de tal acción: "The Jew is a traitor in the sense that he betrays his obligation as a father to protect his natural offspring. He is also a traitor as a representative of the race which rejected Christ" (Boreland 18).

La reacción paterna es la que cabe esperar del personaje antagónico en la trama siendo éste el elemento sobre el que tiene que interceder la Virgen con un milagro para restaurar la agresión perpetrada y construir, ajusticiando al agresor, una alegoría social representativa de la comunidad judía. El padre entra en cólera y arroja a su hijo a las llamas de "un forno grand e fiero" (134) en un intento de purificación, ya que su hijo ha pasado a pertenecer a la fe cristiana a través del acto de la comunión[8]. La descripción de la narración personifica al padre como un ser demoníaco al disponer una serie de alusiones o caracterizaciones que pertenecen a dicho ámbito de significado:

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[7] Este acto por parte del judezno sirve de rito de iniciación e integración a la fe cristiana, ya que "it was through their participation in the Eucharist that they conceived themselves to be united in the body of Christ, becoming his holy Church" (Abulafia 131).

[8] Este es un tema presente en el arte medieval donde encontramos "abundantes representaciones de niños castigados por sus padres–judíos–por haber comulgado" (Monsalvo 133). En relación con el arte eclesiástico en la sociedad medieval véase el interesante estudio de: Capuano, Thomas M. "La correspondencia artística entre "De los signos que aparecerán..." de Berceo y la escultura del siglo XIII." *Hispania*. 71.4 (1988): 738-742, donde el autor analiza la relación entre la manifestación artística y la figura de Berceo como escritor que se vale de iconos que forman parte del arte eclesiástico cristiano.

Pesóli esto mucho al *malaventurado*
como si lo toviesse *muerto o degollado*;
non sabié con *grand ira* qué fer el *dïablado*,
fazié *figuras malas* como *demonïado* [...]
Priso esti ninnuelo el *falso descreído*,
asín como estava, calzado e vestido,
dio con él en *el fuego bravament encendido*:
¡*mal venga a tal padre que tal faze a fijo*! (134, énfasis añadido)

Late 15th-century antisemitic painting from Frankfurt-Main, accusing Jews of ritual murder and bestiality, and associating with the devil.

En el grabado que incluimos, la imagen del judío representa el carácter demoníaco al que nos acabamos de referir. Aunque las ilustraciones[9] son posteriores a la época de *Los Milagros*, el estereotipo judío se prolongó e intensificó durante los siglos sucesivos hasta desencadenar en la expulsión de dicha comunidad de la península en el año 1492.

[9] Todas las imágenes en el presente estudio provienen de la página web del *Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies*: <http://www.aihgs.com/doc2.htm>.

La acción nos traslada a la reacción de la madre, quien es representada de manera opuesta al progenitor al encarnar la voz auxiliadora de la Virgen –"Metió la madre vozes e grandes carpellidas" (134)– en tanto que es madre y ve cómo se pone en peligro la vida de su "fijuelo", que además de ser testigo ante la comunidad ejerce el valor simbólico de no aceptar la acción descabellada que se está llevando a cabo sobre su hijo. Como señala Boreland, no es casual el hecho de que "Virgen y madre judía" compartan la característica común de ser madres, y sobre cuyos hijos, Cristo en el caso de "Sancta María", y el niño judío, se lleve a cabo una fechoría que atenta contra el estatus de madre protectora: "In a sense the Virgin and the Jewish boy's mother blend together in Berceo's version. The lady first seen in the Church, who later protects him in the fire, exercises a maternal function" (20).

Volvemos al momento en el que el padre, lleno de furia demoníaca,[10] arroja a su hijo al horno para mostrar cómo la audiencia accede a la resolución cristiana sobre el agresor. Llegados a este punto el milagro se cumple, ya que el fuego no ejerce daño alguno sobre el niño, simbolizando que pese a la intención paterna de acabar con el ultraje al que se ha visto sometido por la acción de su hijo, la providencia divina actúa en su defensa: "ca pusiera en elli Dios la su bendición" (134). Al producirse el milagro la colectividad cristiana toma represalias ajusticiando al agresor, no estando éste en condición de salvar su alma. De esta manera, se intensifica el propósito narrativo de edificar una prolongación metafórica de cómo se administra la justicia celestial:

> Entendieron que era Sancta María ésta
> que lo defendió ella de tan fiera tempesta [...]
> Prisieron al judío, al falsso desleal,
> al que a su fijuelo fiziera tan grand mal,
> legáronli las manos con un fuerte dogal,
> dieron con elli entro en el fuego cabdal. (135)

Berceo pone un especial énfasis en subrayar de manera descriptiva el contraste establecido durante el milagro entre las dos comunidades, y en cómo dicha oposición lleva a la comunidad cristiana a talionar al agresor: "Berceo's version underlines quite sharply the contrast between the Jewish religion and Christianity, and between the Old Dispensation and the New. The Jewish father

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[10] En esta línea de significado Monsalvo se hace eco de que al considerar "la magia como un arte diabólico, se otorga a los judíos una personalidad demoníaca [también se representa a los] judíos como agentes del diablo, que no hacen sino recoger leyendas muy extendidas en todo Occidente" (133).

perishes by the Old-Testament law of ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth’” (Boreland 21). Es el propio pueblo, bajo los designios de la acción mariana, el que ajusticia al culpable porque una vez entendido el mensaje que se presenta a través de la historia la audiencia justifica el valor moral de la acción:

> Tal es Sancta María que es de gracia plena,
> por servicio da Gloria, por deservicio pena;
> a los bonos da trigo, a los malos avena,
> los unos van en Gloria, los otros en cadena. (136)

Burning Jews: from Schedel, ‘Weltchronik’, Nuremberg, 1493

La imagen recoge el uso del fuego como elemento al servicio del cristianismo que purifica y aniquila al elemento amenazador del dogma cristiano, presentando un símil con las intenciones del padre judío y que al final son consumadas por la colectividad cristiana.

A modo de conclusión queremos visualizar la funcionalidad narrativa, a la vez que contraponer el sentido alegórico de lo corpóreo en su concepción semántico-funcional, en cómo se dispone lo perteneciente al cuerpo humano y al cuerpo de Cristo simbolizado a través de la comunión. De manera alegórica en la narración se trata el tema del cuerpo de Cristo mediante una caracterización de lo corpóreo que tiene que ver con la espiritualidad, de aquí que nos

refiramos al sentido del mismo como una alegoría del cuerpo espiritual.

Se plantea un intento frustrado de destrucción del cuerpo por la comunidad judía, ya sea explícita o alegóricamente, y se superpone el triunfo de la acción cristiana como salvadora de la unidad corpórea social. Con esta acción destructiva sobre el cuerpo físico se está trasladando el deseo de aniquilar de igual modo el cuerpo social: la oposición entre judíos y cristianos. Sin embargo, dicha oposición queda simbólicamente personalizada en la acción de un intento de destrucción corpórea mutua.

Tal y como documenta Richards, para la época ya se había gestado una creencia popular en torno a la comunidad judía que solía desencadenar en acciones violentas por parte de los cristianos, al ver éstos amenazados tanto su dogma como su estatus social: "The longest-lasting, most notorious, and most damaging charge against

Anonymous woodcut of c. 1470 from the Kupferstichkabinet, Munich, depicting the infamous 'Judensau' stereotype - Jews suckling from a sow and eating its excrement.

El grabado ilustra a modo de síntesis cómo se articulaban algunas de las creencias populares que identificaban a los judíos como seres depravados. Dichas creencias llevaban a la sociedad cristiana a imaginar cómo la comunidad judía se servía de los excrementos animales no sólo para realizar sus rituales sino además como alimento.

the Jews was that of ritual murder. [...] Stories of the murder of Christian children by Jews now became a regular occurrence. [...] But the stories were believed, became part of popular folklore, and were usually accompanied by violence against the Jews" (105).

Nos referimos a un elemento corporal que tiene que ver con la espiritualidad a través de la conversión, aunque también exista el elemento físico que se crea a partir de la escena en la que el progenitor arroja a su hijo al fuego. En la acción del padre judío se personifica la idea de cómo este personaje, y por extensión alegórica la comunidad judía, atenta contra la negación espiritual del sacramento de la eucaristía: el cuerpo de Cristo. Ambas dimensiones de lo corpóreo y lo espiritual, se insertan bajo la existencia de un cuerpo social que opera como trasfondo a la narración mariana. La comunidad cristiana se opone a la judía con una intención de adoctrinamiento disponiendo un mecanismo en los receptores de devoción-recompensa y, a su vez, con una función adoctrinadora al recrear un intento de agresión corporal en sus tres dimensiones, física, espiritual y social, como representación alegórica corpórea del conjunto de la iglesia cristiana, su constitución como única fe verdadera, y la presencia de la fuerza protectora divina de los que participan de dicha fe: "The body is able not only to substantiate itself but to substantiate something beyond itself as well: it is able not only to make more amply evident its own existence, presence, aliveness, realness but to make even more amply evident the existence, presence, aliveness, realness of God" (Scarry 193).

Javier Muñoz-Basols
University of Pennsylvania
Estados Unidos de América

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QUEEN GERTRUDE: MONARCH, MOTHER, MURDERER

Harmonie Loberg

We generally think of human aggression in terms of confrontational, physical violence, typified by school-yard shoving contests and barroom brawls. But what behavioral scientists have discovered is that "Among adult humans, physical violence is in fact the most infrequent form of aggression" (Björkqvist, "New Trends," 10). Instead, people prefer alternatives that balance greatest effect with least risk of retribution/punishment (Björkqvist, "Sex Differences," 181). According to Kaj Björkqvist, a pioneer in the field of human aggression, the development of social and verbal skills allows for "sophisticated strategies of aggression," "with the aggressor being able to harm a target person without even being identified: Those strategies may be referred to as *indirect* aggression" ("Sex Differences," 179). This seemingly straightforward definition contains enough ambiguity to encompass a broad spectrum of complex human behavior, examples of which range from the relatively harmless (e.g., spreading of a rumor) to the deadly (e.g., hiring of an assassin). Interestingly, *Hamlet*—with a plot predicated on an act of indirect aggression (Claudius's poisoning of Hamlet, Sr.)—offers us further paradigms; lethal demonstratives include the forging of an execution order and the disguising of murder as a friendly duel. Equally important, Shakespeare's play shows us that overt aggression is punishable (Hamlet's banishment to England for murdering Polonius), while indirect aggression may bring rewards (Claudius's crowning after assassinating his brother). It also suggests that the discovery of an indirect aggressor's identity can result in severe penalty (Claudius is killed for the poisonings of the final scene). *Hamlet* presents such a comprehensive study of indirect aggression that we even witness an ironic inversion of the indirect aggression model in the murder of Polonius: the target person (Polonius) can identify the aggressor, but the aggressor (Hamlet) cannot identify the target person who he attacks through the arras. In truth, the only

act of aggression meeting the traditional criteria of direct violence is Hamlet's murder of Claudius in the play's final scene. Considering the high number of deaths by other means, this play appears to reflect the human preference for indirect aggression and this method's success rate. I suggest that, within this context of prevalent indirect aggression and with the aid of recent behavioral research, we need to consider anew the textual evidence that Ophelia's "drowning" is not the result of an accident or of suicide.

I will argue that Queen Gertrude is responsible for the death of Ophelia, but I am not the first to suspect her involvement in this mysterious death. As early as 1805, E. H. Seymour noted that the Queen's description of Ophelia's death seems to derive "from ocular knowledge":

> it may be asked why, apprised as she was of Ophelia's distraction, she did not take steps to prevent the fatal catastrophe, especially as there was so fair an opportunity of saving her while she was, by her clothes, borne "mermaidlike-up," and the Queen was at leisure to hear her "chanting old tunes." (1:373n)

These sixteen lines continue to disturb critics. In 1994, Martha C. Ronk suggested that "the speech is peculiar, if not outrightly bizarre, because Gertrude appears to have been present as eyewitness" to Ophelia's death (22). Four years later, Stephen Ratcliffe asserted the Queen's involvement in the murder of Ophelia based solely on a line-by-line reading of the drowning narrative (123-44). Even as critical trends encourage us to read this account as merely an emblematic means of conveying what cannot be shown on stage, suspicions are not easily dismissed—perhaps because the report does a poor job of directly informing the audience, leaving so many unanswered questions. How does the Queen know of such details? Who tells her? Who is the eyewitness? Why does the eyewitness not try to save Ophelia? Why does the eyewitness not come forward to defend Ophelia's soul from later accusations of suicide that result in an improper burial? Given the persistence and importance of these cruxes, I must ask, how long will we allow such questions to persist? Queen Gertrude is involved in Ophelia's demise.

I believe that the major obstacles preventing our acknowledgement of this guilty party are related to Gertrude's sex/gender. Because our general understanding of aggression is limited to physical force, we mistakenly assume that females, the physically weaker sex, are less aggressive than males. But as *Hamlet* and aggression research indicate, not all acts of aggression require physical strength; nor are all strategies sex/gender specific. For example, in Frances E.

Dolan's study of Elizabethan legal records and published propaganda, poisoning is described as "the early modern housewife's method of choice" (30); yet in *Hamlet*, only Claudius and Laertes use this lethal means. The males' use of poison (reinforced by the play's haunting motif of poisoning) suggests one of *Hamlet*'s subtle challenges to stereotypes of aggression and of sex/gender.

Regrettably, sex/gender stereotypes seem to persistently plague critical interpretations of Gertrude. Misogynistic critics once cast the Queen as the "whore," describing her as a "shallow, amiable, lymphatic creature" (Granville-Barker 228) and declaring "Hamlet's mother" to be a "criminal," guilty of incestuous sin (Wilson 39). When political climates shifted, so did interpretations of Gertrude (in retrospect, a virtual barometer of how the female/feminine is socially and politically perceived). The "whore" of Denmark became the "madonna." For example, after reprimanding her male predecessors, Carolyn Heilbrun argued that Gertrude is ultimately "intelligent, penetrating, and gifted with a remarkable talent for concise and pithy speech" (17). Rebecca Smith characterized Gertrude as "the nurturing, loving, careful mother and wife—malleable, submissive, totally dependent, and solicitous of others at the expense of herself"; yet she surprisingly and accurately admitted, "This is still a stereotype, but a more positive one than that of the temptress and destroyer—self-indulgent and soulless" (207-08). I would agree that one stereotype *has been* exchanged for another and that both deny female/feminine capability and culpability. Janet Adelman seemed to combine misogynistic and feminist stereotypes in her psychoanalytical reading of *Hamlet*, as she contended that the Queen is a source of *evil* to Hamlet but is relatively *innocent* of the fantasies that he projects upon her (30). Even though current trends in literary studies and theory caution critics to be conscious of artistic illusions, I have trouble believing that any character study can be entirely free of the subversive and/or subconscious influence of sex/gender (and, hence, of the stigmas). Feminist thought has altered our perception of sex/gender, but our sight is still affected by sex(ism) and gender stereotypes.

The problematic feminist premise that women are equal to men in some areas (e.g., intelligence) but not in others (e.g., aggression) also impedes our acknowledgement of Gertrude's guilt. In her startling-yet-necessary study of violent capability in women, Patricia Pearson directly confronts this "awkward paradox in feminist argument":

> if we concede that women are ambitious, like men, and possess a will

> to power as men do, then we need to concede that women, like men, are capable of injuring others who thwart them. We cannot insist on the strength and competence of women in all the traditional masculine arenas yet continue to exonerate ourselves from the consequences of power by arguing that, where the course of it runs more darkly, we are actually power*less*. (32)

She warns, "aggression is not innately masculine, but that evidence lies within the eye of the beholder. As long as patriarchs and feminists alike covet the notion that women are gentle, they will not look for the facts that dispute it" (11). Post-Modernist theory aside, extracting "facts" from the pervasive ambiguities of *Hamlet* seems impossible; but the Queen's murder of Ophelia is strongly suggested within the text, and such a reading should give us all pause to consider the natural progression of feminism in the sociopolitical domain.

The most persuasive evidence against the Queen appears in the final scene. The stage is littered with dead bodies, including Claudius, Laertes, and Hamlet. Amidst the deaths of all the play's male killers, we find the Queen. The common assumption is that the Queen must be eliminated in order for Fortinbras to claim a conveniently vacant throne, but an offstage death would easily solve such a plot necessity. The exterminations of Lady Macbeth and Lady Montague prove the successfulness of this dramatic technique. Instead, we witness the Queen's dying in the company of all the male killers. The fact that she is destroyed by the same means—poison—as all the guilty male murderers strains the credibility of traditional explanations. Such a detailed, intentional parallel implies that the Queen commits murder and is equally punished for her crime.

While the final scene presents a physical association between the deaths of *Hamlet*'s male murderers and the Queen, act 4, scene 7 provides dialogue psychologically linking her to the play's primary murderer, the initiator of the whole tragic plot, King Claudius. As Claudius explains to Laertes,

> My virtue or my plague, be it either which—
> She [the Queen] is so conjunctive to my life and soul,
> That, as the star moves not but in his [Hamlet's] sphere,
> I could not but by her. (14-17)

Long ago, Harley Granville-Barker raised an important question: "is it not odd that he should so confess himself to the young man?" (224). Yes, it is odd. Such an intimate revelation of emotional sentiment seems out of character for the King, who maneuvers through the play in private meetings with cohorts, initiates secretive actions, and works covertly to resolve his political concerns (e.g., Hamlet).

Moreover, he is a confessed murderer, having committed an offense which "smells to heaven" (3.3.36). To hear that the sinister King's "life and soul" are so closely fused to the Queen's implies a blemish on her character, one not necessitated by the matrimonial bond. The King is a murderer, and, by his own words, he implies that the Queen may possess a similar aptitude for lethal action.

Perhaps intentionally, Claudius' implication of the Queen's moral failings initiates the scene in which the Queen reports the death of Ophelia. As my like-minded predecessors have already meticulously examined her account, I do not intend to reiterate what has been so thoroughly enunciated elsewhere. My goals are to expand the argument beyond the sixteen lines, while challenging the faulty assumption that a servant has given the Queen the details of Ophelia's death. Why would a servant report first to the Queen instead of the King? The fact that a servant would not is stressed previously within this scene. A servant presents the King with letters from Hamlet; one of the epistles is directly addressed to the Queen, yet the servant approaches the King first (4.7.37-38). If a servant had discovered Ophelia's body, then the established pattern of conduct dictates that the King would be the first person informed. The fact that the Queen delivers notice of Ophelia's death is highly suspicious. Given the interruption of Hamlet's letters and Claudius' words of implication, it is no wonder that the drowning report has drawn such attention —this scene seems primarily constructed to heighten suspicions of the Queen's involvement in Ophelia's death.

While the evidence points to the Queen's guilt, it does not imply that she is entirely corrupt. For example, persistent assumptions of her lustful libido are unfounded. Yes, Hamlet provides powerful descriptions of his mother's sexual appetite and immoral promiscuity, but he is hardly a reliable source (he is mad or at least pretending to be). Scholarly acceptance of Hamlet's hearsay about Gertrude reflects the perpetual re-inscribing of ancient sexism and stereotyping: females suffer from dominant urges that they cannot control, that prevent rational thought and behavior, and that require males to "protect" them (Roberts 232). Hamlet's opinions also conflict with the dramatic presentation of Claudius and Gertrude's matrimonial relationship. The King and Queen never appear to share romantic or passionate affection with each other, only discussing Hamlet's behavior and governmental concerns. In comparison to the powerful love/lust of Romeo and Juliet or Antony and Cleopatra, the King and the Queen's union seems sterile, with only political motivations.

Gertrude does not marry Claudius because of an insatiable,

sexual appetite; rather, the need to secure her roles as monarch, mother, and wife seems the primary catalyst in her decision. In a patriarchal society, females "inhibit a relational universe. Their basic sense of security is tied to their ability to forge relationships—with men"; females also "need their own aggressive strategies to defend, maintain, and control their intimate relations, not just to 'defend their cubs,' which is the sentimental view, but to defend their aspirations, their identity, and their place on the stage" (Pearson 20). The death of Hamlet, Sr. threatened to rock the foundation of Gertrude's positions as queen of Denmark, mother of Hamlet, and wife of the king. In her "o'rhasty marriage" to Claudius, Gertrude stabilized and maintained her precarious roles (2.2.57). In truth, she spends the entire play guarding her masculine sources of identity. When Claudius informs Laertes of Polonius' death, Gertrude rushes to exclaim, "But not by him," not by the King (4.5.132). The omission of Hamlet's involvement allows Gertrude to simultaneously protect her husband and her son (and hence, herself). An identical act of harboring the guilty party and safeguarding the potential victim appears in the final scene, when Gertrude cries out, "No, no, the drink—O my dear Hamlet— / The drink, the drink! I am poisoned" (5.2.312-13). She supplies enough information for her son to avoid the lethal concoction but does not mention her husband's accountability. Gertrude's efforts to shield her male counterparts simultaneously work to protect herself, by relation.

Unfortunately, Ophelia appears as a true threat to every role that the Queen possesses. When the Queen is excluded from Claudius and Polonius' trap for Hamlet and Ophelia is permitted to participate (if only as bait), the caste system that distinguishes monarch from maiden destabilizes. In response, the Queen turns to Ophelia:

> And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
> That your good beauties be the happy cause
> Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues
> Will bring him to his wonted way again,
> To both your honors. (3.1.38-42)

Critics generally concur with Heilbrun that the Queen's words represent "a humane gesture, for she is unwilling to leave Ophelia, the unhappy tool of the King and Polonius, without some kindly and intelligent appreciation of her help" (12). While such a reading is perpetuated by (and cyclically perpetuates) the mythology of the nurturing mother figure, it also completely glosses over the tardiness of such a "humane gesture," as the Queen has completely ignored Ophelia prior to this point in the scene. According to Phyllis Chesler, author of *Woman's Inhumanity to Woman*, subtle methods of indirect

aggression include the refusal to acknowledge or to talk to the targeted person, a practice that "can be quite unnerving to another woman" (44); she also states that adult women "target and *shun* other women most often for violating patriarchal group norms" (emphasis added 151). When the Queen does finally address Ophelia, only after herself being dismissed, she makes what I suspect is the doubtfully kind reference "To both your honors." Although the plural *honors* links that of Hamlet's and Ophelia's together, their individual genders entail separate meanings. "Personal title to high respect or esteem," and "a fine sense of and strict allegiance to what is due or right (also, to what is due according to some conventional or fashionable standard of conduct)" apply to Hamlet and his superior station ("Honour, honor," def. 2a); but the *OED* provides a specific definition for the honor "Of a woman": "Chastity, purity, as a virtue of the highest consideration; reputation for this virtue, good name" ("Honour, honor," def. 3a). Textual references to Ophelia's "honor" support a gendered definition. While cautioning Ophelia about her relations with Hamlet, Laertes advises, "weigh what loss your *honor* may sustain" (emphasis added 1.3.29). In a similar, if more firm, warning to Ophelia on the subject, Polonius charges that rumors suggest behavior that "behooves my daughter and your *honor*" (emphasis added 1.3.97). These references within *Hamlet* imply a specific definition of Ophelia's "honor": a fragile commodity, which must be guarded from constant danger. Not surprisingly, Hamlet receives no such lectures about his "honor." I suggest that the Queen's reference to Ophelia's frail "honor" and Hamlet's social obligations carries implications of a threat, not of kindness. This covert malice demonstrates a sophisticated variant of verbal aggression, allowing the aggressor to balance strong effect with minor risk and, when successful, to remain unidentified. The fact that I can find no critics who identify the negative connotations of the Queen's words to Ophelia suggests the successfulness of this aggression method. Rather than passively accept the disruption of social order, the Queen enacts a subtle, verbal assault against Ophelia.

Just as she undermines the social caste structure, Ophelia also threatens the Queen's role as mother. In her madness, she sings to the King and Queen:

"By Gis and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie for shame!
Young men will do't, if they come to't;
By Cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.'"

He answers:

"'So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.'" (4.5.59-67)

Following this highly sexual song, Ophelia comments, "I hope all will be well. We must be patient . . ." (4.5.69). I must wonder what Ophelia hopes "will be well" and question the duration of patience that she calls for. Nine months perhaps? Is Ophelia concerned that she might be pregnant as a result of her consummated affair with Hamlet? The connotations presented in the text suggest the possibility of an illegitimate child, which would appear threatening to a woman determined to secure her role as mother to Hamlet. A child, illegitimate or otherwise, would mean a complete recasting of the family structure, primarily mother to grandmother and son to father. Ophelia represents a potential danger posed to the ideal and stable family structure that the Queen works so desperately to protect.

Ophelia also prophesizes the danger to the throne. With ominous assurance, Ophelia claims that "My brother shall know of it [Polonius' death and burial]" (4.5.71). The Queen quickly learns that Laertes has been made aware of events and is secretly coming from France (4.5.89). Significantly, Claudius is again informed of events before the Queen. The peril to the Queen's role as monarch grows when a messenger describes the populous's cheering of Laertes, and their shouts, "Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!" (4.5.111). If Claudius is discrowned, the Queen will also be displaced. She immediately responds, "How cheerfully on the false trail they cry! / O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!" (4.5.112-13). Gone is the Queen's adeptness with tact, replaced by direct verbal aggression. The threat takes on new immediacy when Laertes and his crew charge the doors to confront the King. The Queen cautions, "Calmly, good Laertes" (4.5.120), but his anger flares, and the King must demand—twice—"Let him go, Gertrude" (4.5.126, 130). The Queen is apparently fearless as she moves physically to restrain a potentially violent male. In this moment of desperation, the Queen begins to take physical measures to protect a male relation, thus herself. This shift in her strategies of protection marks her regressing behavior and precedes her report of Ophelia's "drowning."

The Queen's move from verbal to physical means of defense provides evidence of her complexity. Rather than a one-dimensional character or a screen for Hamlet, Queen Gertrude evolves during the course of the play. The Queen of act 1, scene 2 differs from the Queen of the final scene. We initially see her as coyly pleading with Hamlet: "Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet. / I pray thee,

stay with us, go not to Wittenberg" (1.2.118-19); but in the final scene, she sends him orders: "The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment / to Laertes before you fall to play" (5.2.204-05). While she originally obeys Claudius' edicts (for example, "I shall obey you" [3.1.37]), we later witness her direct defiance: "I will, my lord, I pray you pardon me" (5.2.294). These changes in the Queen suggest that she is subject to the fluctuating infrastructures of her relations with males, even as she consistently defends these sources of identity; Hamlet and Claudius show increasing vulnerability (due to their murderous crimes), and the Queen grows in dominion. The closet scene exemplifies the shifting of power. Hamlet enters his mother's room to charge, "Mother, you have my father much offended" (3.4.11); but he leaves resigned to his fate in England (3.4.207). In comparison, Gertrude begins this scene as Claudius and Polonius' pawn (much like Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern); but afterwards, the Queen is viewed as an authority on the subject of her son. Interestingly, she provides the King with a censured and distorted version of Polonius' murder, creating the best possible image of Hamlet, his actions, and his madness:

> Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
> Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
> Behind the arras hearing something stir,
> Whips out his rapier, cries, "A rat, a rat!"
> And in his brainish apprehension kills
> The unseen good old man. (4.1.7-12)
> To draw apart the body he hath killed,
> O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
> Among a mineral of metals base,
> Shows itself pure: 'a weeps for what is done. (4.1.24-27)

There is no mention of her own responsibility for alerting Polonius or of her alignment with Hamlet against Claudius. The Queen is the invisible voyeur of Hamlet's mad behavior and ramblings—eerily anticipating her description of Ophelia's "drowning." Shifts in her means of defense and degree of power prove her to be a complex character.

While she can adjust to subtle changes in her relations with males, the Queen seems either unable or unwilling to live without these masculine sources of identity. Regrettably, Ophelia poses a risk to all of the Queen's roles. Her presence destabilizes the social order of the caste system, and "*her* father's death" is a catalyst for the political revolt against the throne (emphasis added 4.5.77). Ophelia also endangers the Queen's title of mother with the potential of Hamlet's yet-unborn child. Such threats to the family unit and to the domestic domain can lead to the "eruption of violence" because

these primary sources provide comfort and identity to women, even today (Ben-Davis 352). The Queen's hostility towards Ophelia initially appears through sophisticated strategies of aggression, but the increasing dangers force stronger defenses. Whether resulting from physical action or ethical stagnation, the Queen is culpable in the death of Ophelia. Because we are still learning about human aggression, we are just beginning to realize the extensive evidence against the Queen.

While making new discoveries, we must challenge preexisting dogma. For example, accepting the Queen's statements at face value would be a mistake. Critics consistently perceive the Queen's words as direct truths, including those voiced beside Ophelia's grave:

> [*Scatters flowers*] Sweets to the sweet! Farewell.
> I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.
> I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
> And not t' have strewed thy grave. (5.1.243-46)

I am struck by the possessive assertion of "my" Hamlet and by the mournful sentiments that are in sharp contrast to her general opinion of death: "Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die, / Passing through nature to eternity" (1.2.72-73). We also witness the Queen's pitiful attempt at grieving following the death of Polonius. The Queen carries on an argument with Hamlet as if the dead body on her closet floor is a trivial object. She demonstrates a complete lack of concern for the dead prior to Ophelia's funeral, making her words beside Ophelia's grave suspicious and suggestive that the Queen is merely acting the part of the mourner. Just as Hamlet plays at madness and the King adopts the guise of innocence for his brother's "death," the Queen is equally capable of assuming false behavior—especially to prevent suspicions. The Queen reveals her true lack of concern for the dead when she questions Hamlet's violent arrival at the funeral: "O my son, what theme?" (5.1.271). Such a response to death seems incomprehensible to her. The crack in the Queen's mask of mourning is revealed by her inability to appreciate Hamlet's strong emotions. Rather than accept the Queen's words as direct truths, we should be cautious.

We should also recognize the adaptability of our definition of the revenge tragedy. While the issue of genre might seem superfluous here, many scholars defend the Queen by citing the requirement of a suicide in a revenge tragedy. The belief that Ophelia self-destructs does allow *Hamlet* to fit neatly in a defined category, but genres are constantly treated as pliable commodities in the Shakespearean canon. Consider all of the plays that have been tagged "problem

plays" because they do not conform to our generic definitions (e.g., *Measure for Measure*). Even the plays that do snugly fit into groupings carry conflicting elements. For example, *Romeo and Juliet* is clearly a tragedy, but Michael Goldman successfully identified salient characteristics of a New Comedy within the play. In addition, Adelman raises concerns that Hamlet's mixed motives for avenging his father's and/or his mother's murder(s) challenge the traditional definition of the revenge tragedy (31). There are overwhelming examples in the Shakespearean canon that do not agree with our standard genre definitions—yet we dogmatically cling to arbitrary labels. Rather than force a play's compliance, we need to appreciate the potential for variation. Ophelia can be murdered, eliminating the suicide element from *Hamlet*, and the play can still be a revenge tragedy.

There is evidence within the play to suggest that Ophelia's death is not an act of self-destruction. For example, the Queen's account of the "drowning" conflicts with the gravediggers scene. Whether Ophelia dies by accident, suicide, or murder remains problematic in the text. Yet we prefer—if not fixate on—the image of her self-destruction. Regrettably, we are "far more comfortable" with self-destructive females than outwardly aggressive females because suicide "doesn't appear antisocial or malicious" (Pearson 21), because, for women, "it is more socially acceptable to self-destruct than to be outwardly destructive" (Pearson 43). As a result of our socialized predilection, self-destructive heroines "are far more memorable within our culture than female warriors, and they teach white Western women that the most acceptable and admirable way to take a last stand in defense of their worth is to turn against themselves" (21-22); G. B. Shand's passionate argument that Queen Gertrude knowingly commits suicide in the final scene as an ultimate declaration of independence (118) demonstrates the effect that our idealization of the self-destructive female can have on people. While we witness the emotional abuse of Ophelia at the hands of a manipulative Polonius, a misleading Hamlet, an abandoning Laertes, and a murderous King, we too readily declare that suicide is her only recourse. With dogmatic notions, we dismiss the possibility of an accidental drowning, which would reduce our sense of pity, and deny the evidence of her being murdered like every male victim in the play (especially by another female). But in romanticizing Ophelia and her death apart from all of *Hamlet*'s murdered victims, we segregate her—we maintain her inequality.

Perhaps one of the chief reasons we have so easily glossed over

evidence of Ophelia's murder is the absence of the Queen's confession. Claudius admits his crime against his brother, and Hamlet describes his successful attempt to destroy Rosencrantz and Guildenstern; we witness Hamlet's killing of Polonius and the massive destruction in the final scene; but we do not hear the Queen acknowledge any crime, nor do we see her perform the murder. A highly plausible explanation for this omission is that "Rage runs contrary to a sense of the feminine self. It surprises, shocks and ultimately shames the offender. She denies what she has witnessed in herself" (Pearson 42). Just as societies have difficulty recognizing, acknowledging, and understanding the violent behavior of women, so do female perpetrators struggle with their own behavior. And just as these societies generally deny the evidence, so the offenders follow suit. In addition, a self-report or confession goes against a primary goal of indirect aggression: to remain unidentified. Perhaps the Queen succeeds where her male counterparts fail. The Queen's missing admission of crime could be used as evidence of her innocence, proof of social conditioning, or model of indirect aggression.

In the final scene, Queen Gertrude appears secure in her roles, enjoying the festivities with her husband and newly obedient son; but she is poisoned in the company of every other murderer in *Hamlet*. Through advancements in the study of aggression and in feminist thought, we have new reasons to believe that Gertrude receives equal punishment for committing murder. But are we capable of evaluating the evidence against Gertrude without being influenced by her sex/gender? Can we escape stereotypes and social myths? Are we ready to acknowledge the awesome paradox of femaleness: the simultaneous potential for birth and death?

Harmonie Loberg
University of South Florida
United States of America

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VIOLENCE, PORNOGRAPHY, AND VOYEURISM AS TRANSGRESSION IN BRET EASTON ELLIS' *AMERICAN PSYCHO*

Vartan P. Messier

One has only to turn on the television, go to the movies, play a videogame, or open a book or newspaper to be immediately aware that gory, blood-infested images of slaughter and carnage are common appearances. As a matter of fact, they are so embedded in daily life that they form an integral part of the socio-cultural landscape. Closely related to society's fascination for violence is the overwhelming bombardment via the popular media of images objectifying human sexuality. From the fragmented body parts of bikini-clad supermodels and the glorification of male musculature, to suggested and simulated sexual intercourse or explicit pornography, the fact is that sex—like many other supposedly-decreed taboo subjects—not only sells, but is widely accepted in mainstream culture.

In spite of protests about the possible harmful effects of such displays of sex and violence in the media, there seems to be an ongoing and growing trend to push the envelope of the unbearable and the permissible even further, suggesting that the general public has not only become deeply obsessed and fascinated by gore and pornography, but embraced them as a form of popular entertainment. Far from being sickened, the audience is actually begging for more. Descriptive and explicit scenes of bloody slaughter and sexual intercourse are now tacitly assumed to contain an inherent aesthetic quality that makes them intensely attractive and feeds voyeuristic impulses.

In the case of the written literary text, sex and violence have often been part of the *décor* and have at times been incorporated at the forefront of the action, playing a primordial aesthetic role in the dialectics of the work in question. In light of this, the following questions arise: Why are explicit accounts of sanguinary bloodshed and steamy sexual acts so fascinating? Are they part of the cultural heritage and

thus, a tradition to be maintained through relentless exposure and their eventual glorification? Or rather, do they pertain more to the human psyche, containing ramifications with one's innermost desires and instinctual drives?

To attempt to address these fundamental questions, this article first outlines the ways in which sex and violence are depicted in Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho*. In particular, it takes a close look at the aesthetics of the most explicit passages of the novel and, by disclosing the possible range of affective reader responses, identifies what makes them either so enthralling or so repulsive to different readers. It also considers the way *American Psycho* transgresses artistic conventions and social norms of morality, as well as the way it establishes itself as a social critique of the contemporary consumer lifestyle.

Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* is a fictional novel set in New York City in the late 1980s. Patrick Bateman, its protagonist and narrator, is a Wall Street Golden Boy who is also a brutal psychopath and gruesome murderer. The totally uninflected first-person narrative unfolds in a very detailed—seemingly objective—descriptive fashion. Any traces of affectivity and any references to feeling are stripped away from his voice, where the line between consciousness and unconsciousness seems to be blurred; an ambiguity which becomes particularly prominent in the pivotal passages of the novel. This is amplified by the ambivalent relationship between reality and fiction that characterizes the novel. Consequently, Bateman's interior monologue could be described as stream of both consciousness and unconsciousness. What is particularly remarkable, and perhaps, even shocking or disturbing, is that Bateman displays the same matter-of-fact affective filter to describe in detail music albums, waking up and exercise routines, clothing, and restaurant scenes, as well as his barbarous acts of mutilation and murder.

Because of these matter-of-fact descriptions of graphic violence, *American Psycho* was surrounded by much controversy even before its release in 1991 by Vintage Contemporaries. Upon receiving the manuscript Simon & Schuster, the publisher of Ellis' previous books, withdrew from its engagement (and forfeited a $300,000 advance) to publish and distribute *American Psycho* for fear of a national uproar over the novel's overtly explicit scenes of sexual violence. Some of the most controversial excerpts of the book had been leaked from the publishing company and reached the media mainstream, and the book was quickly labeled as "sadistic," "pornographic," "misogynistic," and "loathsome" (Murphet 65-9, Young

86), creating a stir equivalent to the release of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* almost half a century prior to the publication of Ellis' novel (Murphet 15).

In this day and age, it would seem surprising that a work of written fiction would get so much attention, especially when one considers that the public at large is constantly bombarded with explicitly violent and obscenely suggestive images from the national news media and the entertainment industry. Apparently, this did not stop certain self-righteous groups and individuals from issuing death threats to the author and campaigning for a national boycott of the book. What is ironic, however, is that these critics and advocate groups might have not only contributed to creating more interest in the novel, but also, by seemingly overlooking its emphasized satiric undertone, totally missed the fact that the novel actually criticizes the very same acts it appears to glorify. Nevertheless the damage to the book's status and respectability had been done, and while some may still perceive Ellis' novel as an indisputably vile and despicable novel, a worthless piece of sub-literary "junk" (Murphet 69), others considered it to be a satirical postmodern masterpiece.

For instance, David Price aptly argues that in the nature of Bakhtin's "carnivalesque" *American Psycho* is a gross parody of mass consumerism and liberal capitalism, two trends that were not only true during the Reagan Era but remain prevalent today in Western society. In fact, the strength and veracity of *American Psycho*'s social critique lie specifically in the cleverly structured and carefully planned descriptive scenes and series of fictional events. The novel relentlessly ridicules and criticizes everything it addresses, from brand names and label fetishes, "I count … one Versace silk-satin woven tie … one silk Kenzo … The fragrances of Xeryus and Tuscany and Armani and Obsession and Polo and Grey Flannel and even Antaeus mingle…" (Ellis 110), to image-conscious status-driven social politics (199). The subjects of the novel's attacks are, for one, the overwhelming importance conferred upon material goods, monetary wealth and physical appearance as a measure of success and secondly, the total disregard and inconsideration of the dominating social class for carrying out acts of violence—both directly and indirectly—while occupying their over-important positions of social dominion. On one occasion, McDermott, one of Bateman's friends, teases a homeless woman with a one-dollar bill which he then ignites (210), or more obviously, when Bateman gouges out the eyes of another vagrant (131).

On the one hand, a Marxist-Feminist critical approach to the

novel would highlight the constant and cruel oppression by the economically-privileged male dominating classes of women and social "others," as well as denouncing the excesses of individuality within capitalistic society. Moreover, a feminist reading would be particularly drawn to the complicity between sex, violence, and rape as an act of exerted authority over women. On the other hand, the novel's main protagonist is a perfect text-book case for psychoanalytic study. The blurred lines between the conscious reality and the unconscious projections of acts of sexual violence are a perfect illustration of a continuous internal discourse between the expressed and the repressed. In one of the typical passages where Bateman describes his work-out routine at the gym, for instance, the internal monologue abruptly jumps-cuts to his thoughts about masturbating while watching a scene where a woman gets tortured to death in a movie before going out on a date (Ellis 69). Bateman's socially accepted but fake expressions of conformity are repeatedly juxtaposed against his unacceptable but real desires, a juxtaposition that becomes representative of thought vs. instinct, culture vs. nature, and humanity vs. animality. On one occasion, while having dinner with some acquaintances, he thinks about how he would have brutally mutilated two of them if they had insisted on his ordering a specific entrée, while he continues a banal conversation with the people concerned (95).

Ellis' novel is multilayered and multifaceted; as outlined above, the book elicits a wide variety of literary approaches. In addition, as critics such as Julian Murphet, David Price, and Elizabeth Young agree, *American Psycho* is postmodern in its complexity, ambiguity, and its extensive and efficient use of such preferred literary devices as irony and paradox. A careful reading of the novel would highlight the heavily fragmented speech (Ellis 275) and the stream-of-consciousness descriptions (80), while the total lack of "consciousness" —affectivity and introspection—and reliability of the narrator put in doubt Bateman's actual commission of all these gruesome acts of senseless violence.

But it is particularly the aesthetical choices chosen by Ellis to make a social critique that should be scrutinized for they are the cause of the controversy surrounding the novel's release. One might ask what makes the novel's explicitness so compelling for some readers but so repulsive for others. What is the appeal of acts of pornographic violence such as the sexual aggression depicted in the novel? Is it a depraved sense of inquisitiveness, a shameful act of voyeurism, a perverted curiosity of the scopophilic type? Or, as Freud might have suggested, does it lie in the "uncanny," a suppressed

need to discover what is repressed in the deepest confines of the unconscious, a reflection of the reader's own wants and desires? Or even more simply, yet more distressingly, has western society grown so desensitized and so indifferent that we are nowadays only compelled by representations of radical extremes such as the cold visual aesthetics of pornography and ultra-violence?

American Psycho is neither the first–nor the last–novel to depict sexually explicit scenes, for there is an entire legacy of literary works where accounts of sexual acts are vividly described. Perhaps the most infamous example is the work of the Marquis de Sade, but texts such as *Justine* and *The 120 Days of Sodom* are not the most ancient. While observing that the perceptions of "obscene" and "pornographic" material have shifted as society became more permissive, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* notes that ultimately, "judgment must depend on the individual, on his or her moral and aesthetic conscience" (686). More interestingly, *The Dictionary* defines pornography as material "written in such a way as to arouse sexual excitement" and states that it appears in "pulp" literature as well as "established" literature.

Assuming that Ellis' *American Psycho* belongs to the latter category, the task at hand, then, is to determine whether the scenes depicting sexual acts are pornographic with regard to the definition enunciated above. Ben Walker marks a distinction between pornography and sexually explicit material in literature:

> [a] criteria for differentiating between these two categories may be found in the tendency of the latter to highlight the problematics of the sexual act, the mechanical imperfections of the human body, by including deflating techniques, humour, all emphasizing the human emotion involved. In contrast pornography is used to obtain climax, it strives for a perfection, a seriousness, an absolute. Here, *American Psycho* would seem to fit the latter description, everything is 'perfected' in Patrick Bateman's male pornographic gaze.

Thus, according to Walker, the novel contains material that the reader would most probably consider pornographic, as is illustrated by considering the following passage, where Bateman is having intercourse in his apartment with two women, a prostitute and a call-girl, to whom he assigns the names "Christie" and "Sabrina" respectively:

> I pull my cock out of Christie's ass and force Sabrina to suck on it before I push it back into Christie's ass and after a couple of minutes of fucking it I start coming and at the same time Sabrina lifts her mouth off my balls and just before I explode into Christie's cunt, she spreads my ass cheeks open and forces her tongue up into my

> asshole which spasms around it and because of this my orgasm prolongs itself and then Sabrina removes her tongue and starts moaning that she's coming too because after Christie finishes coming she resumes eating Sabrina's cunt and I watch, hunched over Christie, panting, as Sabrina lifts her hips repeatedly into Christie's face and then I have to lie back, spent but still hard, my cock, glistening, still aching from the force of my ejaculation, and I close my eyes, my knees weak and shaking. (Ellis 176)

This passage—and it is hardly an isolated example—conforms to Walker's definition of pornography which emphasizes the lack of emotions and a vision of "perfection" that is prevalent in pornographic material. Other than these pornographic scenes, as Julian Murphet points out, tangible, "real," sexual relations between female and male characters in *American Psycho* are non-existent or doomed to fail, for "men and women in this textual world exist on parallel, untouching planes of reality; each sex satisfies for the other the only preconceived and fixed expectations … (31)" as exemplified in Bateman's failed sexual episode with Courtney (Ellis 101-105) or the romantic-turned-parody vacation he spends with Evelyn in East Hampton (278-282).

Underlining the absence of emotional content in *American Psycho*, Murphet observes that the women are paid and suggests that sex is merely another consumer good in the novel, another product of capitalist society for which Bateman is the perfect poster boy. It is to this particular equation that the entire billion-dollar porn industry owes its success; an industry whose print media typically enclose accounts of sexual acts that closely resembles those of Ellis' novel. The Adult Entertainment Industry capitalizes on sexual curiosity and a voyeuristic pleasure called *scopophilia*, which is derived from "using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight (Mulvey 18)," and is typically enacted by men by turning women into sexual objects through the "male gaze." Although Mulvey's use of the term was originally directed towards mainstream cinema, it is obviously even more applicable in pornography.

Why then does Ellis, an apparently serious novelist, feel compelled to adopt a style and an aesthetic that belong in the pages of magazines from the porn industry? The answer is multifaceted. For one, by considering that the purpose of pornography is "to arouse sexual excitement" (Walker), it can be said that the author is purposely trying to trigger such excitement in the reader. Second, as noted above, the source of this pleasure is *scopophilic,* and thus an act of voyeurism, of enjoyment at a "distance," but the absence of emotions prevalent in all pornographic writing initiates a process of

identification in the reader: there is no distance between the "I" in the text and the personal "I." As Laura Tanner suggests, the reader "imaginatively becomes the violator," and is possibly compelled to project him/herself into the action (qtd. in Walker). Third, pornography is widely considered to appeal primarily to the male gaze, because it objectifies the female body, turning it into a consumer good as noted above, which, according to feminist critics such as Laura Mulvey is a product of the patriarchal thought that Bateman personifies. Moreover, many feminists, such as Susan Brownmiller and Andrea Dworkin, consider pornography to be degrading to women and representing an act of violence against the female body. The root of this analogy lies in the fact that the male gaze not only considers women as sexual objects but also sees the female body as fragmented, as separate and detachable pieces of anatomy—a breast, a leg, a foot, a mouth, a vagina—as if each could easily be severed from the unified entity of the body in its entirety, as a whole, a three-dimensional subject. This concept is perfectly exemplified in *American Psycho* where, as Murphet notes, "the most disturbing thing about Bateman's sexuality, however, … is that it segues into the most excruciating violence of the book's most notorious passages (39)."

Nonetheless, it should be noted that *American Psycho* is neither the first nor the only explicitly violent novel of all times—which parallels the earlier observations about its pornographic content. The annals of literary history are filled with a tradition that endorses overt depictions of violence and gore. A list of works containing violent content would include such celebrated works as *The Iliad*, *Beowulf,* and *La Chanson de Roland*, as well as works by such illustrious authors as Shakespeare, in his *Titus Andronicus*, while a more recent example would be Richard Wright's *Native Son*. Along the lines of the distinction made above to categorize pornographic material, a similar line can be drawn with violence in terms of "explicitness" and "affectivity" with regard to aesthetic choices. In *Native Son*, there is a clear emphasis on depicting some scenes with explicitly grisly and shocking details to provoke a reaction in the reader:

> [Bigger] … gritted his teeth and cut harder … but the bone made it difficult … Then blood crept in widening circles of pink on the newspapers, spreading quickly now. He whacked the bone with the knife. The head hung limply on the newspapers, the curly black hair dragging about in blood. He whacked harder, but the head would not come off.

In *American Psycho*, Ellis makes similar choices. The following scene unfolds after Bateman exchanges a couple of words with "an old queer" and his dog on a side-street while taking a walk:

> In one swift movement I pick the dog up quickly by the neck and hold it with my left arm … I've got such a tight grip on its throat it can't bark and I can actually *hear* my hand crush its trachea. I push the serrated blade into its stomach and quickly slice open its hairless belly in a squirt of brown blood, its legs kicking and clawing at me, the blue and red intestines bulge out and I drop the dog onto the sidewalk … I whirl around on its owner ["an old queer"] and I push him back, hard, with a bloodied glove and start randomly stabbing him in the face and head, finally slashing his throat open in two brief motions; an arc of red-brown blood splatters the white BMW 320i parked at the curb, setting off its car alarm, four fountainlike bursts coming from below its chin. The spraylike sound of the blood. He falls to the sidewalk, shaking like mad, blood still pumping … (167)

In another episode, Bateman goes out to dinner with Paul Owen, a fellow stockbroker who not only handles a very profitable account envied by many, but also irritates Bateman by mistaking him for someone else. Bateman then invites Owen to his apartment to kill him:

> The ax hits him midsentence, straight in the face, its thick blade chopping sideways into his open mouth, shutting him up … There's no blood at first, no sound either except from the newspapers under Paul's kicking feet, rustling, tearing. Blood starts to slowly pour out of the sides of his mouth shortly after the first chop, and when I pull the ax out … and strike him again in the face, splitting it open, his arms flailing at nothing, blood sprays out in twin brownish geysers, staining my raincoat … (217)

Although this killing is considerably graphic, as the novel evolves, the most gruesome passages of the novel turn out to be the ones that involve acts of sexual violence. During the pornographic description of a threesome among Bateman, Christie (the prostitute he had hired earlier) and Elizabeth (an acquaintance of his), the passage jump cuts to the following scene, where after being apparently tortured by Bateman, Elizabeth attempts to escape:

> Elizabeth, naked, running from the bedroom, blood already on her, is moving with difficulty and she screams out something garbled. … I'm naked too, shouting "You bitch, you piece of bitch trash" at her and since most of the blood is coming from her feet, she slips, manages to get up, and I strike out at her with the already wet butcher knife that I'm gripping in my right hand, clumsily, slashing her neck from behind, severing something, some veins (289).

Even though these passages are late in coming, namely halfway into the reading, and form only a minor part of the novel, they have

prompted critics such as James Gardner to deem it "excessive" and in more senses than one, it is. In order to remain in step with the overall narrative style of the novel, these scenes project the reader to the forefront of the action and are once again used to trigger some type of affective response, which may be to push beyond his or her threshold of tolerance. Consequently, this prompts one to question the rationale behind such an aesthetical choice apart from that of fulfilling a possibly sadistic type of voyeuristic tendency, but this will be discussed more scrupulously later. In addition, it could be argued that if Ellis' point had been to illustrate metaphorically the misogynistic violence of the male gaze in particular and patriarchal society in general on the one hand, and the perverted *collective* violence–direct or indirect—of an era on the other, he would have come across the first time, and that the repetition of such scenes remains unjustified.

This argument is flawed, however, for it does not take into account the satiric nature of the novel and its purpose as a work of social criticism. As mentioned above, the objects of the novel's attacks are mass consumerism and the tenets of Western society, and the "excess" in violence is by no means gratuitous, for it illustrates the excesses that form an integral part of liberal capitalism. This prompts David Price to observe that "in Patrick Bateman's world, there is no contradiction between being a Wall Street hotshot and a serial killer because the ideology of the culture obscures such a contradiction (327)." This parallel between the individual violence of the main protagonist and the collective violence of capitalistic culture is displayed when asked by someone at a party what his line of work is, Bateman answers, "murder and executions" his answer is assumed to be "mergers and acquisitions."

Even so, as outlined earlier, the most grotesque passages are the ones that combine sex and violence, particularly where, as the novel progresses, one almost unfailingly leads into the other. The relationship between sex and death is a recurring motif in literature and has been articulated by the use of the term "*la petite mort*", a metaphor that attempts to symbolize the state of non-being, of losing oneself, that immediately follows the orgasmic experience. In Ellis' novel, this concept is taken to its uttermost literal extreme. As noted earlier, what is particularly remarkable is that some of the most graphic and gruesome passages immediately follow the pornographically described sexual encounters cited above, thus establishing a direct relationship between sex and death, pornography and violence. This is illustrated in the next excerpt, which is taken

from one of the two chapters titled "Girls"—another level of structural repetition—where Bateman hires two escort girls and takes them to Paul Owen's apartment. He fails to be aroused by the sex, so he decides to find an alternate way to reach an orgasm:

> … finally I saw the entire head off—torrents of blood splash against the walls, even the ceilings—and holding the head up, like a prize, I take my cock, purple with stiffness, and lowering Torri's head to my lap I push it into her bloodied mouth and start fucking it, until I come, exploding into it (304).

Some indefinite number of days later, he meets a girl, who "remains nameless," at a club called "M.K." and takes her back to his apartment. Once again failing to get aroused through fellatio, Bateman starts getting rough with her, but she decides to stop and as she is gathering her belongings to leave, he knocks her out. He ties her to the floor and starts performing various acts of torture, before finally dismembering her:

> I use a chain saw and in a matter of seconds cut the girl in two with it. The whirring teeth go through skin and muscle and sinew and bone so fast that she stays alive long enough to watch me pull her legs away from her body—her actual *thighs*, what's left of her mutilated vagina—and hold them up in front of me, spouting blood, like trophies almost. Her eyes stay open for a minute, desperate and unfocused, then close, then finally she dies … She has only half a mouth left and I fuck it once, then twice, three times in all (329).

It can be seen within these particularly ghastly excerpts that Bateman's capacity to reach arousal is closely correlated with the acts of mutilation and torture he carries out on his victims, and thus, in noticing that there is a gradual increase of these acts both in incidence and intensity, the reader sees that violence becomes progressively the only way in which Bateman is able to fulfill his sexual drive. This brings us to the conclusion that for one, the psychotic, schizophrenic, and sadistic traits of both the main protagonist and the narrative are increasingly reinforced not only through the repetition of acts of viciousness and murder, but through their increasing intensity as well. Second, violence in *American Psycho* serves not only to illustrate the violence and savageness of capitalism—which is also epitomized by Bateman's being both a relentless and successful Wall Street stockbroker and an equally successful and relentless murderer, but the misogynistic aggression of the male pornographic gaze as well. And third, the concept that sex and violence are intertwined is also reinforced through the same processes of increasing explicitness and repetition.

It is clear then that in *American Psycho* the depictions of sex and

violence can be analyzed concurrently both structurally and contextually, in form and in content. The task at hand is now to attempt to clarify in which way and to what extent they affect the response of the reader emotionally and psychologically. To discuss the latter, some of Freud's theories from his theory of the "Uncanny" seem particularly well-fitted, while an analysis of the former would call in what has been named Ellis' "politics/aesthetics of boredom" by critics such as Elizabeth Young, Marco Abel, and Julian Murphet.

The "Uncanny" [*unheimlich*] addresses an aspect of aesthetic theory that does not consider the "beautiful" or the "sublime," but rather that property which bewilders or startles the reader, one that provokes a feeling of "unfamiliarity" and "uneasiness," which is possibly disturbing, unsettling, and uncomfortable. Freud claims that this aesthetic property stimulates the reader by triggering a strong affective response (251). He alludes to Friedrich von Schelling's definition of the uncanny as "something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light" (241) to create a link with psychoanalysis in considering the uncanny as something that is repressed:

> It may be true that the uncanny [*unheimlich*] is something which is secretly familiar [*heimlich-heimlich*], which has undergone repression and then returned from it, and that everything that is uncanny fulfills this condition. (245)

In *American Psycho*, the uncanny manifests itself on two levels. For one, as a narrator, Bateman does not possess an affective filter and uses either a purely formal syntax and quasi-uninflected speech to describe all events, whether taking a shower, having sexual intercourse, or brutally mutilating his victims. What is particularly *unheimlich* is that the murder scenes are of such an explicitly gruesome nature that some readers may find themselves virtually unable to continue reading, while others may find these passages truly enthralling. What unravels in this process of revulsion/identification is that Bateman appears to be the perfect case study for psychoanalytical study. Freud insists that most repressed feelings contained in the ego are of a sexual or violent nature, and the protagonist of *American Psycho* enacts both, profusely. Nevertheless, it remains unclear whether these murders actually take place, or whether they are merely the verbal expression of the protagonist's unconscious, a possibility worth exploring, for critics such as David Price emphasize the "cartoon-ish" (328) quality of the violence depicted, which renders it entirely or partly *invraisemblable* and thus perhaps merely a product of the unconscious. This leaves the reader in a situation

where he or she needs either to consider Bateman as a character for whom the borders between the conscious and the unconscious are totally blurred—who has lost the social filter of culture with regard to nature—or as a persona who allows his ego to freely project his most intimate repressed desires without ever actually carrying them out, as we see in the narrator's description of a conversation with his buddies at "Harry's":

> Questions are routinely thrown my way … I am, of course thinking about other things, asking myself my own questions: Am I a fitness junkie? Man vs. Conformity? Can I get a date with Cindy Crawford? Does being a Libra signify anything and if so, can you prove it? Today I was obsessed with the idea of faxing Sarah's blood I drained from her vagina over to her office in the mergers division at Chase Manhattan, and I didn't work out this morning because I'd made a necklace from the bones of some girl's vertebrae and wanted to stay home and wear it around my neck while I masturbated in the white marble tub in my bathroom, grunting and moaning like some animal. Then I watched a movie about five lesbians and ten vibrators. Favorite group: Talking Heads. Drink: J&B or Absolut on the rocks. TV show: *Late Night with David Letterman*. Soda: Diet Pepsi. Water: Evian. Sport: Baseball (395).

Bateman remains the voice of the collective unconscious—a voice that is uncontainable and refuses to remain muffled—and as a result it is either laid bare and becomes overwhelming, or, in more extreme cases, it materializes itself and assumes total control over its subject.

The ambiguity between narrative and textual reality persists throughout the novel and constantly sends the reader questioning not only the authenticity of the events described but the extent of the protagonist's schizophrenic neurosis. Freud claims that by maintaining this kind of ambivalence, an author is able to exert his directive power over the reader and stir him into different directions: "by means of the moods he can put us into, he is able to guide the current of our emotions" (951). Likewise, Elizabeth Young aptly argues:

> From the first line, "Abandon all hope ye who enter here", to the last, "This is not an exit", we are *signed*, we are entered in to what is really a *circle* of hell. Once we have given ourselves up to the text, made the choice to "abandon hope", we have no way out. It is a closed system. These imprisoning, claustrophobic qualities are deftly manipulated in order, not only to force us to live as close to Patrick as possible in a fictional sense, but to imprint the reader with such force that we cannot ever get out. This is an act of great aggression and confidence on the part of the author revealing a controlling ego which asserts its rights over both characters and readers (3).

This control is further implemented through what Murphet defines as Ellis' "aesthetics of boredom," a reference to what Marco

Abel and Muphet refer to as 'boring' in *American Psycho* is the endless name-dropping, label-listing, cataloguing of exercise and grooming routines, descriptions of household items, run-down of restaurant settings and menu descriptions, the typical *Rolling Stone* or *Billboard* pop music reviews, and the empty, senseless dialogues between "characters so undefined and interchangeable that even *they* confuse each other's identity (Murphet 24)." Yet, as proposed above, this part of the book, "a good ninety percent of it", according to Murphet, "is a carefully considered foil to the violence (24)." Ellis has structured *American Psycho* meticulously, and as Marco Abel points out, "[it] is marked by the extent boredom is deployed as a major stylistic strategy (143)," while Murphet concurs: "If Ellis wants to bore us, he must have a reason (24)."

Murphet argues that the violent incidents are "so confronting and disturbing partly because they have been so long in coming … and partly because what had remained latent behind the surface banality is here given such swift and explicit expression that we are simply unprepared for it (40)." He also contends that stylistically the scenes of pornography and violence situate themselves on a different plane than the remainder of the text, which accentuates their dialectic antagonism so that "the violence is not simply a matter of *content*; it is very much a matter of *form* and *style* (45)." Likewise, Abel asserts that "Ellis insists that boredom works as boredom only when disrupted by violence (146)," and thus, the two are interdependent in a way that they each perpetually accentuate the other. In that sense, it can be said that they each work against each other to create an effect on the reader. In considering reader-response theory, it can be said that the reader's "horizon of expectations" is constantly shifting, and that in face of the extensive boring passages enumerated above, the reader starts longing for "something to happen" namely the sex and the violence, thus calling in a sense of curiosity, a curiosity that turns into Scopophilia. This particular form of voyeurism is well exemplified in the novel with the repeated descriptions of scenes from horror movies (Ellis 69) and pornographic videotapes (97-98), as well as the use of the camera by Bateman to film the acts of violence (304).

What is to be made, then, of Leigh Brock's claim that "Ellis creates a character who distances himself from his crimes and victims, and while doing so, the author sets up distance between reader and text (6)"? Comparing Bateman to Ted Bundy and pointing out the fact that both could "mask the fact that they were relentless psychopaths, she argues that "in addition to Bateman's sociopathic

removal and depersonalization," Ellis' unique style [i.e. his "aesthetics of boredom"] "insulates the reader's sensibilities (7)." However, as argued above, the latter produces quite the opposite effect; it is because of the difference in content and style between the boredom and the violence that the reader's sensibilities are heightened and he/she is unable to distance himself from the text. Responding to Brock's comparison of Bateman with Ted Bundy, Carla Freccero notes:

> *American Psycho* is narrated for the most part in the first-person voice of a serial killer. The serial killer is a popular American figure of dementia, universally regarded as unthreatening precisely because of his singularity, the nonrationality of his pathology, and the individualized and eccentric nature of his violence. A serial killer is not the oppressed masses, and although his murders are usually lurid, his reach is limited. In this sense, the serial killer serves the function of a fetish in public culture: he is the means of the disavowal of institutionalized violence, while the "seriality" of his acts of violence marks the place of recognition in this disavowal. Through the serial killer, then, we recognize and simultaneously refuse the violence-saturated quality of the culture, by situating its source in an individual with a psychosexual dysfunction. We are thus able to locate the violence in his disorder rather than in ourselves or in the social order (48).

Observing that the fictive individual image of the serial killer is a "consoling fantasy" and acts as a "condensation of the violence of American historicity into a singular subject who performs discrete, singular injurious acts (49)," she concludes, "*American Psycho* does not offer its readers the serial killer as consoling fantasy (51)." In her view, Ellis' minimalist style and the absence of a psychological portrait of Bateman and a background that would explain his behavior, he escapes all categorization as a serial killer in the vein of Thomas Harris' Hannibal Lecter or Norman Bates of Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (51).

Far from receiving any escape route the reader consequently becomes the focal point of the narrative. The irony of Ellis' minimalist prose style and Bateman's unaffected voice is that they relegate the responsibility for feelings and emotions to the reader. In other words, the reader is able to feel what Bateman does not—namely, feelings of disgust and repulsion for the acts of sexual violence. It is the absence of affect on Bateman's part—what Brocke calls "distancing"—that creates the intimacy between the reader and the protagonist. Without a primary filter of characterization and personality, the reader subconsciously becomes Bateman. Moreover, it is also Bateman's lack of personality—which is highlighted by the fact that he is constantly being mistaken for someone else—that not only

plunges the reader into filling this blank by becoming Bateman but also makes him or her long for the violence as the only antidote to the boredom which plagues the never-ending descriptive passages of the novel.

Both sex and violence are instinctual drives, physical needs that have been extensively and repetitively carried out throughout human history, and whose representations have increased with growing intensity. In civilized society, individuals are forced to deal with their sexual and aggressive desires by either suppressing them or funneling them into some other physical outlet. Society has attempted—and succeeded in most cases—to either transpose or replace these needs and to restrain the individual from acting upon any type of physical aggression. Yet these instincts resurface randomly and the individual unconsciously feels a longing for them, or rather, for their representations: along with everything else, we have either domesticated or sublimated our instincts.

In *American Psycho*, Ellis draws a metaphor for the passive, almost vegetative state that characterizes white-collar life in the twentieth century and its lack of physicality, where the need to fulfill one's instinctual drives has been replaced by a gregarious appetite for a variety of consumer products: clothes, cars, home electronics, music, and movies. A superficial lifestyle plagued with ennui prompts one to yearn for excitement, to indulge in the 'thrill' that the modern entertainment industry offers its viewers by constantly pushing the envelope with regard to representations of gore and violence. A paradigm that Ellis meticulously portrays in *American Psycho*, where the main protagonist's only relief from an existence which is defined by "surface, surface, surface was all that anyone found meaning in . . ." (375), is found by indulging in violence—whether fictional or not.

Ellis engineered *American Psycho* for it to have a profoundly discomforting impact on the reader, which Alberto Manguel among others have described as "a revulsion … of the gut" (Manguel 102). Through the blatant yet methodical display of its themes of sex and violence, Ellis' novel transgresses the boundary of what is acceptable within the norms of society. Within this simple precept, there is no doubt that *American Psycho* can be categorized as "transgressive," yet "transgression" as a theoretical concept has undergone intense scrutiny, and it remains debatable to what particular definition of transgression Ellis' novel corresponds.

In his book *Transgressions: The Offences of Art*, Anthony Julius

demonstrates that, characteristically, there are three kinds of transgressive art: an art that perverts established art rules; an art that defiles the beliefs and sentiments of its audience; and an art that challenges and disobeys the rules of the state. This explanation is the accepted definition of transgression and was backed in many reviews of the book. James Gardner traces the history of transgressive literature all the way to Euripides, through Webster, Sade and Celine and defines it in opposition to what he calls "humanistic" and "nice" literature:

> Despite the primacy of this kind of "nice" literature, there is another kind of literature that increasingly exhibits, and sometimes even advocates, very different values. Such fiction is often termed "transgressive" and there are correlative developments in film and the visual arts. Like the humanistic literature of Amy Tan, it is seen as being somehow liberal or leftist because it seeks the distinction of radical "otherness" and because it aspires to threaten the status quo that writers like Amy Tan and Bharati Mukherjee seek only to correct. The two strains converge from different angles of assault on a center allegedly dominated by a white, Anglo-Saxon, heterosexual, right-handed patriarchy.

By addressing the notion of a "center" being attacked by this transgressive fiction, James Gardner still relies on the standard definition of transgression but fails to provide a theoretical framework necessary to determine the transgressive nature of *American Psycho*. In other words, and in light of the so-called controversial content of the novel, one would be drawn to consider particularly to what category the "radical otherness" of the novel situates itself.

With that goal in mind, Walker considers the writings of Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault in an attempt to come up with what he calls a "pure" definition of transgression. Walker argues, however, that material is not deemed to be transgressive in genres where extreme or shocking content can be expected, and he rightly notes that "the uproar caused by *American Psycho* was due to Ellis' status as a 'serious novelist.'" Consequently, Walker suggests that the standard definition proposed above comes closer to a definition of subversion and not transgression, by emphasizing how texts are deployed within a culture. Using Bataille's definition of "excess," he argues:

> [Excess is defined] as that which as that which challenges a closed economy (predicated on utility, production and rational consumption) and foregrounds the experience of the 'unassimiliable waste products' of the body, society and thought—excrement, madness, poetry, automutilation, obscenity. It views all unities as delusive and calls for the individual to reach lower, more 'essential' human drives.

In considering both sex and violence as "more 'essential' human drives" and by positioning them in opposition to "production and consumption" as clearly defined above, it seems that Ellis' novel fits this definition of transgression rather well. In addition, Walker proposes that *American Psycho* is also an accurate exemplification of Foucault's theories:

> Certainly Foucault's description of transgression as the 'appetite,' 'drive for profit' of the already materially-satisfied describes the postmodern condition of late capitalism, the age of excess. Patrick Bateman, Ellis' protagonist in *American Psycho* is the embodiment of the postmodern condition of superfluity; money is not used for basic material satisfaction but for perpetual excess and inhuman ends.

Thus, according to Bataille and Foucault, it would seem that Ellis' novel is indeed transgressive at both ends. Walker argues, however, that Foucault stresses that transgression is detached from anything that is "scandalous" and that it does not offer any form of social commentary in the way that Ellis' novel does. In other words, *American Psycho* is not transgressive in the Foucauldian sense because it is a satire of consumer society and consequently it is aware of what it transgresses.

This observation prompts Walker to draw a parallel between the Bataille-Foucault paradigm of pure transgression and the Barthesian distinction between the "text of pleasure" and "text of bliss," or the subsequent categorical binaries of "readerly texts" and "writerly texts," with the latter corresponding to the definition of transgression as proposed by Bataille and Foucault, while *American Psycho* would be categorized as a "text of pleasure." For Barthes, the text of pleasure "contents, fills, grants euphoria; comes from culture and does not break with it, is linked to a comfortable practice of reading," but the text of bliss is "the text that imposes a state of loss, the text that discomforts," that "unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions, . . . [and] brings to a crisis his relation with language" (14). Young also suggests that even though *American Psycho* resembles a "writerly text" it is intrinsically linked with the culture that produced it; no matter how critical it may be, "it lacks the 'shock, disturbance, even loss, which are proper to ecstasy, to bliss'" (120). Young's implication is that because Ellis' novel is so precisely situated, it does not contain the qualities enunciated above. Yet she bases her argument on her belief that "Ellis' vision is comformist and conventional… He is denunciatory, a supporter of the status quo," a point that Freccero, Murphet, Price strongly contend. While Freccero and Price merely argue that *American Psycho* is purely symptomatic and that it offers no solutions, no alternatives, i.e. no guidelines,

Murphet is more vehement, arguing that "[t]here is scant evidence … that Ellis is a 'supporter of the status quo' (22)." According to Murphet, Ellis is "apolitical," and possibly an anarchist: "most of the values Ellis actually embraces in his fiction inhered … in the period known as the punk movement, defined above all by a nihilistic contempt for established middle-class conformity, sartorial menace, and loud metallic noise; a concerned *épater le bourgeois* by urban youth (21)."

These conflicting opinions on Ellis' political ramifications seem to reflect Walker's skepticism about the definition of 'pure' transgression advanced by Bataille and Foucault:

> However, the Bataille-Foucault paradigm is not without problematical assumptions. Theirs is a 'pure' non-dialectical conception, transgression is purely 'for the sake of it', it has no purpose as such. It is against all 'use' because if one were to exist it can no longer be truly *transgressive*. It is questionable whether this is possible since these 'energies' are inescapably 'directed', committed. Such a genuine conception of transgression needs to be maintained but *within dialectics, within political progression*. In its valiant attempt to resist any political implication, the non-dialectical conception leads to *ineffectualness* and *marginalisation* as Stoekl has said of Bataille: "a simple death or wandering" or at worst to "extremely sinister political configurations (regimes of the right are only too happy to make use of previously unharnessed violence). The latter point illustrates how independence from any appropriation, implication is impossible, and to pretend otherwise is potentially dangerous.

Hence, it would seem that pure transgression cannot exist in a vacuum, a void; for it to be effective, if that is the purpose, it needs to be "committed." The question remains, how can a novel be transgressive if it operates independently from a normative set of standards? What could it possibly transgress? Perhaps, in the minds of Bataille and Foucault this is not the point, and hence, *American Psycho* cannot be considered within their paradigm.

If one believes that *American Psycho* is "non-transgressive," as Young suggests and Walker has demonstrated, what is to be made, then, of the likes of Roger Rosenblatt who are of the opinion that Ellis' novel is "pure" transgression, i.e. transgression for transgression's sake, which implies that they have overlooked precisely what makes it non-transgressive: its social critique, its commitment? Obviously, for these individuals, the novel has clearly transgressed *their* norms, *their* views of what is deemed acceptable to be distributed and circulated. "*American Psycho* was a dangerous book," declares Young (89), yet it remains threatening only to those who see in the novel a mirror-image of themselves and deny it; those who are in

favor of a status quo, of a hegemonic social order: right-wing conservatives, puritans and other *beaux-penseurs* of the bourgeoisie. Young also notes that in an effort to suppress their subversive elements books that contain such disturbing material are usually ghettoized by the literary establishment (90). Yet within the western tradition there seems to be a genuine legacy of works that have been labeled as "transgressive" at various time periods. From *Justine* to *Les Fleurs du Mal*, *Madame Bovary*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to *Ulysses, Beloved* to *The Native Son*, all have stirred major controversy during their respective times only to be canonized later, once the very "transgressiveness"—obscenity, license, immorality, or violence—that characterized them and marginalized them was deemed to contain a distinguishable literary quality. What is even more remarkable is that some of these works are now considered to be the absolute pillars of certain literary trends and pivotal to promoting new critical concepts and social ideas.

In her essay on Ellis' hyperrealist aesthetics Frances Fortier asks the reader "*Où est l'insupportable? Dans la violence même ou dans le récit qui le banalise?*" ["What is unacceptable? The violence itself or the narrative which banalizes it?" (translation mine)] (98). As mentioned in the first section of this paper, society has grown largely desensitized and the thresholds of tolerance for depictions of obscenity and gore through the media and the entertainment industry have continuously been pushed farther. The public at large overwhelmingly embrace this practice. What needs to be underlined is that these depictions remain for the most part representations of a more or less artistic nature. Thus, if one considers that the majority of society is less exposed to first-hand violence—which remains debatable—it still yearns to indulge in representations of violence to fulfill a repressed desire, an instinctual drive for violence. While some could claim that these representations are cathartic, others object on the grounds that they actually produce violence. If so, one could question the applicability of this paradigm to representations of sexual acts as well. One would think that our society has considerably evolved in this regard and become more permissive and tolerant, but how then can one explain the success of the porn industry and its billion-dollar annual revenue? One could argue that this success stems largely, perhaps directly, from the fact that individuals are still unable to fulfill their instinctual drive for sex and thus resort to consuming its various representations. What occurs, then, is that through various consumer products of a visual nature, society has promoted

a scopophilic type of voyeurism as an acceptable way to fulfill these instinctual drives by turning human nature into an object of curiosity, no matter how perverted the practice might appear to be. Charles Baudelaire addressed the preface of *Les Fleurs du Mal* to a *hypocrite lecteur*, a hypocritical reader, someone who would not want to accept the self-image the poems depict. For Ellis, we are all hypocrites, we all indulge in a voyeuristic lifestyle of consumption, a lifestyle that sees no boundaries in objectifying the very essence that defines human existence: its individuality.

Vartan P. Messier
University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez
Puerto Rico

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ALAIN ROBBE-GRILLET'S PARODY OF MODERNIST AESTHETICS THROUGH THE KINETICS OF VIOLENCE

G. Christopher Williams

Like most other stories by Alain Robbe-Grillet, "The Secret Room" does not seem to be much of a story at all. Beginning at its apparent conclusion, the series of "snapshots" (indeed, that is the title of the collection from which "The Secret Room" is taken) that make up the narrative paint a picture of an atrocious crime and its outcome told from its consequences back to its inception. This narrative becomes a static painting or a series of static paintings that in some way mimics a detective story with the invoked audience left with the job of retracing the steps of a murderer fleeing from a ritualistic and grisly scene. Yet, what is left out of this "mystery" is any apparent motive for the crime, since there is no background presented in the story itself. Again, the whole of the story's focus is left on the consequences of the crime, not that which most mysteries are interested in deciphering, the actions and motivations that led up to the crime itself.

Understanding why Robbe-Grillet's story shifts its emphasis from the traditional focus of the mystery genre (which he seems in part to be parodying) is the secret that seems to lie at the heart of "The Secret Room." Due to Robbe-Grillet's framing of the story as a painting and his dedication to Gustave Moreau, it would seem that the answer to these questions must lie in the stories connections between the visual and the narrative forms. Additionally, though, it seems worthwhile to consider the rules and conventions that Robbe-Grillet is breaking with in order to understand the purpose of this "story." In John Barth's "Lost in the Funhouse," a work obsessed with narrative production, the narrator briefly describes how the "conventional dramatic narrative" is typically represented through Freitag's Triangle. Barth's narrator describes that in the diagram he uses of the triangle that "AB represents the exposition, B the introduction of conflict, BC the 'rising action,' complication, or develop-

ment of the conflict" (95). He goes on to explain that "one ought not to forsake" this conventional narrative pattern "unless one wishes to forsake as well the effect of drama or has clear cause to feel that deliberate violation of the 'normal' pattern can better effect that effect." The implication for that story is, of course, that this conventional form has been forsaken and thus the reader is intended to ask how this break in conventionality better generates Barth's own narratorial effects. I think this same question is appropriate in the case of "The Secret Room" particularly as it seems to flaunt a number of conventional models and patterns.

In this particular case, the effect seems to be one of parody, though, in which the rules of a conventional narrative (like the pattern of Freitag's Triangle) are apparently adhered to but then discarded in order to create some "effect." Likewise, the conventions of the mystery genre are also mimicked but are ultimately broken by the conclusion of the narrative. Finally, the rules and philosophy of modern painting are also presented and then brought low by the problematic presentation of Robbe-Grillet's subject matter. In essence, Robbe-Grillet's "The Secret Room" is a narrative made up not simply of fragmented imagery but of layers of parody. Roland Barthes in "Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet" has pointed out that Robbe-Grillet uses classical rhetorical models in his fiction and that Robbe-Grillet does so "with all the deliberation of a true craftsman," employing "such devices . . . in the cause of mockery, in behalf of the destruction of classical space and the dispersion of concrete substance" and other such "overconstructed spaces" (19). In "The Secret Room," I would suggest that Robbe Grillet likewise uses devices often utilized by the cubists, modernists, and mystery writers in order to destroy and disperse the spaces constructed traditionally in cubism, modernism, and more conventional narratives like the mystery genre through the interrelated visual and narrative elements presented in the story that are all disrupted by the brutality of the parodic final imagery of the story.

The parallels between Robbe-Grillet and Moreau seem apparent. Despite Robbe-Grillet's advocation of an objective literature, both artists—the writer/filmmaker and the painter—seem interested in portraying the "real" in a subjective manner. Robbe-Grillet is famous for his conceptualizing of the new novel as "realistic" in its subjective presentation—while the description in his novels and stories are barren of qualification and are seemingly presented in an objective, methodical manner, nevertheless, as Barthes has described, because these objects are often the only "characters" in his

fiction they are “promoted to the rank of subjects” (25).[1] Due to the phenomeological nature of Robbe-Grillet’s fiction, Barthes explains that these objects’ “inner nature” is only revealed because the “novel becomes man’s direct experience of what surrounds him without his being able to shield himself with a psychology, a metaphysic, or a psychoanalytic method in his combat with the objective world.” In a purely phenomenological world, the observer (and the reader in the case of her encounter with Robbe-Grillet’s phenomenological spaces) has only her own senses to depend on—a purely subjective interpretation of the objective world. Likewise, Moreau advocates the presentation of reality through abstraction, making the insubstantial real through plastic artificiality based solely on the intuitions of the artist. Moreau rejects naturalistic art that represents merely what can be seen and attempts to express the unseen. Robbe-Grillet seems to have found a soul sympathetic to his own values in the Symbolist Moreau. Yet Moreau’s work predates Robbe-Grillet’s by over half a century. Robbe-Grillet has ignored his more recent predecessors in the visual arts, the modernists. But, this lack of acknowledgement, too, makes sense given Robbe-Grillet’s proclivities. Modernists were not interested in subjective expression, but instead almost exclusively on objective presentation both in the narrative and through the artist’s expression itself.

For example, the Cubists’ interests lay in the objective presentation of time itself. Such an interest seems to have been of interest to these modernist visual artists from the movement’s earliest beginnings. In *The Vision Machine*, Paul Virilio recounts a conversation between one of the fathers of Modernism, Auguste Rodin, and another sculptor, Paul Gsell, in which Rodin responds to Gsell’s questions about how Rodin’s sculptures have the appearance of movement. Rodin compares the human form as it is presented in photography with that of how the human form is presented in sculpture explaining that “[p]eople in photographs suddenly seem frozen in mid-air, despite being caught in full swing: this is because every part of their body is reproduced at exactly the same twentieth of fortieth of a second, so there is no gradual unfolding of the gesture as there is in art” (1). For Rodin, this difference shows the fundamental

[1] For instance, consider the first story in *Snapshots* in which no characters appear but whose focus seems wholly on a dressmaker’s dummy. The dummy is described as well as its own reflection in a mirror as if the dummy had become the protagonist of the story contemplating itself just as the reader is forced to contemplate the protagonist of a traditional narrative with a traditional protagonist.

difference between the "realism" of photography and the "truthfulness" of art:

> It is art that tells the truth and photography that lies. For *in reality time does not stand* still, and if the artist manages to give the impression that a gesture is being executed over several seconds, their work is certainly much less conventional than the scientific image in which time is abruptly suspended. (2)

The necessity of showing sequential time in a static form like a sculpture was, of course, further developed in cubist works. A painting like Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase (No. 2)* attempts to demonstrate how movement can be represented visually through the fragmented images that make up a single figure of a nude descending a staircase. In other words, the nude is represented as a single entity through the "parts" of her movement.

Despite Robbe-Grillet's homage to Moreau, the similarity between the frozen images that make up the parts of narrative time in Robbe-Grillet's "The Secret Room" is really more akin to those of the moving fragments of Duchamp's painting. It is as if Robbe-Grillet has been able to boil down a narrative into a single scene that represents the whole of the action of his plot in an instant without losing the serial nature of the narrative scenes. Allowing a viewer the opportunity to understand a subject through its movement through space at a variety of angles in a single moment is exactly the effect that cubists hoped to achieve.

We can see how Robbe-Grillet accomplishes this cubist narrative from the beginning of "The Secret Room." The story opens in a completely static, and abstract manner with simply description of color like "a red stain" and its shape "an irregular rosette" (65). The rosette shape, of course, has wider associations with gothic cathedrals and, indeed, as "the space is filled" and details solidify, the story begins to describe what might be the interior of such a cathedral. The descriptors used by the narrator remain in the language of the visual arts as the reader is told that "in the foreground, the stretched out body gleams feebly, marked with the red stain" while "[i]n the background, near the top of the stairway, a black silhouette is seen fleeing, a man wrapped in a long floating cape, ascending the last steps without turning around, his deed accomplished" (66). These images located through visual clues, foreground and background, again, remain mere static images within the "canvas" that contains the whole set of images (72). That the story takes place on a canvas, though, is only revealed in the concluding word of the story.

Hints to the nature of this narrative as painting exist throughout the work, though, such as the fact that it is "difficult" for the narrator "to say where the light is coming from" in the same way that it is difficult to ascertain the location of the artificial light represented in any painting—the artificial but necessary source that adds depth to the painting and provides perspective for the viewer through shadow (67). The reader is also made aware of the frame through which he or she must look to see the images presented by the narrator as the narrator describes that "[t]he dimensions of the room are difficult to determine exactly" because "the vast size of the stairway leading down . . . would imply that this is not the whole room." Like a painting, the view is limited to the part of the room in which the artist has framed the central imagery. Just as we never see beyond the back wall and partial two walls, roof, and floor of the dingy room in which sits the figure of *Whistler's Mother*, we are left only to imagine what might surround the space outside the view that the narrator presents as the room's "considerable space must extend in reality all around, right and left, as it does towards the faraway browns and blues among the columns standing in line, in every direction, perhaps towards other sofas, thick carpets, piles of cushions and fabrics, other tortured bodies, other incense burners." These clues maintain the static qualities of the scene by framing it clearly on the canvas. Thus, we know that the figures of the man and the woman will be made equally static.

Thus, the figure of the man is described in a manner not unlike Rodin's people in a photograph: suspended, rather than motive:

> But the man does not look in this direction, where his movement nonetheless carries him; his left foot on the second step and his right foot already touching the third, with his knee bent, he has turned around to look at the spectacle for one last time. (68)

And as he does so his cape "remains suspended in the air as if blown by a gust of wind." The suspension or stasis of the figure as it moves to escape (or in the case of the narrative's chronology, moves backwards towards the victim that he is fleeing from) seems at once rigidly static in the same sense that each part of the form of Duchamp's nude is static, yet since this reverse flight occurs with some noticeable regression of steps down the stairs it also capture the flow of movement that Duchamp's simultaneous images produce.

Yet, all this stillness is broken by the final image. All the static imagery of the prior scenes is shattered by the dynamic brutality of the murder itself. Initially, "the flesh is still intact" until Robbe-Grillet

signals the kinetic break in this painting with the woman's "rapid breathing, whose rhythm grows more accelerated" (71). With the motive power of breath, both figures become dynamic as the man "leans farther over" and the "woman's mouth twists open, [and] while the flesh is torn open, the blood spurts out over the tender skin." All the qualities of static imagery seem abandoned in the final horrific scene where kinesis becomes the whole of the descriptive material. Suddenly, the painting is abandoned for a full motion picture, but it is only for that instant, the climax of the narrative, that the kinetic leaks through. In the final two paragraphs the room is once again frozen and revealed as being situated on a "canvas."

Just as Robbe-Grillet appears to mimicking cubist technique in painting the serial static images and forms throughout the story, he too appears to be adhering to the philosophy that underlies the desire for this objective look at the elements within the story. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), Stephen Daedalus walks with his friend Lynch, discussing his sense of what beauty is and how to properly apprehend it. In this discussion of apprehension, Stephen particularly fixates on how an individual reacts emotionally to arts like tragedy or drama:

> [T]he tragic emotion is static. Or rather the dramatic emotion is. The feelings excited by improper art are kinetic, desire or loathing. Desire urges us to possess, to go to something; loathing urges us to abandon, to go from something. These are kinetic emotions. The arts which excite them, pornographical or didactic, are therefore improper arts. The esthetic emotion (I use the general term) is therefore static. The mind is arrested and raised above desire and loathing. (205)

While Stephen himself has been seen as a parodic figure in comparison to the mature James Joyce, nevertheless, Stephen's description of art could belong to any number of modernist artists. Consider its similarity to T. S. Eliot's objective correlative, which he describes in "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919). Eliot claims that "the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion" (100). Both Eliot and Stephen seek a means of creating art that does not move its audience emotionally but allows the viewer to examine the material of art objectively and distanced from it. As Stephen goes on to say in his discussion with Lynch, art "produces . . . a stasis of the mind," which cannot be interrupted by kinesis.

Robbe-Grillet's story seems initially to present us with an almost ideal situation for the modernist. The static quality of the painting reflects the objectivity that the narrator allows his audience through

the distance made apparent by the frame through which we see these two figures. While the scene is potentially horrific, the stillness of the victim and culprit and the stillness of the blood and evidence of violence allows the audience to view these figures safely, as uninvolved observers viewing the drama unfolded. Yet, in the passage in which the victim breathes once more, the static qualities give way to kinesis. Interestingly, this kinesis is effected through images both of desire—the heaving breasts of the naked woman—and loathing—the torn flesh and bloody torrent. Robbe-Grillet has effectively mimicked an ideal modernist perspective on this scene and then allows the parody of the modernist belief in objectivity to break the illusion of the ability to maintain emotional distance as he allows the scene to come to life once more.[2]

But, it is the very unorthodox narrative form that allows for this parody to be affected. The story told in reverse chronological order allows us to see that the action effected in the scene is one that cannot be observed without a kinetic reaction. Returning to Freitag's Triangle, Robbe-Grillet has not merely reversed the order of the events of his story, but he has reversed the order of the conventional narrative structure itself. The first few pages, which set the scene, are traditionally, as Barth observes, set aside for this kind of exposition. The exposition, though, is the flight of the criminal from the murder scene. The reader understands that something terrible has occurred not because Robbe-Grillet has established the background of these two characters or the place in which the story takes place but because of the results of the action itself. The background becomes the reaction to the action rather than the catalyst to the action. At once, this concept is very much akin to the traditional conventions of a murder mystery, which generally begins following the murder itself. The murder then is the catalyst to the action of the story.

The unconventional move that Robbe-Grillet makes is in making the climax the murder itself. Traditionally, the mystery should be resolved by an objective and independent investigator or the equally objective police. The climax occurs not as a horrific event, but a final

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[2] Robbe-Grillet has argued that in many ways only the kinetic quality of film has this effect of awakening the viewer to brutality, as he described in *Towards a New Novel*: "the filmed narrative can drag us out of our interior comfort and into this proferred world with a violence not to be found in the corresponding text, whether novel or scenario" (20). The kinesis of film and seemingly static quality of text seems to be resolved in this story by the sudden filmic quality of the resolution as the "still images" in the "static text" of the early scene become violently motive in its conclusion.

confrontation between the detective and the murderer—be that confrontation a battle of wits or a more physical struggle. The process of unraveling the mystery, like Robbe-Grillet's story, focuses the reader on learning of the events prior to the murder. But, in the traditional mystery, this piecing together of the puzzle, understanding the method and motivations of the killer allows for a satisfying resolution to the problem. The reader has witnessed a revelatory moment by understanding why this horrible event has taken place. Like Stephen's model of beauty apprehended properly, the resolution of the matter leads to clarity or, as Stephen describes the epiphanic moment, as one in which "[t]ruth is beheld by the intellect which is appeased by the most satisfying relations of the sensible" (208). Robbe-Grillet chooses to unravel the "mystery," though, by returning directly to the act of the crime itself. There are no objective investigators. For, though the invoked reader was distanced initially from the scene by the framing of the scene and found him- or herself attempting to determine what was going on in the scene, that distance is annihilated, according to the rules set forth by Stephen, the moment the kinetic action takes place and the invoked reader is overcome by desire and loathing at the action taking place.

The effect of this parody of narrative and genre conventions, though, serve to once again highlight Robbe-Grillet's admiration of Moreau. For Moreau felt that his paintings were more realistic than the naturalistic detail of the painting of his contemporaries. He claimed that they failed to represent aspects of life that cannot be seen through material objects, hence, his dreamlike intuitions and perceptions revealed a more realistic perspective. Robbe-Grillet's climax places the importance of unraveling a mystery not on resolving the puzzle intellectually, but understanding the horror of the action that lies at the heart of a murder mystery—the violation of the victim. The kinetic moment at the end of the story is a kinetic experience of the murder, personally and subjectively experienced through the victim's experience of violence. To understand the "puzzle" of "The Secret Room" is not to understand the motive of a killer but his actions and their effects, thus Robbe-Grillet focuses his audience, filtering through the frame of the canvas on the brutality of action and the flight of the guilty. In essence Robbe-Grillet's effort here is to produce what Bruce Morrissette in "Surfaces and Structures in Robbe-Grillet's Novels" has called fiction that is "allegorical of itself" (8). The fiction "embodies, rather than symbolizes, the creative process that the novelist goes through to invent, incarnate, and structure a novel" (8). By embodying the reading process through the reader's role as detective in this story, this parody of narrative

convention serves to undermine an objective notion of truth held by the modernists—that art could speak of truth and provide clarity. This objectivity is impossible in the frame of this story, and the only moment of clarity comes, not from a static representation that allows the mind clarity in repose, but through the reader's disgust at the tearing of flesh. Robbe-Grillet parodies resolution by providing no answer to the secret he describes, but, instead, showing a more real understanding through the kinesis of torture.

G. Christopher Williams
University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point
United States of America

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BILL THE SYMBOLIC WORKER: FORCED SYNDICALISM, OPPOSITION AND THE SELF IN ANTHONY BURGESS'S *1985*

David Waterman

George Orwell's masterpiece, *1984*, was written shortly after the Second World War in the wake of Churchill's defeat and the coming to power of the socialist party, a political shift which delighted the author of *1984*, a dedicated socialist. The question then comes up, early in Anthony Burgess's novel, how is it that Orwell's response to that victory is "a terrifying novel in which English Socialism is far worse than either the Nazi or the Russian variety"[?] (23). Orwell rightly feared the State's abuse of power, especially a State which had access to more technologically advanced methods of surveillance and behavior control, and Burgess himself concedes that much of the everyday detail of *1984* was already present in postwar Britain (33). Burgess nevertheless wishes to present an "alternative picture" to the Superstate dystopia created by Orwell, a response which differs most significantly in the extremely diminished role of the State in exercising power:

> We have the following tasks. To understand the waking origins of Orwell's bad dream – in himself and in the phase of history that helped to make him. To see where he went wrong and where he seems likely to have been right. To contrive an alternative picture – of the condition to which the seventies seem to be moving and which may well subsist in a real 1984 – or, to avoid plagiarism, 1985. (9-10)

Burgess's response is the two-part *1985*, the first half presented as a direct engagement with Orwell's text in the form of interviews, conversations and pedagogical discourse as well as a brief intersection with *A Clockwork Orange*, and the second half as the novel *1985* itself. In Burgess's dystopia[1] it is not the State which holds direct

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[1] In a chapter of *1985* entitled "Cacotopia," Burgess explains the Latin and Greek origins of the word Utopia (or eutopia), saying that: "Dystopia has been opposed to eutopia, but both terms come under the utopian heading. I prefer to call

power over the individual, but rather labor unions to whom one owes allegiance; in fact, refusal to accept union membership results in disenfranchisement. In this society of totalitarian syndicalism, a subject's identity is a function of his or her union membership. Only criminals and the insane would choose not to identify with the collective, and the concept of choice, as we often see in Burgess's work, is a defining characteristic of humanity. In trying to present an "alternative picture" to *1984*, however, Burgess only partially succeeds in distinguishing the two capitalist dystopias, one a surveillance superstate, the other a society held hostage by union excesses. A network of power is deployed in much the same way, whether it is the State or the labor unions which are in control, and like any dominant ideology, the rulers have recourse to institutions which legitimate their authority: the justice system, economic manipulation, psychiatric hospitals. Rule is about power, and despite a measure of disagreement regarding the details, *1985* is not much different from *1984*; subjects are formed within a certain historical context, under a certain dominant ideology which defines reality in its own interest, and those who resist the norms established by the collective majority find themselves outcasts, either marginalized or recuperated by the dominants in institutions. Instead of an alternative picture, Burgess has given us a supplementary one, illustrating as he does the fact that the State has no unique claim as the dominant institution: "A tyranny," Burgess says in the "Bakunin's Children" chapter of *1985*, "can be born out of any social group" (81).

A necessary background element to any modern, capitalist regime of power is continuous, global war. Ongoing war as a precondition of the contemporary world began, according to Burgess, in 1945 with the development and use of nuclear weapons, in other words, with the beginning of the Cold War (3). In an account of the "Great Nuclear War of the 1950s," Burgess manages to outline very accurately the current, fundamental role of warfare in modern society, despite his fictional starting point.[2] Large-scale nuclear war would

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Orwell's imaginary society a cacotopia – on the lines of cacophony or cacodemon. It sounds worse than dystopia" (48).

[2] In a discussion of the role of a fictional text as an historical document, capable of accumulating and transmitting information, Henri Zalamansky says: "If, in other respects, we speak of information, it is because we think that, in many cases, a book is truly an act of knowledge, and that it is false to claim that the writer cannot contribute any information of value, on an equal footing with the journalist or the historian: the writer's talent permits him to convey the atmosphere of an event or of a period, to seize hold of a reality which escapes the cold flatness of objective reporting" (125). See Henri Zalamansky, "L'étude des contenus, étape fondamentale d'une sociologie

destroy society to such an extent that the ruling elite would annihilate their own power base, thus wars could only be waged with limited, conventional weapons and small, professional armies. Neither side is capable of winning, of bringing the war to an end, for the simple reason that "the war must not end." Asked why not, the narrator responds with the aforementioned concept of precondition: "War is peace, meaning war is a way of life to the new age as peace was a way of life to the old. A way of life and an aspect of political philosophy" (4-5). In a capitalist society one also must not forget the economic argument of warfare, as a means of supporting the military-industrial complex, as Burgess points out:

> To use up the products of the industrial machine, to keep the wheels turning but the standard of living low. For the well-fed, physically contented citizen, with a wide range of goods for consumption and the money to buy them, is a bad subject for an oligarchical state. A man filled with meat turns his back on the dry bones of political doctrine. Fanatical devotion to the ruling party comes more readily from the materially deprived. Moreover, loyalty and what used to be called patriotism are best sustained when the enemy seems to be at the gates. (5)

The enemy, of course, need not be real; a perceived threat works just as well, whether Emmanuel Goldstein of *1984* or non-union labor in *1985*.[3] Indeed, as Arthur Redding asserts, war or other forms of violence (or at least the image of war and violence) is what "ensures the possibility of collective action" (45). Reality has been created for the subject, generally by the dominants with the tacit consent of the dominated (the "common sense" of a given society in a certain time and place), and can change as easily as it was created and accepted. Daniel Bell defines ideology as "the conversion of ideas into social levers," highlighting its use as a tool of political manipulation, thus assuring popular support for the ruling elite in spite of continuous changes and "adjustments" of the official version of reality (370). Burgess uses, by way of example, the wavering attitude toward Stalin during and after World War II, as staunch ally or ruthless dictator, depending on the image deemed necessary for the moment (30). Such ability to deal with contradictions, to perform "doublethink" in Orwellian terminology, is necessary to a successful integration into

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de la littérature contemporaine," in R. Escarpit, *Le Littéraire et le social* (Paris: Flammarion, 1970), pages 119-129. See also Edmond Cros, *Theory and Practice of Sociocriticism*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), page 7.

[3] For another example of total, continuous war as a precondition of modern society, as well as the creation of a non-existent enemy, see Burgess's *The Wanting Seed*, pages 226 and 233.

an imposed collectivity; in *1985*, it is the labor unions which determine reality, and which require unswerving allegiance to their precepts, despite contradiction, despite obvious disparities between lived experience and institutional doctrine.

The novel begins with Bev Jones arriving home for lunch, and attacked by a group of seven boys, who normally would be in school but for the ongoing teachers' strike. The physical attack is not too serious, as the assailants have just expended their energy gang-raping one of Bev's neighbors, a boy named Irwin, who is still naked and unconscious in the lobby of the apartment building (109-110). Such assaults have become commonplace in this society, so commonplace that no one has stopped to help the Irwin boy; even Bev justifies his lack of willingness to help on the current climate, so apathetic that even the ambulance may not come: "It didn't do, these days, to be too compassionate. You could spend all day and night being compassionate to the victims of street, hallway and apartment assault" (111). Thus the stage is set for a novel along the lines of *A Clockwork Orange*, a violent society where people live in fear of roaming youth gangs. But just in case the reader might think that the teachers' strike was simply a coincidence, the protagonist enters his apartment to discover, by telephone and via the television news, that the local hospital is burning, and will continue to burn, since the fire department and the army are also on strike. Bev's wife Ellie is a patient in the hospital at the moment, and she dies in the fire; her last words to Bev are "Don't let them get away with it," an imperative which will justify and define Bev's acts of resistance against forced syndicalism for the rest of the novel (113). Other examples follow Bev's personal account, significantly examples taken from outside the UK, a means of delocalizing what has become a pervasive phenomenon in the industrialized West: Bev's uncle George and Aunt Rosa in Australia, she confined to an iron lung following an illness in 1978, dead after the electric workers struck, or Bev's cousin Bert, writing letters from Duluth, Minnesota, USA, describing the electric workers' strike with the temperature at thirty-five degrees below zero Fahrenheit, leaving fifteen thousand dead of hypothermia (117-118). Bev, in his rage regarding the unions' abuse of power, has torn up his union card and demands his right to work without being a union member. Devlin, the union steward, is compassionate with Bev, but nevertheless explains the impossibility of leaving the union:

> The tearing of the card is nothing. It's like in the old Christian days when people got baptized. Tear up your baptismal certificate and it doesn't make you unbaptized. You're a union member, and that's it

> [. . .] You're a union member and you can't unmake it. The records say so, and the records are like the tablets of the Mosaic law. (126)

Bev finds himself in the situation of a contractual obligation, what Arthur Redding calls "the manufacture of consent" or "a brutality which conceals itself [. . .] under all sort of ideologies and pretenses to contractual obligation and to 'choice'" (4; 53). For Burgess, the removal of choice is the worst evil imaginable, the equivalent of dehumanization:

> Evil is at its most spectacular when it enjoys turning a living soul into a manipulable object. To confer death is evil enough, but torture has always been regarded as worse. The State has a considerable interest in dehumanizing. It tends to arrogate to itself all matters of moral choice, and it does not care much to see the individual making up his own mind. (57)

In Bev's case, it is not primarily the State, but the labor unions, which are guilty of dehumanization in a very literal sense; as we will see, Bev's lack of viable alternatives will result in his becoming a non-person. Bev obviously has no real choice in the matter, given the pressure of economic necessity; in order to be allowed to work, he must be a union member, and the union steward knows that Bev will come to his senses and abandon his protest after his grief has passed. Opting out of the system is not regarded as a possibility by "sensible" people.

But Bev does not give in. For at least the second time in his professional life, he makes a difficult choice based on principle. The first was when he gave up his job as a history teacher when new directives were issued, limiting course content to the history of the trade union movement (119-120), and now, with dramatic effect, Bev will sacrifice his candy factory job by reporting for work during a strike and insisting that he be allowed in, thus exposing himself to the pickets' threats and the possibility of "permanent unemployment," all the while being filmed by a crew from Thames Television (130-131). When Bev is formally dismissed from his job shortly after Christmas, he tries to draw an unemployment pension, and is refused as he has "wantonly rejected employment as laid down in the Trade Union Enactment (Compulsory Membership) in 1979" (136). As a last resort, he goes to see his Member of Parliament, who tells him he is powerless to help against enormous union power: "You're fighting history. [. . .] Strictly speaking I'm forbidden even to open my mouth in a *token* way on your behalf. Because you're outside the law. Union membership is a basic condition of franchise. You're not represented anymore" (140). Almost immediately, Bev becomes a non-person, evicted from his apartment, living on the street and

accepting the charity of the Salvation army, his daughter in a girls' home. Bev had lamented to his MP that there is no longer an opposition party, that labels like Socialist and Conservative have nothing left but "nostalgic historical meaning" (139), yet in his downfall Bev comes into contact with other out-of-work teachers, artists and students who have formed an underground network which could become the agent of revolution and reform. If the teacher's highest ideal is subversion, Bev has found, in the underworld of kumina street gangs, students who are both intelligent and motivated to learn anything "useless," in other words anything forbidden by the State schools which favor sociology and Workers' English – instead, these outcast students prefer history, Latin and Greek (144). Anti-state teachers dispense "real education" in a sort of underground university, paid for by the students' robbery, the perverse effect being that, since the State schools have been weeding out material deemed unnecessary for workers, the underground university students are actually receiving the better education, especially as regards critical thinking and cultural analysis (see page 144).

The kumina gang students, like Bev, are critical of the lack of opposition in the current climate, which, as Bev explains, at least regarding British syndicalism, needs an opponent to function properly:

> [. . .] the State is the main employer. You still have the old dichotomy of employer and employee. The workers have to regard their own political executive not as an aspect of themselves but as an entity they have to oppose. They oppose, and the opposition has to give in, because it's not true opposition. Hence all wage demands are met and inflation flourishes. (146)

The kumina boys see themselves not as genuine criminals, but rather as Robin Hood-style rebels, regarding their learning of forbidden subjects and their violent *actes gratuits* as the only things which define them as free human beings, as able to choose, set apart from the collective identity of the union "sheep" whom they refuse to follow (147). What worker's rhetoric calls "equality" is for them only intellectual levelling, a lowering of standards which simplifies the process of providing "the same cultural and educational entitlement" to everyone, with no worries of inequality or inferiority (see 147). From these boys, Bev learns of the existence of yet another opposition group, the UC or Underground Christ, headquartered in a closed section of the District Line, holding love suppers and practicing the "Christnique" of loving one's enemies (148). Bev insists, for himself as well as for his underground students, on the necessity of keeping up opposition against the dominant power, saying, "The only things

of importance are subversive. Art is subversive. Philosophy too. The State killed Socrates" (148). The same is true for the out-of-work professors and artists with whom Bev is keeping company, sleeping in a disused mattress factory and living by stealing food; they too have refused compulsory union membership and participate in the underground movement, including an underground press (155). Not all of the opposition is underground, however. A new newspaper, *The Free Briton*, is advertising for what seems to be the most menacing of all opposition groups, a private army, "outside the law," with the stated objective of maintaining minimum public services during strikes, including strikes by the regular army (156-157). Pay is exceptionally good, and only one opposition group has the financial capability to raise a private army. Bev's suspicions are confirmed as he reads the bottom of page four, after a short reminder that duty to God comes before duty to country: "I do not mean the cricket-playing gentlemanly God that the Anglicans have created. I mean the God of the prophets, from Abraham to Mohammed . . ." (158). Wealthy Arab investors, and by extension the Islamic religion, intend to take power by armed force, knowing that a large measure of popular support will be easily obtained, given people's frustration with the unions' abuse of power.

Every union in the country is represented at New Transport House, under the banner of The Trades Union Congress of The United Kingdom, hence the UK has been called Tucland (126). Bev remarks that in fact the building is rented from the Arabs, who have a considerable financial presence in the country, thanks to oil from the middle east as well as North Sea oil, formerly in British hands but since given up as payment on a loan from Arab financiers, a loan which Britain was incapable of repaying (127-128). Bev understands the level of foreign ownership in the country:

> Where would Tucland be without the Arabs? [. . .] They owned Al-Dorchester, Al-Klaridges, Al-Browns, various Al-Hiltons and Al-Idayinns, with soft drinks in the bars and no bacon for breakfast. [. . .] And, in Great Smith Street, soon would stand the symbol of their strength – the Masjik-ul-Haram or Great Mosque of London. (128)

As a result of heavy Arab investment, the presence of Islam has become much more physical as well, since immigration laws have been eased to allow easier entry for "hard-working Pakistanis and East African Muslims" (128). It is from this base of financial and physical power that the Free Briton army hopes, not unrealistically, to draw its strength and its recruits in the days and weeks ahead, counting as well on a large measure of recruits from disenchanted former union hostages like Bev, the underground networks and the

kumina gangs. As the first general strike in Britain since 1926 begins to take hold, the Head of the Pan-Islamic commission is killed by an angry mob, leaving open the possibility of "punitive" invasion, given that public services are on strike and NATO, fearing for its supply of oil, will refuse to intervene (219). With great symbolic effect, the site of the first great confrontation between union and non-union labor is the Great Mosque, still under construction. Non-union workers, Muslim, Jew, Christian and atheist, have been making sure that the mosque project continue during the strike. For a time, at least, they are protected by the police as they work, but in their turn the police union too goes on strike. To everyone's amazement, a platoon of green-uniformed Free Briton soldiers arrives to take up where the police left off, insuring the safety of the scab workers and the continuation of the mosque's construction (216-217).

Bev is taken on as a commissioned officer by Colonel Lawrence of the Free Britons, as his press attaché and official spokesman. Significantly, Bev never does take the oath of obedience to which Lawrence often refers, which would have, in the manner of a contractual obligation, put him "properly" under the regime of military discipline (226). As an educated man, the work comes easily to him, and while Bev is glad to be working, earning pay as a non-union employee, he is also skeptical about the long-term motives of the Free Briton army, given its foundation in a religious ideology. Colonel Lawrence confirms some of Bev's doubts:

> The only way out of Britain's troubles, Mr. Jones, is a return to responsibility, loyalty, religion. A return to God. And who will show us God now? The Christians? Christianity was abolished by the Second Vatican Council. The Jews? They worship a bloody tribal deity. [. . .] I had dreamt of no Islamic revolution in Britain but rather of a slow conversion, helped by an Islamic infiltration expressed in terms of Islamic wealth and moral influence [. . .] But sometimes the North African blood that is my dear dead mother's cries out for fast action . . . (220)

Whether by a slow process of infiltration or a fast-paced revolution, Islam has become the major party of opposition to counter the union-induced dystopia of *1985*, and Bev, as an educated historian, understands that replacing one ideology by another represents nothing more than yet another repetition within the cycle of history. Although the institution which holds power may from time to time change, such a shift represents no real evolution, no positive social transformation. Bev's fears are further confirmed by what he sees as he reports on the General Strike in his "Strike Diary," in his official role as press attaché for the Free Briton army. As he makes his rounds

gathering news, Bev sees conditions deteriorating, as one expects during a general strike, with trash piling up, fighting for scarce food supplies and the like. He also sees some strikers waver in their devotion to the union party line: "*Free Britons trying to control. Strangely, some of the strikers help. Hope there. Bloody ideological nonsense from top of unions must fail sometime, workers basically decent, must see sense."* (225; original italics). The Free Briton army, which had claimed to be unarmed, clearly is now, and is receiving additional supplies of weapons (224-225), and is also treating cases of desertion as mutiny, rather than as cases of someone who merely refuses to work in a paid job:

> *Five or six mosque workers wanted to pack the job in. [. . .] They wanted to re-enter the ranks of the unionized construction workers and quit the Free Britons. They were marched off under heavy guard and not seen again. [. . .] Disciplinary action necessary against the defaulters of any army, [Colonel Lawrence] said. [. . .] Mutiny totally impermissible.* (230-231; original italics)

The Free Briton army "volunteers" are in the same position as their union counterparts, unable to opt out of the institution once they have signed the agreement, once they have entered into a contractual obligation; like a union card, an engagement with the army seems to be treated like "the tablets of the Mosaic law" (126). Colonel Lawrence's objectives also become more clear as the General Strike wears on. Although he makes some vague apologies for the violence employed by the Free Briton army, justifying himself by the historical conditions of the moment, he refuses to withdraw the army even when it becomes clear that the strike could be ended by such a gesture, with union workers taking over where they had left off. The Free Briton army, after all, had ostensibly been formed only as a non-union organism which would insure the provision of minimum services during strikes. Accused of prolonging the army's intervention unnecessarily, Lawrence responds *"Once for all, no possibility of compromise, Islamic leaders will not accept unionized labour, the British union leaders must be made to see reason"* (227; original italics). Begun as a volunteer organization to insure a necessary minimum of essential services, attracting workers by offering good pay, the Free Briton army has quickly shown its true colors, that of a real army using real violence to do battle against its adversary, in this case the unions. Despite the revolutionary rhetoric on both sides, Bev is pessimistic about the outcome of this confrontation, knowing as he does that the larger network of power will not change in any fundamental way, no matter who happens to wield power for the moment. And, unlike Orwell's dystopia, the State is not involved in

this struggle for power; in fact, throughout *1985*, the State is largely a non-entity, existing only as a matter of form (228-229, for example). It doesn't really matter who wins in this power struggle, and Bev realizes that he has found himself, once again, caught in the midst of an institution that promised to be an agent of change, and instead has become, in its turn, the agent of oppression. And once again, he decides to abandon the oppressor and continue his resistance, noting that the latest acts of warfare have resolved nothing, leaving the situation as contradictory and hopeless as before. The majority of the people simply want peace, or at the very least, what Burgess calls a life which is "adequately fed and fairly dull" (67):

> *There is great confusion now, a blurring of the conflict, an indistinctness of frontier. [. . .] Many of the strikers want to go back to work. There is a strong collective desire for a nice piece of meat, a quiet bottle of beer, an evening with the TV. Union speakers on top of trucks (fewer now, there being no petrol around) are howled down. But, of course, they are also cheered. [. . .] The illness has to be resolved. How?* (231; original italics)

The "illness" to be resolved is the cycle of domination and submission, the continual struggle for power, a society based on binary opposition, where groups of people consider only short-term self-interest rather than long-term social progress. Syndicalism has not been the answer to capitalist oppression any more than the Free Briton army of "liberation" has been, and Bev, in his refusal to identify with the dominant power, finds himself once again on the margin, disenfranchised, a non-person.

At least twice during the novel, Bev is referred to institutions as a result of his ongoing protests, with the goal of reorienting his thinking along the lines of the dominant majority. The first institution which serves the interest of the dominant power is the justice system; Bev is sent before the judge for stealing a bottle of gin, though Bev's real crime is always the same, namely his refusal to admit to union membership. Now, as he stands before the judge, Bev protests that the justice system itself is incapable of functioning properly, given the overwhelming power of the unions:

> I'm a human being deprived of work because I stand by a principle. I object to being a unionized sheep. [. . .] Justice has been corrupted by syndicalism. Not only justice in the wider sense but justice as meted and administered in the courts. Send a union man to jail and you have a strike on your hands. (166)

Indeed, the judge sentences Bev based on his crime of non-conformity rather than on the petty theft, saying "Justice *in the wider sense* demands that your circumstances of life be so modified that the urge

to commit crime is quelled and eliminated," before placing Bev on what is euphemistically called "probation" (167). Probation is in fact compulsory rehabilitation at the Crawford Manor facility, hardly a neutral therapeutic setting, as the facility was founded by the Trade Union's Congress and is partly financed by the State Treasury. The goal of rehabilitation is not coercion, Bev is assured, but an opportunity for him to "reconsider his position" in order that he might choose "to be welcomed back into the comity of the nation's workers" (167). The judge's goal is not to ascertain the facts of the case, but to see that Bev's future behavior is altered according to the current social climate. The judge has institutional authority behind him, and he behaves like what Thomas Szasz calls a "benevolent despot," "whether political or psychiatric, [who] does not like to have his benevolence questioned. If it is, he resorts to the classic tactic of the oppressor: he tries to silence his critic, and, if this fails, he tries to degrade him. The psychiatrist accomplishes this by calling those who disagree with him 'hostile' or 'mentally ill' (39). Bev is escorted to Crawford Manor, along with nineteen other candidates for rehabilitation, by an armed guard who is both a law enforcement officer and an agent of the Trade Unions' Congress; almost comically, guard and prisoners must finish the trip to the Manor on foot, as the train service goes on strike in mid-journey (169-171). Crawford Manor is run by a man named Pettigrew, who is not coincidentally the permanent chairman of the TUC Presidium (173), and who gives the impression of a benevolent healer as he discusses the conflicts between the inner and outer worlds, the individual self versus a collective identity, with his attentive audience. From his sudden mood changes, however, Bev deduces that he is insane (177), and like the judge, Pettigrew has no interest in the particular details of the inmates in his charge; he cares only about the definition and control of resistant subjects. After his course of treatment, including seminars and films, Bev maintains his opposition, though he does so alone among the other inmates. He debates questions of liberty, patriotism, power, and consumption with Pettigrew, at one point physically attacking him, only to be restrained by two metalworkers who label him a "nutcake case" (189). Before being released from Crawford Manor, inmates must fulfil three conditions: accept a job, accept a new union card, and finally, sign "a formal recantation of heresy," which Pettigrew admits is to be used for TUC's own propaganda purposes (188). When Bev refuses, he is taken to the cellar and tortured (192-194), then spending several days in the constant company of Pettigrew and a male nurse, since all of the other candidates for rehabilitation have successfully completed their programs and

agreed to the conditions of release; the one-on-one with Pettigrew, despite his entreaties and threats does not affect Bev, and finally he is allowed to leave the Manor, a “flaw in the system” (195). One of Pettigrew’s final threats to Bev is the possibility of having him declared insane, meaning of course abnormal in relation to a majority-established norm, which, as Bev knows, would be easy for Pettigrew to do:

> . . . the distinction between the place of penal detention and the mental home must, of necessity, progressively narrow. Which represents, in terms of the amenities of enforced confinement, an improvement. Mental homes don’t become like prisons, I mean – it’s the other way round. You can see that this had to happen. (197).

Bev understands the likelihood that, although he is being released for the moment, he will later be incarcerated, *“pursued by his own kind”* (200; original italics), a prediction which will prove surprisingly accurate.

Bev is ultimately sentenced to a state institution, SI-Five, Purfleet Castle, for an indeterminate period, although he feels unbeaten since he is still non-unionized and free to live in “the large periphery of his brain” (239). Bev is not mad in any objective sense, of course, but instead occupies the place of a madman in his resistance to the prevailing social norms. In other words, he is mad in a political, moral and / or ethical sense, what Szasz calls a “manufactured” madness, a means for the dominant power to isolate and thus limit opposition (9). Bev tries to justify his “insanity” to the doctors, who make no pretense to therapeutic neutrality, given that they judge “normality” on the basis of current community beliefs; Bev is “insane” because he resists changing, will not accept “reality” as imposed by the dominant power:[4]

> Look, I can’t see where I’ve gone wrong. I was brought up in a particular tradition that was regarded as sane. I was brought up under a system of government that was regarded as the triumph of centuries

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[4] Shoshana Felman mentions Foucault’s work regarding the mental hospital as an institution in service of the dominant power: “The philosophical decree of exclusion anticipates the political decree of the “great internment” (*le grand renfermement*), by which, one morning in Paris, 6000 people were taken – fools, madmen, loiterers, drunks, tramps, paupers, and profaners – to be confined: that is how, in 1657, the General Hospital was created. This General Hospital, however, was not a medical institution; it was “the third force of repression” (*Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique*, page 61), a semi-judiciary structure which, working alongside the law and the police, had the power to try, to convict, and to execute – outside of court. (39). See *Writing and Madness: Literature / Philosophy / Psychoanalysis*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985).

> of instinctual sanity. I see the world changed. Am I obliged to change with it? (240)

No attempt is made to change Bev's attitude, unlike his earlier experience at Crawford Manor. Years pass in uneventful daily routine, and what little news is to be had from the outside world is of little interest, with the exception of the break-up of the Islamic union and the coming war which is implied (244). All sentences are indefinite, which generally means that the inmates die in confinement; some who are very old and feeble are released to their families (244). Bev chooses another way out. Realizing that, despite his dead wife's injunction not to let them get away with it, in fact, "they all got away with it; they always would," he commits suicide by throwing himself against the electrified perimeter fence (246). And indeed, the dominant powers have got away with it, not only in Bev's particular case, but on a much larger scale as well. The network of abusive power is still in place, functioning as before, with continual warfare as the background element which assures a relatively low standard of living and the formation of antagonistic groups, ready to adhere to the dominant doctrine of the moment. In the Epilogue to *1985*, Burgess warns about the shifting definitions of words like love, duty, God and fidelity, saying "It's here that the danger lies. Any dictatorial regime can take hold of these words, exploit the emotional response they excite, but provide its own definitions" (269). A person who refuses to accept the current, official definition of reality, who refuses, like Bev Jones, to be part of the "flock of sheep," finds himself outcast, disenfranchised, a non-person. A person who has the audacity to oppose warfare, to publicly decry the evils of war (especially war in service of the dominant capitalist regime), finds himself incarcerated, removed from society, silenced, condemned as a criminal or as a madman, perhaps "rehabilitated," perhaps not. If from Orwell we learn to fear too much power in the hands of the State, from Burgess we learn to beware of too much power in *anybody's* hands, regardless of the program of revolutionary liberation which they promise.

David Waterman
Université de La Rochelle
France

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LA PERSECUCIÓN COMO CONTRADISCURSO *AL ORDEN Y A LA PAZ TRUJILLISTAS* EN LOS *CUENTOS ESCRITOS EN EL EXILIO*, DE JUAN BOSCH

Beatriz Carolina Peña

A partir del tercer relato de los *Cuentos escritos en el exilio*[1] (1962), de Juan Bosch (1909-2001), un rosario de perseguidos va desfilando penosamente ante el lector hasta la penúltima narración

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[1] Juan Bosch publica a su regreso a la República Dominicana, después del homicidio de Rafael L. Trujillo Molina, sus *Cuentos escritos en el exilio* (1962). El volumen contiene doce cuentos cuya disposición en el libro responde a ciertos elementos comunes entre algunos de ellos. Los cinco primeros relatos, "Los amos", "En un bohío", "Luis Pie", "La Noche Buena de Encarnación Mendoza" y "El funeral" se centran en la vida rural y, casi todos, denuncian la situación del campesinado.

El último de este grupo, "El funeral", aunque se desarrolla en el campo, presenta rasgos diferentes a los cuatro anteriores. Los personajes centrales no son seres humanos, sino Joquito, un toro joven que resulta muerto, y el grupo de "vacas, novillas, bueyes, toretes y becerros" (Bosch 85) que acuden al lugar de su aniquilamiento para llorar la muerte del semejante desconocido. El cuento posee el elemento fantástico del desplazamiento de los animales desde lugares remotos para exhibir su dolor, aunque el realismo se impone al final cuando nos percatamos de que un campesino anciano está contando la historia a un grupo de niños. Como obra síntesis de este primer grupo, el cuento deplora la injusticia y la indolencia humana en contraposición a la solidaridad y al sentimiento de las reses: "Y el viejo campesino pensó con satisfacción en la ventaja de ser hombre. Porque ni él, ni sus amigos, ni nadie en fin perdía su sueño a causa de que en un camino real cayera muerto un señor desconocido" (87).

El segundo grupo de cuentos, seis de los siete restantes, está compuesto por "Rumbo al puerto de origen", "La desgracia", "El hombre que lloró", "Victoriano Segura", "La mancha indeleble" y "El indio Manuel Sicuri". Este segundo grupo se inicia con un cuento que se desarrolla fundamentalmente en el mar: "Rumbo al puerto de origen"; sigue con otro que se ubica en el campo: "La desgracia"; el siguiente, "El hombre que lloró", tiene lugar en Venezuela, principalmente, en Caracas; el otro, "Victoriano Segura", en un pueblo; "La mancha indeleble" es un cuento urbano y, el último, "El indio Manuel Sicuri" tiene lugar en el altiplano boliviano. Estos relatos se caracterizan por geografías y problemáticas más variadas que las del primer grupo y sus protagonistas no son siempre víctimas inocentes. Particularmente, "La mancha indeleble" le concede un toque de universalidad a este grupo.

del libro.[2] En efecto, ocho de las doce composiciones del conjunto narran las peripecias de protagonistas hostigados. La inocencia, la entereza humana, el ansia de libertad o el disentimiento con el poder político patentizan, en al menos cinco de los ocho relatos, la iniquidad de los inmerecidos rastreos, acorralamientos, apresamientos, torturas y/o muertes padecidos por los personajes centrales.

Estas páginas intentan desmontar el complejo entramado ideológico de la persecución en esos ocho cuentos, a través de la revisión de la identidad de perseguidos y persecutores y del análisis de las causas de los asedios. Se mostrará que, casi siempre, sobre todo cuando los organismos policiales o militares perpetran el acoso, el hostigado se convierte en víctima y que ese martirio subraya el autoritarismo, el abuso de poder y la crueldad de los atacantes. Con las excepciones de “El hombre que lloró” y “El indio Manuel Sicuri”, todos los otros relatos destinados a revisión en este estudio podrían ubicarse en territorio de la República Dominicana. Así, las persecuciones, con o sin razones válidas, configuran un universo literario nefasto y adverso, contrastante con el orden y la paz proclamadas en la realidad por el dictador dominicano Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, quien gobernó en el país de 1930 a 1961.

A partir de las características de los protagonistas y de las causas de sus padecimientos, el tema se divide en cuatro categorías: persecución del otro, persecución del fugitivo, persecución del desafecto y persecución del culpable. La primera categoría se concreta al cuento “Luis Pie”; la segunda corresponde a “La Noche Buena de Encarnación Mendoza”, “El hombre que lloró” y “El funeral”; la

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[2] En un lugar aparte se coloca “Cuento de Navidad”, el último relato del libro y también el más largo. Se divide en seis capítulos cortos y consiste en la recreación de algunos pasajes del Génesis y del Nuevo Testamento como el nacimiento, la epifanía, la evangelización, la muerte y la resurrección de Jesús. Trata también del origen de los Reyes Magos y San Nicolás. Casi pudiera hablarse de un “Evangelio según Juan Bosch”. El cuento contiene elementos fantásticos, humorísticos y otros audaces, como la idea de que “El Señor Dios era un consumado dormilón” (246), la cual, aunque cómica e irreverente, pretende crear conciencia de la responsabilidad del ser humano en obrar su propio destino.

“Cuento de Navidad” está escrito con un lenguaje muy sencillo, en un tono marcadamente didáctico y oral. Tiene como figuras centrales a Dios y, sobre todo, a partir del tercer capítulo, a unos Reyes Magos y un Santa Claus muy humanizados. Los aspectos moralizantes, la sencillez del discurso, los elementos maravillosos, la humanización de las figuras divinas, la presencia del Niño Dios y, más tarde, de un niño indio en la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos, sin juguetes en una noche de Navidad, junto al final feliz y sorpresivo, hacen a los niños los receptores ideales de este cuento.

tercera incluye “La mancha indeleble” y “Victoriano Segura” y la cuarta, “Rumbo al puerto de origen” y “El indio Manuel Sicuri”.

Persecución del otro

“Luis Pie” propone una reflexión dolorosa sobre el problema de los prejuicios, las generalizaciones que los sostienen y los extremos de violencia a que pueden conducir. En particular, el texto enfoca la actitud negativa del dominicano hacia el haitiano, pero si se obvian los accidentes relativos a las nacionalidades, el relato trasciende hacia la discriminación como fenómeno humano.

Gordon W. Allport define el prejuicio étnico como “una aversión basada en una generalización errónea e inflexible. Puede ser sentida o expresada. Puede ser dirigida hacia un grupo o hacia un individuo por ser miembro de ese grupo” (9; traducción propia). Este concepto otorga sentido al conflicto central del texto: a pesar de su inocencia, el haitiano Luis Pie resulta acusado del incendio en un cañaveral de la República Dominicana. La imputación inmerecida y arbitraria se debe a lo que su nacionalidad representa para sus captores, a los prejuicios contra los haitianos, a su problemática otredad. Sus atacantes no vacilan ni por un momento en creer que él ha originado el incendio intencionalmente. Al atraparlo, se lanzan con certeza inexorable a sacarle a golpes la confesión de su supuesto crimen. No se le considera como individuo, sino como miembro de un grupo con atributos repugnantes.

Juan Bosch se ocupa de crear una figura lastimosa, con trazas de víctima aun antes de su desgraciada captura: un personaje solo, herido, enfermo, preocupado por llegar ante sus hijos sin madre y con hambre, que lo esperan en una choza miserable para poder comer la mezquina ración del día. La herida en el pie, impedimento para salir del cañaveral con rapidez, causa de su lentitud, debilidad y estado febril, la ocasiona su trabajo en el corte de la caña. La parte vulnerada de su cuerpo le concede su apellido. Luis Pie equivale entonces a Luis Herido, Luis Malogrado, Luis Inutilizado por la labor inclemente en los cañaverales. Pero es precisamente este personaje desdichado, incapaz de causar daño alguno en sus circunstancias, quien resulta señalado. El grupo armado en persecución del incendiario no se detiene a considerar las circunstancias de este hombre lesionado y desesperado que, acosado por las llamaradas, se arrastra por el cañaveral en busca frenética de una salida. Ante su vista, la hostilidad y el rechazo caldeados por años de generalizaciones y categorizaciones entran en marcha. Ideas infundadas, engolfadas

por emociones intensas, se imponen a la razón. En las mentes de los atacantes de Luis Pie, no cabe otro como autor del fuego. Sus voces le lanzan maldiciones; sus manos y pies, golpes.

El problema dominico-haitiano tiene profundas razones históricas. La inmigración de haitianos a la República Dominicana ha sido muy numerosa desde principios del siglo XIX, ayudada por la problemática fijación de los límites entre los dos países. Estos elementos y el recuerdo de las invasiones del pasado[3] abonan el terreno para campañas de nacionalismo exacerbado, con el efecto del fomento de la hostilidad entre dominicanos y haitianos.

Pero el rechazo de República Dominicana hacia Haití se recrudece con una actitud de superioridad étnica y económica. En realidad, según James Ferguson, desde una perspectiva objetiva, Haití es más pobre, insalubre y subdesarrollado que su país vecino (82). A estos motivos, convertidos por campañas de menosprecio en razones para el desdén y no para la solidaridad, se agrega la condición étnica de los haitianos, menos mestiza que la dominicana, aprovechada para proclamar las indignidades adscritas, desde la época de la colonia, a la raza negra. Se unen también las diferencias lingüísticas y, en alguna medida, religiosas, y además que, aproximadamente, "medio millón de inmigrantes haitianos viven en . . . [República Dominicana] dedicados a hacer lo que un nativo jamás aceptaría, por lo bajo de la paga y las condiciones de esclavitud en que se desarrolla" (Torres 37). Maruja Torres se refiere al terrible trabajo del corte de la caña.

Una tendencia muy común entre los ciudadanos de países con altas cifras de inmigrantes consiste en imputar a los extranjeros los problemas sociales y, peor aún, económicos de sus naciones. Este reproche se difunde y oficializa en los medios de comunicación, donde individuos con prestigio social, político y/o económico y, en consecuencia, con gran influencia en la opinión pública, manipulan la percepción de las mayorías ignorantes de las causas verdaderas

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[3] El 1 de diciembre de 1821, se proclamó en Santo Domingo el *Estado Independiente del Haití Español*. Se trató del primer paso hacia la independencia total de la nación. No obstante, esta Primera República duró muy poco, ya que el 8 de febrero de 1822, el presidente haitiano Boyer invadió el territorio dominicano e impuso su gobierno sobre la isla durante veintidós años. Durante la dominación haitiana, Juan Pablo Duarte y un grupo de jóvenes revolucionarios crearon la sociedad secreta La Trinitaria, cuya misión era lograr la independencia de Haití. Boyer fue depuesto el 24 de marzo de 1843 y el 27 de febrero de 1844, Ramón Mella y otros patriotas proclamaron la independencia. La joven nación sufrió durante varios años episodios convulsos debido a las constantes amenazas de invasiones provenientes de Haití y a los conflictos fronterizos por la problemática fijación de límites entre las dos naciones.

de los males de su país. Generalmente, el grupo foráneo más odiado es aquel con mayor número de inmigrantes, percibido como una amenaza a la estabilidad y al bienestar de los nacionales.

En 1937, todos estos resortes ideológicos fusionados con la efervescencia de la exaltación de valores nacionalistas, recurso muy propio de las dictaduras, configuraron un enemigo terrible o, más bien, un chivo expiatorio, al que Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina se propuso aniquilar con la "Operación perejil".[4] El genocidio se ordenaba para limpiar el territorio dominicano de un grupo humano considerado inferior, cuya naturaleza se oponía al orden, a la civilización y al progreso. El cuento "Luis Pie" se publica en 1941 (García Cuevas 69), cuatro años después de la matanza de haitianos en República Dominicana. La narración parece ser la respuesta estética de Juan Bosch ante el atroz hecho histórico.

Gordon W. Allport presenta una escala creciente de acciones negativas posibles, provenientes de actitudes y creencias discriminatorias: los comentarios dañinos; la evitación de contacto con el grupo rechazado; la discriminación, es decir, la exclusión de dicho grupo de beneficios y/o privilegios potenciales; el ataque físico y, por último, la exterminación, que incluye linchamientos, masacres o programas de genocidio como el de Hitler (14-5). En la realidad tanto como en el relato, los atacantes se valen de eventos detonadores para sobrepasar al más alto grado de actitud negativa hacia el grupo menospreciado. En 1937, el robo de ganado de unas fincas dominicanas sirvió como justificación para decretar la mortandad; en el cuento, el incendio del cañaveral cumple la función de detonante de la violencia contra Luis Pie. En este tipo de circunstancias extremas, donde ni siquiera está probada la presunta culpabilidad de los miembros del grupo discriminado, los agresores no reciben el impulso auténtico de los sucesos inmediatamente anteriores al o

[4] Se llamó así la matanza de haitianos ordenada por el dictador después del 4 de octubre de 1937. Trujillo había viajado a Dajabón a principios de octubre de 1937 y había pronunciado un discurso donde criticaba duramente la presencia de haitianos en los territorios fronterizos de la República Dominicana y proclamaba la ilegitimidad de la ocupación de estas zonas. Se trataba de tierras abandonadas por los dominicanos desde la Primera República y paulatinamente ocupadas por haitianos de manera pacífica. Pocos días después, al parecer, a raíz del robo de ganado de unas fincas dominicanas, Trujillo ordenó la matanza. Se estima que unos 18,000 haitianos resultaron asesinados. El nombre de la operación se debió a que si el atacante no estaba seguro de la nacionalidad de la víctima, debía pedirle que repitiera la palabra "perejil". Si la pronunciación no correspondía con la que haría un hablante dominicano, el asesinato se efectuaba.

los ataques; el ímpetu viene eficientemente proyectado por la sostenida configuración discursiva de un enemigo amenazante.

La ironía mayor de "Luis Pie" radica en que el mismo personaje causante del daño, culpa de él a un inocente. Don Valentín Quintero, el dueño de una de las plantaciones, pasa ebrio en su vehículo y arroja, inadvertidamente, un fósforo encendido al cañaveral. Alcántara Almánzar escribe: "lo que duele es que Don Valentín sea culpable y verdugo al mismo tiempo, autor del incendio del cañaveral por un descuido insensato, y acusador de primer orden" (68). El todopoderoso don Valentín refracta la imagen del dictador: culpa a un inocente del incendio originado por él mismo y moviliza peones y soldados para atraparlo; Trujillo responsabiliza a los inmigrantes haitianos de los males nacionales, debidos en verdad a su ineficaz administración, y pronuncia la orden infame de aniquilarlos. Otro reflejo del tirano es la embriaguez de don Valentín en el momento del incidente, detalle coincidente con ciertos rumores según los cuales Trujillo habría estado ebrio cuando ordenó la masacre.

El relato logra el efecto contrario al de la realidad. Funcionarios y autoridades configuraron al haitiano como un elemento despreciable, enemigo de Dios y de la patria dominicana, merecedor de aniquilamiento. En respuesta, el cuento muestra un don Valentín (nótese la sorna del nombre) vicioso y cruel: "iba al batey a emborracharse y a pegarles a las mujeres" (55); mientras insiste en la imagen de chivo expiatorio del haitiano: "Luis Pie, gimiendo, alzaba los brazos y pedía perdón por un daño que no había hecho" (58).

Persecución del fugitivo

En "La Noche Buena de Encarnación Mendoza", "El hombre que lloró" y "El funeral", cada uno de los tres protagonistas son víctimas de su deseo de libertad. El narrador presenta a Encarnación como un hombre de principios. Y, aunque es autor de una muerte, culpa al difunto Pomares de haber provocado a Encarnación Mendoza al faltarle el respeto. La ofensa parece inocua para el lector desvinculado del código de ultrajes del campesinado. Sin embargo, dentro del universo rural configurado por la narración, el cabo Pomares propina la ofensa con plena conciencia del impacto de sus acciones. El agravio, como medio de humillación, parece fruto del abuso de autoridad: "el cabo Pomares le faltó pegándole en la cara, a él, que por no ofender no bebía y que no tenía más afán que su familia" (68).

En este cuento existe una serie de elementos fatídicos que cercan al personaje y lo van conduciendo hacia su muerte: la madre de Mundito decide mandarlo a la bodega; la ocurrencia repentina del niño de llevar a un perrito, primer delator del fugitivo; las decisiones y los movimientos equivocados del protagonista; pero, en última instancia, el asesinato de Encarnación Mendoza representa un acto de venganza de los militares, cuyo sadismo queda retratado en el sargento Rey. Alcántara Almánzar comenta que este relato "vapulea el aparato jurídico-militar" dominicano (68).

Acentúa la crueldad de la muerte de Encarnación que las acciones del relato se desarrollan en la víspera de Nochebuena, cuando el prófugo está resuelto a pasar la festividad con su esposa y sus hijos. El sargento Rey y un grupo numeroso de oficiales y peones inician una cacería sin pausa desde la mañana hasta la tarde, cuando "un tiro certero le rompió la columna vertebral" (73). La inquina de los militares contra el fugitivo demuestra que el fin no es la justicia, sino la venganza encarnizada. El cuerpo herido y sangrante resulta acribillado sin misericordia: "recibió catorce tiros más, pues los soldados iban disparándole a medida que se acercaban" (73).

La narración no acaba con la muerte del prófugo. Los sucesos posteriores recalcan la ignominia del líder del acoso, a través del placer malsano ante su presa muerta y la índole morbosa de su infamia. El sargento Rey se ensaña contra el cadáver. Sin importar la lluvia, traslada el cuerpo atado a un burro con la determinación de "llevarlo ese mismo día a Macorís y entregarle ese regalo de Pascuas al capitán" (74). En el camino, ordena desatar al difunto para lanzarlo ante la puerta de la casucha de su familia. La esposa y los hijos de Encarnación Mendoza ven horrorizados su cadáver deformado y el lector descubre, ante la sorprendida voz de Mundito, el vínculo entre el niño delator y la víctima: "-Mama, mi mama! ... ¡Ese fue el muerto que yo vide hoy en el cañaveral!" (76).

El cuento configura un universo donde todas las fuerzas se alían al poder arbitrario de los militares. Probablemente, Encarnación no puede salvarse porque, en efecto, ha matado a un hombre. La suerte no lo acompaña y en una tan irónica como trágica contingencia, su propio niño, sin haberlo reconocido, descubre al padre ante las autoridades. No obstante, si bien el acaso nefasto acorrala al personaje como para cobrarle la muerte, la acometida brutal de los militares y, sobre todo, el sadismo del sargento Rey ponen de manifiesto que tampoco la razón ni la justicia rigen en quienes le dan alcance.

La casualidad y el desconocimiento son elementos comunes entre "La Noche Buena de Encarnación Mendoza" y "El hombre que

lloró". Este relato se desarrolla en Venezuela, durante la dictadura del general Marcos Pérez Jiménez. Régulo Llamozas como militante oculto de la lucha antidictatorial tampoco puede ver a su familia. Desde su escondite caraqueño observa, de manera furtiva, a un pequeño residente de la vivienda del frente que juega con su cachorro y su bicicleta. La vista del niño alegre y dinámico le devuelve el contacto con una vitalidad cotidiana, alejada de él en su condición de prófugo.

La tragedia de Régulo Llamozas es su vida clandestina, apartada de sus seres amados; su verdugo, la dictadura militar. En el cuento, el personaje ya conoce el exilio y se ve en la necesidad de desterrarse de nuevo hacia Colombia para conservar la vida y continuar la lucha política. A lo largo del texto asoma el temor del protagonista y de sus compañeros de ser descubiertos o atrapados por la Seguridad Nacional, la policía del régimen perezjimenista.

Un final sorpresivo surge cuando, a partir de la conversación con uno de sus compañeros en el vehículo donde viaja, el personaje advierte que el niño juguetón, observado aquella tarde desde su escondite, es su hijo y que en la casa ubicada frente a ese refugio, finalmente abandonado por él, vive su esposa. El cierre circular (el cuento comienza y finaliza en el momento del llanto de Régulo) revela el desgarramiento de un hombre fuerte, valiente y comprometido con la lucha política, al darse cuenta de su incapacidad para reconocer a su propio hijo, debida al tiempo pasado lejos de su familia.

Por otra parte, las reflexiones románticas de Régulo Llamozas sobre la patria y el hombre exiliado "se podría sugerir que revelan los sentimientos de Bosch mismo quien ha conocido el exilio y el sacrificio personal ante el compromiso revolucionario" (Fernández Olmos 114). El contexto político en el que se inserta la historia de este rebelde venezolano, la dictadura militar de Marcos Pérez Jiménez (1952-1958), no es, esencialmente, diferente al que empujó a Juan Bosch al exilio. Resulta fácil identificar el desgarramiento y las intenciones del personaje, quien, al parecer, desea continuar la lucha desde el exilio, con las circunstancias, entonces reales, del escritor.

"El funeral" presenta también un protagonista en lucha por su libertad. El texto opone la figura libre y juguetona de Joquito, un toro joven, a la autoritaria y violenta de don Braulio, quien representa el poder en la narración. La voluntad del toro es permanecer libre y sus correrías constituyen modos de mantener su libertad. Su actitud no parece belicosa hasta que tropieza con los perros; entonces se

detiene y lanza “un bramido retumbante”, pero no ataca. La embestida surge después de que don Braulio “diciendo algunas palabras bastante puercas se adelantó hacia el animal” (80). Una imagen recurrente en la narración es el júbilo del toro cuando se ve trotando a campo abierto, sin cercas limitantes de sus movimientos. Obviamente, la violencia no se encuentra en su naturaleza; sólo se torna amenazante como respuesta al acorralamiento.

El patrón parece paciente; no obstante, su aguante se descubre como obra del orgullo. La rebeldía del animal se convierte en un desafío a su autoridad y atraparlo vivo, en un asunto de hombría: “—¡Ahora veremos si somos hombres o qué! —gritó don Braulio” (81). En contraste, el narrador insiste en la imagen pacífica de Joquito: “Apareció el toro, pero no con espíritu agresivo; ramoneaba tranquilamente a lo largo del camino, moviéndose con la mayor naturalidad . . . no quería luchar; sólo pedía libertad para correr a su gusto y para comer lo que le pareciera” (82). Constituye un aspecto de relieve que en el toro no surge el deseo de salir del potrero sino cuando las vacas, sus compañeras, son sacadas de allí.

Encarnación Mendoza, Régulo Llamozas y Joquito sufren padecimientos comunes: aislamiento y añoranza de sus familias. A Encarnación Mendoza lo pierde ese deseo. Ni éste ni el rebelde venezolano pueden estar con los suyos por su condición de prófugos; Joquito se convierte en tránsfuga porque no le permiten estar con las vacas. Al fugarse, los tres desafían el poder. Régulo Llamozas logra evadir a sus enemigos, pero Encarnación y Joquito acaban víctimas de muertes encarnizadas. Dispuesto a demostrar su imperio sobre el elusivo toro, don Braulio se lanza, temerariamente, hacia él con el resultado de la muerte de su caballo; finalmente, dispara. La rabia del hombre de verse estropeado por el toro, además de la refriega asumida como un reto a su hombría y a su autoridad, le impulsan a ensañarse (como antes los militares con el cuerpo de Encarnación Mendoza) con el cadáver del animal: “—Desuéllenlo ahí mismo” (83).

Persecución del desafecto

Dos cuentos cuyos protagonistas sufren persecución debido a su condición de sospechosos o desafectos al régimen o al partido son “La mancha indeleble” y “Victoriano Segura”. El primero narra el origen del estigma de un personaje que, luego de entrar a un recinto, se horroriza por la exigencia que allí le hacen de entregar la

cabeza y, acto seguido, decide huir; el segundo es la historia de un personaje perseguido por la policía y rechazado por sus vecinos.

En una entrevista concedida a Fernández Olmos, Juan Bosch afirma que escribió “La mancha indeleble” pensando en un amigo suyo, arrepentido de su militancia en el Partido Comunista (168). Sin embargo, la anécdota de este cuento (por cierto, la única del volumen narrada con la perspectiva de una primera persona protagonista) tiene similitudes con la vida política agitadísima y controversial del autor.

A pesar de que Juan Bosch sufrió presidio, se fugó de su país en 1938 y “desde el exilio, repudió y combatió militantemente la dictadura que anticipadamente había anunciado en 1929” (García Cuevas 23), no ha faltado quienes lo señalen como colaborador de la tiranía. Incluso, en su estudio de *La Mañosa*, Eugenio García Cuevas explica que algunos intelectuales dominicanos han interpretado la novela como una apología del régimen (24).

Al parecer, antes de su exilio, Juan Bosch se había visto en la necesidad de jugar con las reglas establecidas por el sistema gubernamental. Después de la salida de sus padres del país, debió afiliarse al partido de gobierno. Según consta en una carta en la que T. Piña Chevelier intercede por Bosch ante Trujillo Molina, el escritor

> . . . se afilió al Partido Dominicano, en agradecimiento a la atención que ud gastó con su mamá i demás familiares. Cuando ellos se ausentaron del país, él creyó tanto en ud. i en mi como su leal cooperador, que se quedó aquí con la idea preconcebida de servir al gobierno con la lealtad que le es inherente a hombres de su carácter” [*sic*] (García Cuevas 48).

Aunque su vida, quehacer intelectual y práctica política demuestran la desafección de Juan Bosch al gobierno de Trujillo Molina, probablemente, esa inscripción en el Partido Dominicano haya sido su “mancha indeleble”.

En enero de 1934, el régimen de Trujillo Molina apresa y encarcela a Juan Bosch bajo sospecha de participación en un complot contra el gobierno. Después de contraer el paludismo, resulta liberado de la prisión, gracias a la intervención de otro escritor, César Herrera. En enero de 1938, mientras ocupaba un cargo en el Departamento de Estadística de su país y después de que el dictador le ofreciera una posición de Diputado en el Congreso, Juan Bosch sale de la República Dominicana “con la excusa de llevar a su esposa a Puerto Rico a recibir tratamiento médico” (García Cuevas 65). El escritor huye porque rehúsa abandonar sus convicciones políticas para ponerse al servicio del régimen.

Una analogía entre las situaciones del personaje y del autor de "La mancha indeleble" emerge de la renuncia a entregar la cabeza y la consecuente huida: en el cuento, el protagonista, impregnado de terror, huye del salón lujoso cuando, al recibir la orden de quitarse la cabeza, sopesa que ese acto significaría una vida ausente de sí mismo; en la realidad, Juan Bosch abandona la oferta del dictador de convertirlo en diputado del gobierno y se fuga al exilio. La aceptación hubiera significado la renuncia a sus ideas, cuya metáfora en el relato podría equivaler a la entrega de la cabeza.

Al final de "La mancha indeleble", después de su encuentro con dos desconocidos, el protagonista expresa sus terrores: "El miedo me hace sudar frío. Y yo sé que no podré, librarme de este miedo; que lo sentiré ante cualquier desconocido. Pues en verdad ignoro si los dos hombres eran miembros o eran enemigos del Partido" (157). Lógicamente, la razón por la cual el personaje desconoce si aquéllos son integrantes o contrarios al Partido, es porque desde ambos grupos la actitud hacia él es acusatoria: los miembros lo tildan de desertor y los adversarios lo acusan de haber estado afiliado. Se trata, entonces, de una doble persecución, sin otra salida que el aislamiento.

Otro personaje aislado es el protagonista de "Victoriano Segura", a quien el acoso de las autoridades convierte en un enemigo de su vecindario. Las detenciones constantes de Victoriano y su vida misteriosa de puertas adentro construyen una imagen equivocada del personaje, quien se redime y gana el respeto de sus vecinos gracias a que salva, heroicamente, del fuego a una anciana paralítica.

Las causas de la persecución policíaca de Victoriano Segura no están claras en el texto. Sin embargo, su constitución recia, valentía, seriedad y espíritu de sacrificio hacen suponer que la lucha contra el régimen podría ser un motivo. Al final del relato, el narrador, quien sí dice ser víctima de presidio político, lo encuentra en la cárcel. Aunque la causa del encierro también queda en el misterio, el narrador se empeña en demostrar la estatura humana de Victoriano Segura.

El descubrimiento de la enfermedad de la suegra al final del cuento, levanta, en parte, el velo de misterio del personaje y explica el celo excesivo de su privacidad. La vida aislada de Victoriano se manifiesta entonces como una protección de la madre leprosa de su esposa, de quien se responsabiliza en silencio hasta la muerte de la enferma. El cuento narra la llegada misteriosa y nocturna de la familia que, aunque no se dice, probablemente ya huía de conflictos en otros lugares donde la afección se habría convertido en una presunta amenaza para la comunidad.

La lepra ha sido desde siempre una de las enfermedades más temidas en todo el mundo. El estigma ligado a este mal ha causado a los afectados ser rehuidos por familiares, amigos y por la sociedad en general. En Europa, durante la Edad Media, por ejemplo, las personas con lepra eran declaradas muertas y condenadas a la desaparición después de presenciar su propio funeral y enterramiento simbólicos. Confinados a las leproserías o, sin refugio, los enfermos no tenían más remedio que vagar y pedir para poder sobrevivir. Sin embargo, su paso por las calles no era libre y debía ser advertido por una campana tañida por los mismos contagiados.

Victoriano se convierte en el texto en un protector de los estigmatizados, porque la anciana musulmana a quien salva del incendio lleva también consigo el peso de ser diferente en una sociedad mayoritariamente católica. La gente del pueblo achaca su parálisis a un castigo divino por sus creencias religiosas distintas. En este sentido, también abona el rechazo de Victoriano de la oferta del narrador de ir a visitar a su esposa enferma: “No vaya. Su mamá perdió la nariz y tal vez ella la pierda también. Usté la conoció cuando era bonita. Si usté la ve ahora con mi consentimiento, es como si la viera yo” (149).

Los protagonistas de “La mancha indeleble” y “Victoriano Segura” transparentan el miedo de quien no puede apoyarse en los otros sin penetrar en la insegura región del estigma. Se saben diferentes y desean proteger esa individualidad aun a costa de su aislamiento y de la desconfianza flameando en los ojos ajenos. En estos cuentos, la mancha indeleble y la lepra producen efectos análogos: desasosiegan a quienes las padecen tanto como a los extraños.

Persecución del culpable

En “Rumbo al puerto de origen” y “El indio Manuel Sicuri”, los perseguidos tienen culpas verdaderas y, sin embargo, no son ajusticiados por organismos del estado. Fuerzas sobrenaturales atormentan a Juan; y el indio Manuel Sicuri castiga al ladrón y violador Jacinto Muñiz.

El protagonista de “Rumbo al puerto de origen” recibe un castigo divino aterrador por la violación y asesinato, veinte años atrás, de su hija de nueve años. Para el momento de la narración, ya había cumplido veinte años de cárcel. Pero la justicia humana no causa la contrición profunda de Juan de la Paz, sino fuerzas sobrenaturales implacables que le envían una cadena de sufrimientos atroces hasta verlo reducido y arrepentido: cae al mar; pierde su embarcación;

duramente sobrevive y se desplaza hacia un cayo; allí marcha varias horas dentro del agua impregnada de petróleo, lodo y otros elementos que le dificultan la marcha; el sol y el petróleo se encargan de quemarlo; a las quemaduras atroces siguen otras penurias como los ataques de los comejenes. Ante todos estos tormentos, desesperado y rendido, Juan de la Paz pide perdón al cielo de rodillas y hace acto de contrición.

Juan de la Paz tiene otra hija, Emilia. Precisamente, su caída al agua sucede cuando trataba de atrapar una paloma para ella, mientras pensaba en el abrazo y tal vez el beso de agradecimiento de la niña. El texto sugiere la posibilidad de que el personaje atente contra Emilia: "había cometido un crimen espantoso . . . a nadie le constaba que no fuera capaz de cometer otro" (102). La aparición providencial de una paloma en pleno mar abierto con las consecuencias terribles que su intento de atraparla trae para Juan, salvan, al parecer, a esta otra niña de los instintos malsanos del padre.

En "El indio Manuel Sicuri", el indígena aimará pobre y solitario que da albergue al bandido Jacinto Muñiz y lo esconde de sus persecutores, se convierte en su acosador una vez que éste viola a su mujer embarazada y escapa. El texto se demora en la agónica persecución del aterrado y vicioso Muñiz, mientras el hacha afilada de Sicuri se acerca implacablemente a asestar su venganza. Para Manuel Sicuri, desde la perspectiva de su propio código de justicia, la muerte a hachazos que propina al bandido es justa, porque considera que ha matado a una fiera, ladrón además de su inocencia de hombre confiado y caritativo.

La pluma proscripta de Juan Bosch se asienta en varios lugares, pero la mayoría de sus *Cuentos escritos en el exilio* pretende reflejar la realidad dominicana, sobre todo campesina, por él conocida. Una atmósfera de crueldad, peligro, inquietud y miedo es auspiciada por las fuerzas policiales en varios de los textos. La conformación de víctimas desmiente el bienestar colectivo.

Al discurso oficial de Trujillo Molina contra los haitianos, "Luis Pie" opone un personaje mártir del trabajo en los cañaverales, de la pobreza y de un grupo al que cree sus salvadores; ante las proclamas de justicia y libertad, "La Noche Buena de Encarnación Mendoza" y "El funeral" oponen el asesinato despiadado, y "El hombre que lloró" recrea el desgarramiento del hombre en el exilio. "La mancha indeleble" y "Victoriano Segura" revelan la soledad del sospechoso. En los dos últimos relatos vistos, el castigo de auténticos

antisociales, irónicamente, no proviene de las autoridades, lo que parece cancelar la validez de la justicia oficial.

Perseguidos, muchos inocentes, otros culpables, se deslizan sudorosos, enfermos, apesadumbrados, solitarios, angustiados, iracundos y/o o presas del sobresalto, a veces erguidos, otras, agazapados, por estas páginas de Juan Bosch. Habitan un universo arbitrario y feroz donde la palabra soez y el acero implacable esgrimen su dominio y hasta el aire se torna duro y frena el avance. El prejuicio, la intolerancia, la injusticia y la venganza suelen ignorar la inocencia, el ansia de libertad, la entereza de espíritu o la justicia institucional. Cuando la policía o la milicia son los acosadores, sus agresiones se hinchan para afinar los trazos de víctima de los perseguidos. El martirio ocasional, sufrimiento último del hostigado después de la agonía de una zozobra sin tregua, recrudece el autoritarismo, el abuso de poder y la ferocidad de los persecutores. Así, la atmósfera hostil de estos cuentos deviene un contrasentido literario a las promesas de orden y paz con las que el tirano Trujillo Molina, y otros dictadores latinoamericanos, han embelesado en la realidad los oídos esperanzados de sus crédulos seguidores.

Beatriz Carolina Peña
Bernard Baruch College of CUNY
Estados Unidos de América

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OVERCOMING VIOLENCE: BLUES EXPRESSION IN SAPPHIRE'S *PUSH*

Wendy A. Rountree

In the novel *Push* (1996), Sapphire creates a young blues woman, Precious, who conquers physical and emotional abuse, reclaims her voice, and tells her story by masterfully weaving her painful experiences into blues expression. Precious faces her past directly and chooses to express her experiences, verbally and in writing. She does not allow her past to dominate her present or future, nor does she allow anyone, including her negligent mother, to determine her life's worth. Furthermore, Precious finds the guidance of positive women role models, and consequently, learns self-determination.

My presumption in this essay is that Sapphire has created a character who endures blues experiences, the pain and frustration of living in an oppressive environment. To produce the blues atmosphere in her work, Sapphire returns to the African-American oral tradition by using techniques of orature in her novel. For example, Precious speaks in the African-American vernacular.[1] Sapphire believes that the oral tradition and various African-American musical forms influence her novel. In an email interview I conducted with Sapphire on April 21, 2001, she says,

> While I would categorize Precious' experiences as blues experiences, I'd classify the novel as a blues / hip hop / jazz novel because while there is acceptance, submission, and transcendence in the blues (and a lot of other things), it is in hip hop, the music of Precious' generation, that we find the open defiance, visibility of the formally invisible (ghetto youth), and the movement from the periphery of the culture to it's [sic] center, that characterizes some of Precious' life as she is being "born again." (Sapphire)

[1] To Houston Baker, Jr., vernacular is the language of the working-class or the "people designated as 'the desperate class' by James Weldon Johnson's narrator in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*" (3); Precious is a member of this social class.

Sapphire, indeed, has created a hybrid narrative—a novel infused with blues motifs (and also hip-hop)—that more accurately reveals the experiences of some African-American girls in the United States.

In addition, the novel is driven by first-person narrative. This use of the first person often appears in blues songs. In *Push*, Precious' voice, her *I*, is clearly articulated. As the novel progresses, the reader can tell that Precious gains in knowledge. For instance, her spelling improves, and she becomes more confident in her opinions and openly expresses them. By the end of the novel, Precious realistically understands her life situation, seeks to improve it, and is at peace with her own identity and place in the world.

In *Push*, Precious also experiences male domination and silencing. Precious matures in an isolated, urban space and experiences sexual trauma and abuse as a child, which forces her into silence. *Push* has graphic scenes of sex and violence, reflecting the blues tradition.[2] However, Sapphire is not interested in "love and trouble" relationships, which are from the blues tradition, but the silencing of a young girl's voice, primarily by familial sources. In a personal email interview, she says her "novel is about in many ways giving voice to a silenced person" (Sapphire).[3] Precious eventually finds comfort and validation from adults and peers alike. Consequently, Precious is able to reclaim her voice, to achieve emotional and psychological healing, and to eventually become a true young blues woman who can "sing" her experience.

Precious' abuse begins even before she is old enough to fully discover that she has a voice. Years later, in a counseling session, Mary, Precious' mother reveals that Carl, her boyfriend and Precious's father, began abusing Precious when she was three-years-old. Eventually, Precious has two children by her father. Carl's actions of sexual, physical, and verbal domination of Mary and Precious are reminiscent of sadistic master / slave scenarios.[4] For instance, Mary

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[2] Oliver notes: "[T]he power-seeking manifestations of masculinity … are denied most Negroes and are expressed instead through aggressive sexual fantasies. Sometimes these take the direct form in many blues devoted to weapons … wherein violence is the theme—though the subjects themselves are potent sexual symbols. Sometimes these are extended into fantasies of unrestricted sexual aggressive viciousness …" (255).

[3] I conducted an Email Interview with Sapphire on April 21, 2001.

[4] Interestingly, Janice Lee Liddell compares Carl to a character, Corrigedora, in the novel, *Corrigedora* written by Gayl Jones, another African-American women writer

is present the first time Carl tries to rape Precious, and she tells him to stop. However, she no longer protests after he tells her to shut up. At one point, Mary even reveals that Carl told her that he would not have sex with her unless she allowed him access to Precious, which she does. Mary's ineffectual voicing exposes Precious to years of molestation.

Over the years, the abuse becomes more extreme, with Carl slapping and roughly penetrating Precious. For instance, Precious recalls one incident when her father was raping her and saying: "[Y]ou LOVE it! Say you love it!" (111). Precious says: "I wanna say I DON'T. I wanna say I'm a chile" (111). Internally, Precious has a voice, one that rejects her father and loudly speaks against her abuse as indicated by the capitalization of the word "DON'T" in opposition to her father's stressed and ironic "LOVE." However, she does not verbally rebuke her father because she is afraid of him.

She has learned from previous instances of her father's abuse that the more she verbally protests the more violent her father becomes, so she remains silent and endures the abuse. As a result, Precious learns that voicing leads to punishment.

However, at this point Precious answers her father's abuse with physical reactions. Instead of projecting her anger onto others, Precious turns her fear, anger, and resentment onto herself. She says, "[A]fterward I go bafroom. I smear shit on my face. Feel good. Don't know why but it do…. I bite my fingernails till they look like disease, pull strips of my skin away. Get Daddy's razor out cabinet. Cut cut cut arm wrist, not trying to die, trying to plug myself back in" (111-112). Ironically, Precious wipes her face with her own excrement and cuts her own body to prove to herself that she is still alive, real, visible—'to plug [herself]back in" to life. Her father's abuse takes away part of Precious as if each sexual attack brings her closer to an emotional death, and Precious does anything that will make herself "feel good," to hold on to herself. Later in the novel, Precious regains that part of herself more resolutely after she goes to group incest survivors sessions and finally believes that "[M]ama and Daddy is not win" (131). She is able to share her experiences with others, breaks her silence, and recovers herself.

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who has used blues expression in her literary works. Liddell says: "wherein a white slave master is biological father to both a mother and her daughter. The slave master, sexually possessing a female lineage of three generations, is an obvious agent to the same pain and pathology as is Carl" (144).

Precious also learns to distrust positive emotions and feelings of pleasure because sexual pleasure has been corrupted by her father's abuse. During the rapes, Precious feels physical, not emotional satisfaction, and is ashamed. She says, "I HATE him. But my pussy be popping. He say that, 'Big Mama your pussy is popping!' I HATE myself when I feel good" (58). Her aversion to "feeling good" spreads to other areas in her life. As a result, when she begins to learn to read in Miss Rain's alternative education class, Precious does not know how to react to her joy. Precious says, "I want to cry. I want to laugh. I want to hug Miz Rain. She make me feel good. I never readed nuffin' before" (54-55). On the surface, Precious, a product of an under-funded, overpopulated urban public school system, is grateful that she is finally learning to read and write at age sixteen, but she is conflicted about Miss Rain's concern for her welfare.

Precious has had little encouragement or paternal and maternal love in her life. Mary treats Precious like a servant, making her wait on her hand and foot; Precious is responsible for all the cooking and cleaning in the home. Mary also does not support Precious when her daughter decides to attend the alternative school to continue her education. Mary tells Precious: "[F]orget school! You better git your ass on down to welfare!" (56). Mary also encourages Precious to be overweight as she is. Unconcerned with Precious's health, Mary makes Precious eat mounds of food even when she is not hungry. As a result of her mother's mistreatment, Precious feels worthless. She says, "I big, I talk, I eats, I cooks, I laugh, watch TV, do what my muver say. But I can see when the picture come back I don't exist. Don't nobody want me. Don't nobody need me" (31). Similar to her feeling emotional death when her father rapes her, Precious also feels an erasure of her being while performing the mundane activities of life like cooking and watching television under her mother's supervision. Tellingly, Precious does not openly question her mother's actions.

Mary is emotionally unstable and does not have a firm grip on reality, for instance, though Mary is aware of Carl's real wife and two children, she still refers to him as her husband. More importantly, Mary is the one who allows Carl access to Precious, so she must know that Carl is the father of Precious' children although she never acknowledges the fact. Mary is in denial, and her physical and verbal abuse of Precious hinders her daughter's emotional development and pushes her further into silence. However, Mary not only allows Carl to abuse Precious, but she uses Precious for sexual gratification too. Instead of protecting Precious from abuse, Mary adds to her daughter's abuse.

Precious' non-verbal reaction to her mother's sexual abuse is to make herself go to sleep. Precious' actions are similar to those of sexually-abused children who "leave" their bodies while they are being abused as a coping defense against the abuse. Later in the novel, when her counselor, Ms. Weiss, asks her about her first memory of her mother, Precious writes a short poem in her notebook, including lines, stating that her mother's "jaw open like evil wolf" (133). The simile that Precious uses to compare her mother's mouth to that of a carnivorous animal's mouth reveals the extent to which her mother's abuse has had on Precious. Her mother's demeaning words and abusive actions have torn into Precious' psyche and self-esteem like that of a wolf's teeth into flesh, causing pain. Precious' blues writings show that she obviously still remembers her mother's abusive behavior and that she never finds comfort and direction from her mother. However, she does find guidance and emotional support from Miss Rain, peer support from the young women in her alternative education class, later, in her "survivor" support groups, and, ultimately, in verbal and written voicing. In the email interview, Sapphire says, Precious "is able to transcend her condition because of the meeting of her inner resources with the positive resources of her outer environment—the alternative school, halfway house, etc." (Sapphire).

Precious' journey toward voicing is similar to those journeys toward literacy made by slaves in the nineteenth century.[5] During slavery, of course, it was illegal to teach a slave to read and write. However, sixteen-year-old Precious is illiterate because she attends under-funded, overpopulated, urban public schools, where discipline—not education—is often the primary goal of teachers. That Precious resents this educational handicap is clear in the scene where Precious brings her math class to order by shouting: "[S]hut up mutherfuckers I'm trying to learn something" (6). However, while Precious speaks forcibly to her classmates, she remains silent on other issues that could change her life situation. She says she cannot tell Mr. Wicher why she has difficulties learning: "I wish I could tell him about all the pages being the same but I can't" (6). Precious is ashamed to tell her teacher that she is illiterate. She has fallen through the cracks and has made it to ninth grade because of "social promotion," not because she has learned basic skills.

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[5] The most famous examples of the slave's quest for literacy in the African-American literary tradition are Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Salve, Written by Himself* and Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*.

Precious' lack of progress in school is also based on her sexual abuse as illustrated by her early school years. Precious likes school, but she says: "[K]innergarden and first grade I don't talk" (36). Precious' voice has been silenced because of the shame she feels about her abuse. By second grade, Carl's increasingly aggressive sexual attacks have further warped her self-confidence. Consequently, Precious becomes even less responsive in class; she no longer participates in classroom activities and begins urinating on herself while sitting in the classroom; as she says only to the reader: "I wet myself. Don't know why I don't get up, but I don't. I jus' sit there and pee" (37). As a result, the other children tease and ostracize Precious, and her teacher and principal dismiss her as someone who cannot learn. Eventually, Precious begins to believe in her ineptitude and no longer tries to learn how to read or write. She believes that her teachers, principals, classmates, and even her mother are correct—that she is worthless.

On the recommendation of her principal, Mrs. Lichenstein, when Precious is pregnant for the second time, she enrolls in an alternative school, where she meets Miss Rain and new classmates like Rita who become positive role models. Sapphire says in an interview with Mark Marvel that in the alternative school Precious is "allowed to have her innocence back. And these older women and fellow outcasts who are in the class embrace her. So she goes from being this object of ridicule and abuse to being like the baby" (30). When all of the young women struggle with the rudimentary aspects of learning the alphabet, Sapphire emphasizes the child-like quality of all the young women on the first day of class. Ironically, this child-like quality, which is never acknowledged in Precious' own family, is encouraged in the classroom which is a safe environment where Precious begins to build strong relationships which encourages her to rediscover her voice. For instance, one of Miss Rain's teaching techniques is writing in journals. Even though the girls do not know how to spell, Miss Rain encourages them to write in their journals, often by writing words the way they think the words are spelled. Miss Rain also encourages the girls to write about their feelings, and her technique teaches them to trust their own opinions, thoughts, and unique voices.

Later, Miss Rain also has the girls read novels such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*. Precious identifies with the sexual, physical, and verbal abuse that Celie endures. Precious also shares with Celie the effects of silencing. She says: "I love *The Color Purple*, that book give me much strength" (82-83). Sapphire sees *Push* as part of

African-American women's literary tradition. She explains in an interview with Mark Marvel why she mentions *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in her own novel: "I wanted to let this whole new generation who's [going to] read *Push* know that it was born out of *The Color Purple* and the other books I mention. I don't think I could have written *Push* if Alice Walker had not written *The Color Purple,* or it Toni Morrison had not written *The Bluest Eye*. They kicked open the door" (30).

Because Sapphire sees *Push* as a continuation of the literary tradition to which the blues novels, *The Color Purple* and *The Bluest Eye* belong, it is not surprising that Precious has the characteristics of a young blues woman. All three novels have similar narrative structures that follow "a pattern common to traditional blues lyrics: a movement from an initial emphasis on loss to a concluding suggestion of resolution of grief through motion" (Moses 623). In *The Color Purple*, Celie initially loses her innocence through rape and eventually loses her sister. Throughout the novel, Celie expresses her blues through letters written to God, and by the end of the novel, she has come to terms with her past experiences, learns to accept herself with the help of a woman blues singer, Shug Avery, and is finally, reunited with her sister.[6] Only a few weeks into the class, Precious has to leave to give birth to Abdul. While she is in the hospital, she continues to write in her journal, and Miss Rain diligently responds. Through this silent "voicing" Precious reveals her abuse and low self-esteem. By responding to Precious in writing, Miss Rain reinforces the value of literacy. She also uses the journal responses to encourage Precious to stay in the alternative school and not to take her mother's advice to go on welfare. Miss Rain loudly voices her concern for Precious through writing: "[C]OME BACK TO CLASS. WE MISS YOU," and "[Y]ou are learning to read and write, that is everything. Come back to school when you get out the hospital" (70). Through Miss Rain's communications, Precious learns that she has peer support from her classmates, and this knowledge continues to build up her confidence. Miss Rain also bolsters Precious' self-esteem when she says, "Precious you are not a dog. You are a

[6] In fact, Kester argues in "The Blues, Healing, and Cultural Representation in Contemporary African-American Women's Literature" that "the meeting between the outwardly docile, frigid Celie and the wild, sexy Avery produces one of the most heart-wrenching healing processes in contemporary African-American women's writings, and […] it shows that healing can only begin when women share the tradition of black cultural representation thematically inscribed as the blues" (120). Consequently, Celie finds emotional healing from her blues by expressing her feelings with a woman just as Precious does in her alternative school and in the survivors sessions.

wonderful young woman who is trying to make something of her life" (71). Such words never leave her mother's lips.

The classroom also provides a space for Precious to develop healthy peer relationships and to validate her experiences and concerns. For example, when her classmates learn that she has not had prenatal care for Abdul, they are very upset with her. "Miz Rain fall *out*, I mean she fall out! when she finded out I ain' been to doctor. PRENATAL! PRENATAL! The whole damn class is screamin' preeeenatal! Whas that! You gotta this, they say, and you gotta that – " (63). Mary, of course, should have been the one to tell Precious about prenatal care; however, she is not fit to guide her daughter. Precious, instead, finds mother-substitutes in Miss Rain and her classmates.

Miss Rain and her classmates also encourage her to attend Survivors of Incest Anonymous. At the initial meeting, Precious briefly speaks about her abuse. She is inspired to speak because she hears and witnesses other girls and women talking out loud about acts of incest and rape. She is surprised to watch women, young and old, of all ethnicities, speaking about their experiences; for the first time, Precious realizes that she is not alone. This knowledge gives Precious the courage to speak. She remembers incidents of abuse: "'I was rape by my father. And beat.' No one is talking except me. 'Mama push my head down in her…' I can't talk no more" (130). Although Precious can say no more at this time, it is enough. For later, when she and some of the others girls go to a café in Greenwich Village, she says she feels like she is "alive inside. A bird is my heart. Mama and Daddy is not win. I'm winning" (131). Precious is liberated by her voice. In speaking, she begins recovering her confidence, her identity, and self–determination. She marvels over, "[H]ow Mama and Daddy know me sixteen years and hate me, how a stranger meet me and love me. Must be what they already had in they pocket" (131). What is in the stranger's pocket is compassion, conscience, and character—qualities Precious' parents do not possess. However, by being in a support group, Precious is learning that she does not need her parents' love for validation and that their lack of love does not mean that her life is meaningless. As with other protagonists who fully develop emotionally and psychologically in Bildungsromane, Precious learns to seek that validation within herself.

Precious is empowered by the stories of the other women, but also by telling her own story to others. Sapphire says, "every time I let Precious' voice come through, I just felt the rawness and the

power coming from a worthy human being" (30). Storytelling is a healer and validates the storyteller's experience.[7] The concept is not new. Both the voicing in the Catholic confession and on the psychiatrist's couch are recognized vocal confrontations with problems that lead to regeneration. Liddell posits that: "[T]he 'push' of the novel is not only Precious's physical thrust to birth her father-fathered babies or her psychic discharge of the pain of her rape, but most important, Precious's 'push' is the launching of her own agency, essentially the birthing of a new and self-conscious Precious" (144).

Liddell's argument is consistent with my reading of the novel, for even when Precious learns that she is HIV positive, she focuses on planning Abdul's future and educating him.[8] Precious does not concentrate on the negative even though she says: "I'm not happy to be HIV positive. I don't understand why some kids git a good school and mother and father and some don't. But Rita say forgit the WHY ME shit and git on to what's next" (139). Precious does "git on to what's next": her desire to complete school and the welfare of her child. Sapphire says, "[T]here is something very aggressive and assertive about being a female. We're taught to be very laid back and passive, but if we're to survive, if we're to move forward, we have to have that pushing energy" (30). By the end of the novel, Precious has experienced that "pushing energy," literally in birthing her babies, and acquired it spiritually by "birthing" herself.

Eventually, Precious becomes most comfortable expressing her voice in poetry. At the end of the novel, each of the remaining girls contributes a written poem or life story to the class's book. Precious' poems begin and end the book. Because Precious finds love and support outside of her family, she is able to effectively cultivate her voice to express her past. In the untitled poem that ends the novel and ends the "class' book," Precious uses blues expression to explain her past, and to try to make sense of her life: "[C]ONCRETE JUNGLE / it's a prison days / we live in / at least me / I'm not really free / baby, Mama, HIV / where I wanna be where I wanna be? / not where I AM" (175). The poem moves from blues lament to her

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[7] In "The Blues, Healing, and Cultural Representation in Contemporary African-American Women's Literature," Kester says, "the blues is probably the most striking and characteristic literary image for healing and self-healing among women in contemporary African-American women's novels" (126). This is most certainly the case in *Push*.

[8] Precious once again finds support in an organized group for HIV positive girls 16-21 because "Ms Rain say people who help you most (*sometimes*) is ones in the same boat" (138).

decision to move on: "[P]LAY THE HAND YOU GOT / housemother say. / HOLD FAST TO DREAMS / Langston say. / GET UP OFF YOUR KNEES / Farrakhan say. / CHANGE / Alice Walker say" (176-177). By having Precious use other people's words from everyday speech, addresses, and literature to aid her in expressing her blues, Sapphire once again incorporates the African-American oral tradition into the novel. Intertextuality, therefore, creates a hybridized text, and thereby, verbally connects Precious to other African-American experiences. The reader knows that Precious holds these words dear because she incorporates them into her own blues expression. Most notably, the heartening words of famous African-Americans—Langston Hughes, Louis Farrakhan, and Alice Walker—directly speak to Precious and her experiences. Through their individual works—Hughes' poetry, Farrakhan's speeches, and Walker's novels, for example—each writer / speaker / motivator has addressed the "blues" of their people and have sought to elevate the psychological and emotional psyche of African-Americans. Precious selects words by these individuals because she is inspired by individuals who acknowledge and empathize with her pain (her blues) and offer her assistance (hope and motivation). "Additionally, Hazel Carby argues that blues singers had assertive and demanding voices" (758), indicated by the capitals in Precious' poem. By the end of the novel, she has also developed her "assertive" blues voice which is made louder and truer by the voices of others.

If, as Angela Davis believes, "naming issues that pose a threat to the physical or psychological well-being of the individual is a central function of the blues" (33), it is true, then, in *Push* that Precious has successfully found her voice within the blues tradition. Precious finds her voice and self-worth by acquiring literacy and discovering the support of adult and peer relationships. As a result, by the end of the novel, Precious is not held back by her past but has liberated herself. Because Precious is able to find a mother-substitute, Miss Rain, she finds the emotional support that encourages her to develop her voice and to consider her life as valuable. As a result, Sapphire reveals the importance of strong female ties for the proper emotional and psychological development of young African-American women; and in the process, she creates a novel that speaks to those young women who struggle to rediscover their voices and to establish their own identities by loudly singing their own blues.

Wendy A. Rountree
Salisbury University
United States of America

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VIOLENCE, TRAUMA, AND CULTURAL MEMORY IN LESLIE SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

Alexandra Ganser

The interplay of psychological as well as physical violence against Native America and trauma therapy via constructions of cultural (i.e. collective) memory, history, and ethnic identity are of prime interest in Leslie Silko's *Ceremony* (1977). In her seminal novel, she examines the roles of both collective and personal memory as well as of a multiple heritage in the de/construction of hybrid ethnic identities that in turn is a healing device for collective trauma. *Ceremony* tells the story of Tayo, a crossblood who returns from World War II to the Laguna Pueblo reservation in New Mexico and finds himself alienated from his surroundings because of a severe war trauma. In this article, I argue that the violence Tayo has suffered is not only deeply inscribed in his mind, but also affects his physical being; the protagonist is forced to grapple with the many conflicting aspects of his hybrid ethnic body in order to return from his metaphorical state of suspended animation.

* * *

In Aleida Assmann's influential study of cultural memory, *Erinnerungsräume*,[1] the body is treated as a medium of memory. Bodily experiences, according to Assmann, inscribe themselves as memories on the body itself; the body is correspondingly a trace into one's history and identity. Collective memory, too, is written directly and indelibly on the body, as Nietzsche has concluded in his *Genealogy of Morals*. According to Nietzsche, agents of socialization and institutions of control and punishment have always inscribed the body culturally, in order to construct, determine, and stabilize a "memory of morals" (quoted in *ER* 245).

[1] Quoted as "*ER*" hereafter.

An instance of this kind of bodily inscription is found in the injured soldier's body: the physical wound—the scar—represents a site of memory more enduring than any other, and functions as the body-historiography of battles and other events in war. As traumata of war ("battle shocks" or "shell shocks") are mostly characterized by a loss or repression of memory, they therefore function as a sort of "anti-memory": despite the fact that traumatic memories of war are not consciously remembered by the soldier (or indeed any victim of war), they become indelible bodily inscriptions.

Memories inscribed on the body are, like other forms of memory, crucial for any construction of identity; however, as Peter Middleton and Tim Woods have pointed out, "[m]emory's role in the maintenance of identity has … long been recognized as vulnerable to loss" (Middleton and Woods 95). In the aftermath of a traumatic experience, for example, memories in fact destroy (rather than constitute the basis for) the possibility to create identity because they are inaccessible for a conscious procession through the mind (*ER* 248):

> An experience whose excessive quality overwhelms the psychophysical capacity of a person destroys the possibility of an integral constitution of self in the aftermath. Traumata stabilize experiences which are inaccessible for the mind and settle down in the shadow of the mind as a latent presence.(*ER* 258-259)[2]

Remembrance and oblivion represent acts of trade and exchange, and are thus inseparable. Assmann notes that traumatic experiences seem to block such an exchange[3] because they prevent remembering and, consequently, forgetting, which always presupposes the processing of memories.[4] Affective layers of memory are separated from cognitive layers, and that is why verbal expressions cannot represent the wounded memory of the soldier (*ER* 260).

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[2] "Durch eine Erfahrung, deren Exzeß das psychophysische Fassungsvermögen übersteigt, wird anschließend die Möglichkeit einer integralen Selbstkonstitution zerschlagen. Das Trauma stabilisiert eine Erfahrung, die dem Bewußtsein nicht zugänglich ist und sich im Schatten dieses Bewußtseins als eine latente Präsenz festsetzt." All the translations from German into English are my own.

[3] See ER 278: "Constitutive for any memory is the distance to itself, which makes possible self-encounter, monologue, self-doubling, self-reflection, self-disguise, self-production, self-experience; a distance which does not occur after traumatic experience…" ("Das für Erinnerungen konstitutive Selbstverhältnis der Distanz, welches Selbstbegegnung, Selbstgespräch, Selbstverdoppelung, Selbstspieglung, Selbstverstellung, Selbst-inszenierung, Selbsterfahrung ermöglicht, kommt beim Trauma nicht zustande …").

[4] This is the reason many (psycho-)therapeutical methods that are primarily targeted on forgetting prove unsuccessful (ER 279).

When the conscious processing of one's individual memories has become impossible, these painful memories take on a demonic nature, i.e., they haunt the person by incontrollable recurrence (*ER* 174-175): "A past that is not pacified rises from the dead unexpectedly and haunts the present like a vampire."[5] Successful trauma therapy, therefore, centers on the reconfiguration and de-/restructuring of memory in that it attempts at rendering mnestic processes conscious and more inclusive. By means of self-reflection, auto-aggressive blockades are being mitigated. No wonder, then, that the term "story" is crucial for Assmann in relation to therapy, as the life story that one "inhabits" (*ER* 134) connects memories and experience into "a structure that determines life as a formative self-image and that gives orientation to one's actions."[6] Memories lost in or distorted by a trauma have to be (re)appropriated (i.e. gradually evaluated, selected, made accessible, and interpreted) by means of binding them into a narrative structure (*ER* 134-135). To make sense of one's life, thus, means to make sense of one's (hi)story, and to be able to tell it.

Likewise, most of these considerations apply equally for cultural traumata, i.e. traumatic experiences that affect the collective memory, such as the Holocaust, the cruelties of the slave system, or 9/11 more recently. The collective trauma also translates from generation to generation and often remains unspoken and tabooed for a long time (*ER* 175). Guilt, as long as it is being denied or repressed by the dominant politics of memory, haunts the present and has a grip on it until it is acknowledged. In contrast to individual trauma, collective trauma can only be inscribed into an abstract body, and thus does not bring along physical wounds. Furthermore, memories of cultural traumata, which are often hidden in strictly regulated institutions such as (closed) archives, can be made accessible by the changing agents of mnemopolitics.

In *Ceremony*, the protagonist returns from the Philippine battlefields to his homeland, the Laguna Pueblo reservation. The battles against Japanese soldiers, in which Tayo lost his (full-blooded) cousin Rocky, have traumatized him severely, but because the white doctors at the Veteran's Hospital in Los Angeles are unable to help

[5] ER 175: "Eine unbefriedete Vergangenheit steht unerwartet wieder auf und sucht wie ein Vampir die Gegenwart heim."

[6] ER 134-135: "Die Lebensgeschichte, die man 'bewohnt', bindet Erinnerungen und Erfahrungen in einer Struktur, die als formatives Selbstbild das Leben bestimmt und dem Handeln Orientierung gibt."

him, he is sent back to his reservation, where he finds himself just as alienated from the outside world as in the hospital. Tayo even expresses the desire to return to the vet's hospital, because uneasy "visions and memories of the past did not penetrate there" (15). Silko employs metaphors of white smoke at this point in order to describe Tayo's state of mind:

> [h]e had drifted in colors of smoke, where there was no plan, only pale, pale gray of the north wall by his bed. *Their medicine drained memory out of his thin arms* and replaced it with a twilight cloud behind his eyes. It was not possible to cry on the remote and foggy mountain. If they had not dressed him and led him to the car, he would still be there, drifting along the north wall, invisible in the gray twilight. (15; my emphasis)

The trauma of war has left Tayo estranged not only from his sense of self, but, as the story unfolds, also from his past, his family and friends, and his homeland. As Aleida Assmann puts it:

> *Ceremony* is a novel about the relation between trauma and identity. The trauma of war renders the mixed-blooded hero's problem of identity dramatically visible.[7] (290)

Thus the story of Tayo becomes a story of refiguring identity within a highly conformist community of Native Americans.[8] This deconstruction of Tayo's social status as an outsider, a role he has internalized on from his early childhood, involves an intense (and often painful) confrontation with both his Pueblo and White legacies as conflicting fragments of identity that are united within himself. Therefore, the protagonist has to face oppression from both the Laguna community and a White hegemony that seems to be in control of Native American land, culture, and history. As one might expect, this confrontation involves Tayo's active remembering of both personal and collective memories, which seems almost impossible for the traumatized protagonist—whose war experiences are inscribed on Tayo psychologically as well as physically. As soon as he tries to remember, Tayo starts to tremble, to vomit, to faint:

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[7] ER 290: "Ceremony ist ein Roman über den Zusammenhang von Trauma und Identität. Das Kriegstrauma macht das Identitätsproblem für den Helden, der ein Mischling ist, dramatisch deutlich."

[8] See 57: "Tayo was used to it by now. Since he could remember, he had known Auntie's shame for him." Another narratorial comment on the conformism of this society concerns Laura, Tayo's deceased mother, who had sexual relations with both whites and Mexicans: "[t]he things Laura had done weren't easily forgotten by the people" (65).

> He felt the shivering then; it began at the tips of his fingers and pulsed into his arms. He shivered because all the facts, all the reasons made no difference anymore; he could hear [his dead cousin] Rocky's words, and he could follow the logic of what Rocky said, but he could not feel anything except a swelling in his belly, a great swollen grief that was pushing into his throat. (8-9)

As far as Tayo knows at this point in the story, the only remedy against his seizures is "to keep busy …, to keep moving so that the sinews connected behind his eyes did not slip loose and spin his eyes to the interior of his skull where the scenes waited for him" (9). His memories of the war experience are clearly located in "the interior of his skull," but as they are completely entangled, he is unable to work with them, or to put them at least into an order: "as he tried to pull them apart, and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more" (7). Thus, Tayo is helplessly haunted by the violence of the war scenes that appear repeatedly in his dreams, which "did not wait any more for night; they came out any time" (56), e.g. by Rocky's death or by what is termed "battle fatigue" by the Army doctors (31) when they refer to his inability to kill a Japanese soldier who reminds him too much of his uncle Josiah (19).

In *Ceremony*, Tayo's trauma therapy is conceived of as a painful *journey* (e.g. in Arturo J. Aldama's essay, "Tayo's Journey Home") that also includes geographical movement, as to reappropriate collective memory necessarily involves a spiritual reappropriation of the homeland. In Assmann's words:

> From an Indian perspective, the trauma of war is not only inscribed into the body of the soldier; the nuclear defence industry with its growing power to destroy inscribes itself also into the earth. Therefore, trauma therapy can never be individual therapy alone, but is closely entangled with the macrohistory of a traumatized earth.[9]

However, the overall purpose of this ceremony is not to create a unified sense of self, a "being whole"[10] that would be merely fictitious

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[9] ER 294: "In indianischer Perspektive ist das Kriegstrauma nicht nur in die Körper von Soldaten eingeschrieben; die nukleare Rüstungsindustrie schreibt sich mit ihrem wachsenden Zerstörungspotential auch in den Erdkörper ein. Deshalb kann Traumatherapie auch niemals Individualtherapie sein, sondern steht in engstem Zusammenhang mit der Makrogeschichte einer ebenfalls traumatisierten Erde."

[10] It is noteworthy that a substantial number of analyses of *Ceremony* do not take into account the influx of postmodernism on contemporary conceptions of identity and thus center upon the issue of Tayo's "becoming whole" again. In my view, this clearly hints at the persistence of the romanticizing notion that Native America is close to an "original" state of nature and therefore beyond the reach of postmodern fragmentation (see for example the analyses of Moss or Seyersted).

anyway, since it is impossible for either the tortured land or the traumatized protagonist to undo (historical) processes of fragmentation and hybridization. What can be achieved, however, as Assmann states, is an understanding of these processes and consequently a transformation of the conception of personal and collective identity, which involves the liberation from the passivity of the victimized Indian (*ER* 296).

Accordingly, Tayo's transformation—and thus his healing—consists in his active search for a heritage of his own as well as in the dissolution of outwardly assigned roles such as the helpless victim, the nineteenth-century motif of the "tragic mixed-blood," or the traditional Indian who cannot cope with twentieth-century America and is therefore doomed to vanish (on the latter, see Sequoya 92-93). For the protagonist, the reinvention of identity is informed by rediscovering the cultural memory of the Laguna Pueblo as well as by remembering a land that can be regained symbolically by the narrative act of telling its story (Assmann, "Space, Place, Land" 63-65). In the end, Tayo finds a place from where "there was no sign the White people had ever come to this land; they had no existence then, *except as he remembered them*" (184-185; emphasis mine).

Tayo's geographical journey functions as a trajectory that leads him out of the trappings of the passive victim of multiple oppressions (both within and outside the Laguna community). His development is of a non-linear, gradual, and highly complex nature, as it involves not only Tayo's view of his own identity, but is made possible only by his de/construction of Native American history and heritage, as well as of the land itself, as "the Indian concept of transition is territorialized, taken from and bound to the life and persistence of the land" (Assmann, "Space, Place, Land" 64). The transition is thus not limited to a personal level, but is extended to the conception of ethnic identity in contemporary America.

In this context, Silko uses various helper-figures who accompany Tayo on his journey. Ku'oosh and Betonie are both medicine men, but while Ku'oosh's power is limited to the traditions of the Laguna Pueblo and therefore offers only temporary relief (39), the half-Mexican Navajo Betonie transcends the old ceremonies of his tribe by integrating aspects of the colonizers' culture, like coke bottles and phone books. In his hogan, he had

> a medicine man's paraphernalia, laid beside the painted gourd rattles and deer-hoof clackers of the ceremony. But with this old man it did not end there; under the medicine bags …, he [Tayo] saw layers of old calendars, the sequences of years confused and lost... (120)

Although the calendars would be useless with regard to traditional Pueblo conceptions of time—which are cyclical rather than linear—and are therefore not kept in chronological order,[11] Betonie's Mexican grandmother started collecting them out of a necessity to keep abreast with the times: "[i]n the old days it was simple. A medicine person could get by without all these things. But nowadays…" (121). In order to be able to confront contemporary problems of hybrid ethnic identity, Betonie's wisdom has to transcend traditions and tribal borders and cannot end where a different culture begins; as Aleida Assmann points out, he "knows that the ceremonies must keep changing as the world changes" ("Space, Place, Land" 65).

As a medicine man, Betonie traditionally functions as guard of the Navajo cultural memory, since he is one of the community's storytellers, who, together with the responsive audience, keep its vital oral tradition alive. This responsibility, however, has been a cross-cultural (or inter-tribal, as John Peacock terms it throughout his essay "Un-writing Empire by Writing Oral Tradition") task since the first contact with other peoples, and especially since Spanish and Anglo domination of the Americas has started: oppression and ethnic diversification through population changes have left their traces. The storyteller Betonie acknowledges these "new stories," which seem to be the main reason for his "keeping track of things" (121), i.e. his mania to collect "the leftover things the whites didn't want" (127). In this context, Assmann views Betonie's practice of collecting things as clearly countering the white "throwaway society" (*ER* 386).

> [C]ardboard boxes filled the big room; the sides of some boxes were broken down, sagging over with old clothing and rags spilling out…Inside the boxes without lids, the erect brown string handles of [Woolworth] shopping bags poked out …. He [Tayo] could see bundles of newspapers, their edges curled stiff and brown, barricading piles of telephone books… Light from the door worked paths through the thick bluish green glass of the Coke bottles… (119-120)

Betonie's mnemopolitic agency focuses on the subversion of traditional media of memory: he is an agent of waste, as for him, all the things that are thrown away are alive as long as their stories are remembered (121). Consequently, he exhumes and reactivates Tayo's narrative reservoirs, as Karsten Düsdieker mentions (249). Tayo is taught to remember everything he has seen: the stories of

[11] With regard to the calendars, Betonie's disrespect for chronological time can be viewed as a subversion of the supremacy of white models of linear time.

the war as well as those he chooses to inherit, e.g. the stories his uncle (and surrogate father) Josiah told him—but also the stories of the land and of the Laguna Pueblo that are produced by a White hegemonic discourse. As Gabriel Motzkin states,

> … the memory of the constituted other [in this case, of the white world] is necessary for the definition of self, but this memory itself is so traumatic that it can only be cured through the therapeutic mediation of the transformed other. (271)

Remembering (and *selectively* telling) both the stories of oneself and of the Other, therefore, constitutes a vital part of both the active acquisition of a heritage and the creation of a new legacy.

In this respect, Ku'oosh is much more traditional and conservative; he fails to transform his rituals in order to meet the demands of contemporary ethnic identity-construction, and eventually "has only dead ceremonies, pale ceremonies" (Copeland 160). Therefore, he is not very helpful beyond his analysis of the world Tayo lives in, which he terms "fragile": "filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs …" (35). Although Ku'oosh "begins the process of unwinding Tayo's memory from the depths of his being" (Copeland 160) and also heightens the protagonist's awareness for his communal responsibility to tell "the story behind each word … so there could be no mistake in the meaning of what had been said" (35-36), he is unable to offer any prospects for how to live in this world. Ku'oosh has to admit that "[t]here are some things we can't cure like we used to …, not since the white people came" (38). On the other hand, as Suzanne M. Austgen has put it:

> Betonie … integrates the current realities of Indian life into traditional ritual [and] demonstrates ritual's potential for reflexivity. Betonie's new ceremonies not only reflect changes in the Pueblo culture, but are a means for endorsing these changes. (Austgen 5)

Betonie is one of the characters in *Ceremony* who is privileged in the negotiation of traditions—of memories and of heritages. Throughout the novel, the crossblood is not a tragic, but a powerful, creative character. Not only in Native American literature are crossbloods often presented as privileged in the negotiation of heritages. Due to their problematic ethnic, cultural, and social status of in-betweenness, they are often depicted in their function as a bridge (a spatial metaphor Homi Bhabha coined) between different cultural contexts throughout so-called "ethnic" texts. As the "divided culture hero" Kenneth Lincoln speaks of (236), Tayo, as a polycultural protagonist

> … represents a mediating principle between contesting social formations – as it does in the notion of the "mixed-blood" as "bridge" – the Native American protagonist reprises the historic role of the bicultural translator. (Sequoya 91)

Neither fully integrated into the Laguna Pueblo community and far from being accepted by White hegemony, Tayo's painful task is to create a sense of self that transcends internalized stereotypes of the "tragic half-breed": he has to subvert these ascriptions in order to generate both self-respect and social agency. This de/constructive process eventually helps him acknowledge the positive qualities of being in-between, such as the possibility to bridge gaps between Native American, Chicano/a, and White cultures (i.e. to function as a cultural translator), or a basic openness to constructions of new identities, which Michael Fischer terms "the creative sense of being of mixed heritage" (224).

In *Ceremony*, Silko uses various characters of mixed ancestry and emphasizes their outstanding qualities as agents of cultural, social, and historical transition. In all of her fiction, Rachel Stein notes,

> [i]t is often people at the margins of tribal/dominant culture–people of mixed descent, … those who bear the conflict between cultures in their own persons and who must inevitably negotiate the entanglement of competing cultures–who are driven to create new stories that reframe the relations of native culture and dominant white culture ... (Stein 122)

Tayo and Betonie, due to their being crossbloods, are placed at a certain distance from their respective communities, a fact that enables them to develop a more inclusive worldview which counteracts dichotomization—just as they themselves cannot be placed into dichotomous categories of ethnicity and of cultural belonging.

Even Josiah's speckled cattle[12] are half-breeds, "full of meat like domestic Anglo cattle but wild and rangy like Indian stock" (Flores 117), and unlike the "weak, soft Herefords" (Silko 74) the white ranchers breed (Silko 186), his are intelligent survivors, "designed by their genes to survive the changing conditions of their environment" (Copeland 166). The speckled cattle have never been separated from the land and are so "wild" that they could not be kept in barns or corrals. It exemplifies the crossblood's subversion of a dichotomized

[12] Ronnow notes yet another function of the wild cattle: "[t]o breed wild cattle … had always been Josiah's desire. Tayo … learns that to desire as Josiah desired is enough to reinstate Josiah into his on-going story [and] becom[es] more comfortable in the presence of the dead" (80).

white world: in that it even crosses fences (79), Josiah's cattle undermine the White concept of property; and, as Tayo notes, their whole design ridicules scientific breeding: "he thought of the diagram of the ideal beef cow which had been in the back of one of the [White science] books, and these cattle were everything that the ideal cow was not" (75).

White science loses its claim to universality, for the books Tayo and Josiah read do not consider "drought or winter blizzards or dry thistles, which the cattle had to live with" (75). Silko contrasts the two kinds of cattle as she contrasts Betonie and Ku'oosh. In the same manner, Tayo is everything the ideal Indian is not: he represents the double Other, who is discriminated against by both Whites and Natives. Still, he is the one to survive (the war as well as the crisis thereafter) because he can cope with many worlds—something which his cousin Rocky, who always wanted to be as white as possible, does not. Like many of his peers on the reservation, Rocky struggled for full integration into the White system and thus tried to deny the legacies of the Pueblo:

> [Rocky] was an A-student and all-state in football and track. He had to win; he said he was always going to win. …Rocky understood what he had to do to win in the white outside world. …Tayo saw how Rocky deliberately avoided the old-time ways. (51)

Rocky tries to forget where he comes from by "whitewashing" himself; his incentive to fight for "the white people's war" (36) is part of this process, as in its time of need, the army promises that "[t]hey were America the Beautiful too, this was the land of the free just like the teachers said in school" (42).

While Rocky dies in the Philippines, many of his Indian comrades survive, but have to realize that without the uniform, they are again as "un(wanted)-American(s)" as they were before the war. Their disappointment and their hatred for the White world turn against Tayo because he is part White; Emo, "who prides himself on being a full-breed" (Assmann, "Space, Place, Land" 65), insults him: "You drink like an Indian, and you're crazy like one too—but you aren't shit, white trash. You love Japs the way your mother loved to screw white men" (63).

Emo measures Tayo against internalized stereotypes that are designed by Whites—the drunk and the crazy Indian. As he cannot dissociate himself from White categorizations, he constantly tries to live up to them and eventually kills Pinkie, one of his friends, in an accident while getting drunk (259-260). Thus, Emo "becomes one of the displaced and uprooted war-veterans who … succumb to fits of

alcohol and aggression" (Assmann, "Space, Place, Land" 65).

All of the surviving veterans are haunted by what they have seen: by "what the white people had made from the stolen land" (169), but also by those who died in the war. Temporal borders between the world of the dead and that of the living have become pervious; but in contrast to his comrades, Tayo does not try to silence the ghosts of the land and of the war by drinking himself to death.[13] As a crossblood, he is familiar with the transgression of borders, and thus is able to confront the dead in the course of his trauma therapy. At the end of the novel, Naomi Rand says, he "chooses a 'voluntary' Indian identity" which "gives him a way of coming to terms with his own dead" (Rand 18).

The transgression of all sorts of borders seems to be of foremost importance throughout the novel. Even borders between (what seems to be) reality and imagination are challenged, as can be seen when Tayo takes a Japanese soldier for his uncle Josiah and thus is unable to kill him. What White medicine declares a hallucination, or "war fatigue," becomes part of a historical reality as soon as Betonie reveals to Tayo that "[i]t isn't surprising that you saw [Josiah] with [the Japanese]. You saw who they were. Thirty thousand years ago they were not strangers" (124). The protagonist's "hallucination" clearly shows that his outside (or, "double Other") status as a half-breed enables him to unmask constructions of both temporal and geographical borders, and consequently to embrace a worldview that is inclusive rather than based on dichotomous constructions of categories of identity, such as ethnicity. As Jennifer Brice points out, "it is precisely the blurring of self and other that distinguishes him from the destroyers" (Brice 132). The construction of the Japanese as enemy is therefore clearly a product of White arbitrariness and cannot be sustained by Tayo.

The arbitrary construction of evil is also shown in the creation myth that is retold in the novel, in which White people are created in an Indian witchery contest between all the tribes of the world ("[s]ome had slanty eyes/ others had black skin," 133). One of the witches, whose tribe and gender remain unknown (134), creates the White people as inimical to the world, and so reveals that evil is a construction. Betonie helps Tayo to understand that witchcraft

13 See 169: [e]very day they had to look at the land, from horizon to horizon, and every day the loss was with them; it was the dead unburied, and the mourning of the lost going on forever. So they tried to sink the loss in booze, and silence their grief with war stories about their courage, defending the land they had already lost.

> … want[s] us to believe all evil resides with white people. Then we will look no further to see what is really happening. They want us to separate ourselves from white people, to be ignorant and helpless as we watch our own destruction. But white people are only tools that the witchery manipulates; and I tell you, we can deal with white people, with their machines and their beliefs. (132)

Here, the witchery functions as a metaphor for hatred and violent destruction as well as for borders that exclude and split up the world, so that boundaries prevent transitions. In the course of the novel, Tayo has to re/learn that "there were no boundaries": temporal, spatial, spiritual, or ethnic (145). He has to remember and accommodate the creation stories, which are part of the cultural memory of his tribe, in order to re-member the world. Of course, collective stories and myths are always changing; they are not a given, and therefore must be actively accessed (or, inherited) by Tayo, who then also bridges the gap across cultures, and, like Betonie, negotiates different heritages. As Melody Graulich notes, the protagonist claims his identity by the stories he accepts as his own (Graulich 5).

In *Ceremony*, the crossblood—as a direct embodiment of transition and border-crossing—is privileged in the constant accommodation to and of a (postmodern) world that is complex, fragile, and always changing in its design. As Aleida Assmann puts it,

> [t]hose who have crossed borderlines are ambivalent persons, developing a sense for complexity, dismissing rigid black-and-white patterns and clear-cut polarizations of values. ("Space, Place, Land" 65)

Yet she also contends that "transition is an exposed, particularly fragile and risky state" (Assmann, "Space, Place, Land" 65). Therefore Tayo, whose collective responsibility it is to understand transitions and negotiate cultural heritages in order to de/construct (and thus accommodate) collective identities of the Laguna Pueblo, needs experienced helpers, like Betonie or many of the female figures in the book.

The stories Tayo is told re/shape his sense of self, and in turn, the stories he himself constructs and, at the end of the book, tells the Laguna elders carry the potential to re/write tribal history, as they subvert the manifold dichotomizations that penetrate Western worldviews. As Toni Flores has observed:

> [Tayo] comes to terms with that part of his past which is implicated in the actions of the victimizer—American, violent, male—and with that part which is implicated in the role of the victim—Indian, suffering, female. Resolved to accept neither of these roles, rejecting the necessity of dichotomizing them, he tells the story in a new way, making good rather than evil and active creation rather than passive suffering the salient principles. (Flores 120)

* * *

From a cross-temporal perspective, one always lives with stories of the past in the present, and is responsible for the continuous rehabitation of narrative space. To create and/or continue a counter-discourse that constructs “the Indian” as the surviving, not as the *Vanishing American* also means to do justice to the many Pueblo ancestors who were engaged in resisting both Spanish and Anglo usurpation, and to render their lives meaningful: that the tribe lives on and remembers its heritages and traditions is—at least partly—their merit. The remembrance and re/creation of constructive (rather than destructive) stories continue the history of resistance and active opposition to White stories of war and oppression.

Leslie Silko employs spectropolitical agency in her novel in order to reconcile the protagonist with his many selves and his heterogeneous surroundings. The reconciliation, however, does not include the violent, destructive elements in any of these cultures, which are presented as the main source for conflicts between ethnicities in the novel.

As a crossblood, Tayo must learn to work with the multiple nature of his ancestry. From his status of in-betweenness, he is bound to confront both oppressor and oppressed, both the white hegemonic system and non-WASPS—especially America’s most paradoxical Other, its indigenous peoples. In a continuous re-negotiation between these conflicting worlds, Tayo, due to his multiple heritages, is a privileged agent, whose ultimate achievement is the hybridization of both the Pueblo and Anglo collective memories: from the Navajo/Mexican Betonie, he learns that Native America needs to acknowledge the impact of the colonizers’ culture/s and to integrate as well as de/construct their hi/stories. The Anglo part, in turn, will have to live with Other stories, stories that fragment and counter its Grand Narratives, and eventually debase any claims to universality or objectivity.

Hybridization is everywhere in *Ceremony*, from its formal properties and multivocal narration to the many fragmented and/or traumatized personalities that either withdraw to stories of loss, despair, hatred, and violence, and thus are destined to die, or embrace their fragmentation and work with rather than against this phenomenon in that they create new and livable stories. These figures in Silko’s book do not counter cultural trauma with violence; in contrast, they reject violent acts in order to break the traumatic spell. The new *Vanishing*

Americans are those who ignore that the world is always in transition and refuse to acknowledge a hybrid cultural heritage that, as Silko makes clear in *Ceremony*, is even capable of healing both mental and physical war wounds.

Alexandra Ganser
University of Vienna
Austria

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CUENTOS / *FICTION*

AGGRESSION IN KOSOVO

Ann Daghistany

April 7, I999...

NATO Relief Worker Craig Davis, at the Brazda refugee camp in Macedonia, tried not to lose his balance as he passed out plastic bottles of water to the Kosovar Albanians. They were dehydrated after their struggle over the mountains. Their raised hands waved wildly as he shifted his weight to grab more bottles from the workers behind him in the truck. The desperation of the workers, combined with his own lack of sleep and the tension he had felt since the conflict began, drove up his racing adrenalin. In his peripheral vision he saw, lying on the edge of the human mass of refugees, a shrouded form. For some reason, he felt impelled to find out if this was a corpse or a person dying of thirst. He turned abruptly to the men behind him and shouted, "breaktime," then jumped down the backside of the truck and sprinted over to the body. It was a woman. In her arms, she held an infant, clutched to her naked breast. She murmured as he broke the seal on the bottle and lifted her head to drink. In order to stabilize her posture and to prevent the infant from falling, he hoisted himself beneath her and held them both in his arms. He balanced her head on his chest and she began to drink. Craig noticed that the woman was young, her long, dark hair tied up beneath a kerchief. Her aquiline nose and delicate cheekbones accentuated her beautiful eyes that turned to him wildly. When he saw her expression, he wondered if her mind had snapped.

Just then, an interpreter arrived. Another woman spoke softly to the two men. She had come from the same group of refugees as the young mother and child.

"Her name is Amina Haridinaj, and I thank you for her," spoke the older woman through the interpreter. As Craig was about to ask her where Amina came from, the interpreter gestured towards the border a few hundred yards away. Behind the barbed wire, a

Macedonian guard walked his dog. On the other side of the wire, the Kosovo side, a young man holding an infant raised his hands in supplication. A thin young woman with wavy black hair cried out to the young man. The hill behind her wore the early spring color of lime green.

"She says it's her cousin," the interpreter said to Craig. "She is promising that, if the guard will let him through with the sick baby, she will sign any papers necessary to guarantee their financial future." Craig still held Amina and her thirsty baby in his arms. Amina began to moan, and he offered her another bottle of water. He held it to her lips as if she were his own baby. At the same time, he shifted her bundled infant into the crook of his other arm. He looked up to see a Macedonian guard staring at her tender breasts. He quickly covered her chest with the open side of his jacket. He recalled that about twenty ethnic Albanian women had been reported killed, on the other side inside Kosovo, during a mass rape which had occurred after they had been forced to walk back from the border to their burned out villages. The Serbs had forced them into their training camp where they had raped and killed them. Craig fleetingly remembered that in Rwanda very young girls whose anatomy was not mature enough for penetration, were slit with blades to accommodate the soldiers' sexual organs, and then raped repeatedly until they died.

Craig looked down again at Amina, whose wild eyes seemed to calm, as if she sensed that his arms would help and not harm her. He thought that she could read his expression of compassion. His articulate eyes registered sensitivity to her pain and distress. Amina put up her hand and touched his cheek, and shifted her gaze to the top and then to the sides of his head. What she saw, in her delirium, was the face of her beloved husband. He had been shot in the back of the head by the Serb police, and left to die by the side of the road. She had been beaten about the neck and shoulders when she had stooped to comfort him. Now she saw his loving eyes fixed upon her, as they had been, the night before they had been forced from their home. He told her that, whatever happened, he was happier with her than he had ever imagined himself.

"Allah has blessed me with my girls," he had spoken tenderly. "My life is complete and I ask only for the safety of our family. If we can be together, that is all we will ever need." He had kissed her, and embraced their two young daughters.

Amina relived the moment; she was dreaming still. When she looked directly at Craig again and he peered deeply into her nut-brown eyes, he thought he could see into her soul, into the lake of

her spiritual beauty. Waves of suffering and fear flowed across it, but these could not diminish its depth.

This woman, accompanied now only by her baby daughter and an older woman from her own village, was an Ethnic Albanian. She represented one of half a million Kosovar Albanians forced to flee from her province by the orders of Milosevic. The NATO bombs had not deflected him from his purpose of "ethnic cleansing." Indeed, the delay during which peace offers were being negotiated, had ironically served his purpose. Milosevic had armed the Serbs and had instructed the military and the police to go from house to house. They would order the Ethnic Albanians to put their keys, money and jewelry on the kitchen table and to evacuate their house within thirty minutes. The people were then forced to walk through the cold, rainy early spring night, up over the mountains.

On the first night of the displacement, three children died and two women had given birth. Amina had seen a woman in labor, hunched by the side of the trail on the bare rocks, a woman who screamed in pain and who cried protests to those who tried to stop and to administer to her needs.

"No," she cried repeatedly, "I cannot have the baby here on the mountain. We will both die, and everyone else will die too." Amina had clutched the hands of her crying infant and her terrified seven year old daughter tightly. She had wondered if they would survive. What kind of world will the new baby see, born this cold night into the mountain rocks? What kind of world will her own daughters meet, if they lived through these bad times?

Now, Amina closed her eyes and rested her head on the chest of the American Relief Worker. She could not tell him that already, in addition to her husband, she had lost her seven year old daughter. She did not know if the girl was already dead, like her father. The little girl had been torn from her side, the night before, when the Macedonian soldiers had suddenly descended on the other camp and forced them all into buses. The Albanians had been rushed so brutally that many had been separated. Amina had lost her little girl. It had happened so suddenly. She had been asleep with her little ones beside her, when a soldier had quickly grabbed her arm and had yanked her to her feet. She had managed to clutch the wailing baby, but the girl had been pulled in another direction by another soldier. She had screamed as she felt herself being dragged through the muck, mud and human feces, to the buses. Other people were screaming as their children were being torn from them. Surely, I will see her again... the soldiers must have put her on another bus.

Amina felt her blood begin to freeze, and layers of ice formed in her brain. Hell is not full of fire. Hell is full of ice, full of freezing pain, not knowing what is happening to you, avalanches falling between you and your own tiny daughter. Amina had been shoved into a seat and crammed against a bus window. She had instinctively sheltered her wimpering infant beneath her cape. She had burrowed her shoulders around the baby to form a cave. The bus had suddenly lurched forward and then careened out of the border valley and up into the mountain passes. All of this passed through her mind again, for the thousandth time since the early morning, when it had happened. Amina lost track of time. Her eyes opened as she felt the American Relief Worker place her gently on the ground. He motioned to the older woman, who took Amina's hands as he turned away. He removed his jacket and placed it over Amina.

"I will come back to check on you," he said, reassuringly. Craig had seen, over the top of Amina's head, a sight that had warmed his heart in the middle of this frozen hell. While the workers were distracted by the unloading of more refugee tents, portable toilets, showers and food, a Macedonian border guard, the one who had, only minutes before, initially refused to allow the man with the infant to join his cousin, had changed his mind.

. . . .

Maxhide Tasholi turned back towards the voice of the Macedonian guard. What on earth was he saying now? He had inspected her papers, had heard her promise to care for her cousin Mechide and his daughter. The border guard had seemed impatient, and had given her a strange look. His dog, a German Shepherd, had pulled at the chain that restrained him. The guard had waved her on, shaking his head, no, no. The border guard motioned her back to the gate, and her cousin followed him. Maxhide did not know that the border guard had recognized her, that he was obeying the divine voice within him that told him to stop her from leaving. By the time his brain had processed this soul recognition, he was opening the gate and calling to her. The German Shepherd pulled vigorously at his leash, eager to resume his pacing walk, but the guard walked out into the boundary area of the border, the area where only nomads could live. He stepped into the dangerous boundary of his own life, meeting the passion of suffering with his own passion, committing the meaning of his life to her, to Maxhide. It happened so quickly that

she could not grasp it. Maxhide was stunned when the border guard held out his hand to her. He grasped her slender hand tightly, intensely. Her terracotta eyes, set off by her ivory skin, widened in the grey morning light.

"I am Idriz, Idriz Berisha," he said. "I will come to your home for the necessary signatures tonight. Give me your identification." He glanced down at the papers she slipped into his left hand. Idriz had not let go of her right hand while he spoke.

"I'll return it when I come tonight. It has your address? You do live outside Skopje?"

Idriz turned and nodded to Mechide, who shifted his infant to his shoulder. She was wrapped tightly in a pink blanket that covered every part of her except her face and a few lemon tufts of hair. Maxhide just had time to look intently at Idriz. Dark hair fell down over bronze eyes and partially hid the tanned face of a handsome farmer. Strong white teeth and a firm, well formed mouth smiled at her. He waved them on, and quickly returned to the gate. Soon it was locked. The whole incident had taken less than a minute. Nonetheless, many had seen it. In a few moments, Maxhide, her cousin and the quiet baby had cleared the hill to the line of trees budding in mauve and lime.

"I can't believe he did that," Mechide said quietly, as they walked over the hillside. "You know, he could be shot for disobeying the orders to let no more Kosovars out."

"Yes, well, the orders change every few hours, it seems," Maxhide said. "Thanks be to Allah, this is the work of Allah. Our prayers are answered. You and the baby are safe. What happened to your wife?"

"She died in the mountains. She twisted her bare feet and fell into a ravine. The soldiers shot her as she lay in the crevassse. They rode in their cars behind us and forced us to keep walking. She had bloodied her feet on the jagged rocks because when the soldiers robbed us, they took her brand new shoes. One of them claimed that his wife also had small feet. Another one said his brother had the same blood type as the Ethnic Albaninan men they had rounded up earlier to use for human shields in the NATO bombing and for live blood transfusions for the Serb casualties. They took my money and her jewelry. My shoes were too big for her, and she could not walk in them although she tried. If I had not been carrying the baby, she would have been thrown out of her mother's arms as she slid down the mountain." Tears ran down his face as he recalled the terror in his wife's voice as she fell.

“I have only this child, now, to live for,” Mechide said. “Were it not for her, I would want to die.”

“Hush, Mechide. Allah has spared you. You must never forget that there is a reason for that. Our family needs your help. You know that my brothers have been conscripted, like all the others. There is no one to help my father with the farm. You know that we are in danger because of the tensions in the country, because those who favor Milosevich may start a revolution. Please help us.”

“Of course,” he sighed, “I am grateful for my life and for my child. Many have less. I know it is a miracle that the border guard let me pass. What did he say to you?”

“He said he would come tonight for the signatures that will guarantee your financial security with us.” Maxhide paused as she thought of the handsome Idriz. She could not imagine what had inspired him, what had motivated him to put himself in such danger. She pondered in her heart. Maxhide began to feel the magnetism of the man who had risked himself to save her cousin. She felt herself drawn to Idriz, and she began to look forward to seeing his handsome face again. So soon. Tonight.

That evening, when the knock came at the door of the farmhouse, Maxhide was ready. She had cooked a meal for Idriz that would also be a homecoming feast for Mechide. She had roasted lamb and potatoes, baked fresh wheat bread, and located milk for the hungry baby. Maxhide had traded eggs from their poultry for the milk from the neighbor’s cow. Her face was radiant in the excitement of the moment, she smoothed her russet blouse, her eyes blazed. Idriz stood in amazement when the door opened. His heart pounded and he stammered a greeting.

“Hello, I am Idriz, and I came for the signatures.”

“Come in, come in, you have saved two lives in our family and you are a hero to us all,” Maxhide said in a rush, and then blushed. “Please come in and eat with us. We want to get to know you. You did such a brave thing. You have friends here, and your life will be blessed.”

“It already is,” said Idriz, taking her hand. He entered the neat cottage and saw her father behind her. White curtains lined the windows and several upholstered chairs faced the television beside the blue plaid sofa. The round dining table was neatly set with china, and he could see that the lace tablecloth was intended to honor him, the desired guest.

“Good evening , sir,” said Idriz, as he reached past her to grasp the old man’s hand. So began the alliance that would shape them all. For although Idriz was Macedonian, a conscript like the brothers of Maxhide, he was not a practicing Muslim. His family had been uprooted from Belgrade in 1981, the year after Tito died, when his own brothers had taken part in the Albanian student uprisings for independence. These had produced political refugees as well as martyrs, his brothers among them. Milosevich, a Communist and then a Serbian nationalist, had whipped up anti-Albanian hatred. The Berisha family had fled to the south. Their mother died, and their father, embittered by these losses, had turned from Allah. He had not kept his very young son active in the faith. The boy had grown up in an atmosphere of emotional deprivation, even starvation, and his lonely heart had enormous, unused reservoirs of feeling. Because he had the courage to look when others turned away, his heart overflowed suddenly when he met the woman destined to unlock the gates of his passion. That woman was Maxhide. He had acted on human love as the divine intervention. Now his home was with her and he saw the world through her eyes. Idriz had learned that love of another is not linked to time, but to human will and compassion. As he stood in the cottage that housed his sweetheart, his blood raced and he felt alive. He had felt different all day, from the moment he had set eyes on her. The evening light cast a radiance about her. The group sat down in the dining room, the smiling baby rocked in Maxhide’s arms, and the new life of the family began.

Earlier that same morning of April 7, 1999, inside the tent field hospital at the Brazda camp, American television journalist Ronald Deale, his hair sticking up like straw and his face worn and haggard, spoke carefully into the microphone that he held in his right hand.

“We are here on the abandoned airstrip outside of Skopje, a city in Macedonia, at the Brazda camp,” he began. “The suffering of the refugees is horrifying. But even more than the adults, the children are in terror. They cry a great deal or they do not register any emotions whatsoever. They cannot sleep. Their nightmares wake them screaming. The adults try, but they cannot comfort them. NATO is training Albanians to counsel the children. Outside, we can hear them playing a game. It is more than a game, it is therapy. It helps them to share their emotions in a group setting, and it makes reality more acceptable. The worst thing of all is that the children cannot make any sense of what they have seen. Take the case of Gani Izbica, the ten year old boy you are about to see. Gani was shot in the arm during a raid on his house. His mother and sisters were

killed, but he escaped, because he played dead. Gani is about to come to the microphone. He is groggy from the anesthesia, used during the operation to remove the bullet." Deale looked into the eyes of the child who shook his head in bewilderment.

"Tell us what happened, Gani." Deale spoke comfortingly to the boy.

"They shot my mother and my sisters! My mother is dead!" the boy cried.

"Who shot your mother and sisters, Gani?" the journalist inquired calmly.

"It was people from the town, people that I knew! They stormed into our house after dark, after my father left, and they shot us!" The camera returned to the face of Ronald Deale, who lifted the microphone to his own mouth.

"Gani's father was told to leave, because the police were rounding up all adult males between the ages of fourteen and sixty, and no one knew where they were being taken. He left with other men from the village. If they are lucky, they are still in the mountains, in hiding. Otherwise..." Deale did not complete his sentence. He looked down at the boy with compassion. "The doctors say that Gani will have only a scar from the bullet in his arm, but his scars inside will be harder to heal. This is Ronald Deale in the Brazda refugee camp outside Kosovo." Ronald turned back to the boy when the camera lights shut off. He asked Gani if he could return to visit him. The boy nodded, and lay back weakly.

On his way out of the field hospital Deale encountered Craig Davis. Deale had already interviewed the NATO team of Rescue Workers in which Craig served, so the men recognized each other.

"How's it going, Deale?" asked Craig. The afternoon light was somber under the pearl cloud cover.

"Well, every time I think it can't get any worse, it does. The atrocities are unbelievable." Deale spoke quietly.

"Let me tell you something good, for a change. Something I just saw with my own eyes. You know the Macedonian soldiers, the border guards, are under strict orders not to let any Kosovars out, not even into the safekeeping of relatives who sign for their financial security?" Deale nodded.

"Well, I just saw one of them quickly open the gates to let a young man pass with an infant. His cousin, a woman, came up to the gates to talk with the guard. At first the guard seemed to resist her

pleas, but after she had turned away, he relented, and called her back. God knows he will have to pay for that. I know the other guards saw him."

"How did you happen to see this? Did you get a name?" Deale pulled at the snaps of his jacket.

"As it happened, I was giving water to a young Kosovar mother, a breastfeeding woman who is in such bad shape she could not stand to get the water herself. After the guards opened the gates, I went over to see what I could find out. Two other guards were shouting his name to their supervisor and I overheard it. It's Idriz Berisha." Davis reached out to help remove Deale's jacket.

"I'll make note of it. When they move against him, if I interview him on international television, the press coverage may help his case."

"Good idea, Deale. I know there are a lot of stories that the public never gets to hear. There have to be Serbs who are helping their neighbors, even if they must keep it totally hidden. Let's go talk to him now before we lose track of him." The two men walked quickly across the fields separating the field hospital from the tents that housed the refugees. The sky had darkened to slate.

April 8, 1999

Maxhide opened her eyes to a rainy morning. She had been dreaming of her lover, Idriz. Lazily she began to recall everything that had taken place the night before. The family had finished eating before it was quite dark, and Idriz suggested that she show him around the property. The cloudy skies had not lifted, and the damp smell of earth beneath the pines contained vegetation and the promise of lilacs. The leaves had just begun to bud, and the spring birds called to each other. Maxhide's senses were in a heightened state and she saw the tree branches and the leaves in perfect detail. She smelled the delicious air. It seemed to her that happiness lies in the enjoyment of nature's beauty shared with another person. As the couple walked slowly towards the fence behind the cottage, Idriz told Maxhide that he was under arrest and that he might be jailed when he reported to his superior the next afternoon. The one hope, he said, lay in the meeting he had with the American journalist and the young NATO Rescue Worker who had come to his guard station at the border before he finished his watch. They told him they wanted to interview him on television, to publicize his intervention for Mechide

and his infant daughter. They had hoped it would help deflect the might of the Macedonian military in its efforts to punish him.

Maxhide was not surprised, but she became alarmed. She looked at him in fear and concern. They were passing the tractor shed behind the cottage, in the corner of the fence beside the plowed wheat fields. Idriz pointed, and they went inside. Suddenly his arms were around her, and they began to kiss with passionate intensity. Maxhide turned over in her bed as she remembered his kisses and her response. She recalled Idriz removing his shirt and placing it on the dirt floor of the shed, and then the quick fall to the ground below him. She had silently begged forgiveness from Allah for not waiting until her bridal night, but she knew that she might never see Idriz again. He was clearly her heart's intended. She gave him her love and tenderness in that short time before darkness fell. Never would she forget the low chuckle that he made, deep in his throat, an expression of joy, as he caressed her breasts and thighs. Never would she regret their lovemaking, no matter what the price. As she looked up, she knew that Allah had brought them together. Maxhide had not heard that life quickens before death, but she would have understood lovers the world over.

Now she heard the baby crying in the makeshift crib, a bureau drawer lined with blankets. She rose quietly and tried not to wake Mechide on the living room couch as she tiptoed past him. She reached for the baby and lifted her to her chest. "Little one," she whispered, "little one, you are wet and stinky but Maxhide will change you. We will care for you, pretty girl, are you Maxhide's pretty girl?" Suddenly she wondered if she might have a little girl of her own, a little girl belonging to Idriz. If he lives, she thought, if I live, if we live. One day at a time. She took the baby into the kitchen and prepared a bottle of milk. Then she carried the feeding baby into her room. After she changed her diapers she decided to creep back into bed with the infant bundled up beside her. Soon she was lulled by the breathing of the baby, light as the April rain outside, smelling of sweet violets. She could not cheat herself of this moment of peaceful rest with the fragrant breath of the baby on her cheek, any more than she could deprive herself of her lover's arms. If this were her last day to live, at least it would begin in beauty. The love now within her was met not only by Idriz' tender lovemaking but also by his physical presence of love within the world of hatred around them. It made life worth living and dying. This man was her cup of life, filled for her by Allah, a cup that she would drain. And cherish. Maxhide and the quiet baby fell asleep.

April 9, 1999

Craig Davis sat on Amina's cot in the field hospital. He looked down at her soundless, moving lips. He saw the pallor of her fair skin, the circles around her eyes, and the fine bone structure of her face. He worried because he could see the creeping signs of death, a blue and bruised look about her temples and in the hollows of her eye sockets. The Kosovar in the next cot was staring at him when he took her hand to his lips and kissed it. Her soul, Craig thought, is trapped below a layer of ice. She opened her eyes and stared at the milky tent ceiling. He noticed that her eyes had faded to an opaque fawn color.

"Is she your relative," the man in the next cot asked. Craig looked over at him and smiled. Ah, the man spoke English. Maybe he could find out something from him about Amina. He decided to try.

"Well, I feel like she is. I saw her yesterday in the crowd. Where's her baby?" the man frowned.

"It must have died already. I think she rambled on about two dead children. She keeps saying, over and over, that she has nothing to live for, that her whole family is gone. She has spoken of her husband shot—she keeps reliving that. She also repeats the separation from her young daughter at the busses, and now I guess the baby is gone too. It too must have died."

"It looks like she will get her wish soon. Why don't they bring water? Craig went to find the medic.

"Please bring this woman an IV. She is so dehydrated; she looks near death to me. Please hurry."

"There aren't any IV tubes available at Brazda yet," answered the young man. "The convoys may bring them today or tonight. Of course, that may be too late for this woman. You are right, she may die."

"What if I tried to help her to drink water?" Craig asked. "I was able to get her to drink some yesterday."

"I'll bring some bottles and you can try." A few minutes later, Craig sat on the bed and held Amina in his arms. He opened the bottle and tried to pour some into her mouth, but she let it dribble down her chest. He looked up in dismay at the medic, who shook his head and gently mopped up the water with a towel.

"There is no point in trying to help her, as she has lost the will to live. She won't last long now."

"Do you know anything about her children? Apparently she spoke endlessly about the loss of her whole family."

"When she was brought into the field hospital, she was carrying a dying infant; it was too late."

"Was she conscious when the baby was taken from her?"

"Yes. She tried to hold onto her; we had to force her to let go. Did you wish to see her? Do you know this family?" The medic sat down suddenly on the folded cardboard cartons that covered the earth beneath the tent roof.

"No, the family is like the other Ethnic Albanian Kosovar families, with dead husbands, mothers and children," Craig added, "who die despite everything we can do." Maybe because of much that we have done, he added to himself. "I hear that the ones who got out before the borders closed, are the lucky ones. Those inside face dangers greater than death. All the while Craig was holding the inert form of Amina.

She was still breathing. Her eyes were sunken, closed, ringed with long, black eyelashes that adorned her pale cheeks with womanly beauty even now as she lay dying. Craig held her tenderly, his mind thinking that she should live, while his heart accepted that her soul would depart. A prolonged life for Amina would only extend the icy hell into which she had been thrown.

. . . .

Ronald Deale stood outside the Brazda tent city, near the border which had opened for a few hours to let in a line of refugees. Beside him stood Idriz. The cameras began to film the interview.

"Idriz Berisha, yeasterday you were seen opening the gate against orders to let pass a man and his baby. Why did you do it?" Between cloud patches, sunlight spotted the trees behind the tents and a cold wind blew intermittently.

"I did it to save the baby's life. I heard the baby's father tell his cousin across the wire that the baby had started a respiratory condition." Idriz straightened his shoulders and stared intently into the camera.

"After all," he added, "the purpose of the Rescue Mission is to save lives. The Macedonians, all of them clearly understand that. Orders to open and to close the border occur without explanation.

See for yourself. Right now they are open and the guards are letting the refugees come as we speak." He pointed to the lines behind them.

"Yes, I can see that," Deale said, speaking into the microphone himself. "But, weren't you worried about the cost of your decision? What has happened as a result?" He held the microphone under the mouth of Idriz.

"Well, I have been ordered to appear before the military court in a few hours. Later, I can tell you more."

"I think it's worth another interview," said Deale to the international viewers, "to see the result of a direct attempt to save two individual lives, in the middle of this massive rescue work. We'll keep you posted on the outcome." Idriz turned away, silent in his knowledge that more than one baby had influenced his decision. He recalled Maxhide's beautiful creamy skin, and prayed that Allah would allow them to be together once more.

Inside the headquarters of the High Commisioner for the NATO Relief Effort, a woman turned from the televsion to her subordinates. She was one of the highest ranking NATO officials. She had seen the interview, and she requested that the military commander of the Macedonian troops be brought to her. A few minutes later, she told the general of the television interview and the one to follow. She reminded him that the public relations of the Macedonian soldiers had been poor. Many of the soldiers, sympathetic to the Serbs in Kosovo, had treated the refugees with brutality. She emphasized the symbolic value of Idriz Berisha and stated that it would be in the interests of the Macedonian military to treat his case with care. Of course, she added, some disciplinary action must be taken, as he had disobeyed orders, but could not a dishonorable discharge substitute for prison in this case? The general agreed and left to issue the orders. Later that afternoon, Idriz met Ronald Deale and Craig Davis. He shook hands with Ronald and thanked the men for their intervention. His own story, he said, was one of the few with a happy closure. No one knew then that Gani's father would survive and would locate him because of the publicity provided by the media. NATO Rescue Worker Craig Davis, thankful for Idriz but picturing in his heart the face of the beautiful, fragile Amina who lay dying, extended his hand with a sad smile. It was too late for Amina and her children.

Ann Daghistany
Texas Tech University
United States of America

Poemas / ***Poems***

BILL STOBB

Nervous Systems

Invisible but dense
like a sky full of dusty textbooks
dark matter came sweeping along
after our brilliant spheres. So,
sparks remind us of love: deep quiet
interrupted by vision.

Sparks shower down
from an industrial chimney
tonight walking near the distillery.
I think of love.
Peering up into near black
I think I see the perching welder.
I picture him
every night
walking up his driveway:
he wants to despise
what he sees in the yellow kitchen light
—appliance, appliance, woman, child.
He wants to stay outside
but it's no use.
He puts his foot on the step and thinks of love.

When I think of violating myself
I go walking late at night:
there's a sweet lemon coating
on every city block. Objects
look weird in the sulfuric lights
and they are weird. Once
the only time in my life
I sensed my own size
in a deep way:
I was standing next to a pile of bananas
in a fluorescent Iowa convenience store.
My reflection
in the window behind the register
looked like a large man standing
on the sun. A thousand bananas
and me right with them.

Suicides are said to be damned
and it must be
not so much for their disdain as survivor fear.
If the spirit returns
pale and luminous, dark
lines drawn into what had once been called its skin
trembling will inhabit us.
From the reels of our lives
nothing counters
that black version blanking the self.

Graphic design on a café door:
preppy girl's coffee swirls.
Gazing across a table at a swirly-eyed boy
she conducts fluid substances and he
conducts. Their convection:
the sweet idea that worlds
launch in perhaps slightly over
-caffeinated swoons. The door
swings open. Snow
spirals in and dust.

Other greens. Reductions.

"The bulk of distances, the mounds of home."
Lyn Hejinian, "The Green"

Starting when I am young, concern for the family yard
in summer: thinning, burning
out to its reedy margin. Concern against yellow
breeds these disjointed... what. What?
Every morning it's there, the yard, for tending
and inside, at arm's length
a sense that Dad's in the garage, smoking, dissatisfied.

I put on a green apron. A green bow tie.
I serve omelets to the grieving
at the Perkins across from the hospital.
I hope to feel irrelevant.
Careful with decafs and whole wheats.
Careful to be efficient and kind
but in no way involved in a meal.

On the west side, I sell pool tables
and there I love green
lain over slate—rooms
centered by a well-lit emerald.
Step out to smoke and examine
a sunburned fringe of foothills
dying to spark in dry heat.

In the showroom I roll long bank shots
on the fastest carpet. Wait
and wait and the ball rolls and I love
that the doorbell's not ringing.

The world sort of bumps and flirts and buzzes up
to the fall of oh one.
At his nightclub my friend Ali
installs three eight-footers
on the balcony over the dance floor. Black
chrome, upgrade fabric, upgrade cushions.
We break hundreds of racks.
All the pretty shapes we make
to dispatch a black solid.
Most I love the perfect field:
green object of the game.

Noticing how much coffee people drink.
How many poured black circles hover.
Plus coffee at the hospital. Coffee at the funeral.
In the middle of dinner rush, busser slips
carrying two full cup-racks—each six-by-six
held solid by three pound frames of company green plastic.

Some things unfold in smaller time.
Yes, there's that same yard always
and drizzling birch finally
pisses over the garage. The space
we made for a kennel
planted and replanted after the dog was put down
ultimately houses an engine.
Ceded to the unsatisfactory margin.

But then there's slip, fling, hair lift time.
Busser slips carrying two full cup-racks time.
Eyes open wide, splayed-out
and the tiniest bright interval offers this thought:
it's a cartoon: cups suspended
above his sudden flailing horizontal.
But that moment has a conclusion
in which cups smash on busser's face, just
as the back of his head meets linoleum.
Then, I don't actually hear birds chirping
or see stars spinning over the damaged head.

Above the ice bin, next to the shelf of colorful tea boxes,
we hang a nice picture (from his high school year book?).
His face glares white in the flash.
He seems more surprised than usual.
A couple weeks later he's back on the floor, lightly
bandaged. During his first shift, I run
for ranch to restock the salad bar and see him
sitting in the break room. He's taken down the photo
covered his face with dollar bills.

Any place will burn.
Drive around the West any September

there's a million acres burning.
That September it was different. It burned

from the sky. To the ground.
And the yard is more important than ever.

And everything that stands
stands for everything more than ever.

And the too many broken   the not being

there when that didn't just

fall.

Ali moved to Canada after deluded
patriots saw a Syrian. No one came
to his club anymore except federal agents.
One last night we played eight-ball on the balcony.
He told me about the place on Vancouver Island.
The photo. The feeling he could already feel
of breathing there, like a cool steam.

Later that week I'd repo the tables
instead of dousing and sparking them
which I considered.

SEMI-AUTOMATIC

us on the coast: in the mountains:
outside the appointed chapel

the child whose job is to draw the bodies also
draws the bodies' crumbling monument

machine replaces one with zero:
functions diminish: the pleasant occurs

<dorothy> what if she keeps him tied up?
he's good with gentle people

behind this wall: human turmoil:
john take us up to camera two

<dorothy> we must be going up in the cyclone
<witch, on bicycle> wee! heh-heh-heh

pointillism: polysemy: polystyrene:
less objects than events, excited particles shiver

at the canyon: every year three people fall:
at the doctor: this is our year

abstract orbit to plot imaginary center:
an overpass shrine is just such a circle

out <to black> tomorrow, ninety:
despite early disturbances the heartland is dry

Bill Stobb
Viterbo University
United States of America

Reseña / *Review*

Los malos tratos a escena. El teatro como herramienta en la lucha contra la violencia de género, de Marta Fernández Morales. Oviedo: KRK ediciones, colección Alternativas nº 12, 2002.

M. Isabel Menéndez Menéndez

El libro de Marta Fernández Morales cuestiona la literatura canónica, masculina, cuyos personajes femeninos son sometidos a la voluntad de los varones, sin dudar nunca de la legitimidad de esa dominación y sin ofrecer a las mujeres ninguna posibilidad de escapar de ese destino de violencia y discriminación que el patriarcado ha reservado para ellas. Es consciente la autora de la dificultad de trascender ese constructo cultural plagado de ideología machista, cuando no misógina. Y así, aunque sabe que la literatura oficial que se enseña en las universidades está plagada de nombres y obras de varón, que son considerados como los maestros, tiene esperanza en que las cosas irán cambiando poco a poco a partir del compromiso de autoras y profesoras que acceden cada vez más al temario feminista y cuyos textos empiezan a ser tenidos en cuenta desde las instituciones académicas. En este sentido, Marta Fernández Morales, cuya tesis doctoral se dedicó al estudio de la violencia sexista en el teatro norteamericano contemporáneo, analizando obras de tanta actualidad como *Los monólogos de la vagina,* ha seleccionado varios textos teatrales actuales para observar cómo se produce y desarrolla en ellos la situación de malos tratos físicos y psíquicos contra las mujeres. Es un trabajo aún novedoso en España ya que, aunque la crítica feminista de países de nuestra órbita cultural lleva décadas trabajando sobre la violencia que padecen las mujeres, lo cierto es que se trata de un aspecto muy poco abordado desde la crítica literaria española. Marta Fernández Morales se nutre de las ricas aportaciones de la crítica feminista, a partir de la cual se ponen en cuestión los mitos que han rodeado a las mujeres en el teatro clásico y contemporáneo. Las obras con las que trabaja esta autora son textos cuyo común denominador es dar la vuelta a esos papeles femeninos identificados con la pasividad y el masoquismo y también a los roles masculinos que sostienen la virilidad sobre la violencia y el dominio. No es un trabajo inocente el de Fernández Morales, se trata de utilizar la fuerza del teatro para despertar conciencias, persigue utilizar el teatro como el arma política que es, capaz de cuestionar el orden social y la tolerancia ante la violencia. Cree la autora que el teatro es capaz de visibilizar problemas e injusticias.

Su fin último sería que el público pueda transformar su placer y su aplauso en reflexión y en acción.

Una de las autoras que han despertado la atención de la investigadora es la feminista española Lidia Falcón; con una ideología muy radical, sus textos ofrecen una separación total entre el espacio femenino y el masculino, sin comunicación entre hombres y mujeres. Las dos obras que se estudian en el libro presentan a mujeres víctimas de la violencia que deben padecer también la falta de cooperación e incluso la culpabilización ante el sistema legal y judicial. Para la autora, estas obras de Falcón despiertan la rabia ante las injusticias a las que son sometidas las mujeres.

Esos episodios vejatorios que sufren las mujeres cuando acuden a las comisarías también aparecen en la obra de Alberto Miralles quien, sin embargo, utiliza un enfoque más irónico. Fernández Morales destaca la agilidad que es capaz de transmitir este autor de manera que el tema, aunque terrible, no anula a quien lo ve desde el teatro.

Totalmente distinto es el teatro de Francisco Doménech, simbólico y muy estético, que logra transmitir la brutalidad del maltrato sin una sola bofetada. Destaca la autora de *Los malos tratos a escena* que eso demuestra que el teatro feminista no tiene por qué ser desagradable de ver desde las butacas, que la dureza del tema puede ser abordada desde un tratamiento amable.

En cuanto al teatro mucho más alternativo de María Irene Fornés, que enlaza la violencia doméstica con la política, le sirve a la autora para demostrar que ambos tipos de maltrato forman parte de un *continuum* de violencia cuyo objetivo es el mismo, aterrorizar a una parte de la población, aquella que se rebela contra el canon sexual, ideológico o político.

La obra de Marta Fernández Morales es un trabajo de enorme actualidad. Cuando en España mueren dos mujeres cada semana, a manos de los que son, o han sido, sus compañeros sentimentales, utilizar la crítica literaria para denunciar los padecimientos que sufren las mujeres es una apuesta arriesgada académicamente, novedosa desde el punto de vista histórico y, sobre todo, de un gran compromiso social. Sin olvidar el rigor académico que exige su trabajo, la autora se deja llevar, y no quiere disimularlo además, por su punto de partida claramente posicionado ideológicamente. Ella está con las que sufren y lo que desea es que quien lea su libro, convertido luego en público que acude a una representación, sea capaz de reflexionar sobre esa lacra social que es la violencia sexista, sea capaz de implicarse en la erradicación del problema.

El análisis crítico no incluye los textos primarios. La abundante bibliografía propone referencias de obras dramáticas, artículos especializados, tratados sobre violencia, libros sobre teatro, *web*liografía reciente, etcétera.

M. Isabel Menéndez Menéndez
Universidad de Oviedo
España

Número Especial - Convocatoria

La junta editorial convoca a la entrega de trabajos (ensayos, poemas, cuentos, reseñas) relacionados con **discapacidad** para la publicación de un número especial (junio 2005) de la revista. Los ensayos pueden concentrarse en varios aspectos del tema, incluyendo:

- asuntos del área de estudios sobre la discapacidad
- representaciones de la discapacidad en la literatura, el cine, la cultura popular y otros medios de comunicación
- la confluencia entre género, sexualidad, raza, política y discapacidad.

Fecha límite para entrega: 9 de agosto de 2004. Véase las normas para entrega de manuscritos en **http://www.uprm.edu/atenea** para información sobre el formato de manuscritos.

Special Issue - Call For Papers

The editorial board invites submissions (essays, poems, fiction, book reviews) for publication for a special edition (June 2005) on **disability issues**. Essays may address a wide variety of topics including (but not limited to):

- disability studies as a field
- representations of disability in literature, film, popular culture, the media
- the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, politics and disability.

Submissions for this issue must be received by 9 August 2004. See submission guidelines at **http://www.uprm.edu/atenea** for details about the format of manuscripts.