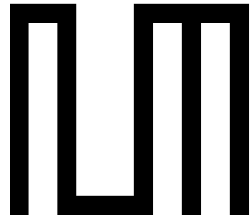
Atenea

revista bilingüe de las humanidades y las ciencias sociales/

a bilingual journal of the humanities and social sciences

ATENEA

REVISTA BILINGÜE DE LA FACULTAD DE ARTES Y CIENCIAS
DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE PUERTO RICO, RECINTO DE MAYAGÜEZ



VOLUMEN XXIV • NÚMERO 2
DICIEMBRE 2004

La Junta Editora de la Revista ***Atenea***
publica artículos relacionados con las humanidades y las ciencias sociales escritos en español o en inglés y algunos cuentos y poemas. Los artículos deben regirse por las normas estipuladas en la última edición del manual del Modern Language Association of America (MLA). Favor de enviar tres copias a la Editora, Revista Atenea, PO Box 9265, Universidad de Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681.

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ISSN 0885-6079

URL: http://www.uprm.edu/atenea

Tipografía: HRP Studio

Diseño y arte portada: José Irizarry y Nandita Batra

El diseño de la portada viene de un tetradracma de plata ateniense del siglo V a.C. Presenta a Atenea en el anverso y su atributo, la lechuza, en el reverso. Cortesía del Foro de Monedas Antiguas.

Ilustrador: José Irizarry

The Editorial Board of Revista ***Atenea***
publishes articles on the humanitites and social sciences written in English or Spanish, as well as some poetry and fiction. Articles should conform to the norms stipulated by the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) and be sent in triplicate to the Editor, Revista Atenea, PO Box 9265, University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681.

The Editorial Board of Atenea is not responsible for the views expressed by the contributing authors and reserves the right to publication.

ISSN 0885-6079

URL: http://www.uprm.edu/atenea

Typography: HRP Studio

Cover designed by José Irizarry and Nandita Batra

The cover design is based on an Athenian silver tetradrachm from the 5th century B.C., depicting Athena on the obverse and her owl on the reverse. Courtesy of the Ancient Coin Forum.

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Revista de la Facultad de Artes y Ciencias
de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Mayagüez

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ADORNO IN BRAZIL

Fabio Akcelrud Durão

I

From May 13th to May 17th 2002 a conference took place in Piracicaba, São Paulo, with the title "Tecnologia, Cultura e Formação ... Ainda AUSCHWITZ." Organized by two multidisciplinary study groups, of the Universidade Metodista de Piracicaba (UNIMEP) and of the Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar), the four-day meeting represented the consolidation of something new in Brazilian cultural and academic life. This novelty, which was only to be made even more visible in the numerous events celebrating Adorno's 100th birthday last year, helped in the first place to confirm the emergence of a numerically significant school of interpretation of Adorno in Brazil. Attendance at the conference was very mixed; at peak times it totaled more than three hundred people, while the presentation of papers involved members from all strata of the academic spectrum, from undergraduates, through master and doctoral students, to young professors and senior scholars. Panels dealt mostly with issues of technology in its relation to education (in the ample German sense of *Bildung*), aesthetics, and the culture industry, while keynote talks elucidated diverse aspects of Adorno's works and its relation to more distant philosophers, such as Nietzsche, and fellow thinkers, such as Marcuse and Horkheimer.

Noteworthy was not only the extremely comfortable atmosphere, which permitted the circulation of ideas among people of so many different places and ages, but also the fact that in one way or another participants were talking the same language, managing to communicate by means of a shared code, inhabiting a common thinking space. One would have to turn to Jacques Lacan to find a theorist with such a similar broad audience in Brazil, but in his case the number of interpreters and commentators has been supported by a highly organized, and reasonably bureaucratized, institutional apparatus, the

psychoanalytical, both inside and outside the university. Conversely, what is remarkable about the current reception of Adorno in Brazil is that it has taken place within a minimum of underlying structures, academic or otherwise, while at the same time it managed to overcome regional differences and perennial political disagreements in what is now a coherent set of theoretical questions and approaches. This concordance, which may strike North Americans as restrictive or even repressive, was a real achievement in the Brazilian context, for there the recurrent problem intellectuals saw themselves confronted with in the last decades was the difficulty to form a critical tradition, a common ground from which discussions could gain momentum. Even though the Brazilian university apparatus, especially its graduate system, is one of the best in Latin America, it is not strong enough (especially after a decade of neoliberalism) to absorb the increasing availability of imported theoretical goods, now much enhanced by the Internet. This led to a situation in which assimilation of interpretative systems proved to be impossible. There was simply no time to digest what was brought from the outside, no time to verify, not even to experience, the productivity, tensions and contradictions a given theoretical framework could offer when transplanted to the Brazilian context.[1] This is why one should see with good eyes the solidification of an interpretative community around such a multi-layered and far-reaching thinker as Adorno.

In fact, the history of the reception of the Frankfurt School in Brazil is not a really recent one. In 1969 José Guilherme Merquior had already published his *Arte e Sociedade em Marcuse, Adorno e Benjamin*, which was to a great degree responsible for the stereotype of Adorno as an "anti-modern terrorist of art" (Duarte, "Zum Rezeption" 122), in contradistinction to a revolutionary Benjamin. This early assessment was followed by a series of works that appeared in the 80s and 90s, both translations and by native authors, which competently dissected the difficult philosophy of the Frankfurt School, presenting its main

[1] That direct importation of theories can prove to be disastrous is made clear, for instance, by the bizarre reception of Bahktin's theory of carnavalization. By uncritically adhering to it, Brazilian critics ultimately offered what turned out to be indeed a noxious contribution. For in Brazil, there is nothing so institutionalized (and commodified) as carnival itself. When being happy becomes a social imposition and moral obligation following the calendar, the critical gesture must go in the other direction, in the struggle for the individual's right not to hide his or her sadness. See Durão, "Enforced Happiness; Or, Domination Brazilian Style" (forthcoming).

ideas and central concepts, articulating its aims and at times proposing reformulations for supposed deadlocks.[2]

But what makes the Frankfurt School in general, and Adorno in particular, so interesting for Brazilian intellectuals *today* is his cultural criticism of capitalism, especially of what became known as the culture industry—a mixed term that conceptualizes those artifacts that are *cultural* (i.e. not fitting for "concrete" purposes, as clothing or pans) and yet are produced industrially, in mass quantities and for profit. For in Brazil is to be found one of the most monopolized systems of mass media in the world, epitomized by the all-powerful Globo Network.[3] More than theorists of the new media like Bourdieu, Baudrillard or Deleuze, Adorno furnished Leftist intellectuals with a set of conceptual tools and a framework that linked immanent criticism of cultural goods to a solid and comprehensive philosophy that encouraged interdisciplinary work, thus enabling both scholars and activists to establish a link between their lived experience and their practice of thinking. Derived from Marx's description of capitalism and Weber's account of rationality, Adorno's strong concept of totality functioned perfectly as a heuristic instrument to conceptualize a totalitarian system of communication and cultural production, one that allowed very little space for what differed from its pasteurized products. Thus, from and through the critique of the culture industry, a door was opened to the recent carrying out of research in the most diverse fields, such as pedagogy, literary theory, sociology, music, anthropology and even physical education.

And yet Adorno's reception in Brazil was not immune to a certain dialectic of light. Precisely because of its difficulty, of the challenge it presents to readers, his texts begged to be explained, dissected, analyzed, paraphrased, in short, to be *illuminated*; they encouraged, in other words, the proliferation of the secondary literature and of philological work that keeps the academic industry going. This explains the title of the conference in Piracicaba, especially the

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[2] Among the extensive bibliography of works written by Brazilian scholars, one could mention, chronologically: Klothe (1978); Rouanet (1983); Freitag (1988); Matos (1993); Duarte, (1993); Gagnebin (1997); Nobre, (1998); Zuin, Pucci & Oliveira (2000).

[3] See Lopes (*O Superpoder*) and Herz (*A história secreta da Rede Globo)*. These otherwise overly denunciatory and somewhat propagandistic books are here useful, inasmuch as they call attention to the narrow connection between mass media and conservative politics, which tends to be overlooked by Adorno's more epistemological/formal approach (e.g . *Schema*). It is perhaps the first great irony of the twenty-first century in Brazil that Rede Globo saw itself obliged to support Lula's left-wing government, due to its overwhelming debt of some billions of dollars.

"still Auschwitz" (*ainda Auschwitz*) in it. For most of the papers presented there were devoted to the elucidation of determined aspects of Adorno's theory, which, given the general approval it enjoyed, ended up by enthroning the philosopher and turning him into an infallible Master. This led to some disheartening results: since Adorno deploys concepts that point beyond their sheer content and strive to exhibit (*darstellen*) something other, it was not uncommon to find analytical definitions of "constellations," self-identical commentaries on "nonidentity," intellectualized categorizations of "experience," rationalistic assessments of "mimesis," or intentional descriptions of "exact imagination." While this might elsewhere generate, at most, boring results, in Brazil it gives birth to blatant contradictions, for the obsession with conceptual clarification, an otherwise necessary step in intellectual practice, is in Brazil at best repetitive and stifling (how many times can one recapitulate the argument of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*?), at worst radically at odds with the experience of the concepts themselves. What should shed light on a form of thinking reverts into obscurantist acceptance.[4]

What follows is an initial attempt, tentative and limited, to be sure, in the opposite direction: not to pledge an oath of filiation, but to venture into a dialectic of fidelity, whereby the emancipating impulse underlying a given theory can only remain the same once it is made different by turning against itself. This is signaled in the double meaning the preposition "in" may have in the title above. If the text's first part focused, however briefly, on the reception of Adorno in Brazil, mainly emphasizing its laudable consistency and questionable subservience, a second step should follow, now suggesting a description of what could result from the clash of his theory with a reality he could have had no inkling of. In order to do this, a short detour is necessary.

II

In a short text, "Thesen über Bedürfnis" ["Theses on Need"], Adorno presents an important argument concerning the irreducibly social character of human needs. Far from being universal, or even

[4] It is interesting to observe that the exact opposite happens in relation to the greatest living Brazilian literary critic, Roberto Schwarz, whose theory of misplaced ideas (*Misplaced Ideas*) shares an undeniable Adornian inspiration. It so happens, however, that Schwarz (whom Shierry W. Nicholsen acknowledges in her translation of *Prisms* for introducing her to the Frankfurt School) has systematically avoided mentioning Adorno in his work as well as approaching his relationship to him.

constant, they vary according to the specificities of particular societies. Even those utterly biological necessities, such as eating, he says, cannot be taken as natural, but must be considered as functions inside a totality in which its parts are interrelated, and in a process of mutual determination. For hunger, "conceived as a natural category, can be satisfied with grasshoppers and gnats, a repast to many wild animals. To satiate the concrete hunger of civilized men, it is necessary that they receive something that does not disgust them, and in disgust and its contrary the whole of history is reflected."

Eating is not a sheer natural phenomenon; menus are determined by a cultural framework dictating what counts as edible. But if human needs are socially configured, it is also possible to argue that "the differentiation between deep and superficial needs is a socially produced semblance [*Schein*]" ("Thesen über Bedürfnis" 392; see also "Über Statik und Dynamik als soziologische Kategorien" 220-222). That is, since the social whole, the ever-more socialized society [*vergesellschaftete Gesellschaft*], is a total space, one that does not allow for any kind of exteriority, the mediation between biological and psychic needs (as manifested in symptoms of neuroses, psychosis and the like) must be carried out precisely through the fundamental category of semblance. A dialectical figure of thought, it acquires in Adorno's sociological writings the opposite valences it exhibits in his texts on aesthetics. In art, *Schein* is a false appearance that conveys truth; as a sociological category, it is a given, a fact, that in itself leads to error. Needs that are in fact the result of a complex process of socialization appear as immediate and evident, as natural. This is why "to judge about what would be true and false needs it would be necessary to take into account the structure of society as a whole, with all its mediations" ("Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?" 365-366).

However, the presence of the social in the most apparently organic functions, in the very structures of drives (*Triebe*) themselves, should not be taken as an endpoint for thought; it should not turn into a slogan. Even though for Adorno there may seem to be only one synchronic social whole, the capitalist system in its monopolistic phase, it is fair to ask whether his kind of totality can really bear the mark of universality. Now, one main feature that characterizes late capitalism for the German philosopher, the nodal point for the analysis that follows, is the assumption of a partial, at least precarious, fulfillment of basic human needs. Indeed, once this unacknowledged *Bestimmung* of the Adornian concept of society in advanced countries comes to the fore, it is possible to realize to what extent capitalism's restrictive abundance lies in the background of Adorno's sociological writings.

To be sure, he considers this trait to be heteronomous to capitalism as a purely economic system, for the fulfillment of urgent needs can only be brought about by some form of non-economic organization, such as the State, through welfare programs, or institutions of charity and the like. Nevertheless, it is precisely this intervention in the "free" workings of the market that characterizes Adorno's idea of monopolistic capitalism as opposed to its earlier, liberal stage. Much of the novelty brought about by monopoly capitalism, in fact, can be fruitfully approached through the lenses of a typically Marxian contradiction, which is properly adapted by Adorno, namely that of overwhelming human needs in a situation without scarcity. Differently from Marx, who saw in capitalism the *potential* for the overcoming of privation through the already-attained development of the productive forces, Adorno had to work with a state of affairs in which suffering persisted hand in hand with the at least partial fulfillment of material necessities.

This lack of fundamental needs can even be used as central point around which much, if not all, of Adorno's sociological texts may be interpreted. Once the Marxian prognosis of the proletariat's ultimate absolute impoverishment (*Verelendung*) is proven wrong, it becomes important to acknowledge that "the proletariat has more to lose than its fetters. In comparison to the situation in England a hundred years ago, as it stood before the eyes of the authors of the *Manifesto*, the proletariat's standard of living has not worsened, but improved" ("Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie" 384; see also "Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?" 358-361). Precisely because human needs are social and in constant historical mutation, it is possible for Adorno to argue that classes continue to exist, even if their for-itself becomes blurred in a false egalitarianism. From another perspective, relative abundance is also responsible for salient changes in the realm of culture. Two of the most central targets of Adornian analyses, homogenization and standardization, with all the consequences they bring about in terms of subjectivization, would prove to be impossible if need were overwhelming, which would thus force subjects to act more spontaneously and autonomously to counter it. His theory of semi-formation ("Theorie der Halbbildung" esp. 110-111), would be unthinkable without the availability of symbolic goods adapted for the masses, which now occupy the position of consumers. Even the fundamental philosophical topos of administration (*Verwaltung*, see e.g. the essay "Kultur und Verwaltung") is logically connected to the radical reduction or abrogation of basic needs. From a quite simplistic point of view, indeed, it is possible to argue that the uncomfortable presence of utter need would lead to revolts that would

threaten rational planning and coordination. In other words, for social control to work under ideal conditions, a certain degree of stability is welcome, if not required. And if we remember that in capitalism needs become a function of the market, and not the other way round—i.e. the commodities "pick up" their consumers and not the other way round—then psychological urges and the functioning of the psychic apparatus itself become intertwined with the sociological determination of the suppression of absolute need. Finally, in a last step, when one is reminded that through the logic of exchange (*Tauschprinzip*) subjectivity and the commodity form are dealt with by Adorno and Horkheimer in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as sharing the same functioning as the concept itself, the model of a totality based on the overcoming of basic necessities may be extended to epistemology and metaphysics. It may indeed look like a far-fetched claim to argue that a link exists between Adorno's close totality and its immanent criticism of concepts, on the one hand, and the satisfaction of basic, concrete needs, on the other. This suspicion could start to dissipate once two observations are taken into account. In the first place, the separation between philosophy and sociology in Adorno can only be brought about at the critic's own expense; for him, the two disciplines always mediate one another. Secondly, historical depth (which in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* becomes a *reductio ad absurdum*) can only be worked out from the point of view of the present, which illuminates what came before it, but remains blind to suppressed possibilities, unrealized potentials time did bury, but could reemerge in a different future. The abrogation of immediate necessity and the totality matching it, in other words, project their own genealogy in a history that could have been otherwise.

All of this, it is important to emphasize, does not mean that need is *the* most fundamental category in Adorno's philosophy. To say so would be tantamount to claiming that it represents a firm ground, a first principle from which a conceptual system could be reconstructed by deduction. The argument here runs in a different direction, namely, that need is a border-concept that, just as many others in Adorno (e.g. nonidentity, experience, suffering, constellation, or even dialectics), may be used as a lens to interpret the whole of his philosophy, one side of the prism light can go through. Once this is granted, the next move must be to determine to what extent a different configuration of need might restructure and transform Adorno's characterization of totality and the theoretical practice attached to it.

III

It should be clear by now that what is at stake in this reformulation is nothing but the simple question: what happens to the Adornian notion of totality when it exhibits a strong version of need, when the most fundamental requirements for the sustenance of human life cannot be taken for granted? Underlying this question there is the suggestion that Adorno's concept of totality can only imperfectly function in Brazil, where massive need and privation are grafted in a country completely colonized by capitalism.[5] The coexistence of material scarcity, on the one hand, and capitalist structures of desire and intersubjective action, on the other, point to the formation of a kind of totality that cannot be sustained without the formation of *constitutive margins*. The challenge for thinking Adorno in Brazil hinges on how to theorize the relationship between inside and outside, core and periphery in a satisfactory way. That this must be done in a dialectical fashion can be seen in the insufficiency of two opposed positions, when taken in isolation. Brazil cannot represent either a pure and simple sameness, or a perfect alterity, in relation to the so-called First World. By arguing that Adornian categories function perfectly in the Brazilian context, the first position leads to an always-doomed project of mimicry, which, as was claimed above, enters in sharp contradiction with the experiential content of concepts themselves. On the other hand, inasmuch as it posits the total incompatibility between periphery and center, the second perspective almost as a rule generates mediocre theories of a strongly resented tinge. A refocusing of Adornian lenses to Brazil demands a kind of structure capable of thinking difference and sameness within the same theoretical framework. Below, the attempt will be made to demonstrate that the kind of totality exhibited in the Brazilian context, which could *mutatis mutandis* be expanded to much, if not all, of the Third World, is itself in dialectical tension with the Adornian one. The suspicion informing and underlying this comparison is that, when transplanted to the margins of the world-system, the concept of totality exhibits a peculiar dialectic of inside and outside, according to which an idea of openness tends to force itself, only to be proven wrong as it is closely scrutinized.

To be sure, there are a number of Adornian philosophemes begging to be examined from the ex-centric Brazilian point of view, sensuality as semblance (*Schein*) and the problematic nature of

[5] Recent estimates say that 50 million Brazilians live in utter misery, 29.3% of the population, making less than US $ 25.8 a month. See http://www.rebidia.org.br/novida/FGV_MFOME.htm.

aesthetic autonomy being, perhaps, the first ones to come to mind. Here, however, two other themes will be dealt with: first, what could be called the phenomenology of the commodity form. The expression refers to the interaction between commodities, as scrutinized by Marx in the beginning of *Capital*, and the mental set generated by them. The second topic concerns the concentration camp of *Auschwitz*, which represented for Adorno a concrete philosophical problem, as we will see, a nodal point linking epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and political praxis. These two issues could function as a proper starting point, not only because, as will be shown, they present strong connections in the Brazilian context, but also because they belong to two fundamental broad areas of research from which much complementary work could be carried out.

Adorno's criticism of the commodity form in monopoly capitalism can be fruitfully approached by his theorizations regarding obscurantism (see *The Stars Down to Earth* and "Theses against occultism"). This important philosopheme answers for a complex of problems that unite politics in its broadest sense, here in the guise of administration and domination; economy, as the production and circulation of commodities is always implied; and psychology, since obscurantism as a social practice strongly interferes in individuals' structure of drives. For our present purposes, it is important to emphasize that the mechanisms worked out by Adorno, in his *The Stars Down to Earth*, regarding astrology can be very satisfactorily applied to the world of commodities in general.[6] Just as the Freudian characterization of the drive involves the indissociable link between an imagistic, representational content, and a physiological impulse, so *all* commodities in today's late capitalism combine a semiotic element (the process of signification it fosters), and a material character. In astrology, Adorno argues, two social spheres, severed by an increasing division of labor, are brought together, namely, those of astronomy and psychology. The astrologist, that is, has to possess at least a minimal knowledge about the planets' movements, on the one hand, and a fairly acute sense of his readers' anxieties and desires, on the other. Obscurantism arises from the incapacity to question the arbitrary nature of this joining together of planets and people; the question readers of the *Los Angeles Times* did not ask was simply: what proves that the movements of celestial bodies interfere with human lives? Adorno

[6] Interestingly enough, Adorno sees his reading of the horoscope column in the *Los Angeles Times* as a contribution to a general theory of totalitarianism. If the comparison with commodities proves right, then a very disturbing image indeed of an economic oppressive totality emerges, within liberal democracy itself.

calls this kind of superstition secondary, because "the individual's experience of the occult, whatever its psychological meaning and roots or its validity, rarely, if ever, enter the social phenomenon to which our studies are devoted. Here, the occult appears rather institutionalized, objectified and, to a large extent, socialized" (*Stars Down to Earth* 16). At play in this case is a dialectic of rationality and irrationality. Reason is made obscure, insofar as facts are hipostatized and cannot be related to a meaningful whole; subjects "feel that everything is linked up with everything else and that they have no way out, but at the same time the whole mechanism is so complicated that they fail to understand its raison d'être" (*Stars Down to Earth* 110), and that is why they are prone to somehow accept irrational explanations such as that of astrology. On the other hand, that "somehow" is crucial, for in an enlightened society (in the strong sense of *aufgeklärte*) it is hard to *really believe* such improbable "theories" as astrology. What is constituted, rather, is a structure of partial disbelief, since "so many followers of astrology do not seem quite to believe but rather take an indulgent, semi-ironical attitude towards their own conviction" (*Stars Down to Earth* 109).

Now, this posture is the one that most accurately accounts for the relationship between consumers and commodities in late capitalism: they *know* that the association of a product with a given image is not true, but they conceal it to themselves and enact a kind of "suspension of disbelief" that is not so easily distinguishable from that involved in aesthetic experience, except, perhaps, that it involves a good deal of bad faith. In Brazil, the contrary happens; the situation here is a paradoxical one, insofar as the principle of exchange is both present and absent: absent, because a great part of the population (from 20 to 50 million, depending on how one calculates and interprets statistics) lies outside exchange, has no buying power; present, because the desire structured by the commodity form is ubiquitous. And since there are so many people concretely outside the market but with their desires ruled by it (what Robert Kurz once termed "monetary subjects without money"), a certain literalism prevails. Whereas in advanced capitalist countries, those inside the market have to try to pretend they are not, in Brazil, those outside it represent perfect capitalist subjectivities. Precisely because they suffer need in a society that fully eradicated pre-capitalist structures of life, they completely believe the promises made by that which they do not have. The expensive car *really* brings beautiful women; the cigarette *really* takes one to the old West. In the closed totality of central capitalist countries, "there is no place anymore outside the machinery, from which one may name the phantasmagoria", for "only

on its own incoherence should the lever be set" ("Spät Kapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?" 369). What lies outside has to be found within; the potential for change, what is other, has to be sought inside the system of exchange. In Brazil, since the principle of exchange is a fiction for so many subjects, otherness is present in that interior outsideness. It is precisely because of that literalism, that belief about the face-value character of commodities that the excluded may constitute revolutionary subjectivities. It is true that this structure of desire can lead to the most barbaric acts of violence (e.g. killing someone for a pair of tennis shoes), but when compared to the detached posture of postmodern cynicism, i.e. *knowing* the truth and perpetuating the false, taking things to the letter may generate action. By demanding that commodities be equal to what they communicate about themselves, a typical practice of immanent critique, subjects may under propitious conditions *act* in a way directed to radical difference and continue to maintain what they know is bad.[7]

A second term of comparison can be fruitfully investigated by means of the confrontation with the problematic of Auschwitz. For Adorno the concentration camp became both the example and the symbol for what is best approached as a nightmare of reason. There, the most advanced technological means were deployed to exterminate human beings who were thereby deprived of their humanness. In order to eliminate as many individuals as possible, everything should work as a clock: arrival and departure of trains, the process of selection of those who should go to gas chambers, disposal of bodies, collection of belongings and organic leftovers such as hair. People were thus turned into numbers; they ceased to be viewed even as objects: they became abstractions. This perfectly corresponds to the culmination of a long tradition in philosophy, that of disenchantment with the world, the struggle against animism and geometrization of the universe. Auschwitz was a closed space within which control over inmates was total (Sofsky 1997) and extermination could be carried out in the most cold-blooded and calculated fashion. Dying, as a result, lost any meaning it could once have had; it became the function of an unpredictable system under which all individuals were fungible and replaceable (Adorno, *Metaphysik* 166-213; *Negative Dialectics* 361-408). For the survivors a universal context of guilt (*Schuldzusam-*

[7] Slavoj Žižek has repeatedly been making the same argument for some time now, stressing that the self-distancing embedded in irony, rather than representing a resistance to capitalism, brings about the most effective way of adapting to it (e.g. 1-33, 296-331).

menhang) came into being, since there was no justification for their remaining alive in face of the others' deaths.

From a temporal perspective, Auschwitz represented a caesura in history that questioned not only any discourse based on the idea of progress, and its accompanying conception linear time, but it also led to the imposition of a categorical imperative for the future: that it may never be repeated (Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* 365). As an object to be criticized, the concentration camp poses a challenge to language, in what could be called a dilemma of naming. To utter or write "Auschwitz," to *represent* it, is an act of vulgarization and unfaithfulness towards the terror and suffering that cannot be conveyed through language; to deal with it rationally is an insult in view of the utter irrationality underlying it. On the other hand, maintaining silence about Auschwitz, not evoking it, is itself barbaric, for it encourages forgetfulness, thus ultimately facilitating its repetition.

The Brazilian version of Auschwitz is the daily miniature pogrom, the recurrent urban massacre, in Portuguese called *chacina*, an everyday word. Its best characterization would be that of routine terror without catastrophe—or, in a different formulation: their catastrophe (for they must be named in the plural) is none other than the absence of catastrophe, the fact that they cannot be turned into it. Inconceivable without the structure of desire described above, it exhibits a peculiar kind of coherence when put side by side to the concentration camp. First of all, the point of contact: the *chacina* can also be interpreted as a nightmare of reason. At the bottom, the dehumanization and barbarity are the same, but the kind of rationality has changed. Instead of the centralized and totalitarian space of the concentration camp, the *chacina* is mobile and may take place anywhere anytime in the margins of Brazilian big cities, occasionally at the center. It is a system in the most rigorous sense (indeed its anonymity only proves it), for, since both victims and perpetrators are mostly excluded from society, they are interchangeable. In their ongoing war with the law and opposing gangs, the latter know that their life expectancy is extremely limited; they also know that, waiting for their death, there is an unemployed reserve army eager to occupy their position. As for the victims, there is an undeniable element of undecidability in their choosing, both in the choice on the part of the leader as to who should die, and as a result of chance encounters in the megalopolis. If underlying Auschwitz there was a pseudo-theory vilifying the Jews, the *chacina* is deprived of any ideological justification whatsoever, but involves whoever happens to be available. And if in the concentration camp anonymity was a function of total regulation, in *chacinas*, it is the result of economic deregulation, the withdrawal of the State from

all welfare areas and massive unemployment. In both cases, non-subjects appear: in Auschwitz, the number tattooed on the forearm; in the periphery of Brazilian megalopolises, individuals with no IDs, non-citizens.

But also temporality and the dialectic of naming are also inverted. If Auschwitz poses a dilemma surrounding the name, the *chacina* remains unnamable. Due to its size and iterability signifiers cannot be made to apply to larger contexts or further occurrences. Two of the most representative instances, the Carandirú massacre (where 101 penitentiary inmates were killed by the police during a revolt), or the Candelária incident (when 16 street children were murdered at the steps of Rio de Janeiro's most important cathedral), could not be turned into symbols or extrapolated to represent other cases of daily murder. The categorical imperative that Auschwitz be not repeated reverts into its opposite: that the *chacinas* stop, that for one single day they cease to take place. And yet, precisely because of this difference the universal context of guilt remains the same; or, better, it becomes even more visible and cogent, both morally and epistemologically. Sacrilegious though it surely is, the idea that, in its total form of control over the "material" at hand, one finds the same kind of rationality at work underlying Auschwitz and Schoenberg's dodecaphonic technique is true. If in its orderliness, Auschwitz offered the underlying truth of modern rationality; Brazilian miniature pogroms, quotidian terror without catastrophe, open our eyes to the truth of postmodern micro-narratives, so dear to a Lyotard.

The inverted phenomenology of the commodity form and the logic of the *chacina* are only two theoretical *topoi* that come to the fore when Adorno's philosophy is confronted with the Brazilian context. As was said above, several others could be dealt with—one could think of the role of sex and carnival, constituting a politics of happiness, as a means of political domination; or the difficulty of presupposing aesthetic autonomy in art and literature, under conditions of social disintegration, as Paulo Lins' recent pathbreaking bestseller *Cidade de Deus* attests. Adorno's importance for all this is that of furnishing a libertarian impulse, a posture of nonconformity and the strength to question that which would otherwise go without saying. It does not matter if his philosophy becomes utterly modified in the end: that would be the only way for it to remain the same. And if the project is to retain the impetus in different contexts of application, the challenge becomes to expand all this to the Latin American horizon. What form would these issues take where indigenous populations are prevalent? Where U.S. presence is overwhelming, or where the national context taken in isolation is insufficient? These are questions that, of course,

cannot be answered here, but must be left to the reader, as an invitation.

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ESTRUCTURA NARRATIVA Y ECOS DE ANGUSTIA EXISTENCIAL EN *CRISIS* DE EDELMIRA GONZÁLEZ MALDONADO

Glenda Y. Nieto

Plantear el tema del existencialismo en una obra narrativa no es un oficio sencillo. El libro *Crisis* (1973), de la escritora puertorriqueña Edelmira González Maldonado, abarca ciertos contornos de subjetividad que exige un análisis objetivo de la obra. La misma debe ser percibida como un microcosmos que puede evaluarse a través de las ideas filosóficas heredadas por el pensador francés Jean-Paul Sartre. Así lo propone María Teresa Bertelloni en su artículo "La soledad radical como principio y fin del discurso literario de Edelmira González Maldonado":

> Escritura existencial y existencialista en la mejor herencia sartriana, en un aquí y ahora concretos que constituyen el espacio y el tiempo de la obra. Un espacio y un tiempo que son además vitales y tienen como horizonte la soledad radical del ser en sí y para sí que se enajena en la escritura. (117)

En la obra narrativa de Edelmira González Maldonado, recopilada en tres libros, *Crisis* (1973), *Soledumbre* (1976) y *Alucinaciones* (1981), se percibe una clara influencia existencialista. Su cuentística gira en torno al ser humano y sus conflictos metafísicos, por esta razón Josefina Rivera de Álvarez señala que:

> [esta obra] encaja perfectamente, por sus preocupaciones matrices, en el marco de la literatura de inquietudes existenciales que es propia de la generación del cuarenta y cinco. Así, los relatos que [González Maldonado] congrega en el cuaderno titulado *Crisis* se hacen eco en su conjunto general del duro enfrentamiento a que se ve sometida una fina sensibilidad de mujer con un mundo circundante en el cual impera un materialismo absurdo, insustancial y cruel, en conflicto con los valores eternos del espíritu humano. (516)

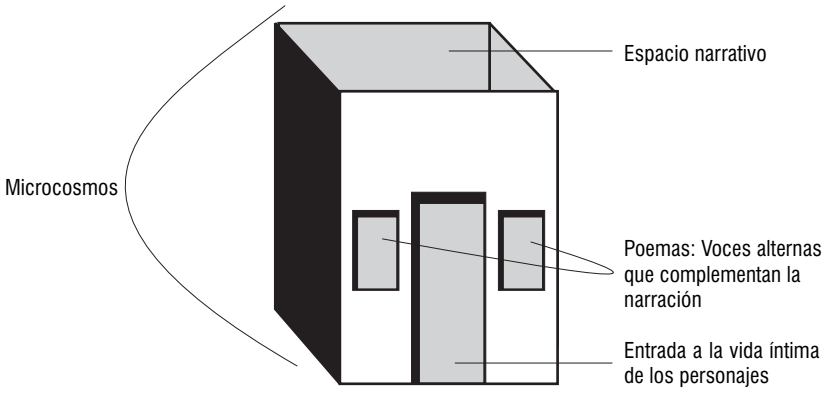
El libro *Crisis* recoge la influencia existencialista en seis cuentos —"Respuesta", "Un caso y César Vallejo", "Historial", "Somos tres", "Equívoco", "Veinte minutos"—, doce poemas —"Nosotros en el

paisaje", "Esa sensación", "Llanto por todo y nada", "Verdad irrevelada", "Circunstancias", "Paisaje impávido", "Ansia y contraste", "Sombras", "Mañana, poco importa", "Miedo", "Tiempo", "Todo"— y un epílogo. María Teresa Bertelloni explica que:

> Estilísticamente *Crisis* presenta, intercalados, dos recursos literarios: lo específicamente poético —es decir la palabra versificada— y lo específicamente narrativo, ambos ligados por la misma necesidad de decir en una especie de sístole y diástole estética.
>
> *Crisis* inicia un viaje sin retorno desde el presente hacia el pasado, pero no para iluminar el futuro, si no [sic] para asumir el hastío, la desesperanza y el dolor de vivir como único camino y como único lugar. (117)

En esta obra, González Maldonado construye un medio-mixto narrativo en el cual los poemas se presentan como antesala y clausura de cada cuento. Los poemas, como voces alternas a la narración, nos develan fragmentos de cada historia. No consideramos que hayan sido escritos como obras individuales, sino como nexos narrativos para complementar y dar versatilidad y profundidad al texto. María Teresa Bertelloni afirma que: "La escritora no ha pretendido ... en estos poemas, que se intercalan con los cuentos, hacer poesía. Su voz y la estructura exacta es el cuento. Estos versos son otra forma de contar, más condensada y conceptuosa. No quieren ni pueden ser otra" (118).

Para entender la estructura que González Maldonado ha creado, debemos visualizar cada cuento como una casa con dos ventanas y, en el centro de ambas, una puerta. La estructura que proponemos es la siguiente:



Cada ventana representa un poema, narración implícita de carácter existencial, y la puerta representa la entrada a un espacio narrativo explícito, donde se nos revela la crisis de los personajes. Esto significa que al leer un poema recogemos sólo una porción de la esencia de la historia, por lo que es imprescindible leer el cuento (entrar por la puerta de la casa), acto que simboliza entrar a la intimidad de los personajes, y descubrir sus conflictos. Por esta razón consideramos que leer los textos de *Crisis* es entrar a seis casas o micromundos, en los cuales se plantea la reflexión existencial de las protagonistas de cada narración.

Para obtener una comprensión más clara de lo propuesto anteriormente analizaremos el primer cuento, *Respuesta,* en conjunto con sus dos poemas: *Nosotros en el paisaje* y *Esa sensación*; luego continuaremos analizando exclusivamente las narraciones de este libro.

El poema "Nosotros en el paisaje", ventana de "Respuesta", presenta un nosotros pictórico, artificial, un nosotros como elemento decorativo dentro de un cuadro que como fondo tiene un paisaje. El título materializa el tú y el yo. Al materializarlos produce un plano bidimensional, un espacio que contiene figuras estáticas. Ese nosotros está allí, en el paisaje, no es un nosotros en armonía con la naturaleza, sino objetos colocados al azar, simples elementos existentes, diminutos y encerrados en ese paisaje.

Los primeros versos, "Cegaba la conciencia el mediodía / en el minuto nuestro" (17), nos muestran un panorama brillante y colorido, porque la luz que emite el sol al mediodía alumbra intensamente y, a su vez, revela la multiplicidad de colores de la naturaleza; azules, verdes, amarillos, rojos y marrones que predominan en un típico mediodía tropical. El resplandor del sol, por su parte, causa calor y, y por tratarse de un paisaje tropical, también podemos presumir que provoca humedad e incomodidad. Este resplandor ciega al "nosotros". Esta ceguera no se refiere a la visión óptica, sino a la conciencia. Podemos deducir que los acontecimientos del día obstruyen la claridad de la conciencia a la voz poética, lo cual puede haber sido causado por algún acto vergonzoso o alguna tragedia.

En este poema, percibimos un encuentro fallido que oscurece la conciencia y el alma para dar paso a la angustia y a la reflexión existencial: "¡Da lo mismo la vida, la belleza, / el amor, la vejez, el envilecimiento!" (17). Esta reflexión nos muestra una voz poética abatida, que comienza a analizar su propia vida y el valor de la misma. Todo parece ser lo mismo, lo cotidiano la va consumiendo y el tiempo que transcurre se presenta como metáfora de tristeza:

“La hora se acurruca / en la falda del tiempo / para encender la tarde”.

La voz poética pasa de un estado de ánimo a otro; al principio, la voz se introduce de manera sosegada, caracterizada por el mediodía, luego se opaca con tristeza al igual que el atardecer y finalmente se sumerge en la amargura intensa con la noche, hasta que desaparece el sentido de la vida: .

> Y ... de repente ...
> tras un árbol de nubes,
> un rostro gris se asoma
> difumándose en sombras
> para beber la noche.
> Oh, sólo hay diferencia
> entre estar vivo o muerto. (17)

Este poema, como hemos mencionado, es sólo una ventana del cuento “Respuesta”, El poema nos describe ambiguamente un conflicto interior, pero no nos indica explícitamente la causa de esa amargura, sólo nos revela la metamorfosis anímica que va consumiendo a un ser hasta llevarlo a equiparar la vida con la muerte. Es por esto que debemos entrar en la narración de “Respuesta” para averiguar el origen de esa amargura y descubrir quién es la voz poética.

María Arrillaga, en *Concierto de voces insurgentes*, señala que “Respuesta”, cuento premiado por el Ateneo Puertorriqueño en 1969, fue escrito a raíz del suicidio de una tía de González Maldonado, quien decide quitarse la vida a causa de sus conflictos matrimoniales (142). Esta tragedia abatió muchísimo a la autora y marcó gran parte de su narrativa. En este cuento nos enfrentamos con una circunstancia similar. El personaje principal, una mujer de cuarenta y cinco años, se enfrenta ante una situación devastadora. Su marido tiene una amante, pero el conflicto no es sólo éste, sino que su marido le da dos opciones; le ordena que acepte esta situación o que se suicide:

> La dejó, así, tan perpleja. Tan vacía. Tan consternada. Tan oscura por dentro. Tan aniquilada. Le había como arrancado las entrañas de un tirón. Sintió aquella horrible sensación de fiebre en el rostro. Aquel calor. Aquella oquedad de ausencia. Aquella expresión catatónica. (19)

Las palabras del esposo desatan una confusa y aniquiladora amalgama de conmociones físicas y psicológicas en la protagonista. La enumeración de emociones y sensaciones relacionadas al vacío, la aniquilación y la perplejidad nos recuerda la distorsionada figura humana en la pintura “El grito” (1893), del pintor noruego Edward

Munch. En dicha pintura, el personaje central se tuerce y se desfigura para expresar el pánico y la desesperación provocados por sus pesadillas personales. Se mece al ritmo turbulento de líneas que parecen guiar el eco de su aguda desesperación a cada rincón del universo, hasta lograr que el cielo y la tierra se estremezcan con las estridentes ondas emitidas por el terror. Así fue la reacción de esta mujer. Ella creyó tenerlo todo cuando realmente no tenía nada y al enfrentarse con su realidad sintió que "[u]n cansancio como de siglos le apretaba las carnes doloridas, los cabellos, las uñas" (19). Su dolor fue más allá de lo corpóreo; la invadió entera, fue consumiendo su espíritu y "[s]intió que algo profundo, muy suyo se le iba escapando, dejando de ser ella" (19). De esta forma queda atrás el sentido de su propia existencia y las ganas de seguir viviendo.

La angustia de esta mujer se desata a raíz del dilema que se le presenta: ¿Debe aceptar la infidelidad de su marido o seguir su consejo y suicidarse? Ella, como ya sabemos, escoge el suicidio. Para algunas religiones antiguas, como el hinduismo, el suicidio es un acto inútil ya que sólo se destruye el cuerpo, mientras que el alma queda sumida en su impureza. Para los antiguos japoneses la autoaniquilación significaba renunciar a la vida manchada por la vergüenza para reivindicar el honor propio y familiar ante la sociedad. Desde el punto de vista cristiano quitarse la vida representa un pecado que se paga en el infierno. Para los existencialistas ateos, el suicidio es una decisión, una alternativa frente al dilema de la vida. La protagonista de "Respuesta" se suicida, no por cobardía o porque su esposo se lo ordene, sino porque reacciona impulsada por su angustia, ante la propia disyuntiva de tener que escoger otro camino. Proponemos que su suicidio responde a su ansia de libertad y afirmación personal ante la mirada del otro.

El marido, de "rostro ausente", representa *el otro* quien la aturde con su *mirada* y quien a su vez se trasforma en su enemigo. La *mirada* que él ejerce sobre ella es esa experiencia a través de la cual él trata de ejercer su autoridad sobre su esposa. Es una relación unidireccional, no reversible, lo que representa una relación conyugal sumamente tensa. Al sentirse observada se siente degradada e inerte ante un laberinto sin salida, y todo esto, en el fondo, le causa vergüenza. La mirada *del otro*, de su marido, la subyuga y transgrede su libertad. Ella no es tan sólo un ser *para sí*, sino que se trasforma también en un *ser para el otro*, lo que origina su deseo de morir: "¡Oh la vejez, el amor, al envilecimiento! / Vida, pasión y muerte. / El dolor de existir. La nada" (20).

Ante esta confusión metafísica, la protagonista siente la necesidad

de volver a sus raíces y le pide al marido que la lleve al lugar donde nació. Interpretamos esta necesidad como un anhelo de nacer nuevamente, de retornar al útero materno y tener la oportunidad de vivir otra vida, diferente a la actual. En el camino hacia su pueblo, ella observa detenidamente el paisaje, con mirada reflexiva y melancólica:

> Todos los colores se volcaron en los ojos secos de ella. Los matices diversos de las miramelindas: blancos, rosados, rojos, anaranjados, violetas... Poblaban los bordes de la vieja y acogedora carretera. La luz era más luz entre los claro oscuros del bosque. Se desvanecían los verdes a la distancia del monte. El río, un camino en el camino, moría en el valle de jacintos blancos. Un vaho de vegetación húmeda, podrida, se colaba entre el perfume de la flores. Ella vio como caían dos chinas maduras de un árbol. Contó cuatro girasoles marchitos agarrados a un tallo. Unas maripositas negras con puntitos plateados revoloteaban alrededor de una flor de campana, colgando de un arbusto de hojas como dedos. Casi avergonzado, asoma un racimo de guineos intensamente morados entre otros verdes y maduros. Todo parecía moverse en una danza. (20)

No consideramos que este pasaje refleje "un erotismo frustrado" como ha señalado María Arrillaga en *Concierto de voces insurgentes*, sino una experiencia estética que evoca la vida misma (157). Como afirma Juan Eduardo Cirlot, en su *Diccionario de Símbolos*, las flores representan la fugacidad de las cosas y de la belleza; y la vegetación:

> [e]n todas sus formas, ofrece dos aspectos principales: el de su ciclo anual por el que simboliza la muerte y la resurrección ...; y el de su abundancia, del que deriva un significado de fertilidad y fecundidad. (Cirlot 460)

La mujer emplea todos sus sentidos para apreciar la naturaleza; acto similar al que ejercemos ante un paisaje que no volveremos a ver. Las imágenes de la naturaleza observadas por la mujer representan el desarrollo de su propia vida por medio del color, la forma y el movimiento. Hay imágenes naturales asociadas con la decadencia de la vida: la vegetación podrida, la caída de dos chinas maduras, cuatro girasoles marchitos y un racimo de guineos morados. Estas plantas, frutas y flores representan fragmentos desagradables de su vida; así como la infidelidad de su marido, la vergüenza que siente ante el fracaso y el tiempo que ha consumido su juventud. Pero aun la sensación de podredumbre y desasosiego que producen los recuerdos que agobian a esta mujer, está acompañada también por la belleza: las miramelindas, la luz entre los claroscuros del bosque y el valle de jacintos blancos. Este paisaje seleccionado por la mirada de la mujer representa la paradoja de la vida —en ella coexisten

elementos vivos y muertos; bellos y horribles; nuevos y podridos— que en muchas ocasiones impulsa a una íntima reflexión, expresada a través de estos versos:

> ¿Cuál es la diferencia entre
> estar vivo o muerto? ¿Es eso
> un acto de legítima defensa
> propia? ¿Lo que constituye
> una razón para vivir puede ser
> al mismo tiempo una razón para
> morir? (20)

En *El mito de Sísifo*, Albert Camus hace un señalamiento similar al de los dos últimos versos de esta estrofa: "lo que se llama una razón para vivir es, al mismo tiempo, una excelente razón para morir" (14). Él afirma que el suicidio es el único problema filosófico verdaderamente serio. Morir por voluntad propia "supone que se ha reconocido... la ausencia de toda razón profunda para vivir" (14). En la naturaleza, la mujer del cuento vio destellos de la vida que iba perdiendo, detalles vitales que la iban abandonando. Ya no le quedaba nada. Desapareció todo motivo para existir, ni siquiera su hija le sirvió de ancla para mantenerla a flote en el mundo. Todo aquello que en alguna ocasión fue su razón de vida ahora es su razón para morir. Por esto dispuso todo: redactó un testamento, destruyó su diario y le escribió una carta a su marido "agradeciéndole su franqueza [y] sinceridad" (21). Finalmente dejó que la muerte, liberadora, la socorriera de la garras del mundo que la estaba consumiendo. Como en un ritual contempló las aguas del mar en movimiento y se entregó a ellas:

> Ella observaba cuidadosamente cada movimiento del mar. El subir y el bajar de la marea. Las profundidades del agua. El ir y venir de las olas. El misterio que emanaba del monstruo hermoso la aturdía... Y de repente, en el tibio atardecer del día de su cumpleaños, solitaria, confusa, palpando en abandono su absoluto, vistió su traje baño negro. Se preparó un exótico "cocktail" de coñac y soporíferos. Marchó despacio, muy despacio, hacia la playa, internándose por el inmenso camino de fosforescencias azules.(22)

Veamos ahora un fragmento del poema "Esa sensación", segunda ventana de "Respuesta", el cual nos presenta la voz angustiada de la mujer por causa del infierno que le provoca *el otro*:

> Cuando despierto,
> en cada nuevo día
> presente siempre está
> la insostenible sensación
> indefinida,
> del perplejo vacío
> desesperante

que tanto me tortura.
Vivir en aniquilamiento,
bullición, desasosiego,
mal de nada y de todo,
río de silencios turbios... (23)

Estos versos reafirman todo lo que hemos explicado anteriormente, pero ahora quien nos habla no es un narrador omnisciente, sino una voz poética, que como podemos percibir es la voz de la mujer. Con este poema, González Maldonado nos revela explícitamente el pensamiento de la protagonista —sus incertidumbres y amargura— y a la vez justifica su suicidio, pues ella necesitaba ser libre.

En "Respuesta", la muerte es un elemento liberador. En el segundo cuento de este libro, "Un caso y César Vallejo", la muerte se presenta como un intento de libertad, puesto que la protagonista intenta suicidarse, pero no lo logra. En este cuento contemplamos otra mujer que sufre por lo estragos de la vida. Su crisis es originada también por la infidelidad, pero esta vez el triángulo lo completa otro hombre, el amante de su marido. En este cuento vemos el cumplimiento de la premisa sartriana, la cual establece que el infierno son *los otros*; puesto que esta mujer yace doblemente acosada por dos hombres, dos miradas homicidas. Por un lado, tiene la presión de la presencia de su marido y por el otro tiene esa otra mirada a la cual le teme. Este matrimonio de apariencias crea en ella un infierno interior, que la agobia y la manipula. El acorralamiento y la frustración que esto le provoca la llevan a buscar una "salida airosa", Una vez más percibimos la muerte que se asoma para liberar a un ser del infierno que le provoca *el otro.*

Las protagonistas de "Respuesta" y "Un Caso y César Vallejo" sucumben ante sus realidades conyugales, sin poder ver cumplidas sus aspiraciones. Ellas encarnan personajes trágicos, arrollados por la crisis de sus existencias. Las situaciones en que se encuentran las dos desembocan directa e indirectamente en la muerte. Estas mujeres viven en una sociedad burguesa autoritaria y asfixiante, en la que su individualidad no sólo se ve reducida, sino humillada. En el mundo de ellas, la libertad es una ilusión. Estas mujeres no pueden desear otra cosa que ser libres. El conflicto de estas dos historias se origina porque ellas no pueden ser algo hasta que *el otro*, sus maridos, lo reconozca de esta forma, o sea que su estabilidad emocional depende de ellos. Lamentablemente, en ambos casos, la aprobación del *otro* es indispensable para la existencia de ellas.

Como ya hemos visto, las vidas de estas dos mujeres, la de "Respuesta" y la de "Un caso y César Vallejo", son parecidas. En

estos dos cuentos vemos la incomprensión de dos seres solitarios que se rehúsan a vivir en el cautiverio de la vida. Este cautiverio se puede a su vez trasformar en algo más concreto, como una casa o la rutina cotidiana que es capaz de demoler al ser humano. Esta situación la observamos en "Historial", tercer cuento de este libro, donde vemos una mujer/casa. La protagonista se funde con una estructura arquitectónica: "La casa. [Ella es] la casa". (43).

En este cuento no vemos la presencia de la muerte como ente liberador, pero sí vemos el tiempo que se detiene y consume de rutina a un ser que se busca a sí mismo equivocadamente *en el otro*. En busca de su autenticidad, la protagonista se involucra sentimentalmente con dos hombres. La primera vez se casa con un ingeniero que le brinda seguridad y protección, pero con el transcurrir de los años la rutina la consume, porque los intereses del marido no coinciden con los de ella. Por otra parte, la segunda relación amorosa que establece, llena su deseo de suplir sus intereses intelectuales, pero después vive: "tres años de agonía, sadismo, incomprensión, pesadillas, sangre, dolor y lágrimas" (49).

"Historial" es un vaivén narrativo que nos lleva del presente al pasado, y viceversa, para crear planos narrativos simultáneos. Han pasado quince años, pero a la misma vez sólo han pasado tres años. Existe una ruptura de las estructuras narrativas tradicionales; trozos temporales que bien podrían convertir esta casa en un espacio cubista. Con el espacio de esta casa, la voz narrativa nos logra transmitir la claustrofobia que siente la mujer. Es la claustrofobia que sienten las personas que quieren y necesitan huir de una situación terrible y no pueden hacerlo por el agobio que el ambiente mismo promueve.

La caída de la protagonista, por causa de sus dos relaciones, es una caída anímica, no corporal. Ella no trata de escapar a través de la muerte, sino que opta por otra alternativa. Como la casa, ella permanece en pie, aunque con "grietas irregulares, hondas y oscuras" (45). Surge de esta forma la reflexión existencial: "¿El amor y la fe dónde residen? ¿Cómo se encuentran? La vida. Tu caída. El descenso en un oscuro hueco muy profundo... insondable. Y emerges del abismo, compenetrada" (49). Es la soledad lo que finalmente se revela como redentora. Esos hombres han sido esa mirada del *otro* que la han aplastado por años y la han tratado de anular hasta el punto hacerla sentir como un objeto.

Soledad, muerte y búsqueda de autenticidad son temas que predominan en este libro. En "Somos tres", el cuarto cuento, vemos otra cara de la muerte; la percibimos desde su descomposición morbosa hasta su fase etérea. En "Somos Tres" nos encontramos

ante un relato enigmático. Nos habla una voz lejana quien dice haber logrado irrumpir en otro refugio: "Queriéndolo. Pre-sintiéndolo". O sea, es un ente que pasa de la vida a la muerte y existe otro ente, que yace en la dimensión de la muerte, que lo observa, y a la vez narra el cuento.

En la mayor parte de los cuentos de este libro, en "Respuesta", "Un caso y César Vallejo" y en "Somos tres", podemos percibir la muerte desde otro punto de vista, diverso al convencional. La podemos ver como liberadora, como un escape o hasta como una continuación de la vida misma. Los papeles de la vida y la muerte se invierten. La vida acaba, pero renace al mismo tiempo. En este cuento la vida se presenta como un ciclo. No existe final definitivo, sino que a través de la muerte se comienza a vivir desde otro punto de vista. Es una metamorfosis. Considero que este cuento posee cierta continuidad con "Respuesta", pues esta muerte es un final deseado y provocado. Es una reflexión creativa de lo que es el estado de la muerte, presentada a través de un laberinto narrativo. "Somos tres" es un intento deliberado de crear un ambiente hermético e inconexo que hace referencia a la vida como vía de muerte. Con este cuento, la autora alcanza la confusión entre la vida y la muerte; lo que propongo como el logro de una suprarealidad.

En "Equívoco", quinto cuento de este libro, existen otros conflictos de carácter personal, diversos a los anteriormente discutidos. Se repite la contraposición mujer/hombre, pero desde un aspecto intelectual e ideológico. En este cuento todo es ambiguo. La narración se presenta a través de los ojos de la mujer; el lector observa lo que ella contempla. La voz narrativa sumerge al lector en el equívoco experimentado por el personaje femenino, a través de una vivencia extraña y clandestina.

El argumento de este cuento se puede resumir así: Un hombre y una mujer que provienen de un mismo país se encuentran en una embajada extranjera. Comparten algunas horas de intimidad durante las cuales se hace evidente que ambos participan en actividades políticas clandestinas no-identificadas. La mujer tiene acceso a información que valdría para salvar al hombre de un peligro, pero ella no le revela dicha información y el suceso no-identificado se cumple al día siguiente.

Estos dos seres (el hombre y la mujer), que se encuentran y se desencuentran, andan perdidos. El conflicto de este cuento yace en el equívoco del ser y el no ser y en la ejecución de la libertad de elección. Por otro lado, la ambigüedad de esta historia es producida por la ignorancia, el miedo, la secretividad de la protagonista y la

complicidad de la voz narrativa. La voz narrativa deja al lector con la duda de lo que realmente pasó: ¿Quiénes eran realmente ese hombre y esa mujer? ¿Qué relación había entre ellos? ¿En qué consistía el deber? ¿Qué tipo de proyecto subversivo manejaba el hombre para que su retrato terminara en la primera página del periódico? Aunque no existen respuestas concretas a estas preguntas, es claro que en "Equívoco", la autora nos ha querido mostrar la desgarradora lucha de intereses que agobia y confunde a los seres humanos. De ahí su énfasis en la soledad del individuo, en la imposibilidad de comunicación espiritual y sicológica entre los seres humanos, en la dificultad para encontrar la verdad acerca de la vida y los ideales sociopolíticos por medio de una decisión intelectual y en el carácter irremediablemente personal y subjetivo de la existencia.

En "Veinte minutos", último cuento de este libro, percibimos el tiempo como eje central de la narración, como elemento devorador. "Veinte minutos" es una reflexión sobre la vida, las emociones y las heridas que no logran subsanarse con el pasar del tiempo. En este cuento se pasa del presente al pasado narrativo, a través de un montaje de escenas retrospectivas relatadas por un narrador omnisciente.

La protagonista está sumergida en el nerviosismo, la nostalgia y la angustia que le provoca el enfrentamiento con el pasado, pues ella se encuentra con el hombre a quien amó hace 20 años atrás, pero quien la abandonó antes de casarse debido a que ella tenía una enfermedad. El pasado y el presente se unen para llenar un hueco de dudas, incertidumbres y años de espera.

Los ojos verdes del hombre son los que desatan el conflicto interior de la mujer, su crisis. Ella sucumbe ante sus memorias, revelando de esta manera que aún sigue siendo aquella joven enamorada y abandonada. Ante sus recuerdos y multiplicar las imágenes a través de su propia mirada, también se plantea una antigua preocupación. La mujer expresa: "...no sé cómo él me ve aquí y ahora. Si es que me ha visto. Ni cómo me veía antes" (88). Con esta reflexión la mujer confiesa una profunda inquietud por saber lo que el hombre piensa, o sea cómo ella se ve reflejada en los ojos *del otro*, lo cual queda nuevamente inconcluso. Una vez más, la mujer queda en el abandono de la duda. El hombre no la reconoce y ella concluye que es porque no tiene sus ojos: "No me ha reconocido. No me ha visto. Claro... Yo no tengo sus ojos" (88). Esto afirma la visión pesimista que ha heredado del tiempo y la negación de sí misma, porque *el otro* no la reconoce. El dolor y el abandono le anularon la confianza en sí misma, y al final regresa al origen angustioso, sin encontrar solución.

Al igual que toda crisis tiene su fin, negativo o positivo, este libro también tiene un "Epílogo", que se presenta como último cuento de esta obra. Éste resume el agobio causado por las relaciones conflictivas que ya hemos discutido anteriormente. Brevemente recoge los sentimiento de ofuscación por encontrar una salida de la encrucijada de la vida —"sola consigo misma escudriñaba el horizonte perdido en la oscuridad. Pensaba en el desatino y en lo aburrida que había sido su existencia hasta entonces" (91)—; los interminables cuestionamientos a los que se enfrentan los seres humanos —"Preguntábase hasta cuándo duraría ese estado de fastidio que por todo ese tiempo había pasado inadvertido" (91)—; el acoso ante la *mirada del otro* —"Y ... como un intruso, sin aviso ni motivación alguna, para no dejarla tranquila ni un momento, el extraño inició su desconcertante acoso reiterándole día a día" (91)—; la inútil búsqueda de la autenticidad a través del *otro* —"Todo lo que [ella] había dicho... todo cuanto había hecho... todo cuanto había sido... sólo fue importante para sí y para los otros por un instante y en un inmediatez dada. Y después había sentido, inmediatamente también, aquella desolación, la oquedad que no había podido comprender en su justa medida dentro del ámbito de su precario que-hacer" (92)—; y concluye que *el otro* se puede equiparar a una mísera lombriz —"no era posible establecer una diferencia entre el gusano del zafacón que ni dice, ni hace, ni es, y el hombre" (92).

Al leer estos cuentos, somos, de una forma u otra, afectados por ellos, y esto se puede mostrar con reacciones de compasión u horror ante estas historias. En esta narrativa no vemos seres fantásticos sacados de un mundo irreal, sino que percibimos seres inmersos en un mundo palpable. Son personajes sumergidos en un mundo con el cual nos podemos identificar, porque la autora no lo ha inventado, sino que lo ha transcrito en su narrativa. González Maldonado ha capturado el sentimiento trágico de la vida.

La manifestación del sentimiento de crisis se logra a través de la utilización de intertextos literarios, medio-mixto narrativo, elementos pictóricos y las novedosas técnicas narrativas, heredadas de la generación del 45, que le dan forma a la materia del relato. La prosa poética y el estilo expresivo de González Maldonado se acomoda perfectamente a las exigencias individuales de los cuentos: así el discurso narrativo logra producir, en el lector, ecos de angustia, soledad, histeria, confusión metafísica y experiencia estética. Estos cuentos se perfeccionan a través del acentuado ambiente de misterio y atmósfera fantasmal en que se desarrollan los personajes femeninos.

Desde el punto de vista sartriano, podemos señalar que el problema de estas heroínas es precisamente que sus existencias dependen de la *mirada del otro*. Para ellas es necesario mirarse a través del espejo del *otro*, de la mirada del hombre, para afirmar sus existencias y sentirse vivas. Es una dependencia enfermiza, porque es esta mirada la que culmina aniquilándolas. Este conflicto conduce a todas estas protagonistas, de una manera u otra, a perder su autenticidad, pues ellas renuncian a la libertad de realizarse a sí mismas y se pierden en el anonimato que les otorga la presencia del otro.

Todos estos cuentos, de una forma u otra, tienen desenlaces trágicos. Consideramos que *Crisis* es una obra de carácter existencial con perfil trágico porque: posee finales desdichados; los personajes principales son mujeres angustiadas y atrapadas por la *mirada del otro* que les destruye la posibilidad de ejercer su propia libertad; cuestionan el sentido más profundo de la vida y producen placer estético. En estas narraciones es posible ver la afirmación del ser humano por medio de la exposición artística de la angustia, la soledad y el sacrificio del ser humano. González Maldonado tuvo la valentía de presentarnos, a través de estas seis historias, la intimidad del ser humano arrojado en el mundo, víctima de su propia naturaleza finita. Esta obra es un esfuerzo por llegar a la raíz del ser.

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ON IDENTITY, AND "SEPARATION OF WORD FROM HISTORY"

Kayode O. Ogunfolabi

Abdul R. JanMohamed argues that the discourse of race should reflect the distinction between the material and the discursive. Maintaining that the conflation of the two will not produce an adequate understanding of the discourse of race and imperialism, he observes that "the dominant pattern of relations that controls the text within the colonial context is determined by economic and political imperatives and changes, such as the development of slavery, power- and interest-relations in all colonial societies is the manichean opposition between the putative superiority of the European and the supposed inferiority of the native" (82). The interesting thing about his argument is not only the manichean division of the colonizer and the colonized into binary oppositional categories, but also the distinction he tries to make between text and material reality. He intensifies his argument with the critique of Homi Bhabha by saying that "Bhabha's unexamined conflation allows him to circumvent entirely the dense history of the material conflict between Europeans and natives and to focus on colonial discourse as if it existed in a vacuum ... . he represses the political history of colonialism, which is inevitably sedimented in its discourse" (79). In essence, his critique of Bhabha is that Bhabha privileges text over reality. He states more vigorously that "[d]istinguishing between material and discursive practices also allows us to understand more clearly the contradictions between the covert and overt aspects of colonialism. While the covert purpose is to exploit the colony's natural resources thoroughly and ruthlessly through the various imperialist material practices, the overt aim, as articulated by colonialist discourse, is to 'civilize' the savage, to introduce him to all the benefits of Western cultures" (81). Even though he agrees that there is a symbiotic relationship between the "discursive and material practices of imperialism," the position still stems from the notion of separateness of text and reality. Therefore, the symbiotic relationship conforms to his larger

manichean opposition. One cannot but observe that JanMohamed does not take the role of language into consideration in his argument. He fails to understand that the reality he wants desperately to capture only comes to being through the use of language. Another important point to note is that his conception of text is faulty. He sees text as distinctly separate from reality in the discussion of race and imperialism. Text, to him, seems to be the written book or language as a realm far removed from material representation.

Paul Gilroy, in *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1996), acknowledges the fact that identity should not be essentialized or sought as a form of originary. This view is more vehemently argued by Edouard Glissant, who rejects binary oppositions of white and black but accepts and argues for an in-between space of the Creole. In spite of Gilroy's rejection of race and identity as essence or originary, he regards the postmodernist and deconstructionist perspectives as preventing the possibility of politics and he calls this "the unhappy polar opposition between a squeamish, nationalist essentialism and a skeptical, saturnalia pluralism which makes the impure world of politics literally unthinkable" (102). He added, "identity can be understood neither as a fixed essence nor as a vague and utterly contingent construction to be reinvented by the will and whim of aesthetes, symbolists and language gamers" (102). Gilroy is skeptical of postmodernist and deconstructionist perspectives, which emphasize language. However, Gilroy fails to understand language as the process through which race and identity can be expressed. Reality does not have an existence outside the realm of language. Again, we encounter in Gilroy, the separation of text from reality. We can then ask, what is text?

Jacques Derrida believes that nationalism, language, politics, race, identity, politics and cultural representations are a form of writing.[1] His basis for this claim is that they do not express an absolute truth. It is the impossibility of arriving at an absolute truth that makes them a form of writing and it is this writing that he calls text. He therefore differentiates between "book" and writing. He sees the "book" as an expression of totality of an unmediated truth and then claims that "[t]he idea of the book, which always refers to a natural totality, is profoundly alien to the sense of writing" (95). What then is the nature of writing? Richard Rorty maintains that "[f]or Derrida, writing always leads to more writing, and more, and still more–just as

[1] See Richard Rorty.

history does not lead to Absolute Knowledge or the Final Struggle, but to more history, and more, and still more" (94). Texts are about the impossibility of an absolute truth. In our discussion of identity and race, text becomes pertinent in the sense that it makes us aware of the fact that identity and race are not unmediated reality and they are never finished. They partake of the quality of text and by that we need to understand that identity and race should not be assumed to have a mimetic representation in our discourse. That is, we should not assume that they are unproblematic. He further argues, "[b]ooks tell the truth about things. Texts comment on the other texts, and we should stop trying to test texts for accuracy of representation" (95). Derrida also maintains that we should not see the text as eventually leading to a referent outside of it. In essence, "[t]here is nothing outside of the text" (96). This claim is important for the fact that it acknowledges what Abdul R. JanMohamed and Paul Gilroy deny, that the word or the text is separate from some outside reality. Therefore, identity and race are texts; the discourses that they embody are always in progress and never finished because they keep referring to other texts in a syntagmatic paradigm where it is not possible to reach an absolute truth and representation but an approximate truth. This quality of text is also the nature of language. Meaning is always deferred and therefore identity and race, expressed through language cannot but remain an approximate truth. The main purpose of this paper is to show that language is important to the construction of identities. I therefore argue that no identity exists outside of the realm of language. It is important to add that, even though I argue that identity does not exist outside language, no racial identity can be fully known and no race or identity is stable. Identity partakes of the "nature" of language in which signification is beyond any stable system, and therefore articulating identity through language manifests a desire to capture the "true" meaning, "authentic culture" and "original race," elements which contrarily are always resisting, and will continue to resist, a coherent and unified representation.

The main works that will serve as reference for this article are Homi Bhabha's 1994 *The Location of Culture* and Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s 1986 "*Race*," *Writing*, *and Difference*. The perspectives that this article will take are post-structuralist, postmodernist and deconstructionist. This move is important because any racial identity or representation opposed to text situates itself as a center, and being a center is to be an authority and be authoritative. Again, it is most common that this centralized racial identification represses its own internal splitting and doubling. It shows what it is but does not reveal its entropy; thereby, it denies other "truths" and ambivalence that is

characteristic of all identities. Racial homogeneity tends towards essentialism and it romanticizes false origin and racial sanctity. The postmodernist, post-structuralist and deconstructionist perspectives are skeptical of any centralized authority or knowledge. Since centralized knowledge works by passing itself as natural, these theoretical positions are committed to revealing the alternatives and difference repressed within such cultures and knowledge. In addition, they will show that meaning, through language, is deferred and cannot be reached, and since identity comes to life through language, it shares this nature of language, that is, that meaning is always deferred. In the same way, identity cannot be fully grasped or contained in any coherent sense. Identity is expressed through language all the time, but will always elude the enunciating subject. Identity is performed in a permanent temporality and the immediacy and spontaneity require repetition that is always in the present.

Kwame Anthony Appiah, in "The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race," (1986) argues that race is an illusion. He claims that based on genetic analysis most of the genetic characteristics in a race can be found in another. He added that the genetic differences within a particular race are more than the differences that may exist between races. The implication of his contribution is that biology becomes an insignificant factor in determining racial origin, differences and characteristics. Other differences in social, economic, political and cultural institutions he claims are not determined by biological factors. It follows that the colonialists who invoked their racial difference and the inferiority of the "other" in order to colonize them had no "real" proof to back up their rhetoric of racial difference. What they have called race is an illusion as Appiah has shown. In spite of the apparent soundness of Appiah's arguments, his conclusion begs other questions. For instance, if race is an illusion, how is it that the claim of racial difference worked for the imposition of imperial authority and European cultures on the colonies? In addition, what exactly made this illusion so pervasive if it is non-existent? If race were an illusion why did Europeans invoke it to justify imperialism and colonialism? The atrocities of colonialism, racism and imperialism remain a black spot in world history. In dismissing race as an illusion, it is important to consider and challenge the atrocities committed in the name of racial difference. Missing from Appiah's argument is the recognition of the power of race as a construct that goes along with the military weapons used to physically subjugate the colonies and psychologically to contemn their humanity. Racial construct does not necessarily occupy a position of priority over military subjugation, but they both go hand in hand, and one may not

be able to determine which one is stronger than the other. Amiri Baraka makes a statement that is worth considering, asserting that "[t]he racial chauvinism of the so-called Literary Canon justifies the military cannon that enforced colonialism throughout the third world yesterday or the invasion of Panama, Grenada, and the destruction of Iraq today. Academic or artistic chauvinism explains economic and social exploitation" (238). Intellectual production becomes the site of racial chauvinism, and the claim to racial superiority of self over the "other" in literary production serves to enforce the economic interests of the colonialists. The economic and imperial agenda are important, but the literary production of this time, the writing that justified racial distinctions, even though "race" might be an illusion, is as important as economic and political interests. Since it is through writing that racial identity is asserted, we are compelled to shift attention to the language of both the colonizer and the colonized rather than dwell on the history of colonialism that has been displaced both in terms of space and time and therefore cannot be reduced to any coherent or totalized representation.

Like Kwame Anthony Appiah, John Garvey argues that race does not arise as a result of biological factors. However, he moves a little further and takes a view different from Appiah's. While Appiah maintains that different social and political characteristics are not determined by biological and particularly genetic influence, Garvey claims that racial difference is a result of social factors and environmental circumstances. Although he argues that the lines of race are not stable and can be drawn and redrawn, he fails to take language into account. He assumes that the social institutions arise, and are used to racial ends, but does not state how racial difference shares the characteristic of language in a way that racial identity is deferred and never fully known just as signification is deferred.

In their response to Jacques Derrida's "Racism's Last Word" (1986), Anne McClintock and Rob Nixon state that "[i]s it indeed the word, *apartheid*, or is it Derrida himself, operating here in 'another regime of abstraction' ... removing the word from its place in the discourse of South African racism, raising it to another power and setting separation itself apart? Derrida is repelled by the word, yet seduced by its divisiveness, the division in the inner structure of the term itself which he elevates to a state of being" (340). They take Derrida on more boldly when they assert that "[t]he essay's opening analysis of the word *apartheid* is, then symptomatic of a severance of word from history" (340). Their claims come out of the notion that the word necessarily reflects its referent. We can understand their urgent

purpose in proving that the word necessarily reflects the outward reality, but this is not all there is to capturing that reality. They fail to take the enunciatory process into consideration in the articulation of racial identity and the violence and atrocities carried out in the name of race difference. In addition, one feature of language, which they have not considered, is that signification is deferred and cannot be reduced to any coherent form because language itself is metaphorical and therefore is open to various interpretations that would not allow a stable reference.

Word and History; Text and Reality

It is important to reiterate the central idea of this article. Identity comes to being only through language and there is no identity or reality beyond language. In other words, racial identity can be realized through the enunciatory process and there is no reality beyond this text and context. The spoken word, like the written word, is also a text. It would be an illusion to assume that the spoken word is authentic and can express fully one's identity without raising the question of how much of the person's identity is expressed in the text, whether written or spoken.

When McClintock and Nixon state that Derrida separates the word from history, a corollary of it is the separation of text from reality. They have assumed that the history of South Africa's racism can be grasped by the very texts through which they are expressed. This argument, though tempting, is trapped within the Saussurean hegemony. McClintock and Nixon operate with the principle that the sign and its referent have a structure that is understandable and noncontroversial. The irony of the argument is the creation of binary opposition. That is, while they claim that Derrida separates the word from history, the Saussurean structuralist linguistics relies on the principle of binary opposition, which, while trying to establish a correspondence between the sign and referent, word and reality, word and history, ends up dividing them as binary oppositions in which the "signifier" has a stable "signified." The implication is that they have separated text from reality without acknowledging the fact that language only tries to grasp reality in an endless struggle. Again, it seems the "word" is taken as normal and not problematic and this tendency is informed by the ideology of realism that tries to pass itself off as normal and therefore refusing to reveal its process of construction. For instance, McClintock and Nixon go a long way to detail the history of South African racism. The question to ask is, are

these details unmediated? The following excerpt from Eagleton will throw light on the issue:

> [i]n the ideology of realism or representation, words are felt to link up with their thoughts or objects in essentially right and uncontrovertible ways: the word becomes the only proper way of viewing this object or expressing this thought.
>
> The realist or representational sign ... effaces its own status as a sign, in order to foster the illusion that we are perceiving reality without its intervention. The sign as ["reflection"], ["expression"] or ["representation"] denies the *productive* character of language: it suppresses the fact that we only have a ["world"] at all because we have language to signify it, and that what we count as ["real"] is bound up with what alterable structures of signification we live within. (Eagleton 118)

It is important to observe that there is no reality outside of the text, or outside of language, because it is only through language that identity can be signified, not in any totalized form, but in its constant resisting of totality, coherence and unity. As a result of the place of language in signifying identity, to claim that it is possible to separate the word from history or reality is to assume that language has a systematized structure and the relationship between the signifier and the outward reality, that is the signified, is smooth and symbiotic. It also assumes that the relationship between language and history is a coherent one. If we examine this statement, "[f]or the dominant ideology of race in South Africa proved so insistent that it could not be suppressed entirely, even at the level of discourse" (McClintock and Nixon 343), we are tempted to believe that South Africa's racism is obviously present in its discourse. We need to acknowledge the fact that language and the discourse of South Africa's racism are attempts to represent racism that cannot be fully represented. That racism and identity cannot be fully represented does not mean that they have existence outside of the discourse. Instead, identity, reality and history have no existence outside the discourse or outside the text. They can only be signified through the text and we must admit the limitation of language: the inability to signify an absolute reality. Therefore, our commitment will be to continue to strive towards this total knowledge of reality that is impossible to reach or achieve. Rather than seeing post-structuralist and deconstructionist models as tending towards abstractions, they actually make reality, history and ultimately identity and signification possible although not in an absolute sense. Terry Eagleton says, "deconstruction is for [Derrida] an ultimately political practice, an attempt to dismantle the logic by which a particular system of thought, and behind that a whole system of political structures and social

institutions, maintains its force" (128). Instead of seeing the text as an abstraction different from reality, it is a means by which dominant political hegemonies can be challenged and subverted. Although one can raise an objection that textual commitment does not advocate physical subversion or military attack in order to right the wrongs of racial prejudice, we should be aware that racial prejudice and all forms of hegemonic forces rely on the production of knowledge that makes physical, economic, and political injustice possible in the first place. This is the reason why we need to challenge such forces at the discursive level, and to assert that the discursive level does not signify a space without social, political and cultural signification. In fact, challenging social injustice is possible in the discursive space. Eagleton says further, "[u]nable to break the structures of state power, post-structuralism found it possible instead to subvert the structures of language" (123). Language here does not mean the *logos* but rather the discourse of power that justifies the authority of an oppressive regime or knowledge. The rhetoric of legitimation needs to be deconstructed.

In the same way, language becomes the tool for any group of people justifying their identity and they must acknowledge the complexity of language and identity as not a given but as an experience that cannot be fully grasped. Identity is not removed from everyday politics that is made possible by language. When Derrida claims, "there is nothing beyond the text" (366) we would understand that racial identity can only be signaled, contested and reformulated through the facility of language. Derrida says further: "it so happens that the text which various deconstructionists are speaking of today is not at all the *paper* or the *paperback....* If there is nothing '*beyond* the text,' in this new sense, then that leaves room for the most open kinds of political … practice and pragmatics. It even makes them more necessary than ever" (368). Since the text has no fixed reference and it is writing about other writings, there cannot be an absolute truth. The word cannot express identity in an unmediated way and yet it is through the word that we can engage identity and race. Someone who says, "I am Bantu" could not express all there is to know about being Bantu. It is open to many interpretations and at the same time the utterance is the only means through which one can express one's racial identity. When one confronts the hegemony that tries to silence one's racial identity and racial crimes involved in the process, the continual repetition of the word, even though it cannot express identity and racial injustice in totality, reminds a person or a people about themselves and they continually formulate and reformulate their identity. They also decipher and forestall the attempt of

hegemony to suppress the discourse that attempts to unmask its ideology. Derrida states: "... in spite of their efforts to 'retire' this 'sufficiently stigmatized' term, the renown has not been effaced: it has gotten more and more sinister. This is history, this is the relation between words and history. It's the thing and the concept they should have retired, and not just the word, if they had wanted to put an end to the sinister renown" (360). By using the word *apartheid* the South Africans not only try to define the racial relations between them and the white minority, they also constantly remind themselves and other people, within and outside of South Africa, about the physical reality of racial segregation. The word does not mean anything in itself. It is the concept that it signifies that the people remember and understand. It is not the physical landscape or the physical experience of history that has been spatially and temporally displaced that the word expresses. Rather, it is the concept that the word conveys and it is the concept that the people understand. In the famous example of the word-tree, and the object-tree, there is an arbitrary relationship. When the word is said, one does not immediately see the object but one understands the concept. Just in the same way that there are so many trees that one may find it difficult to understand which one is the referent, identity becomes fluid and refuses definitive categorization and epistemological reduction. If this situation is so, then identity, history and reality do not mean the actual event or circumstance. They cannot be spatially and temporally contained. But the concept is what is generated through the use of language. Identity is therefore inscribed in language but not in totality because they are volatile and always refuse containment in the same way that signification is constantly deferred.

The Theater of Identity

At this point, we should note that identity is not a pre-given entity that remains the same throughout time and space. To see identity as pre-given is to determine what it is before it is experienced. Rather, because identity is constantly shifting, never stable, it is repeated, constantly performed through language and often called performance or performativity. Performativity is most necessary because of shifting boundaries of identity across time and space. Homi Bhabha observes:

> [f]or identification, identity is never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality. The discursive conditions of this psychic image of identification will be clarified if we think of the perilous perspective of the image

> itself. For the image–as point of identification–marks the site of an ambivalence. Its representation is always spatially split–it makes *present* something that is *absent*–and temporally deferred: it is a representation of a time that is always elsewhere, a repetition. (51)

He further notes that "the function of theory within the political process becomes double-edged. It makes us aware that our political referents and priorities–the people, the community, class struggle, anti-racism, gender difference, the assertion of an anti-imperialist, black or third perspective–are not there in some primordial, naturalistic sense" (26). Since identity is neither a primordial existence nor a pre-given category, the only way it can be signaled is through the process of enunciation, which is also the site of ambivalence. The site of enunciation is the site of ambivalence because the "I" of enunciation is different from the "I" of the enunciating subject. In other words, the personality, character and life of the enunciating subject cannot be fully expressed in the "I" of the enunciation. As a result, identity is never total or unified. The inadequacy of language to express an absolute identity requires such identity to be constantly enunciated, to be repeated and performed, giving rise to the politics of performativity. Therefore, "[t]erms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition" (2). In conceiving of identity, one needs to look beyond static representation because the natural universe or the physical space is not the site of identity formation. Its site, as said earlier, is the enunciating process where identity is performed and is repeated because of language's inability to capture the "essence" of identity in the utterance. The performance in the enunciating process is very important because the utterance tries to express a concept that is spatially and temporally displaced. Identity, too, is expressed but the expression only signals the absence. Invariably, language tries to capture a totalized image of identity in the performance and repetition of the self.

Conclusion

This article tries to demonstrate that one cannot sustain the claim that there exists a one-to-one correspondence between word and referent or that identity is a pre-given category that is not mediated by language. It suggests that there is no context outside the boundary of language through which identity can be signaled. There is nothing that is beyond the text. It is a misconception to think that the

text is the pages of a book. The text is inscribed with political, economic and cultural signification, which is not tied to any physical reality. It is also important to say that identity is produced at the site of enunciation that is marked by ambivalence. It is through this ambivalence that identity must be recognized as an experience that is always elusive, always in a flux, always becoming, and always refusing reduction to any certitude.

Rather than assert that the text separates itself from history and reality, identity comes into being at the site of enunciation. It is through performance that identity can be produced in its repetition and it is a realm where politics of resistance becomes enabled. If one considers Houston A. Baker's argument in "Caliban's Triple Play" (1986), there is that entanglement between those who differentiate text from reality. By proposing another space where performance is possible (the third of the triple) there is the opportunity for resistance not necessarily physical acts of violence but the deconstruction of the discourse of hegemony. Physical acts of violence have little to do with a regime that is strengthened not only by its military arsenal but also by its discursive apparatus. Baker, quoting James Baldwin, notes, "[p]rotest…preserves the always already arrangements of power" (389). Instead, the deconstruction of hegemonic discourse dismantles the logic of its power and so when Baker quotes Shakespeare thus:

> You taught me language; and my profit on 't
> Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
> For learning me your language!

In the "third play" the discourse of the dominant power is turned on its head just as Caliban has done here. The process is what Homi Bhabha describes as "the mime that haunts mimesis" (176).

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HYBRID MOMENTS IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE SATANIC VERSES*

Hugo Ríos

"Hybrids open up the door"
Misfits

How does newness come into the world? How is it born? Of what fusions, translations, conjoinings is it made? (*Satanic Verses* 8) With these words, Rushdie initiates the discussion of the hybrid in his novel *The Satanic Verses*. In terms of cultural identity there is nothing absolutely new in the world: newness then, enters the world as a process of combination or in Rushdie's words as "a bit of this and a bit of that" meet and mingle; Melange, hotpotch" (*Imaginary Homelands* 394).

In his essay "In Good Faith," published in his collection *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie states that *The Satanic Verses* "celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization and fears the absolutism of the pure" (*Imaginary Homelands* 398). This is Rushdie's definition of hybrid; one he embraces in his novels. Although the theme is present throughout his work, only *The Satanic Verses* can be read as a master manual in which Rushdie inscribes his theories about the role of the hybrid in postcolonial societies.

The narrative structure of the novel is based on a series of events narrated in various forms thus forming a web of reference: dreams and film-like scenes that dissolve any straight forward attempt to read the novel. The main characters are Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha but by no means does the narrative focus exclusively on these two characters. The text effectively distributes the narrative voice and elements among several secondary characters that usurp the main story line and provide different reading and interpretations of the events. In more than one way these characters, in the best Borgesian fashion, work as mirror images of each other. Saladin and

Gibreel are also one character, the migrant, and as we will see later on, they are faces of the hybrid. Rushdie avoids the traditional good and evil dichotomy with his two characters; instead they are roles, phases of a whole being. The theme of the migrant caught between east and west is an extremely important topic in Rushdie's fiction and in *The Satanic Verses* plays a decisive role in shaping out the intricacies of the plot. Once again the figure of the author contaminates the text because Rushdie also happens to be in the same place as his characters: he is also a stranger in a strange land and perhaps the prototype for his fictional creatures.

Most of the problems that Saladin and Gibreel encounter are the result of the postcolonial condition of the immigrant. In this particular case, London is the goal, the Promised Land for these two Indian immigrants. A goal in this context should not be interpreted as a finishing line but rather as another beginning, a new and more challenging point of departure.

The novel begins with Saladin and Gibreel falling out of the sky, after the airliner that was carrying them over London airspace explodes. Layers of the fantastic cover a realist landscape in order to literalize the roughness of the descent into a foreign land, an alien landing. Another reading of the incident would see it as a more straightforward fantastic strategy employed as a metaphor of the postcolonial condition. The characters are not presented to the reader; they are rather thrown into the fictional world of the novel. This hyperbolic nature of the postcolonial is what Rawdon Wilson identifies as "the abrupt entrance of the postcolonial subjects into the imperial center" (221). The tense situation on the plane, the explosion and the fall are only metaphors of the immigration/ transmigration from one self to another and the xenophobic barriers that deny access to the real self.

Even though Rushdie's characters fall together, their difference is clearly established during the fall and also, by the different paths they choose, they are unmistakably defined. One of these paths of difference is the figure of the enigmatic Rosa Diamond, the eighty-year old woman who finds Gibreel and protects him while Saladin is taken away by the police. This old lady lives on her distant memories, visited every night by the ghost of the Battle of Hastings. The unnamed narrator mentions that she lived in Argentina with her husband, Henry Diamond, until they had to flee the country to avoid scandal. Rosa could very well be a crossroads, the encounter between past and present, between different cultures but for Gibreel she represents the mystique, the seduction of the foreigner by the imperial center.

Rosa's stories represent the fact that life-saving stories are not the exclusive property of the periphery but that the center can also use them to maintain their hegemony in place. Rosa uproots Gibreel, leading him astray from his path/story and pasting him in her own story and disrupting his identity. By taking him out of context, Rosa disseminates his social being while creating a condition of acceptance towards the new self and rejection towards his own. Gibreel does not contaminate Rosa's stories with his foreignness because her stories, set in an exotic locale, have established the role that he is set out to play. Only when Rosa dies is he free to recover his path. As a victim of Orientalism there are only limited roles for him to play and the narrator comments this situation as follows: "…in an ancient land like England there was no room for new stories…," suggesting a closed canon. His personality is struggling between what he is (immigrant) and what he represents (Hindu Deity) and the exotic roles Rosa had for him. Any attempt of Gibreel to reconstruct his self is now contaminated by his encounter with the Canon.

After his exhausting encounter with history and tradition (Rosa) Gibreel suffers a series of metamorphoses that reflect his inner turmoil and conflicts. Back in his homeland, Gibreel was a famous actor. He starred in several "theologicals." A theological is a film based on the life of Hindu deities. When the identity crisis starts, the diving line between his own self and the characters he plays become blurred.

Gibreel's sorry state is the result of his inability to transcend the gap between cultures and inhabit this space as a hybrid. Since he is not attached to any culture, he keeps bouncing between rejections, disassociated and uprooted. Surrounded by light beings, perhaps equally uprooted, equally at odds with their identity like Rekha Merchant and Alleluia Cone, he ends up committing suicide, putting an end to his struggle, finding his country in death: "…Gibreel put the barrel of the gun into his mouth; and pulled the trigger; he was free" (*Satanic Verses* 546).

Saladdin Chamcha's story is the exact opposite of Gibreel's. When he lands in England he is not so lucky as his partner-in-flight. Immigration agents pick him up as soon as he lands and he suffers endless interrogation and beatings. Like Gibreel, the instability (in this case caused by violence and rejection) triggers metamorphic states where Saladin's true self is denied and transformed. The narrator introduces these chances by employing a common magic realist technique: familiarization of the uncanny. This technique is a reversal of the strategies explained by the Russian formalists. Victor Shlovksy, in "Art as Technique," states that common objects can be defamiliarized.

Defamiliarization is "the technique to make objects unfamiliar, to make forms difficult, to increase difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged" (Richter 741). As Chamcha is questioned by the police he grows horns, a huge penis, and a traditional devil-like tail. He also emanates an acrid sulfur-like smell also associated with infernal beings. In this diabolical transformation, Rushdie saturates the text with innumerable allusions and parodies. For instance, the figure of the devil is an extremely important reference, since the devil is an outsider in monotheist religions and many characters identify with the devil as part of the xenophobic myths employed to destabilize the postcolonial condition of the immigrant.

Chamcha's metamorphosis and the echo of his name immediately bring to mind Kafka's Samsa. According to Paul Brians, the name Saladdin Chamcha is an oxymoron because Saladin is a traditional heroic name and to create contrast this sublime name is paired with spoonseller (8).

The way in which the narrator represents the attitude that his captors take against Chamcha in a way reflects the position of a foreigner when he is initially confronted by the ruling class. "…he crouched down in his little world, trying to make himself smaller than smaller, in the hope that he might eventually disappear altogether and so regain his freedom" (*Satanic Verses* 162). In the eyes of the immigration officer, this transformation is not fantastic. It is a simple case of a foreigner showing his true self. Even though Chamcha has British nationality, he is considered a foreigner by the officers: "You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilized standards" (*Satanic Verses* 159). Interestingly, at the beginning of the novel, Chamcha detests his roots. He is a privileged immigrant with a recognized position and prestige; he rejects his roots to the extent of shortening his name from Chamchawalla to a more acceptable (or western) Chamcha. Or as Michael Gorra states: "An Indian-born professional mimic, a man of a thousand voices, who in private life has remade himself as an Englishman—accent, bowler hat, member of the Garrick Club" (87). This is why, when he is kept captive, he claims that he is not a "fishinboat sneaker in." Later on, even when he is enjoying the hospitality of the Shaandaar café he angrily retorts, "I'm not your kind, you're not my people. I've spent half my life trying to get away from people like you" (*Satanic Verses* 290). Chamcha is not pleased when he is linked to the Indian community living in England but when pressed by the police to reveal his true name he is confronted with a terrible reality that destroys his idea of his English self: "What kind of name is that for an Englishman" (*Satanic Verses* 163). In this particular case

a wrong name creates a series of events that change forever the life of the characters.

Another character-defining instance in the novel occurs in the hospital scene. This scene is of a great importance since it shows how an imperial center treats its colonial subjects. Chamcha is sleeping in the hospital when he is suddenly awakened by someone. This mysterious being is a manticore: half man, half tiger. During his conversation with the manticore, Saladin discovers that the hospital is full of fantastic hybrid beasts, such as chimeras and satyrs. According to the manticore these mutations are the responsibility of "someone." Certainly they are the result of contact between a foreigner and the powerful renaming machine of the Empire. Chamcha is interested in knowing about the process employed in the transformations. The manticore is quick in providing an answer: "They describe us … they have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (*Satanic Verses* 168). This statement captures the power of stereotype over a subjugated mind. The one that controls the describing discourse and language controls the subject. Later on, when Chamcha escapes from the hospital authorities, he receives shelter from a Hindu restaurant, The Shaandaar. It is fascinating to see how Chamcha, a proud Englishman in his own eyes, has to escape from his fellow citizens and can only find refuge with the people he rejects. Even there his metamorphosis continues. He keeps on growing, so much that his figure transcends the world of physical reality and starts invading the world of dreams. This is essentially how "newness enters the world." The hybrid, consciously or unconsciously, starts absorbing characteristics from the surrounding cultures, growing to such extent that no single culture can contain the cultural cross-references that inhabit this new being. This rupture not only habilitates the hybrid but also enables him/her to inhabit the time/space zone that is created, akin to what Homi Bhabha called the "third space" (36).

One of the most challenging moments for the establishment of Chamcha's new identity occurs when he finds out about the success of Gibreel in England. A powerful hatred consumes him. He finds an outlet for releasing his anger in the destruction of the wax figures in the Hot Wax Club, a local discotheque. These effigies of English political leaders are burnt anyway by the Indian Pinkwalla during disco nights. As Frantz Fanon asserted in *The Wretched of the Earth*, violence is sometimes an effective method used to release the frustrations of the colonized mind but the type of violence presented in Rushdie's text does not exactly fit the form of Chamcha's hatred is repressed and only released against wax figures, not only against the political effigies mentioned before but surprisingly against the figures

of important immigrant leaders. The result of this melting is one solid mass, formed out of the remains of the different set of bodies. Once again, this incident is an apt metaphor of the hybrid condition. After the Hot Wax episode, the bestial transformation stops and Saladin returns to his human form. But a different metamorphosis now ensues. He starts reevaluating his cultural contexts. He relinquishes his rejection of his cultural background and his love of the imperial center. He reaches ground zero. Or as the narrator explains: "he would have to construct everything from scratch, would have to invent the ground beneath his feet, before he could take a step" (*Satanic Verses* 132). This is the station of the hybrid. This new cultural being builds an innovative time/space continuum because after the transformation he or she can no longer inhabit a traditional discourse. He or she sets out to rebuild his self and along the way, write a new history quite removed from the previous models of history. Now that he knows who he is, Chamcha can make peace with his past and face his future. In order to lay to rest the ghost of his previous history, Chamcha must make peace with his dying father. He decides to return "home" although the whole way he questions where home is supposed to be. "What strange meanings words were taking on. Only a few days ago that back home had rung false" (*Satanic Verses* 514). He also finds the sounds that his words were supposed to have and that he meticulously hid away while living in England. Among the words that savors again the sound of his original unabridged name leaves him a confusing and yet satisfying sensation: "began to find the sound of his full, un-englished name pleasing." Later on he meets an old friend, Zeeny, who delivers the coup de grâce to his reconstructing bid:

> If you are serious about shaking your foreignness….then don't fall into some kind of rootless limbo instead…you should really try and make an adult acquaintance with this place, this time…try and embrace this city…the actual existing place. Make its faults your own. Become its creature. (541)

The hybrid state is not a "rootless limbo" and the hybrid does not lack roots. It is the other way around. The hybrid selects his roots. In order to do so, he or she must make peace with his origins and select what he or she wants to use as materials for his/her new being. Chamchas's final turn around is the exact opposite of Gibreel who, even when he flirted with his angelic powers, could not find enough elements to construct a solid suicide-proof personality.

Two men fall from the London sky. One of them flirts with history and confuses his path along the endless forest of symbols, acting out in order to achieve acceptance. The other one rejects his roots

but through a series of painful experiences is able to come through as a different version of his old self. Both represent stations of the hybrid, because both choose similar ways to try to adapt but they are caught in the machine and in the end only one of them is able to see the light.

Chamchawalla's last thoughts define the closure of *The Satanic Verses*: "if the old refuse to die, the new could not be born" (547). This statement right at the end of the novel connects with the first "To be born again…first you have to die" (3). Saladin died and was reborn in Salahuddin, hybrid citizen, craftsman of the space/time zone, the interstice of the hybrids.

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ANIMALS AS 18TH-CENTURY TEXT: THE CONTEXTUALIZED PRACTICE OF GOLDSMITH'S WRITING AND GAINSBOROUGH'S PAINTING

Lewis Caccia, Jr.

All animals tell a story. The story may be about themselves, their masters, the values within a geographical framework, the economic affordances and constraints of a temporal dimension, or any combination of these. For example, a dog trembling on a porch along a rough city street where windows are boarded up will convey different messages than a dog relaxing in an air-conditioned doghouse situated well beyond closed gates. Likewise, two different conclusions can be drawn when a rare Baltimore oriole or a chicken hawk occupies a tree branch in northeastern Ohio. While driving, one might reflect on cows differently when they are in a pasture than when one has escaped and is lumbering along the road. Moreover, one can be sure a horse is serving a different purpose when it is sweaty, physically undefined, and confined to a muddy pen than when it is groomed, prominently toned, and grazing on green grass.

In Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*, animals are used in some scenes to help advance the story. The use of animals develops the plot, defines the characters, details the setting, and maintains the humorous tone. Individually, the different scenes convey important points about the role of animals in eighteenth-century life and about socioeconomic class issues of that era. Furthermore, the socioeconomic issues reflected by Goldsmith's literature have also been illustrated in country paintings, particularly the paintings of Thomas Gainsborough. The similarity of the messages conveyed by the two genres and their accurate depiction of real life—as verified by modern, non-fiction accounts—truly indicate that Goldsmith shaped his text to create not only an entertaining comedy but also a narrative art.

As the plot emerges, birds are used to introduce the primary conflict of the story, the conflict between Dr. Primrose and Squire Thornhill. Primrose recalls, "our tranquility was soon disturbed by the report of a gun just by us, and immediately after, a man was seen bursting through the hedge to take up the game he had killed. This sportsman was the Squire's chaplain, who had shot one of the blackbirds that so agreeably entertained us" (43). In *Oliver Goldsmith Revisited*, Peter Dixon elaborates on this conflict between the protagonist and antagonists: "it shows up the callousness of Thornhill, and the crassness of the chaplain" (82). On a larger level, this scene represents a conflict between two classes of society that is also explained by Dixon: "This pastoral scene, like others later, exists to be shattered: the calm and sanctity . . . is rudely demolished" (81). Thus, even within the country setting, values still typically differ according to one's socioeconomic class. By taking time to listen to the birds rather than hastening to shoot them, Primrose's family can be representing the simple pleasures of experience while the Squire could be demonstrating the materialistic pleasure of possession.

Goldsmith's depiction of how the idea of pleasure represents a difference between two social classes rather than just between two people or values themselves is echoed in some of Gainsborough's paintings. In particular, *Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door* (Cormack 181) features a rural family relaxing in the evening twilight. This painting extends beyond mere physical description to offer a visual *commentary* that William Paley explains in *Reasons for Contentment Addressed to the Labouring Part of the British Republic*, dated 1792:

> If the face of happiness can anywhere be seen, it is in the summer evening of a country village, where, after the labours of the day, each man at his door, with his children, amongst his neighbours, feels his frame and his heart at rest, everything about him pleased and pleasing, and a delight and a complacency in his sensations far beyond what either luxury or diversion can afford. The rich want this; and they want what they must never have . . . (Cormack 180)

The response of the rich lends greater credibility to Paley's interpretation. Malcolm Cormack explains, the rich "did not buy representations of [this sentiment] from Gainsborough. His landscapes ... were not well appreciated" (180). Hence, the use of discretionary income is as indicative of eighteenth-century class values as it is of the tendencies of the different economic demographics existing today.

In addition to suggesting a difference between the values of two socioeconomic classes, Goldsmith's scene also implies a deference to the upper classes. To understand this interpretation, consider the scene following the shooting of the blackbird. Specifically, the chap-

Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door. Collection of the University of California, Los Angeles; Gift of Mrs. James Kennedy. UCLA Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

lain offers Sophia the game he had just killed. In response, "she was going to refuse, but a private look from her mother soon induced her to correct the mistake and accept his present, though with some reluctance" (*Vicar* 43). Sophia's initial refusal of the gift and her mother's urging to accept it may represent how young people are less conscious of social classes while adults usually defer to higher classes.

Certainly, there was much deference to the upper classes when it came to hunting. Stella Margetson explains in *Leisure and Pleasure*

in the Eighteenth Century, "though the English upper classes were far less autocratic than their continental neighbors, the shooting of game was a privilege they guarded very closely" (124). This exclusivity of hunting rights was even mandated by law:

> No one not having an estate worth L40 per annum or goods and chattels worth L200 was allowed by the Game Act to go out . . . to kill partridges, pheasants, hares, and rabbits . . . which developed during the century into a disastrous war between the rich and poor, causing much ill-feeling and much hardship to the unprivileged section of the community. (124)

The ramifications of this legal disparity damaged more than the feelings of the lower classes. With the laws created to favor the "richer neighbors," the rural hunter was now "forbidden to kill the plump fowls of the air which might have kept his wife and children from starvation. . . . The sport was really his necessity" (124). Consequently, the necessity to eat inspired many of the rural poor to take up poaching, which stretched the already existing tensions between the wealthy and poor. Ironically, the idea of poaching became publicly romanticized much like the gunfights of America's Old West. "It had an irresistible fascination . . . and a very old country labourer asserted with dignity: 'Us don't see no harm in it, for the Bible says the wild birds is sent for the poor man as well as the quality'" (125). With these hunting conflicts in mind, Goldsmith may have been motivated by the romanticism in establishing the humor of someone enjoying birds getting into a conflict with someone who hunted them. Likewise, he may have been motivated by the serious ramifications of the laws in using the humor to subtly critique the laws of the time. Collectively, the truths of Gainsborough's visual interpretation of two different value systems and of Margetson's account of the differing laws for the rich and poor suggest Goldsmith's bird scene as a truly multi-faceted depiction.

As the plot thickens, the Primroses' personal shortcomings are emphasized when they are swindled out of horses. Two chapters beforehand, Goldsmith carefully prepares this characterization by first establishing the importance of horses to the pastoral way of life. Specifically, while twenty-first-century society enjoys horses as pets or grooms them for shows, Primrose's plans demonstrate how eighteenth-century rural society looked down on horses that didn't perform some kind of work:

> Now, my dear, my proposal is this: there are our two plow horses . . . that have scarce done an earthly thing for this month past and are both grown fat and lazy. Why should not they do something as well as we? And let me tell you, when Moses has trimmed them down a little, they will not be so contemptible. (50-51)

The choice of the words "earthy thing" represents how horses were not for entertainment but for practical purposes. Likewise, the word "contemptible" reinforces the rural view that horses were useless as a luxury and had to justify their being kept.

This prevailing view of horses sparked debate about what provisions should be made for their well-being. In Gainsborough's *Peasant with Two Horses (*Barrell 36), this debate is vividly depicted. Specifically, the painting includes a boy resting atop a white horse under the shade of a large tree, a location that suggests the scene is taking place during the heat of summer. Meanwhile, a black horse rests its head on the rump of the white horse. In the distant background, other workers labor hard. The choice of black for one horse and white for the other is most reflective of the discrepancy Gainsborough seems to portray. John Barrell addresses this discrepancy in *The Dark Side of the Landscape*:

> The contrast tells us much about what was an important issue in moral and religious debate in the eighteenth century: whether the good life was one of unremitting toil . . . of the curse of Adam, or a life of intellectual, and so moral, self-improvement, such as can be undertaken only by those with leisure for the task. (35-36)

This contrast of two value systems was further complicated by a disagreement among country people about how important horses were to the nature of work. As T. S. Ashton explains in *An Economic History of England: The 18th Century*, horses offered greater efficiency in the production of food as they had largely taken the place of oxen at the plow (55). However, when wheat prices were skyrocketing, many people complained that too much land was going unused for food production, "that large resources of land were being absorbed in the raising of horses" (55). Likewise, horses were being utilized for factory industry and in the army, but these were at the expense of soil erosion, leading many to call the horse, "'the most dangerous moth in the whole web of agricultural economy'" (55). This temporary ascription of the horse is most indicative of the temporal quality of cultural values, including eighteenth-century values.

Ultimately, a favorable recognition of the value of horses prevailed. By 1773, horses had increased ten-fold to find employment "not only in the army and the hunting field, but also in and about collieries and industrial establishments" (Ashton 87). Moreover, one of the lesser known yet equally important occupations of eighteenth-century rural life was that of the saddler. A. E. Richardson elucidates in *Georgian England* the importance of saddlers to the rural economy as a whole:

> . . . the saddler made coach and chaise harness, bridles, reins, whips, and traces. He employed a whole band of tradesmen, ranging from the leather cutter, the currier, and the embroiderer. He bought . . . from the draper . . . the mercer . . . . the laceman . . . and the haberdasher. His trade, therefore, was a comprehensive one. (71)

Hence, horses were vital to the country way of life. Depending on one's profession, horses were used to hunt for food, plow for crops, raise horses for sale, provide services for others with horses, or any combination of these.

By establishing the importance of horses, Goldsmith heightens the effect of the swindling. The embellished consequence builds upon the obvious storyline of a family that receives bad break after bad break. Additionally, the scene offers a commentary about the lack of social mobility the pastoral population faced. Specifically, Primrose sends Moses to the fair, trusting his son to develop his intellectual skills, "As I had some opinion of my son's prudence, I was willing enough to entrust him with this commission" (57). However, Moses not only makes a bad deal but even "'parted with the colt, and brought us back nothing but a gross of green paltry spectacles!'" (59-60).

> In *The True Genius of Oliver Goldsmith*, Robert Hopkins explains this message of social immobility: "It is the Vicar who designed Moses 'for business,' but when Moses and his father are swindled at the fair, both are shown to be yokels" (192-193). While this irony of Primrose's reasoning is humorous, it also makes the point that all decisions and expenditures had to be devoted to maintaining whatever profession the rural person was in, that time and money couldn't be spared to enter a profession of a higher social status. Indeed, as stated by Hopkins, "A few critics have suggested . . . *The Vicar of Wakefield* is not only a satire on complacent optimism but also a burlesque of the shallow" (200).

The lack of social mobility in the eighteenth century is well documented. According to Roy Porter's account in *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, "the English social ladder was indeed precisely graded" with many levels between the top and the bottom (49). He also explains that "England was a society in which the fences dividing social ranks were, in theory and practice, jumpable" (50). However, this recognition of social mobility is tempered with an admission of the many constraints that kept the mobility very restricted, especially for country inhabitants:

> . . . so long as mass concentrations of workers remained highly exceptional and the Poor Law regulated rural society, there was no imminent threat to stability. Limited access to upward mobility and the rise in tandem of aggregate wealth and social pretensions ensured that the social order neither collapsed nor was overthrown. (97)

This description suggests that the opportunities granted to rural people were often designed to keep them happy in the status they already held. In particular, the word "aggregate" suggests that the main goal of the economic system was to ensure that people within a level were truly equal to each other while a few individuals were enabled to advance in order to keep the remainder of a particular socioeconomic class believing in mobility and continuing to work hard at their level.

The lack of social mobility reflected in Goldsmith's fiction and Porter's non-fiction is likewise illustrated by Gainsborough. For example, in *Village Scene with Peasants on Horseback* (Barrell 64), as stated by Barrell, "a more dejected portrayal of the village community could hardly be imagined" (64). Specifically, peasants sit with heads downcast atop of horses, also with heads downcast. In the background, three larger-than-scale people-two women, one nursing a baby, and a man-huddle in despair. A church steeple in the distance suggests a betrayal of promises made to the rural community. Linking the messages conveyed in both literature and painting, Barrell explains, "Goldsmith had shown the jolly village of Gay's *Shepherd's Week* as having been destroyed by the rapacity of the new rich: Gainsborough's picture shows the surviving village too as a place of poverty and despair" (65). In correlation with Gainsborough's illustrations and the non-fiction accounts of horses and social immobility, Goldsmith's swindling scene advances the Job-like plot, characterizes two of the Primroses, extends the humorous tone, and takes place in a setting typical of pastoral life. Hence, Goldsmith's scene reflects not only aspects but also complications of the country way of life.

No animal defines individual people like the dog. Bulldog. Chinese chow. Labrador retriever. Pit bull. Every breed says something different about their master's place of residence, financial status, and/or personality traits. Additionally, many people develop closer relationships with dogs than any other animal. Dogs can share in one's celebrations, sadnesses, work, and even safety. With these canine qualities in mind, it is most fitting that the "An Elegy of the Death of a Mad Dog" serves as the novel's climax, a point after which Primrose's condition could still improve or worsen. Moreover, the elegy signifies a change in the tone of the novel and occurs in the chapter that starts the second half of the novel. In *Oliver Goldsmith: A Georgian Study*, Ricardo Quintana explains the contrasts that occur before and after the elegy:

> The memorable episodes present in the first half are all perfectly attuned to the spirit of family life as it runs on tranquilly . . . . [In the second half], the characters are thrust into the world; their experiences are violent: movement, chase, travel are forced on them. (110)

Equally important, the elegy reinforces the characterizations of both Primrose and Thornhill and alludes to the outcomes that await them in the remaining chapters. Specifically, Primrose is symbolized by the kindly man described in the lyrics: "A kind and gentle heart he had,/To comfort friends and foes;/The naked everyday he clad,/When he put on his clothes" (82). On the other hand, Thornhill is unfavorably analogized as a dog who "when a pique began,/The dog, to gain his private ends,/Went mad and bit the man" (82). Likewise, their fates are symbolically foreshadowed; Primrose "recovered of the bite" while Thornhill becomes "The dog it was that died" (83). Indeed, as stated by Hopkins,

> Not only does "An Elegy" foreshadow the reversal of the end of the novel but, most significantly, the reader is warned about the intensified structural burlesque that is about to ensue in *The Vicar* itself . . . . Immediately afterwards, the narrative structure becomes extremely exaggerated with fluctuations between states of happiness and misery (205-206).

It is most appropriate that Primrose indicated his preference for a song about dogs rather than swans because the types of dogs owned by the wealthy and by rural class individuals alike told much about an individual's interests, economic status, and general personality. Richardson explains,

> Hunting the fox was the prerogative of the landed gentry . . . Fishing was a sport for quieter, studious men . . . and fowling was pursued with due regard to economy in powder and shot . . . . Each of these sports . . . produced definite codes, special breeds of horses and dogs, and customs peculiar to it (74-75).

Similarly, Gainsborough included dogs in many of his portraits to help define the people he was illustrating. For example, in his rural paintings, such as *Peasants Going to Market* (Barrell 53), dogs tend to be thin and are striding to keep pace with their masters. On the other hand, paintings such as *William Poyntz* (Cormack 73) feature a wealthy hunter who is nonchalantly leaning against a tree with a well-fed dog who is also relaxing beneath the tree. Regarding the concept of hunting, it is also most interesting that very few of Gainsborough's paintings feature *rural* hunters, perhaps a reflection of the hunting laws during his era.

Another painting in which a dog helps to advance the story is *Carl Friedrich Abel* (Cormack 121), a portrait of a musician/composer.

In this portrait, the dog sits underneath the table while Abel composes. Resting his head on his paw but with his eyes open, the dog patiently waits—conveying the numerous hours a composer needs to perfect his craft. Likewise, The *Reverend Henry Bate* (Cormack 129) features a dog with utmost erect posture, eyes locked upward to his master. It is a most appropriate representation as Bate was a very pugnacious clergyman. Known as the "Fighting Parson," he even "fought a duel on behalf of his opinions in the press" (Cormack 128).

> On a softer note, *Mrs. Mary Robinson* (Cormack 135) is a portrait of romantic disappointment as she holds a picture of her unrequited love and stares forward, wistfully. Her dog shares in her emotion by sitting on a ledge that is closer to her level and likewise stares forward, wistfully. In these paintings, Gainsborough constructs settings that allow carefully chosen spaces for dogs. It is a technique that tells a story, ascribes the characters, and sets a tone with images much like Goldsmith does with words. In this fashion, both genres convey real-life themes that span across different personalities, occupations, and events.

After the climax, Primrose must sink to his lowest point in order for the happy ending to achieve its maximum effect. Specifically, when Squire Thornhill is unable to persuade Primrose to approve his plans for Sophia, the Squire hits Primrose with utmost financial ruin:

> The consequence of my incapacity was his driving my cattle that evening, and their being appraised the next day for less than half their value. My wife and children now therefore entreated me to comply upon any terms, rather than incur certain destruction. (130)

Accordingly, Dixon confirms how this incident aptly initiates the series of misfortunes that befall Primrose, and he explains the incident's broader implications: "The ruin appropriately begins with Thornhill's steward driving away Primrose's cattle. The pastoral and peaceable world of hay and cider and cattle rearing is torn apart. . ." (81). Thus, Primrose's struggle with his cattle reflects the economic fragility of pastoral life.

Although Goldsmith's use of comedy includes exaggeration, the importance of *owning* livestock to the economic stability of farmers was no exaggeration. According to Roy Porter, there was a great economic disparity between tenant-farmers who were able to own a portion of the land they worked on and tenant-farmers who merely received wages. To explain, land ownership "enabled the poor man to support his family, and bring up his children. Here he could turn out his cow and pony, feed his flock of geese, and keep his pig" (94).

On the other hand, non-tenant farmers were "more dependent on money wages" and "also without employment for much of the year" (94). The struggles of eighteenth-century non-tenant farmers become more perceptible when considered along twenty-first-century parallels. The struggles facing non-tenant farmers were much like the struggles facing migrant farm workers today.

Having Primrose lose his cattle from being driven off is an apt exaggeration that emphasizes the difficulty of raising cattle in the first place. Ashton explains this difficulty, "small, thin cattle could be raised on" barren land or hills; however, the profits of quality cattle were not enough to outweigh the cost of setting up quality pasture land (52). Additionally, farmers needed large amounts of capital to withstand the initial costs of acquiring cattle and the need to allow several years to raise fattened cattle. Those with sufficient capital still faced difficulties: "a failure of the hay crop, or a shortage of oats might make it impossible to keep livestock through the winter" (52). As if those challenges weren't enough, cattle always faced the possibility of disease (52-53). Again, these challenges become all the more lucid when viewed through a twenty-first-century lens. Farmers still need large capital to keep current with modern farming technologies, and mad-cow disease has posed danger to the cattle industry as of late.

Illustrating the real-life facts of eighteenth-century farming, Gainsborough's *Herdsmen and Cows* (Hayes 73) says much about the importance of livestock and the difficulty to maintain it. Specifically, there are two herdsmen tending three cows on a hill. The close proximity of a small, humble house suggests that the herdsmen are tenant-farmers who own the livestock rather than just earn wages. The leaveless trees suggest a poor quality of land and the sawed-off branches suggest a scarcity of resources. Moreover, the cows' waists are indented to reflect the fragile state of livestock economy. Applying this fragility of economy in his fiction, Goldsmith shows how country residents are as affected by their environments as city people. In the words of Ricardo Quintana, "So is the comedy of life enacted in the idyllic setting of the little farm where the Primroses take shelter from the accidents of the outer world" (115). Perhaps it is the substantial quantity of these accidents experienced by both character and reader that allows Goldsmith's book to appeal to collective humanity.

Throughout *The Vicar of Wakefield*, Oliver Goldsmith includes animals to help advance his story. Specifically, the bird scene early

Herdsmen and Cows. The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis.

in the novel establishes the primary conflict, characterizes the protagonist and antagonist, details the setting, and builds a humorous tone. As the novel develops, the horse-swindling scene takes place at a fair, a typical country setting; also, the scene develops the Job-like plot, further characterizes the Primrose family, and once again enlivens the humorous tone. Beginning the second half of the novel, the dog elegy serves as the novel's climax. After the climax, cows are driven away to sink Primrose to his lowest in order to maximize the effect of his favorable resolution.

In addition to advancing Goldsmith's fiction, the use of animals strongly correlates to real-life issues that are confirmed by the modern, non-fiction accounts and by Gainsborough's illustrations of the country way of life. As Quintana proclaims, "the real theme of this seemingly innocent book is discovery about life" (115). Indeed, the bird scene develops the concept of pleasure as perceived by two different socioeconomic classes and builds into a depiction of the deference to the upper classes. Similarly, the horse scene implies much about the horse's place in eighteenth-century society and the general social immobility of the society itself. Furthermore, the dog was the most apt of subjects for the elegy as dogs arguably define

their masters more effectively than any other animal. Finally, Primrose's difficulty with the cows reflects the difficulty of the country way of life itself, let alone the influences of class differences.

With these real-life depictions in mind, readers are left with the question of whether Goldsmith was purposely trying to bring these issues to light or was just utilizing popular issues to create an entertaining read. Accordingly, Hopkins offers a perspective that speculates a possibly intentional nature of the novel: "If this interpretation is right, then the improbability of plot, instead of being a weakness, is in reality a deliberate stratagem on the part of Goldsmith" (200). Actually, we can't be sure of Goldsmith's motivations, but many of the best writers throughout the centuries have been those who recognize the important issues of their time and apply them to their writing–if only for entertainment purposes. If nothing else, *The Vicar of Wakefield* is valuable for inspiring readers to consider the influences of the time, influences that shaped a comedy that remains popular more than two centuries later.

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'ESTA DESGARRADA INCÓGNITA': MONSTER THEORY AND *HIJOS DE LA IRA*

Dominique Russell

Hijos de la ira is a peculiar book. Much has been made of the way its disordered, gargantuan verses burst onto the placid poetic scene of post-war Spain.[1] Its enduring appeal, however, has less to do with its historical effect as with its dramatic religious and existential questioning. It is the 'Diario íntimo' that continues to fascinate, with its nightmarish inner world populated by monsters.[2]

Yet it is curious how little critical attention has been paid to the meaning of the monsters that proliferate in these poems. Much enumerated, they are more often flattened into a general allegory, than treated as monsters qua monsters. Luis Fernández Vázquez, for example, in his recent study leaves a key insight undeveloped: "[Alonso] moviliza todo una teoría de monstruos, bestias, chillidos acres, sórdidas materias para poblar su selva poética"[3] (55). What is Alonso's 'theory of monsters,' or, more accurately, given poetry's unsystematic form, his conception and his use of the monstrous? How does it fit with other theories of monstrosity? These are important questions to explore, for if *Hijos de la ira* is a kind of diary, it is a portrait of the poet as monster, the intimate diary of a monstrous self, and one which conforms to many aspects of the grotesque.

As an intimate diary, however, it doesn't quite deliver, as Philip Silver points out. There is a "willed reticence" that holds the reader now at a distance, now close, in a pattern of attraction-repulsion.

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[1] In Emilio Alarcos Llorach's famous formulation: "fue una especie de terremoto, que subvirtió las capas poéticas e hizo aflorar a la luz los estratos latentes de que nadie hablaba" [It was a kind of earthquake that subverted the poetic surfaces and brought forth the latent strata that no one talked about (translation mine)] (146).

[2] A recent edition has been published to celebrate the centenary of Alonso's birth.

[3] "[Alonso] mobilizes a whole theory of monsters, beasts, shrill cries, sordid materials to populate his poetic jungle"(translation mine).

At times the "I" speaks as an individual, and other times projects a voice that is disembodied and "universal."[4] These ambiguities of tone, and of revelation and disguise seem to me related to the *poemario*'s fundamental motif. The monster is a contradictory figure, being on the one hand a singular, unrepeatable error of nature and on the other, a creation of the community, and thus exemplary. Like the poetic "I" the monster is inevitably displaced, its meaning impossible to capture directly.[5] According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "the monster is definitionally a displacement: an exhibit, demonstrative of something other than itself" (*Of Giants* xiv). The monster is thus an ideal disguise for the poetic "I": pointing beyond itself, polysemic, at once fascinating and repulsive, promising intimacy, but nevertheless remaining aloof.

The monster disguise is also related to the poetic "I" in a more conflictual way. There are two "I's" in the book, titled, significantly "children" rather than "child of wrath" (the singular being more appropriate to the "diaro íntimo"[6]). On the one hand, there is "ese Dámaso frenético"[7] mocked by the poet as "ese tristísimo pedagogo, más o menos ilustre/ese ridículo y enlevitado señor;"[8] and on the other the poet, hidden in the first poems behind "Dámaso," and taking up space fully in the third-person poems, as the voice of "Man," who calls God to account in the name of all Humanity. On the one hand, there is the "I" alone among monsters, and on the other the "I" who contains multitudes, a Nerudian voice who sings for those who cannot.[9] The tension between these two voices, the singular and the collective, is part of the meaning of monsters. At the same time, however, it is in this conflict between individual bodily experience and the universal, abstract voice that the monstrous arises. I want

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[4] I discuss the division and monstrosity of the poetic "I" in greater depth in "El poeta disfrazado de sí mismo: máscaras, monstruos y el yo poético en Dámaso Alonso" (269-278).

[5] "It may be that the nearest one can come to definition is to look not straight to the self, which is invisible anyway, but sidewise to the experience of self, and try to discover or create some similitude for the experience that can reflect or evoke it and that may appeal to another individual's experience of self" (Olney 29).

[6] The title refers to the epigram "…et eramus natura filii irae sucut et ceteri" "[and we were by nature the children of wrath, even as the others"] from the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians (11, 3). See Ferreres 133-137 for commentary.

[7] "this frenzied Dámaso" ("Monsters" 79).

[8] "that sorry pedagogue, more or less distinguished, that ridiculous man dressed up in a frock coat" ("On All Souls' Day" 15).

[9] For another perspective on the poetic "I" see Marcelo Coddou "Notas para otra crítica: ¿Por qué los "Monstruos" de Dámaso Alonso?" (142-161).

to suggest here that the inevitable duality of the monster is resolved through the singular, abstract unity of the poetic voice. Monstrosity is left behind in disembodied verse.

In this study, then, I want to move beyond the authorized reading Alonso himself gave in his 1968 prologue:

> El poeta, participante en la vida, la ama intensamente; odia, al mismo tiempo, la monstruosa injusticia que preside todo el vivir. Consecuencia de esto es considerar monstruosa toda la vida. Pero ya este sentido de la palabra monstruosa adquiere otro valor: la vida es monstruosa porque es inexplicable. Cada ser es un monstruoso porque es inexplicable, extraño, absurdo. Es el valor primordial que *monstrum* tenía en latín[10] (Alonso 14).

If the primary meaning of *monstrum* is "strange," it has other meanings and uses that can shed light on the self and the world being scrutinized in these poems. As a singular being that serves as an example, a visible warning and embodiment of sin, the monster shares in the duality of the poetic voice, as an exemplary uniqueness. If, as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen claims, a monster "exists only to be read', the Dámaso who is "monstruo entre monstruos" still has much to reveal (4). In the pages that follow, I propose to read *Hijos de la ira* through the lens of "monster-theory," focusing on three uses of monstrosity: as signs of transgression, abjection and troubled paternity, showing how in each case the conflict arising from incompatible dualities is at the heart of the image of the monster.

1. The Monsters as Transgression Embodied

The monster is a sign, a horrible image that must be interpreted. The contested origin of the word—from *monstrare* (to show) or *monere* (to warn)—points to this double function.[11] The monster is a

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[10] The author, as a participant in life, loves it intensely; at the same time he hates the monstrous injustice that presides over every act of living. A consequence of this is to consider all life monstrous. But with this usage the word "monstrous" acquires another meaning: life is "monstrous" because it is unintelligible, strange, absurd. (This is the primary meaning that monstrum had in Latin (vii).

[11] Marina Warner comments: "Myths and monsters have been interspliced since the earliest extant poetry from Sumer: the one often features the other. The word myth, from the Greek, means a form of speech, while the word monster is derived, in the opinion of one Latin grammarian, from *monestrum*, via *moneo*, and encloses the notion of advising, of reminding, above all of warning. But *moneo*, in the word *monstrum* has come under the influence of Latin *monstrare*, to show, and the combination neatly characterises the form of speech myth often takes: a myth shows something, it's a story spoken to a purpose, it issues a warning, it gives an account which

visible incarnation of a transgression: "The monster functions as the single evidence, both powerful and shameful, that a gross violation has taken place" (Vélez-Quiñones 50). It serves at the same time as a warning to those who would contemplate such a transgression. As Cohen has it, monsters "police the borders of the possible" while bearing the hideous mark of their rebellion against those limits (12). They are a warning against rebellion and a de-*monstration* that the established order has been disturbed.[12] The stricter the order, the more productive the teratogenesis:

> cada monstruo es hijo de una contradicción (la que se crea entre el orden que la margina y la rebeldía que proclama) ... quienes transitan los márgenes son una amenaza y corren el riesgo de ser catalogados como monstruos. Y son tantas las fronteras como proliferativas las fábricas innumerables de monstruosidades.[13] (Lafuente 18)

It comes as no surprise, then, that images of monsters and monstrousness abound in Francoist Spain. *Hijos de la ira* is one work among many during the Francoist period, from Camilo José Cela's *La familia de Pascual Duarte* (1942) to Víctor Erice's *El espíritu de la colmena* (1973), that incorporates monstrousness as central to poetic and fictional worlds. The harshness of the fratricidal war and difficult post-war situation account in some measure for these images. More specifically to Alonso, the repression of the early post-war years and the ostrich-like determination to declare that all was well, in for example, the poetry of the *garcilacistas*, made it necessary to find a more authentic language with which to address the desultory reality of the period. Part of the proliferation of grotesque and horrific images, and the explosion caused by *Hijos de la ira*, has to do with the public release in speaking—metaphorically of course—of what could not be spoken of.

The regime itself engendered monsters by de-humanizing its enemies, forcing them to exist in the silence outside the publicly acceptable. The imposition of "one 'Numantian' Spain" emanating from the ideology of Franco's regime required the exclusion of any

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advises and tells often by bringing into play showings of fantastical shape and invention—monsters" (19).

[12] As Chris Baldick puts it, "in a world created by a reasonable God, the freak or lunatic must have a purpose: to reveal visibly the results of vice, folly, and unreason as a warning to erring humanity" (11).

[13] "every monster is the child of a contradiction (one created between the order that marginalizes it and the rebellion it proclaims) […] those who travel the margins are a threat and run the risk of being catalogued as monsters. And the borders are as varied as the innumerable monster factories are prolific" (translation mine).

diversity from public life and a clear, fixed vision of what it meant to be Spanish. As José Monleón puts it:

> The totalitarian public sphere admits only the voice of submission. Dissidence—political as well as aesthetic—belongs to silence, to the obscure realm of exile. This exclusionary act forged two monolithic blocks: on the one hand, an absolute, monovalent public "I"; on the other, a many-headed demon, one "absent other" invested with all the connotations that had been discarded from the public realm. (264)

Like many writers of the postwar period, Alonso breaks the condemnation to silence, yet the voice he finds is that of a "many-headed demon."

Whatever the context from which they are born, monsters exist to be purged, the guilt embodied in their bodies expiated in order to restore the status quo. We may take pleasure in their rebellion, but we take more in their destruction, however sympathetic their appeal. As Stephen King points out:

> We love and need the concept of monstrosity because it is a reaffirmation of the order we all crave as human beings…it is not the physical or mental aberration in itself that horrifies us, but rather the lack of order that these situations seem to imply. (qtd. in Carroll 199)

Monsters serve as the polar opposite of normal, yet their abnormality makes normality possible. Their disorder serves order. In the words of Lafuente: "aunque lo patológico, lo inusual o lo aberrante se definen como excepciones a la norma, es en realidad lo atípico lo que configura y define lo normal"[14] (21).

In *Hijos de la ira*, the warnings and demonstrations of disorder are grotesquely multiplied. From the outset, we are set in a night of the living dead, where the poet, one of more than a million living corpses, rails against God:

> Y paso largas horas pregúntandole a Dios, preguntándole por qué se pudre lentamente mi alma,
>
> por qué se pudren más de un millión de cadáveres en esta ciudad de Madrid,
>
> por qué mil millones de cadáveres se pudren lentamente en el mundo.[15]
>
> ("Insomnio" 21)

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[14] "although the pathological, the unusual or the aberrant are defined as exceptions to the norm, it is in reality the atypical which configures and defines the normal" (translation mine).

[15] And I spend long hours asking God, asking him why my soul is slowly rotting

This first poem establishes a pattern of spiraling exaggeration that is at work throughout the collection. Fanny Rubio describes its structure as "construido en verso libre, casi versículo, con ritmo encadenado, obsesivas reiteraciones paralelísticas e insistencia formal que se acompañan de una repetición temática para comunicar la descripción de la ciudad como cementerio de vivos que se pudren"[16] (167). The rhythmic and thematic "insistence" serves to emphasize the monstrous as all-encompassing. It begins with the other, but eventually penetrates the very soul of the self. (I will discuss the abjection of this image in the next section.) The manifestations of guilt are everywhere. Alonso brings us into a universe where horror is complete, revealing divided and deconstructed identities, bodies in decomposition, deformed and deforming. The monstrous is so totalizing that the possibility of eliminating the monster and restoring order is gone. There is no order to be served by the removal of the monster. The pole of normalcy disappears as everything, from insects to God, is monstrous.

It is thus no surprise that the eyes that see this monstrosity should be those of a monster, the most horrible of all, "señalado del dedo de mi Dios":

> No, ninguna tan horrible
> como este Dámaso frenético,
> como este amarillo ciempiés que hacia ti clama con todos sus tentáculos enloquecidos,
> como este bestia inmediata
> transfundida en una angustia fluyente,
> no, ninguno tan monstruoso
> como este alimaña que brama hacia ti,
> como esta desgarrada incógnita.[17]
>
> ("Monstruos" 108)

These verses constitute a self-portrait as an agitated, grotesque beast, abjectly flailing before God. Like "Insomnio"the spiraling exaggeration and multiplication of images share in the grotesque,

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away/ why more than a million corpses are rotting away in this city of Madrid,/why a billion corpses are slowly rotting away in the world ("Insomnia" 3).

[16] "constructed in free verse, each verse, with a enjambed rhythm, obsessive parallelistic reiterations and formal insistence [is] accompanied by a thematic repetition to communicate the description of the city as a cemetery of the living who are rotting" (translation mine).

[17] "marked by the finger of my God: No, none of them is so horrible/as this frenzied Dámaso,/ as this yellow centipede that cries out to you with all his maddened feelers,/ as this immediate beast/transfused into a flowing anguish;/ no, none so monstrous/as this wild animal bellowing at you,/as this soul-torn unknown" ("Monsters" 79).

where “the ‘ludicrous’ is never far from the ‘fearsome’” (McElroy 12). As the grotesque mode demands, and monsters must be, these verses are supremely visual, at the same time as they gather rhetorical power in the use of the anaphora.

The poetic voice here is like Kafka’s Gregor Samsa, reduced to a ridiculous non-human condition, but a tragic figure nevertheless. This poet-insect, poet-beast bears the burden of social guilt, feeling more than anyone a shared suffering. His “sublime desperation” teeters on the absurd, as a kind of monstrous grandstanding. But the reader nevertheless identifies, as Ricardo Gullón puts it “con la angustia existential de ser-para-la-nada”[18] (qtd. in Díaz-Plaja 21). Despite the meanings others can read into (and out of) monsters, for themselves they are precisely this, a being for nothing, an error, without projection or lineage.

2. The Monster as Mixed Category

Historically monsters were beings composed of incongrous elements: sphinxes, werewolves, dragons and others are all recombinations of animal or animal and human features. By presenting similarities to categories of beings to which they are not related, “monsters blur the difference between genres and disrupt the strict order of Nature” (Huet 4). The monster brings into question divisions between species and classifications. To quote Cohen, “the too-precise laws of nature as set forth by science are gleefully violated in the freakish compilation of the monster’s body” (7). One can question whether the violation is gleeful, but it is always present.[19] To an “either-or,” the monster responds “and.” It is fundamentally ambiguous, as mentioned at the outset, with an ambiguity paralleling that of the inevitably dual poetic “I.”

Of the monsters with which Alonso identifies—living corpse, “jayán pardo,” “enlutada ameba,” “alacrán,” “necrófago,” “fétida hidra”[20]—all are characterized by a painful duality, being on an

[18] “with the existential anxiety of being-for-nothing” (translation mine).

[19] In the case of Alonso I would argue that these violations are not in fact gleeful at all. Thus, while his evocations of the grotesque body are often in line with that described by Mikhail Bakhtin, his essential pessimism distances his work from Bakhtin’s conception of the grotesque. Without the regenerative, subversive, celebratory view of bodily decay, Alonso’s poems fit a more Kayserian theory of the grotesque (considering these theorists as two poles).

[20] “dark giant,” “amoebas dressed in mourning,” “scorpion,” “necrophage,” “fetid hydra.”

uncomfortable border between the human and the animal, between life and death. For the poet, man's monstrosity comes principally from the fact that he is a being who is both living and dying, a mixture of spirit and body. Almost all the insults he aims at himself show an abhorrence of the body:

> Y ahora,
> a los 45 años,
> cuando este cuerpo ya me empieza a pesar
> como un saco de hierba seca ("En el día de los difuntos" 35)
>
> cadáver que se me está pudriendo encima
> desde hace 45 años ("Yo" 79)
>
> odre de putrefacción quiso que fuera esta cuerpo
> yo soy el excremento de can sarnoso
>
> yo soy el montoncito de estiércol a medio hacer. ("De profundis" 199)[21]

These images of detritus contaminate even the soul, described in "De profundis" as "ramera de solicitaciones"[22] and in "Insomnio" as subject to decay. One can hardly avoid evoking here the concept of abjection, as theorized by Julia Kristeva. For Kristeva abjection serves the formation of identity as a social and speaking subject, which requires a denial of the body and its functions. What threatens the stability of that identity is abject:

> ce n'est donc pas l'absence de la propreté ou de santé qui rend abject, mais ce qui perturbe une identité, un système, un ordre. Ce qui ne respecte pas les limites, les places, les règles. L'entre-deux, l'ambigu, le mixte.[23] (12)

There is, nevertheless, a particular disgust associated with the waste that recalls our corporeality, and the death at work within us. The horror of the abject is the horror of our inescapable materiality,

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[21] And now/at the age of 45,/when this body of mine is beginning to weigh/like a bag of dry grass ("On All Souls' Day" 15)

corpse that has been rotting on top of me/for 45 years ("Myself" 51)

a wineskin of corruption he wanted this my body to become.../ I am the excrement of the mangy dog.../I am the little half-built pile of manure ("De Profundis" 147).

[22] "my soul a soliciting whore" (147).

[23] "It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (Kristeva 4).

the organic reality of our being. It returns to remind us of our animal nature, our dependence and mortality:

> tel un théâtre vrai, sans fard et sans masque, le déchet comme le cadavre m'indiquent ce que j'écarte en permanence pour vivre. Ces humeurs, cette souillure, cette merde sont ce que la vie supporte à peine et avec peine de la mort.[24] (Kristeva 11)

In *Hijos de la ira*, abjection contributes to a view of man (and indeed all living beings) as monstrous. The lyric "I"—a disincarnate subject—in creating himself as a character (object), notes with revulsion his bodily attachments.[25] He contemplates with anxiety the mixture of categories, the blurring of boundaries: life/death, animal/human, inside/outside, self/other. The ambiguities precipitate a category crisis that threatens the very construction of the self. The self becomes monstrous, dangerous, "a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions" (Cohen 6).

For Kristeva, the revulsion of the abject arises precisely from this reminder of the self's lack of unity. The abject—excrement, mucus, pus—brings to consciousness that which threatens our integrity, but from the *inside*, from within our permeable, porous bodies. The abject on one level relates to the presence of dead matter within our live bodies. It relates to necessary functions that the mind (the conscious "I") cannot impede.

The lyric voice in *Hijos de la ira* cannot reconcile itself to this dominion of the body, rejecting duality and the reminders of mortality. In this sense the aspiration is toward a disembodied "universal" voice. By being the voice of 'Man' with a capital, there is an escape from the individual "I," crammed into a body for 45 years.[26]

Curiously, the ever-present and 'unpoetic' words—"putrefacción," "hediondo," "grotesco," "nauseabunda," "acre," "fétido," "pus"[27]—which relate to the destruction of the body, that is, the process of decomposition, are not used in relation to the dead. In a book where "la imagen de los monstruos...describe todo lo que existe: cosa, árbol, animal y hombre, o sea toda la circunstancia del poeta y aun el poeta

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[24] "No, as in true theatre, without makeup or masks, refuse and corpses show me what I permanently thrust aside in order in order to live. These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death" (Kristeva, *Power* 3).

[25] "The monster is the subject itself, conceived of as Thing" (Žižek 66).

[26] As I mentioned in relation to "El último Cain," the individual is always present within the abstraction.

[27] "putrefaction," "stinking," "grotesque," "nauseous," "acrid," "fetid," "pus."

mismo" [28] (Flys 253), it is striking that the dead are neither monsters nor monstrous. There are terrible images of open-eyed corpses in "Preparativos de viaje," but the poem concerns the moribund in the moments before dying, rather than the dead themselves.[29] Once dead, their eyes reveal a sad wisdom:

> No hay mirada más triste.
> Sí, no hay mirada más profunda ni más triste.[30]
> ("Preparativos de viaje" 53)

In "El día de los difuntos" the dead are described with awe and praise, in rare exclamations that are not of horror but of admiration:

> ¡Oh! ¡No sois profundidad de horror y sueño,
> muertos diáfanos, muertos nítidos,
> muertos inmortales,
> cristalizadas permanencias
> de una gloriosa materia diamantina!
> ¡Oh ideas fidelísimas
> a vuestra identidad...![31] (33)

The images here are of crystalline transparency. The dead are immortal, permanent, pure spirit, disincarnate and always faithful to their identity. A "diamond-like material" suggests purity, multifaceted eternity. That is, the dead are no longer subject to change and confusion. Dying eliminates the ambiguity of matter and state that disconcerts the poet. One becomes an idea, not a body.[32] Once dead, the anxiety of the in-between state in which we exist (living with death within us) is eliminated. Identity is fixed, and, as we shall see in the

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[28] "the image of the monster... describes all that exists: thing, tree, animal and man, that is, the entire circumstance of the poet and even the poet himself" (translation mine).

[29] Flys comments: "Entre la vida absurda e indeseada y el estado envidiable de la muerte, el hombre siente un miedo invencible al tránsito, o sea, al momento de morir. Y así, el instante que promete traer consigo la solución definitiva a toda miseria existencial es, al mismo tiempo, el causante de la más profunda angustia [Between absurd and undesired life and the enviable state of death, man feels a invincible fear of the transition, that is, of the moment of death. And thus, the moment that promises to bring with it the definitive solution to all existential misery is, at the same time, the cause of deepest anxiety" (translation mine)] (308).

[30] There is no sadder gaze./Yes, there is no deeper or sadder gaze ("Getting Ready for a Journey" 33).

[31] No, you are not the depth of horror and slumber,/diaphanous dead, gleaming dead ones,/immortal dead,/crystallized continuations/of a glorious diamantine substance!/Oh ideas most faithful/to your own identity! ("On All Souls' Day" 11).

[32] The exception is in "Elegía a un moscardón azul" where the dead insect becomes "sólo ya cosa, sólo ya materia/orgánica, que en un torrente oscuro volverá al mundo mineral." Nevertheless death represents a singular state and matter.

next section, one resembles one's creator. For the present, however, alive and alienated, enclosed in the self, the poet finds himself anxiously in the fluidity of being:

> Yo me muero, me muero a cada instante,
> perdido a mí mismo,
> ausente de mí mismo,
> lejano de mí mismo,
> cada vez más perdido, más lejano, más ausente.[33]
>
> ("En el día de los difuntos" 33)

3. The Monster as Bastard Son

For Aristotle, "anyone who does not take after his parents is really in a way a monstrosity, since in these cases Nature has in a way strayed from the generic type" (401). Whether or not a distortion of the philosopher's concept, monsters were long thought of as creatures that did not resemble their father.

When the monster in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* speaks for the first time, it is to express this anxiety about the paternal relationship, the fear of not resembling the father. The same type of concern is present in *Hijos de la ira*, with God occupying the role of father and creator, usurping the role of mother. While the last poems of the book seem to give a place of honour to the mother as comforter and saviour, she is, like the Virgin Mary, only an intercessor. The mother will love her monster son, unconditionally, but this will not give him a place in the social order.

Indeed, the mother is not represented here as giver of life. There is an idealization of her role and an erasure of her procreative (and therefore sexual) powers. Mother is subsumed to the Virgin Mary. The mother-son relationship undergoes a curious reversal in "La madre" where she is represented as an older or younger sibling, in need of her son's strength:

> Ah, niña mía, madre,
> Yo, niño también, un poco mayor, iré a tu lado,
> Te serviré de guía,
> Te defenderé galantemente de todas las brutalidades de mis compañeros.[34] (115)

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[33] I am dying, dying every moment,/lost from myself/absent from myself/distant from myself/ more and more lost, distant, absent ("On All Souls' Day" 11).

[34] Ah, my little girl, Mother,/I, a little too, somewhat older, will go beside you,/I'll be your guide,/I'll defend you gallantly against all the stupidities of my classmates ("Mother" 83).

A silent backdrop, a way station, a balm to raging existential questions, mother (woman, nature) is not the creator. The difference is made clear in "La isla," where childhood and rest are opposed to terror and insomnia:

> Gracias, gracias, Dios mío,
> tú has querido poner sordo terror y reverencia en mi alma infantil,
> e insomnio agudo donde había sueño.
> Y lo has logrado.[35] (193)

Mother is comfort and rest, but the urgent questions about life and identity are reserved for the Father. Acceptance must come from Him. Resemblance must be to Him.

Thus the perfection of the dead and their lack of monstrous characteristics are related to their resemblance to the Creator. Says the poet in the last poem, "Dedicatoria final (Las Alas)" which is addressed to God: "la muerte es el único pórtico de tu inmortalidad."[36] Pure spirit and immortal, the dead resemble the Father in a way the poet longs for. His un-godly humanity disturbs him; he cannot bear to conceive of his spirit at the mercy of his body. Like the Frankenstein monster, Alonso finds himself a "mixed category" and calls his creator to account:

> Oh Dios,
> no me atormentes más
> dime qué significan
> estos monstruos que me rodean
> y este espanto íntimo que hacia ti gime en la noche[37]
> ("Monstruos" 107)

The questions posed to the creator are expressed differently, but they are essentially the same: Why was I created, *not* in your image? Why was I created, for so much solitude? In *Frankenstein* the questions are literal ones, and escalate towards outright hostility and condemnation, which the reader is inclined to share:

> "When I looked around, I saw and heard of none like me. Was I then a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled, and whom men disowned?"
>
> "Cursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?" (155)

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[35] Thank you, thank you, my God;/you have wished to put dumb terror and reverence in my infantile soul,/and acute insomnia where there was sleep./And you have succeeded ("The Island" 143).

[36] "death is the only doorway to your immortality" ("Final Dedication - The Wings" 163).

[37] "Oh God,/don't torture me any more./ Tell me what they mean,/those monsters that surround me./and this intimate fright that moans to you in the night." ("Monsters" 79).

In *Hijos de la ira* the questions circle the same sad territory of abjection, though the speaker is metaphorically a monster, rather than a deformed incarnation of his creator's hubris. Yet the speaker's questions are equally bitter, and cast a similar doubt on the creator's intentions:

> Dime, ¿qué huerto quieres abonar con nuestra podredumbre?
> Temes que se te sequen los grandes rosales del día,
> las tristes azucenas letales de tus noches? ("Insomnio" 21)
>
> ¿Qué piedras, qué murallas
> quieres batir en mí,
> oh torpe catapulta? ("La obsesión" 135)[38]

The Creator of monsters becomes monstrous as he observes his creation from afar:

> Tú me oteas, escucho tu jadear caliente,
> tu revolver de bestia que se hiere en los troncos
> siento en la sombra
> tu inmensa mole blanca, sin ojos, que voltea
> igual que un iceberg que sin rumor se invierte en agua salobre.[39]
> ("En la sombra" 127)

The way in which the images in this poem recall the Mary Shelley novel is striking: the iceberg, the shadowy pursuit of the "beast." Like Dr. Frankenstein, God has become the monster, stalking his creature with a mixture of love and horror. The repetition of "Sí tú me buscas" and the fear inspired by the nebulous presence suggests the mutual persecution of the novel:

> A veces en la noche yo te siento a mi lado,
> que me achecas,
> que me quieres palpar,
> y el alma se me agita con el terror y el sueño,
> como una cabritilla, amarrada a una estaca
> que ha sentido la onda sigilosa del tigre.[40] (127)

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[38] Tell me, what garden do you want to fertilize with our rot?/Are you afraid they'll dry up on you, those great rosebushes of day,/the sad lethal lilies of your nights? ("Insomnia" 3).

What stones, what walls/do you want to beat against in me,/oh clumsy catapult? ("The Obsession" 97).

[39] You look me over, I hear your hot panting,/your milling around like a beast striking against tree-trunks;/I feel in the shadow/your immense white bulk, eyeless, turning over/like an iceberg that soundlessly turns upside down in the salt water ("In the Shadow" 93).

[40] Sometimes at night I feel you at my side,/that you're spying on me,/that you want to touch me,/and my soul becomes agitated with terror and sleepiness,/like a she-goat, tied to a stake, who has felt the stealthy emanation of the tiger ("In the Shadow" 93).

Creature and creator are locked in a fatal circle, each monstrous, one by creation and action, the other by having abandoned his proper paternal role towards his creation.

In “Hombre” the silent divine monster is dead:

¿Se te ha perdido el amo?
No: se ha muerto.
Se te ha podrido el amo en noches hondas
y apenas sólo ya es polvo de estrella.[41] (175)

This killing of the ‘owner’ can be seen as an attempt to resolve the issue of resemblance to the Father. His death liberates the creature from the burden of monstrosity, but it is a temporary and unsatisfactory resolution in a poetic universe so strongly underpinned with religious longing.

The Divine returns, very much alive, oceanic and overwhelming:

…¡Ay, Dios,
cómo me has arrastrado,
cómo me has desarragado,
cómo me llevas
en tu invencible frenesí,
cómo me arrebataste
hacia tu amor![42] (“El alma era lo mismo que una ranita verde” 148)

This overwhelming power wins the poet, finally. God is understood as a demanding father, calling the poet through his pain:

Oh Dios,
Yo no sabía que tu mar tuviera tempestades,
Y primero creí que era mi alma la que bullía, la que se movía,
Creía que allá en su fondo volaban agoreras las heces de tantos siglos de tristeza humana,
Que su propia miseria le hacía hincharse como un tumefacto carbunclo.
Y eras tú.[43] (“La isla” 193)

Throughout the book, the lyric voice has railed against a God who should be peaceful and loving but who is instead threatening, and

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[41] Have you lost your master?/ No: he has died. Your master has rotted away on deep nights,/and now is hardly more than dust dust! (“Man” 127).

[42] …Oh my God,/how you have swept me along,/how you have uprooted me,/how you carry me/upon your invicible madness,/how you have snatched me away/toward your love! (“My Soul Was Just Like a Little Green Frog” 113).

[43] Oh God,/ I didn’t know that your sea had storms,/and at first I thought it was my soul that was boiling, was being churned up;/ I thought that down there in its depths were stirring in ominous flight the dregs of so many centuries of human sadness/ that its own misery was making it swell up like a tumescent carbuncle/ And it was you (“The Island” 143).

tumultuous. God's monstrous visage is but a reminder of his true nature as demanding, all-powerful and incomprehensible. Like Job, the poet must discover his powerlessness before God's mysterious ways. There can be no calling to account.

Yet there is a clear reconciliation in the last poem of the book. "Dedicatoria Final (Las alas)" reconciles Dámaso to God, and to himself, as the poetic "I" discovers that his monstrosity was temporary, his abjection a necessary purging:

> cuando yo estaba más caído y más triste,
> entre amarillo y verde, como un limón no bien maduro,
> cuando estaba más lleno de nauseas y de ira,
> me has visitado,
> y con tu uƵða,
> como impasible médico
> me has partido la bolsa de la bilis,
> y he llorado, en furor, mi podredumbre
> y la estéril injusticia del mundo[44] (217)

In the oft-cited verse "tenía que cantar para sanarme"[45] it becomes clear that the cure has come through poetry. And it is poetic creation, precisely, that allows for an escape from the condition of monstrosity.[46] Creation allows him identity with the Father:

> Oh Dios,
> comprendo,
> yo no he cantado;
> yo remedé tu voz cual dicen que los mirlos remedan
> la del pastor paciente que los doma[47] (218).

The poet's singing allows him to mirror God, to resemble him. It thus restores identity and allows for an escape from the abjection of the body. The last poem represents the triumph of the poet's immaterial voice over the corporeal. Singing the spirit, he is no longer "the last of all beings," a monster, but a disembodied, god-like voice, raised up on the wings of angels.

[44] after I reached my lowest and saddest point,/in between yellow and green, like a lemon not quite ripe,/after I was full of nausea and of wrath,/you have visited me,/and with your fingernail,/like an impassive doctor,/you have broken my sac of bile,/and I have wept, furiously, for my putrifaction/and the sterile injustice of the world ("Final Dedication - The Wings" 163).

[45] "I had to sing to get well" ("Final Dedication - The Wings" 163).

[46] My conclusion is similar in one sense to Philip Silver's although I give greater weight to the religious content. Silver, who cannot take it at "face value," states: "it now seems to me to be one of several generative systems of motivation—perhaps the most obvious—which disguise and distract us from a more elemental, more concrete, satisfaction that the poet finds in his craft" (288).

[47] Oh God, I understand,/I haven't sung;/I imitated your voice as they say blackbirds imitate/the voice of the patient shepherd who trains them (165).

The monstrous in *Hijos de la ira* thus resolves itself through resemblance to the Father, a flattening of duality through a rejection of the body, and the embrace of a (limited) community and its rules. The reference to angels in the final poem reminds us how rich is Alonso's use of the monstrous. In comparison to the monsters of mass culture, Alonso uses the motif with its religious charge still (consciously) active. As Edward Ingebretsen demonstrates, angels and monsters resemble one another, each bringing frightening revelation. Until they were reinterpreted in a scientific paradigm in the seventeenth century, monstrous births were read as prodigious signs from the gods, portents of future calamity or consequences of past sins.[48] If monsters are transgression embodied, as I argued in the first section, they can be read as signs from God or Nature, depending on the paradigm.

In Alonso's "existential religious" poetic universe,[49] his monsters are signs from God of a social, natural and existential disorder, parallel, if opposite, messengers from the divine. Like the angel, the monster is a "remarkable presence," "an occasion of *pietas*, filial awe or awesome fear" with its "divinity marked on the sly"—a shadow of the fear inspired by God in every text in which He ever appeared (Ingebretsen, xiv). In *Hijos de la ira*, the monstrous is ultimately a "God-send," bringing news that is sacred, awful, but finally *awe-full* as well. Along with horror, they inspire awe of God's unfathomable creative powers. Poetic creation, singing in an abstract voice, allows the monstrous poetic "I" to assert his similarity to an angel, and thus to God.

Alonso's intimate diary of a monster is, then, in some sense a search, an escape from monstrous duality into wholeness and resemblance to the creator. I say "in some sense," since monsters, as I have stated, are by nature ambiguous and polysemic. In cataloguing some of the uses of the monstrous in *Hijos de la ira* I have by no means exhausted their meanings. If the monsters in this work exceed Alonso's own definition, it is because, as Slavoj Žižek reminds us, they function as "a kind of fantasy screen where [a] multiplicity of meanings can appear and fight for hegemony" (48).

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[48] See also Marie Hélène Huet 8-79 and Elena del Río Parra 11-68.

[49] See Flys 225-239.

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NARRATIVE MODE, MIXED IMAGES, AND ADAPTATION IN FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA'S *APOCALYPSE NOW*

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If it is worth doing, it can't be done;
if it can be done, it isn't worth doing.

Critic John Simon on the dramatization of fiction[1]

When the Vietnam War ended in 1975, it left with it a legacy of destruction, confusion, division, and chaos that ushered in a new generation of films and literature in the United States which sought, some with more success than others, somehow to recreate the events that happened there for an audience that needed to come to terms with the atrocities of ten years of warfare and the implications of their nation's moral, political, and military self defeat. In 1977, Michael Herr, who had been a journalist during the War, published a book of his journal entries from the time he spent there. In 1979 film director Francis Ford Coppola released *Apocalypse Now*, a film which culminated four years of work on the part of the filmmaker and which was based on the short novel *Heart of Darkness* published in 1902 by Joseph Conrad. There is a historical connection between these events; Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* bridges the gap between colonialism in *Heart of Darkness* and the Vietnam War and does so through events, images, and places presented by Herr in *Dispatches,* who co-wrote the narrative for the film.[2] Through this combination, Coppola creates a film that successfully addresses the primary concerns of a piece of literature while adding a new dimension to them by setting them in a different historical and cultural context and building upon and commenting new meanings created by the merging of these two texts through the creative singularities of the film.

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[1] Quoted by Watts, 41.

[2] According to the film's credits.

Heart of Darkness has two narrators, both of whom are characters in the story who exist on different levels in the narrative. Marlow, the captain of a river steamboat in Africa tells the narrator a tale that makes up the bulk of the novel, of a journey down the river and the encounter with Mr. Kurtz. The unnamed main narrator then tells the reader about Marlow telling this story. The reader as audience does not have direct contact with Marlow; he speaks in the first person to the narrator and the narrator speaks in the first person to us. Although *Apocalypse Now* is in part narrated by a narrator/protagonist, U.S. Army Captain Willard, he is the only visible narrator who speaks in the first person. This mode of narrative is the way *Dispatches* is structured as a work of journalistic nature. However, given the importance of the two narrators in *Heart of Darkness*, where Marlow takes the narrator on a journey to the heart of Africa that in the end symbolizes a tour through the darkness that can lie in the human heart, one has to consider the position of the audience with respect to the narrative in *Apocalypse Now*. In order to do this we must first understand Captain Willard's nature as the narrator of the film.

Clearly filling in the role of Marlow in terms of the adaptation of the character, Captain Willard becomes "the caretaker of Colonel Walter E. Kurtz's memory" (0:9:41-46) in the same manner that Marlow does near the ending of *Heart of Darkness*. Willard says, however, that "there is no way of telling Kurtz's story without telling my own, and if his story is a confession, then so is mine (0:9:51-10:00)." Willard is therefore aware that he is telling a story; he is conscious of his narration and how it lets us see beyond the story itself into his perception of and reaction to it. We are then the objects of Willard's story about Kurtz and we become an equivalent of Conrad's nameless audience-narrator, therefore a tacit layer in the narrative of the film, an implicit rather than detached observer with insight into Willard's thoughts and a fragmented knowledge of his past. The journey into darkness is then ours as well. We receive it through Willard's reflection and experience in the same manner that the actual narrator in *Heart of Darkness* receives it from Marlow. The voice-over narrative we get from Willard, along with his awareness of telling a tale, confirms our incorporeal presence within the framework of the film. This can be seen as a representation of our reception of the Vietnam War as a period and as an event. The war presented in television and in print was one arguably different from the one actually going on. The resistance that it encountered in the United States reflected the inner turmoil and conflict that lay dormant after three major wars in the previous 65-75 years of United States history. Whether orally, by letter, by book, or by screen, most observers of the Vietnam War were spectators of a

narrative, truthful and/or otherwise, which unfolded before them and recounted the action taking place in a remote, foreign, and for some, exotic land.

This voice-over narrative is also how *Dispatches* comes into the narrative of the film although not so much as an element of plot but as a vehicle of discourse. W.D. Ehrhart identifies as one of the stronger points of Michael Herr's recount of the Vietnam War in *Dispatches* the multitude of two line statements, fragments, and descriptions "that make you sit up and say yeah, goddamn; yeah, that's just what it was like (5)," such as:

> "It was one of those days that I realized that the only corpse I couldn't bear to look at would be the one I would never have to see" (77)
>
> "wake up...with only the taste of a bad dream in your mouth like you'd been chewing on a roll of dirty old pennies in your sleep." (33)
>
> "We napalmed off [the Montagnards[3]] crops and flattened their villages, and then admired the restlessness in their spirit."

Ehrhart, a Vietnam War veteran and a writer himself calls Herr a "word-photographer," referring to this ability to capture images in words. This quasi-poetic form of narrative is present throughout Willard's voice-over reflections in *Apocalypse Now*:

> "Shit. Charging a man with murder in this place was like handing out speeding tickets at the Indy 500." (0:19:54-20:00)
>
> "Never get out of the boat, absolutely goddamn right; unless you were going all the way. Kurtz went all the way, he split from the whole fucking program." (0:56:23-31)
>
> "It was a way we had around here of living with ourselves, we'd cut them in half with a machine gun and give them a Band Aid." (1:20:53-1:21:00)

In *Heart of Darkness,* Marlow receives a bundle of letters and files given to him by Kurtz, which is substituted in the film by a dossier on Col. Kurtz given to him near the beginning of the film by a General who sends him on a mission to kill Kurtz, who has gone into Cambodia with an army of soldiers and Montagnard mercenaries. Willard is an equivalent to Marlow; he is not the same character in terms of the narrative since he embodies characteristics attributed to the narrator in *Heart of Darkness*. In the novel, the actual narrator is an ivory trader just like Kurtz, and as he listens to Marlow's tale his appreciation of Kurtz begins to grow. Captain Willard echoes this in the film since he

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[3] Generic French term for any of 187 "ethnic minorities" living in the mountainous areas of Vietnam.

belongs to the same group of Special Forces that Kurtz does and his understanding of Kurtz's tactics and his voice "really put the hook" (0:24:50) in him.

Willard's interest in Kurtz, which echoes Marlow's stated admiration and the narrator's curiosity as well as Willard's own appreciation and understanding of the man carries with it a sense of voyeurism which of course fits the cinematographic medium of *Apocalypse Now*, but is also reflected in various planes and characters within the film itself. When first coming upon land to meet Kilgore, Willard and the boat crew pass a television crew filming scenes from the war (the director of this TV crew is actually played by Francis Ford Coppola himself). This sense of voyeurism is also carried through in the character of the "fan" the photojournalist who hangs around Kurtz's camp, masterfully embodied by Dennis Hopper. This may be a reaction or a critique of the fallacious and/or feverish coverage of the war on part of the media, which bordered on obscenity, but it may also very well be a function of Herr's involvement in the project.

Besides contributing rhetorical devices to the spoken narrative of the film as well as a journalistic narrative voice, *Dispatches* draws, coincidentally or otherwise, a direct connection between the Vietnam War and *Heart of Darkness* in its presentation of the imperialistic British colonization of Africa as represented by Kurtz:

> It was spookwar then, adventure; not exactly soldiers, not even advisors yet but Irregulars, working in remote places under little direct authority, acting out their fantasies with more freedom than most men ever know. (Herr 50)

This association was not the prompt for making a film based on *Heart of Darkness* set during the Vietnam War. It does, however, solidify the connection between the events of the war and previous colonizing or invasive efforts by the West upon other cultures, both in fiction as well as reality.

Spoken language, however, is not the only contribution that *Dispatches* made to setting Conrad's novel during the Vietnam War in the film. Herr and his "word-photography" also contribute a multitude of images and motifs from the Vietnam War that connect Conrad's Novel with the history of the war and the experience of those who lived through it. One such occasion, a scene in the film, which has no counterpart in *Heart of Darkness*, presents a sequence that is described almost image for image in *Dispatches.* Willard and the boat arrive at the site of the "Do Lung Bridge" where there is a rabid battle going on. Looking around for the commanding officer, Willard runs into a soldier with a decorated grenade launcher and a detached

demeanor who moves slowly to fire over the trench. In *Dispatches*, Herr wrote:

> The M-79 (grenade launcher)...was obviously a well-loved object; you could see the kind of work that had gone into it by the amount of light caught from the flares that glistened on the stock. The Marine looked serious, dead-eyed serious...He drew the weapon, opened the breach and dropped in a round that looked like a big swollen bullet, listening very carefully all the while to the shrieking. He placed the M-79 over his left forearm and aimed for a second before firing. There was an enormous flash on the wire 200 meters away, a spray of orange sparks, and then everything was still except for the roll of some bombs exploding kilometers away... (Herr 142)

This is reproduced almost exactly in the scene from the film. The reason for the soldier's detachment in *Dispatches* is that he is stationed in Khe Sanh, the site of a seventeen-day battle where close to 250,000 people were killed. This connection to the history of the war establishes the relationship between the intellectual environment of *Heart of Darkness*, which denounces the dehumanizing nature of imperialism, and actual events that echo these ideas; albeit from a Eurocentric perspective, but only as much as *Apocalypse Now* does it form he point of view of the United States. *Heart of Darkness* forms the theoretical background integrating colonialism as presented through fiction with the Vietnam War as presented through film in *Apoclypse Now*, even when some scenes are clearly adapted from *Dispatches*.

Another example of how *Heart of Darkness* and *Dispatches* integrate in *Apocalypse Now* is in the rearrangement of characters provided by Conrad's novella into new roles and personages through a characterization that is based on the people from the war that Herr describes in his writing. We can see this clearly in the character of Bill Kilgore. A hyperbolic and parodic character of archetypical John-Wayne[4]-cowboy attitude, which he carries along with the walk and the hat, Bill Kilgore is nearly carnivalesque in his enjoyment of the war, going to the point where he actually orders his men to surf during a firefight. Kilgore's radio nickname is "Big Duke" (0:37:21) showing how he is actually a hyperbolic parody of John Wayne, who was popularly known as the "Duke." Kilgore finds his equivalent in *Heart of Darkness* in the character of the manager, generally speaking an agent of the British colonization of Africa that Coppola has intertwined with the United States' intervention in Vietnam. They are managers of resources and men both native and foreign. In the novel, there is

[4] Wayne co-directed and starred in his own Vietnam War movie *The Green Berets* (1968).

a certain quality of speech in the character of the manager that Coppola saw fit to bring over into the film:

> ... just after he said something it got intensified for an instant. It came at the end of his speeches like a seal applied on the words to make the meaning of the commonest phrase appear absolutely inscrutable. (35)

This manner of speaking is present in Kilgore's characterization through dialogue rather than reference. At one point he says:

> I love the smell of napalm in the morning...that smell; that gasoline smell; smells like (pause) victory. (longer pause) Someday this war's gonna end. (0:49:24-50:00)

Their similar way of speaking is where the equation between the manager and Bill Kilgore end. The manager is described by Conrad as having "no genius for organizing, for initiative, or for order even" (35). Kilgore does not fit this profile at all, at least not when the physical aspect of organization, initiative and order is concerned. At another level, that of emotions, ideology, and coherence, there could not be anyone so disorganized as he is. Willard reflects on him afterwards:

> "If that's how Kilgore fought the war, I began to wonder what they really had against Kurtz, it wasn't just the insanity and murder, there was enough of that to go around for everyone." (51:00-11)

This can be easily answered and is actually answered by Willard himself later on "Kurtz had gotten off the boat; (0:56:23) "he could have gone for general, but he went for himself instead" (0:57:49-53). Kilgore can be better described by characteristics presented throughout *Dispatches*:

> On operations you'd see men clustering around the charmed grunt that many outfits created who would take himself and whoever stayed close enough through a field of safety. (57)

> A lot of people knew that the country could never be won, only destroyed, and they locked into that with breathtaking concentration... (59)

Kilgore presents this image of the "lucky grunt"[5] with a tinge of irony and, oddly enough, nostalgia as he prepares barbecues for his men and they have a beach party right after a battle, Willard tells us (even though we can see it on the screen):

[5] Popular nickname for an infantryman in Vietnam (Olson 511).

> "they choppered in the T-bones and the beer and turned the LZ into a beach party; the more they tried to make it like home, the more they made everybody miss it." (0:32:04-16)

> "He was one of those guys who had a weird light around him, and you knew he wasn't gonna get so much as a scratch here." (0:32:35-40)

He is presented then as a "warrior-poet in the classic sense"[6] (i.e. in terms of rape, pillage, and plunder, and then drink); he even has a trumpet man playing a cavalry charge as his helicopters take off for battle, alluding to old cowboy movies, which he parodies, and marking the tradition of the unit he leads, the Air Cavalry 1st of the ninth which, as Willard tells us "was an old cavalry division and it cashed in its horses for choppers and went tear-assing around Vietnam looking for the shit"[7] (0:27:03-07). Although he might not be physically injured, his psyche is well beyond repair; it was like that, perhaps even before he got to Vietnam.

He also embodies the senseless destructive power that characterized the United States' involvement in the Vietnam War mainly with his nearly addicted affinity for napalm; at one point, he muses: "napalm son, nothing else in the world smells like that" (0:49:08-11). His destructive and antagonistic drive is also seen in his use of Richard Wagner's overture "Ride of the Valkyries" as "psy ops" or psychological warfare. As he says, "It scares the hell out of the slopes,[8] my boys love it!" Wagner's opera, which serves the psychological purpose of scaring the Vietnamese and raising the morale of Kilgore's men, is "a symbol of sexual energy channeled into militarism," according to Bernard F. Dick (158). Dick points out that "Ride of the Valkyries" was originally used in association with the Third Reich and World War II in the film *Brute Force* (1947):

> Had the same music been used in a WWII movie in which bombs rained down of German cities, American audiences would have applauded; in the light of the Vietnam debacle, however, "The Ride of the Valkyries" is accusatory rather than nationalistic. It is as if Coppola were accusing America of emulating Nazi Germany by invoking the spirit of Wagner to justify war. (Dick 158)

This theme of senseless and fallaciously nationalistic slaughter finds parallels in the other memorable songs from the film, such as The Doors' "The End" which appears ironically during the opening sequence of the film, the Rolling Stones' "(I Can't get no) Satisfaction,"

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[6] A term used by Dennis Hopper's journalist-Kurtz-fan character to describe Kurtz.

[7] Slang for battle.

[8] Soldier slang term for the Vietnamese people, very pejorative.

and even the trumpeted cavalry charge. The association of music and war is discussed by Herr in *Dispatches* at one point:

> ...the war made a place for you that was all yours. Finding it was like listening to esoteric music, you didn't hear it in any essential way through all the repetitions until your own breath had entered it and become another instrument, and by then it wasn't just music anymore, it was experience. Life-as-movie, war as (war) movie, war-as-life; a complete process if you got to complete it, a distinct path to travel, but dark and hard, not any easier if you knew that you'd put your own foot on it yourself, deliberately and—most roughly speaking—consciously. (65)

This search for a place all his own is perhaps what Kilgore tried and failed to achieve with the barbecuing and the surfing. The voices of the soldiers and their actions have become an instrument of this overture of violence. These soldiers now embody the spirit of rape and aggression that Dick attributes to Wagner's music, which was coincidentally composed only a half century before Conrad wrote *Heart of Darkness*.

Another aspect of Kilgore is provided by the cinematography of the film itself. From the first time we see him on screen, Kilgore is consistently seen on the right side of the plane, almost always on the extreme right or walking from left to right (with one or two very brief exceptions). On one occasion he is seen walking from the right of the plane to the left, but the camera shies from him, scanning away, keeping him effectively stranded on the right, and stopping only when he does, leaving him again on the right corner of the plane. This is a visual representation of the static, stubborn nature of the man and his extremist, right-wing, genocidal, and fascist tactics and inclinations, something that perfectly matches the Nazi motif established by the use of Wagner's piece. Ironically, World War II is said to have been the beginning of the post-colonial era and through the Vietnam War, the United States embodied to a certain extent the imperialist regime that it fought in Europe during World War II, something that is clearly seen in the film through its connection with the anti-imperialistic, although Eurocentric, content of *Heart of Darkness*.

The combination of fiction and fact is the main goal of the film, but it is also indicative of the relationship that film as a whole may have with literature as well as with history. If one holds fiction to be an imitation of nature, then likewise one would think that cinematographic adaptations of literary works would be imitations of literature. *Apocalypse Now* proves that this is not necessarily so. It also proves that there is more to literary adaptation than fidelity, infidelity, and additions. In this film, we see a multiplicity of texts, for instance, as

well as musical and historical associations or adaptations, and the ways in which these texts and adaptations can all intermingle and cohere. By mixing rather than translating the images, narrative, and ideas of literary works as with other "texts" such as musical pieces and historical events, Coppola is able to develop a subtext for the film that freely incorporates any association that is relevant to its purpose. He also avoids ignoring any venue for significance or meaning that may arise from the combination of so many elements into the project. There have been several commentaries made on the part of literary and film critics on *Apocalypse Now.* James Monaco has this to say about the film:

> ...*Apocalypse Now* (1979), a stunningly conceived and elegantly filmed attempt to wring some meaning out of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* set in the context of the Vietnam War. Critics and audiences seemed to agree that the attempt was not successful. Despite its vividly felt metaphors of the American experience in Vietnam—perhaps because of its brilliantly constructed images and sounds—*Apocalypse Now* doesn't seem to tell us very much about Vietnam. (295)

There are, however, a few things amiss here, in Monaco's appreciation of the film. Firstly, there is no mention here of *Dispatches,* whose contribution to the film I have demonstrated and of which I have provided only a few examples of the many that can be found. Secondly Monaco, as many other critics who turn their attention to the Vietnam War and the literature and film that it produced, talks about the exploration of the American "malaise" and "experience" in the war. This comment, besides being wholly ethnocentric and marginalizing also undermines the transcendence of *Apocalypse Now* as an exploration of humanity (or the lack thereof), war as a living, ugly thing, and of the extremes of human psyche and behavior. Monaco's reference to the film as unsuccessful is then not only ill informed but also misinformed in terms of both literary criticism as well as film. His attribution of this failure to the "brilliantly constructed images and sounds" that *Apocalypse Now* features shows how superficially he has interpreted the film in light of the few examples we have seen from the many more present in the texts. W.D. Ehrhart quotes General Kinh Chi: "If only American policymakers had taken the time to learn what every Vietnamese schoolchild knows, how very different might have been the course of the past 40 years" (67). It would seem then that this applies to critics as well. On the other hand Cedric Watts explains the relation between *Heart of Darkness* and *Apocalypse Now*, which Monaco treats rather offhandedly. Responding to Simon's (op. cit.) comment on the dramatization of fiction, he observes:

> *Apocalypse Now* (1979) almost solved the problem by being a film

> *on* rather than *of* a Conradian text: a spectacular transposition of much of 'Heart of Darkness' from the Congo of c. 1890 to the Vietnam War c. 1970: a selective magnification of the surrealistic and ruthlessly prophetic aspects of the original. (41)

To this we might only add the "word-photography" and experience-memory of *Dispatches*, the other original text to this original film. Watts' commentary rectifies two of Monaco's assumptions about the film: first that the film is *about* the Vietnam War, which it is only as much as it is about *Heart of Darkness* or this novel is *about* the colonization of Congo; and secondly that it can *tell* us something about the war which it does by *showing* us more than anything else, concepts which Monaco misconstrues entirely.[9]

Apocalypse Now bridges the gap between literature and history by "transposing" *Heart of Darkness* with the Vietnam War through the incorporation of images, narrative, and discourse provided by Herr in *Dispatches*. This validates the seminal connection between the fictional yet anti-colonialist literary landscape of *Heart of Darkness* and the factual, anti-war, and physical history cast in *Dispatches*, providing us with a critical background for understanding the reality of the Vietnam War as presented in literature and film. Both works lead invariably through the wasteful, nihilistic, and sacrificial extremes represented by the abuse of political and military power in the search for an empire's well-being and its ignorance and lack of identification with the humanity of cultural others, which lead as both Kurtzes, Marlow, and Willard realize, to individual dehumanization, the true major theme of all three works.

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[9] It is also befitting to comment that Monaco expects the film to tell us something about Vietnam. Whether he is referring to the country or the War with the United States is unclear, but I suspect that the latter is the case and so it should be referred to as the Vietnam War; 'Vietnam' is a country, not an event.

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VIAJES, CUERPO Y ESCRITURA EN *VIVIR LA VIDA* DE SARA SEFCHOVICH

Carmen Rivera

Yo quise ser como los hombres quisieron que yo fuese:
un intento de vida;
un juego al escondite con mi ser.
pero yo estaba hecha de presentes,
y mis pies planos sobre la tierra promisora
no resistían caminar hacia atrás,
y seguían adelante, adelante,
burlando las cenizas para alcanzar el beso
de los senderos nuevos.
("Yo misma fui mi ruta", Julia de Burgos)

En su tercera novela, *Vivir la vida*, Sara Sefchovich explora de forma irónica la vida de una mujer y su dinámica social dentro del contexto mexicano actual. Susana, la protagonista, se enfrenta a realidades contradictorias, que nos presentan una parodia de lo que es el México actual marcado por las incongruencias del neoliberalismo y los avatares de la globalización. Por medio de la exploración y negociación de los espacios del poder tanto personal como político, nos adentramos a un mundo de fronteras escurridizas donde lo único certero es la fragilidad de la vida y el absurdo de vivirla en una sociedad violenta y violentada.

La obra anterior de Sara Sefchovich se caracteriza por ese continuo cruzar fronterizo entre la realidad de vivir una mexicanidad citadina ligada a las tradiciones y la necesidad de explorar mundos alternos que sirvan de modelos para el autodescubrimiento personal y justifiquen nuevos rumbos dentro del vivir colectivo. Así pues, sus dos novelas anteriores, *Demasiado amor* (1989) y *La señora de los sueños* (1993) convergen en esa necesidad que sienten sus protagonistas de asirse a sí mismas, aceptando lo que son o han querido ser, para emprender un camino liberador en el cual puedan recuperar la presencia vital que les ha sido borrada en su realidad circundante.

Tomando en cuenta las orientaciones temáticas de su obra, no es extraño notar que la autora recurra persistentemente a una protagonista nomádica que, sin pretenderlo de forma consciente, se inserte en una trayectoria que le revele progresivamente cuán engañosos son los caminos impuestos y cuán posible puede resultar su transformación.

En *Vivir la vida* Sefchovich continúa presentándoles a sus lectores la experiencia ontológica del viaje como medio de liberación, pero va más allá, para también brindar una visión paródica que acentúa la naturaleza epistemológica del viaje: "dime por dónde andas y te diré quién eres". Desde el principio, hasta casi el final de la novela, la protagonista está continuamente circulando de un lado al otro del país y en ocasiones se encuentra realizando viajes trasatlánticos cuyos orígenes rayan en lo absurdo. La continuidad de viajes, sin dudas, le remite al lector a la dinámica transeúnte del mexicano actual, tanto citadino como fronterizo y provincial: piénsese en el continuo flujo migratorio hacia los Estados Unidos o en la locura del tránsito —por sistemático que pueda ser— a lo largo de la Avenida Insurgentes, la más larga de la ciudad de México.

En general, la literatura de viajes parte de la experiencia ontológica del sujeto que asume una utopía de libertad al sentirse capaz de ir más allá de su entorno y observar a los otros. Esta observación de lo otro/el otro/la otra no se reduce a una mirada, marcada por un campo visual inagotable e infinito, sino a la visión, es decir, al observar desde una perspectiva, desde la contingencia de una situación. Hace unos años, Sidonie Smith en su libro *Moving Lives*, innovador estudio sobre la escritura de viajes y su relación con las diferencias de género, señalaba que el acto de cruzar el espacio y el tiempo les da a los hombres, en particular, la certeza de alcanzar su hombría y así reafirmar su masculinidad. En cambio, la autora propone que la experiencia del viaje para las mujeres (y su consecuente escritura) es diferente porque el cuerpo femenino, en tanto metáfora de hogar, es también el espacio donde comienza y termina todo viaje. El hogar, igualado a lo femenino-maternal y regido por lo estático (de lo contrario no sería hogar), es el espacio que precisa ser dejado atrás por el hombre cuando se encamina a ejecutar su rol de actuante maduro e independiente en la sociedad. La mujer, por el contrario, no busca probarse a sí misma como mujer sino insertarse en un perpetuo desplazamiento que le posibilite el auto-escrutinio cuando se imagina localizada en otro lugar. La utopía de verse liberada en otro entorno es, pues, la ignición que la pondrá en marcha. Al respecto, también me parecen iluminadores los planteamientos de Fernando Navarro y Sandra Fernández, de los cuales me hago eco: "el viajero al constituir

la imagen narrada como categoría, y hacer de la multiplicidad de signos, un símbolo; no hace sino inscribirse como 'extranjero', 'extópico' en el campo de lo que ve". Es precisamente ese sentido de extranjería, de extrañamiento, que señalan Navarro y Fernández, lo que observamos en la protagonista de esta novela cuyos viajes, como se verá, se transformarán en experiencias ontológicas mediatizadas por la conciencia subjetiva que poco a poco irá adquiriendo. Vale la pena añadir que esas experiencias sólo sucederán paradójicamente en la medida de su extranjería. Mientras más extranjera es, en el sentido de no pertenecer totalmente al lugar donde se encuentra, mayor será su auto-descubrimiento y la urgencia de consolidar su libertad. Tomando en consideración lo anterior, nos proponemos, explorar someramente los siguientes temas desde la experiencia del viaje: el contenido simbólico del cuerpo (violentado, mutilado, sometido a la voluntad ajena) y el proceso de la escritura.[1]

I. Hacia la libertad sorteando laberintos

Susana, la protagonista, es una joven provinciana de no escasos recursos económicos y harto mimada, incluso hasta la víspera de su boda.[2] Se casa con Francisco de la Vega y Vega, hombre citadino, de extraño comportamiento, que vive inmerso día y noche en su trabajo, asociado éste de alguna manera a la burocracia del estado. Tras el casamiento, se marchan a la ciudad, traslado que dará comienzo a lo inusitado, risible y, más tarde, trágico de su vida.

El primer encontronazo de Susana con su nueva realidad ocurre cuando presencia el desmoronamiento de las tradiciones con las que fue criada. Su luna de miel resulta ser la primera desilusión, puesto que Paco no consuma su primera noche con ella. Aún peor, éste no cumple con la más arraigada de las tradiciones en las mujeres de su familia: quitarle el vestido de novia. Como consecuencia, Susana

[1] Quisiéramos hacer la salvedad de que éste es un texto muy rico en imágenes y representaciones simbólicas, además de presentar de forma encabalgada múltiples eventos. En este espacio, sin embargo, sólo nos limitamos a lo referente a la experiencia del viaje.

[2] Su padre era un rico y poderoso ranchero de la región. Como dato curioso, cito las líneas en las cuales observamos la manera en que Susana fue criada. Narra la noche de bodas: "Eran las nueve y media cuando llegamos a nuestra casa. La primera, la única vez en toda mi existencia, que a esa hora todavía no estaba en la cama, tomando mi vaso de leche y lista para dormir" (19). De entrada, el lector/la lectora será conmovido por la inocencia que se desprenderá de una Susana aniñada que, más tarde, perderá su inocencia de forma brutal.

pasará varios días ataviada de encajes, perlas y tules blancos ante el estupor y la burla de quienes encuentra por su camino. Sin lugar a dudas, la trivialidad de este suceso tendrá repercusiones más adelante cuando su cuerpo, figurado metonímicamente en ese vestido, se convierta en una amalgama de opiniones y disposiciones ajenas a ella. Su evidente ingenuidad y la presión que su padre ejercía sobre ella (al advertirle que ni se le ocurriera regresar a la casa), llega a su fin cuando, precipitada por la rabia, toma unas tijeras, se corta el vestido y se lo arranca a tirones.[3] Al verse liberada de la prisión que significaba dicho vestido, Susana comienza su recorrido iniciático y tímido por la ciudad. A vuelo de pájaro y contando sus vuelos interoceánicos como uno solo, Susana realiza veinticinco viajes. Desde los lugares más recónditos de la ciudad —donde sólo habitan los pobres—; pasando por la casa del Presidente de la República —donde trabaja de ayudante de la primera dama— hasta el México turístico de Cancún y, más allá de los confines nacionales —Los Ángeles, Berlín, Lisboa, Tokio, Sydney, Tel Aviv y Barcelona— la protagonista se enfrenta a la más variada gama de vivencias contemporáneas encadenadas por un eje común: la parodia. Los ejemplos son abundantes en el texto, pero quisiéramos señalar a vuelo de pájaro dos acontecimientos que Susana atestigua: primero, la transformación carnavalesca del anciano decrépito que se convierte en soberbio presidente de la República gracias a la magia del maquillaje y los filtros televisivos; y, en segundo lugar, la banalización del conflicto de Chiapas por grupos de jóvenes fisgones emocionados por el espectáculo de una aventura izquierdista. Ambas escenas acentúan el cariz absurdo que se desvela tras el simulacro comúnmente impuesto y aceptado y, más allá, ridiculizan el esencialismo vacuo tras el poder (representado en el Presidente decrépito pero soberbio) y la lucha alterna contra ese poder (representado en Chiapas). Tanto el presidente enmascarado (tras el maquillaje) como los jóvenes también enmascarados (pero, tras sus fantasías) se homogeneizan en el mismo espacio mediático que, como veremos más adelante, marcará el final de Susana.

Los viajes de nuestra protagonista no sólo se definen por lo que implican anímicamente en ella, sino también por los espacios

[3] Para un análisis de la ropa como espacio simbólico para construir identidades remitimos al lector al iluminador estudio de Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Por limitaciones de espacio no podemos hacer un análisis de la transformación que sufre Susana en términos de la ropa que viste pero queremos dejar sentado la relevancia de dicho estudio para ampliar los horizontes interpretativos de esta novela.

asociados a los mismos.[4] Los paseos iniciales que realiza por los alrededores de su apartamento la espantan y la confunden. Los ruidos, el humo y la basura apabullantes, los enormes letreros publicitarios que envían mensajes incomprensibles para una provinciana y el hormigueo humano que intenta abordar a empujones el metro se le presentan como signos de una realidad desconocida (el espacio de la ciudad) que, simultáneamente la incitan a tomarle el gusto a la libertad. Hasta que toma la segunda decisión radical de su nueva vida y toma un camión para irse a Oaxaca. Este viaje marcará el comienzo de una vida errante que, aunque por momentos parece asentarse en un solo lugar, es realmente jalonada por fuerzas y circunstancias externas. Susana parece no tener control de su vida; todas las personas que pasan por ella determinan cómo debe vivir. El motivo de la mayor parte de sus viajes será, en ese sentido, huir de los controles y buscar un lugar donde poder vivir a sus anchas. Desgraciadamente estos viajes nunca tendrán un final feliz y, aunque en cierta medida le ayudan a crecer, lo cierto es que van agravando paulatinamente su bienestar mental y físico. Como se verá a continuación, los pesares que sufre Susana pueden parecer absurdos en primera instancia, pero resultará que no son tan ilógicos cuando se observan como la consecuencia natural dentro de un mundo muy familiar para nuestros días, donde la violencia se manifiesta tanto por medio de la agresión directa contra una persona como por medio de las sutilezas que afectan el bienestar emocional del colectivo.

II. Un cuerpo acribillado

En su ya clásico e imprescindible libro, *La risa de la medusa*, Hélène Cixous se cuestionaba algo que nos parece pertinente para el estudio de esta novela:

> ¿Soy ese no-cuerpo vestido, envuelto en velos, alejado cuidadosamente, mantenido apartado de la Historia, de las transformaciones, anulado, mantenido al margen de la escena, al ámbito de la cocina o al de la cama? (22)

Hace ya casi treinta años que la escritora francesa propuso "escribir

[4] Es interesante notar los espacios en los cuales empiezan y terminan sus viajes. Por ejemplo, en el primer viaje ella sale de su casa provinciana para llegar al apartamento en la Ciudad de México. Usualmente sus viajes terminarán en lugares donde permanecerá encerrada por algún tiempo: apartamentos, cuartos de hotel, manicomio, etc. Su felicidad nunca estaría en un lugar fijo, en un espacio encerrado sino como lo dice ella misma: "Y es que lo que yo quería era salir. No podía imaginarme más felicidad que la de ir y venir sin que nadie me lo impidiera" (132).

con el cuerpo" en un intento de recuperar el territorio corporal femenino a través del proceso escritural. Parece increíble que todavía hoy, aunque cuestionables muchas de sus propuestas, resulte un texto iluminador que desenmascara muchas de las visiones patriarcales imperantes al filo del siglo veintiuno. Tal es el caso en la novela aquí examinada, en la cual ese no-cuerpo de Susana no es solamente anulado sino que también es acribillado desde que se deslocaliza de su lugar de origen. Ya vimos que el motivo que la saca de su hogar, el casamiento, desencadena el primer atentado contra su cuerpo: el rechazo inexplicable que su esposo le manifiesta. Cuando la recién casada decide rasgarse el vestido de novia, liberándose así de la decepción causada por una tradición incumplida, se va anunciando la cadena de acontecimientos que violentarán su cuerpo. El primer acto perpretado explícitamente contra él fue durante el viaje a Oaxaca que, no olvidemos, fue el primer viaje fuera del parámetro citadino al que su esposo pensaba restringirla. Sentada en una banca del jardín, cansada, hambrienta y sin saber adónde ir, Susana conoce a "un joven de aspecto agradable...que era artista y que participaba en una reunión de becarios del gobierno..." (33). Después de llevarla a comer, el joven la llevó a su hotel y cuál no sería su sorpresa cuando al entrar a la habitación vio a "un montón de muchachos que bebían, fumaban, escuchaban música", y que, al verla, empezaron a "gritar, a rugir a aullar" (33); y acto seguido, la violaron repetidamente.

Con el cuerpo mutilado y el espíritu paralizado tras la violación, Susana continúa su viaje hasta que una buena samaritana la lleva a su casa. Es entonces cuando consigue el trabajo en la casa del Presidente de la República; primero, cuidando los innumerables arreglos florales que recibía la Primera Dama; luego, como ayudante personal de esta última. Otra vez, ocurre lo más insólito: la Primera Dama, de buenas a primeras, decide que su ayudante deberá casarse y así le ordena: "Te vas a casar. Tu marido será Antonio José Luján Vargas, secretario particular del presidente" (46).

Con este segundo casamiento, impuesto como el primero, la protagonista pierde total control sobre su cuerpo: ahora serán los otros los que dictaminarán el curso de ese cuerpo. Lo primero que intentan sus cuñadas, por ejemplo, es transformarla según los parámetros estéticos aceptados y celebrados. Dice la narradora:

> En punto de las nueve de la mañana de mi primer día de casada, llegaron a recogerme mis cuñadas para cumplir con el encargo que les había hecho su adorado hermano: llevarme a cortar el cabello justo debajo de la oreja como lo usan las señoras finas, porque según él, sólo las indias van de trenza. Y también alaciarlo, porque en su opinión, nadie en sus cinco sentidos se dejaría ese cabello ondulado como de secretaria bilingüe. (50)

No sólo el pelo le cambiaron; también la nariz, que, en opinión de su nuevo esposo y cuñadas, era demasiado grande. Más tarde, por recomendación de una amiga, se obsesiona por las dietas y los ejercicios aeróbicos, hasta que queda embarazada. Pierde, entonces, su primer embarazo mientras manejaba para el hospital porque un oficial de tránsito la detuvo por circular con un vehículo que no podía hacerlo ese día. Queda embarazada tres veces más y, cuando ya cansada le pide al médico que la opere, la familia del marido puso el grito en el cielo al escuchar lo que consideraba una actitud herética. No obstante, el colmo de la violencia contra su cuerpo fue cuando le diagnosticaron un cáncer que realmente nunca se había desarrollado. Nos cuenta la narradora:

> De nada sirvió que yo protestara y les asegurara que me sentía bien, que pidiera oír la opinión de otro especialista y que prefiriera morir antes que someterme a una cura tan brutal...Así que esa misma noche me internaron en el hospital y al día siguiente me sometieron a una operación para quitarme el pecho enfermo y de una vez y como método de prevención, el otro que estaba sano, así como los ganglios de las dos axilas. (60)[5]

Queda claro que el cuerpo de Susana es un imán que atrae las arbitrariedades y prejuicios de una sociedad que ha creado un sistema fiscalizador y opresor en contra de la naturaleza del cuerpo femenino.[6] Irónicamente, lo que se consideran adelantos científicos a disposición de la preservación de la salud corporal, se convierten en elementos perniciosos para la otra vitalidad: la del espíritu. En el caso del cuerpo femenino la situación resulta complicada puesto que éste, como muy bien nos recuerda Heidi Figueroa-Sarriera en un iluminador ensayo sobre el discurso biomédico, se convierte en un recipiente donde se mezclan lo naturalmente dado y lo socialmente impuesto. De ahí que el cuerpo de la mujer se convierta en frontera de negociación donde se reinscriben las prácticas de dominación (las que fuerzan socialmente) y, a la vez, de liberación (las que rescatan lo natural). En este sentido, las transformaciones radicales que sufre el cuerpo de Susana denuncian el descontrol total que de forma inconsciente tiene la mujer moderna sobre sí misma. Ella intuye que la estética impuesta puede ser una forma de manipulación

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[5] Si como dice Elaine Scarry en *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*, la representación del dolor carece de referencialidad para quien no lo sufre, de tal manera que se termina silenciándose; podemos decir, entonces, que la operación a la cual Susana es sometida y el dolor implícito en toda la situación no hacen más que enfatizar su aniquilación tanto corporal como espiritual.

[6] Como han visto muchas feministas tras los planteamientos propuestos por Michel Foucault en *Historia de la sexualidad*.

pero, ¿sabe que también la salud o la enfermedad pueden ser condiciones igualmente impuestas? La actitud de Susana es reveladora. Ella deja pasar los cambios que hicieron sus cuñadas sin mucha alarma, pero no será así cuando pierda sus pechos en una operación injustificada.[7] Por eso vemos que su frustración comenzó a crecer, y tras recuperar la salud que, paradójicamente, nunca había perdido, comenzó a germinar en su interior una quemante furia (parecida a la que la condujo a cortarse a tirones el vestido de novia) contra quienes la rodeaban. De esa manera, el día menos pensado, cuando compraba golosinas en el parque para los suyos, decidió alejarse, comenzó a caminar por la avenida fuera del parque, se subió a un camión y se marchó. Ahora iniciaría una nueva etapa en su vida en la cual trataría de hacer su voluntad, una voluntad que, curiosamente, se colaría poco a poco por los resquicios de la escritura.

III. Viviendo la vida se escribe[8]

Si en su primera novela, *Demasiado amor*, Sefchovich se centraba en la poética del cuerpo y su trayectoria por los caminos de México, si en su segunda, *La señora de los sueños*, trataba más bien de la poética de la lectura por parte de un ama de casa típica de la clase media mexicana, en esta su tercera novela, la autora explora la poética de la escritura; esa escritura que se descubre por casualidad y por casualidad se convierte en el espacio utópico donde se le puede hallar un poco de sentido al absurdo de la realidad. Ese primer acercamiento con la palabra comenzó por el simple hecho de tener una caligrafía bonita.

Como mencionamos, Susana abandonó a su familia después de sufrir el tratamiento contra un cáncer que nunca existió. Esta vez se dirigió a un hotel del centro de la ciudad, donde decidió emplearse como recamarera. Allí, Don Mario, el encargado de la recepción, le pide que le ayude a escribir unas cartas. Aunque las cartas no son de su autoría sino de don Mario, la narradora las incorpora como parte

[7] La pérdida de sus pechos le restará elementos claves de su subjetividad femenina: el erotismo y la maternidad. Simbólicamente la están borrando.

[8] Resulta curioso pensar que incluso los títulos de esta novela apuntan hacia la reescritura paródica. Títulos como "En el que se advierte cómo es la vida", "De lo relativo a empezar a vivir", "De lo que se refiere a ya estar viviendo" nos hacen recordar las novelas de caballería o las novelas picarescas (en las cuales siempre hay uno o más viajeros) o nos remontan al texto latino *De la brevedad de la vida*. Por cierto, con respecto a este último, nos parece que vendría al caso una lectura comparada que, sin duda, enriquecería la labor de Sefchovich.

de la experiencia vivida y ciertamente que le ayudan a reafirmar el tono paródico de su visión sobre México puesto que el contenido de las cartas es tan increíble como todo lo que ha vivido Susana.[9] Más tarde, este primer contacto de Susana con la escritura la motiva —al ser internada en un manicomio por pasarse el día entero hablando del PIO (Partido de la Izquierda Organizada)— a refugiarse en la palabra. De esta forma, cuando lee en una revista la historia del tenor italiano Luciano Panzacoti,[10] casado con una chica escultural mucho menor que él, decide escribirle una carta pública haciéndose pasar por su esposa abandonada. Esta carta la envía a uno de los periódicos más conocidos del país y la misiva inmediatamente se convierte en el mayor atractivo de la prensa farandulera.

El hacerse pasar por otra persona no es nuevo en esta novela ya que en *La señora de los sueños* es técnica recurrente.[11] Técnica, por cierto, muy al caso desde una perspectiva paródica puesto que, al tratar de usurpar la subjetividad de la otra persona, se ponen de manifiesto los elementos, juicios o características que precisamente se quieren parodiar. Así pues, cuando Susana usurpa escrituralmente la persona de Elsa Cansini, la esposa victimizada del tenor, no sólo pondrá sobre el tapete la fanfarronería masculina que se burla de su contraparte femenina sino —y esto es lo que nos parece lo mejor— de una prensa que se las jacta de seriedad y objetividad cuando lo que hace es aprovecharse groseramente de una intimidad que, en este caso, es creada por una persona ajena a la realidad de sus protagonistas y que sólo confia en su imaginación. Al fin y al cabo, la beneficiada en todo el asunto fue la propia Elsa Cansini cuyos abogados se vieron iluminados por las cartas de Susana para concertar un divorcio que le dejaría la mayoría de los bienes a la víctima. Como recompensa, Elsa Cansini le dio un cheque de mil dólares a quien beneficiosamente la usurpó y de paso les recomendó a los médicos del manicomio que la dejaran libre porque Susana "era una gran escritora que tenía que seguir ayudando al mundo con [sus] maravillosas ideas" (94).

Es así como Susana se convierte en escritora del día a la ma-

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[9] La primera, por ejemplo, va dirigida al hermano de Don Mario —revolucionario vejado por causa de su fe— pidiéndole que regrese a la vida pública porque ya los izquierdistas creen en Dios y nadie se burla de ellos cuando rezan.

[10] Clara referencia a Luciano Pavarotti.

[11] En un estudio anterior, titulado "Autodeterminación y reconciliación en La *señora de los sueños* de Sara Sefchovich" hemos trabajado la técnica del "passing" en esta autora mexicana.

ñana, cambiando de pronto su vida de ama de casa, encerrada en un manicomio, a una mujer que de ahora en adelante tratará de controlar su vida. Sin embargo, se dará cuenta de que hasta los caminos que aparentemente le ofrecen la libertad también son caminos arbitrariamente controlados. Incluso el de la escritura que, por un momento, parecía haberla sacado de su encierro. Véase lo que comenta la narradora:

> Enjambres de editores y agentes literarios me empezaron a perseguir con contratos magníficos para futuros libros. Escritores me ofrecieron sus servicios para hacer por mí el trabajo y que yo lo firmara. Señoras de sociedad querían venderme sus ideas. Reporteros y comentaristas pagaban por entrevistarme. Y montones de personas insistían en saber de mí, en acercarse, preguntarme, pedirme que leyera sus textos, inscribirse conmigo en cursos y talleres. (94)

La publicidad "farandulera" en torno al/la escritor/a, tanto como las demandas del intrincado comercio editorial, terminan confundiendo a Susana. Por otro lado, tan ofuscada estaba con el imprevisto salto a la fama que decidió encerrarse en el cuarto de un hotel para ver si así le llegaba la inspiración que por completo había perdido. Todavía va más allá y decide contratar a una doble que se encargue de llevar su vida a la normalidad mientras ella se queda escribiendo. Ni aún así logra escribir algo, y esta vez la usurpadora se convierte en usurpada, porque la tal doble no sólo termina robándole su identidad personal y familiar, sino que también se pone a escribir y manda a las editoriales sus escritos como si fueran de la propia Susana. Medio muerta —porque pasó mucho tiempo abandonada en el cuarto del hotel— y desilusionada porque la escritura no le resultó como esperaba, confiesa: "Hubiera sido mejor, en lugar de ser escritora, haber anunciado huaraches"[12] (102).

Más tarde, sin embargo, Susana regresa a la escritura. Esta vez para contarle la historia de su vida a una niña que había venido a vivir a su casa cuando el amante de su segundo esposo se vino a instalar en ella. Rayando en la adolescencia, esta niña —que se llama Rosalbita y es una niña genio— decide marcharse a Suecia con una prima y Susana promete escribirle. Así lo hace, y en el último capítulo, "En el que se afirma que así es la vida", comienza a narrar sus memorias infantiles y su vida cotidiana en el presente, la cual cada vez se encuentra más alejada de las restricciones que externamente se le habían impuesto. Dice:

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[12] "Huaraches" es la voz mexicana para referirse a sandalias de piel.

> Cuando era niña, me ponían vestidos blancos llenos de encajes y moños que no debía arrugar ni ensuciar. Cuando me casé, fue con un vestido blanco lleno de tules y perlas que no me debía quitar sola para no convocar la mala suerte. Luego, un amigo me hizo unos enormes vestidos de manta blanca pintada que no me podía cambiar para que no se pusiera triste.
>
> Hoy, por fin, puedo vestirme como quiera. Así que he dejado atrás los colores pastel y sólo uso el azul marino. Y siempre pantalones, ya no me pongo vestidos. ¡Esta es mi idea de la libertad! (217)

No obstante la realización final de su libertad,[13] la vuelta a reflexionar sobre sí misma a través de sus cartas la sume en la depresión. A ello se añade el hecho de que su mayoría de edad, los cincuenta, la hacen una mujer "transparente" (225), inexistente en una sociedad obsesionada por la juventud. Para colmo, la poca libertad que creía haber conseguido se esfuma ordinariamente cuando se harta de escuchar por todos los radios de la ciudad lo que tajantemente llama "esa voz acaramelada y esos pujidos" (226) que sin parar cantan "Tú la misma de ayer, la incondicional..." (226).

IV. Luis Miguel versus la libertad de vivir la vida

Efectivamente, será Luis Miguel, con sus "pujidos", lo que acabará con la vida de Susana. Dice al final: "Un ser humano tiene un límite para lo que puede resistir y el mío ha sido colmado. No quiero vivir más, porque no soporto seguir escuchando a Luis Miguel" (226). Si a la autora mexicana le desagrada o no la voz de su compatriota Luis Miguel no es tan relevante como el hecho de que el afamado ídolo sea metáfora de las fuerzas mediáticas que manipulan a su antojo la voluntad de los individuos. Esta experiencia, por demás común en el mundo moderno, es también metáfora de la voluntad intervenida y moldeada por los elementos del poder que se recuestan precisamente de la seducción que ejercen los medios audiovisuales contemporáneos sobre quienes actúan cual si fueran autómatas (como actuaba Susana al principio). Así pues, los intentos por conocer una libertad de acción y de movimiento que desde su nacimiento fue coartada se frustran ante una realidad personal fuera de su control. El largo y doloroso viaje que la había llevado a vivir un ápice de libertad se trastorna, y nuevamente la cólera se apodera de sí misma, esta vez no con el deseo de rasgarse las vestiduras o tomar el primer bus para Oaxaca, sino de quitarse la vida. Desgra-

[13] Nótese que esa libertad está asociada con la forma de vestir. Pasó de estar encerrada en el vestido de novia a estar libre en sus pantalones.

ciadamente, la escritura, como lo sugirió Cixous, no la libertaría por completo. De hecho, Rosalba, en el epílogo, comentaría: "…al leer a Susana vi que su cuerpo no existe, que apenas si lo menciona" (240). Lo que quedó fue su escritura como testimonio de su viaje por este mundo. Quizás la propuesta de la escritora mexicana, a diferencia de Cixous, se halle en el viaje como metáfora para una experiencia de liberación.

Decíamos al inicio de este ensayo que la literatura de viajes presume una utopía libertaria que impulsa un cambio de visión de lo uno a lo otro y, pudiéramos añadir que, de la unicidad a la multiplicidad. En ese sentido se percibe una urgencia de abandonar el cuerpo-casa-mujer (el discurso socialmente impuesto) y convertirse en ciudadana del mundo, es decir, en sujeto libre, no fronterizo, no obligado a lo estático. El elemento utópico del viaje se torna, pues, en perenne sentimiento de extranjería.[14] Pero este "sentimiento de extranjería" no debe leerse como claudicación o enajenación sino como hermosamente lo concibió la poeta puertorriqueña Julia de Burgos cuando en su poema "Yo misma fui mi ruta" también hacía referencia a la experiencia del viaje liberador. Tanto en la voz poética como en Susana el seguir adelante es imperante para "alcanzar el beso de los senderos nuevos", y no ser "un intento de vida" sino la vida misma.

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[14] De hecho, el sentido de "extranjería" inserta a Susana en un espacio necesario para su liberación. Es decir, para poder liberarse ella tiene que ser ciudadana extranjera dentro del mundo de las imposiciones; dicho extranjerismo señala su distanciamiento, su obligada ilegalidad y la permisividad de su rebelación.

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READING LEONARD THOMPSON: THE DIARY OF A NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW ENGLANDER

Susan E. Jones

When Maria Laurens Smith Thompson finished the diary of her deceased husband, mourning his passing and documenting her own grief, she ended a run of diaries which spanned seven decades and documented the growth of Leonard Thompson, Esq. from an earnest adolescent to a prominent merchant, inventor, and civic benefactor of Woburn, Massachusetts. If Maria Thompson herself kept a diary, it is lost to time and the vicissitudes of the zealous dissolution of the Thompson estate.

Leonard Thompson's diaries exist in two collections, one (the early diaries) held in the archives of the Woburn Public Library and the other (the diaries from the late 1840s to the end of his life) in the collection of the author of this article. Taken as a whole, they illuminate much of nineteenth-century life, including social and religious attitudes, in a New England town (particularly as during much of this period they are accompanied by the counterpoint of Thompson's father's diaries, Col. Leonard Thompson, diaries also in the possession of the Woburn Public Library archives).

Much has been written recently about nineteenth-century diaries and diarists, particularly women writers. This lengthy span of writing by a New England man (not a famous one, except for his own community) provides an illuminating contrast as well as revealing similar uses of the diary as an instrument of character formation.

In examining the diaries, however, certain problems of analysis pertain as have been noted in critical commentary on the use of these resources. The first of these problems is that of audience. Who was intended to be the reader of the texts that Leonard Thompson Esq. wrote as a young man? As K. Kuhn-Osius points out, "As soon as something can be verbalized, it has found its place in the cognitive universe of all language users" (169). In reading the diaries over time, one becomes aware of differences in style, not just those differences which mark the difference between a naïve response to experience

described by an adolescent writer and the response of a mature man with considerable resources to meet a challenge; such differences often seem to mark a kind of awareness of a shift of audience. In some points (as where Thompson describes his first meetings with the woman who became his bride), one has the sense that these descriptions are written in retrospect and meant to be proudly shared with his fiancée, as they consist of the praise of her bright eyes and other descriptions of her attributes. In his diary for 1851, we find a quite different kind of writing. Thompson's young daughter Jenny had been ill through the early part of January, first teething and then apparently with chicken pox. On January 17, he writes, "Made ready to attend at least J.B. Winn's but alas, Jenny awoke to forbid it with open eyes and lips. Bah!" giving one the sense that he was not planning to share such entries with other readers.

In some places in the Thompson diaries, the reader gets a sense that the writer is still thinking of some all-seeing teacher figure who will be perusing the prose for signs of improper behavior or thoughts. In others, the language seems to flow as a more "genuine" expression of emotional response to the challenge of making one's way in the very difficult economic and social world of the 1830s and 40s. In still others, the structure of the text is morally autodidactic, as if the diary were an external teaching instrument.

A second issue arising in diaries is also identified by Kuhn-Osius, the occurrence of "spots of indeterminacy" (171). As Kuhn-Osius points out, the writer of fiction is under an obligation to describe background information and to inform the reader; the writer of a diary "may simply *name* things, people, or events in the knowledge that *he* knows what he has referred to" (170). Thus what may have been very clear to the diarist because the events were current and parochial and the agents in the events well known to the writer, may provide a site of mystery to the reader a century or more later. One such example in the Thompson diaries comes in the late 1830s when after a series of somewhat jolting life events (his widowed father remarries, apparently without having forewarned his children, and he himself has difficulty establishing himself in a profession), Thompson finally ships out as a sailor, having been signed on board by his father. Just prior to sailing, he speaks of a major betrayal in his life, but describes the incident no further. Clearly he knew to what he referred, but he felt no necessity to speak of it further in his writing. For the reader, given a plethora of details over the next year regarding Thompson's life circumstances, the identity of this strongly expressed reaction remains a mystery. Thompson had been involved in observing the construction of the ship "Burmah" on which he sailed, and he had visited it in the harbor

on several occasions, so his shipping out on her seems not entirely unexpected—did he harbor resentment at his father for signing him on as a hand? A year later he speaks of a meeting at the church to discipline a young man and a young woman, and the man involved is identified several times in his writing as an acquaintance. The grounds for the couple's discipline in the church assembly seem to have arisen about the time of Thompson's exclamation in his diary. Is this incident the betrayal to which Thompson refers? This indeterminacy would be hard to resolve for any modern reader, given the paucity of information and the scarcity of contemporary comments. The father's diary makes no parallel illumination that would seem to clear the haze, nor does it mention the church meeting to publicly discipline the couple, even though the younger Thompson indicates that the church society was hard pressed to come to agreement on the subject of their indiscretion.

On the bright side, while diarists may provide these moments of opacity, many writers, including Thompson, often illuminate the events and celebrities of their day by reflections on them, particularly when they relate to current literary and cultural events. Because Thompson lived close to Boston, Cambridge, and Concord, sites of considerable intellectual activity in the mid-nineteenth century, he often quotes poetry of the period or alludes to events in which he hears contemporaries like Ralph Waldo Emerson address civic gatherings (although in the case of Emerson, he writes in a denigrating manner about his abilities as a speaker). But such illumination is rarer than the multiplicity of incidents and individuals which the reader is hard-pressed to deal with in a meaningful way.

Yet another difficulty of looking at these diaries Cynthia Huff notes in describing diaries as "deeply contextualized, family-based, multimedia discourses" (508). The later diaries of Leonard Thompson become multimedia by often being stuffed with "extraliterary heteroglossia." For example, the 1890 diary includes not just the daily reflections of the writer, but the following items:

1. A pencil sketch of a dog with an object in its mouth
2. A card issued by Raymond's Vacation Excursions showing that Mr. Leonard Thompson, traveling alone, has been assigned to Room 77 at the Yellowstone Lake Hotel in Yellowstone National Park
3. A pencil notation of garden bulbs ordered and received
4. A printed ticket to the "Baptist Anniversary" with a pencil note on the reverse that it was "Received from a com. of young

Ladies in Vancouver B.C. while on board Steamer . . . they were very gentle in their appeals for encouraging attendance at the entertainment.

5. A pen and ink note to the trustees of the Woburn Public Library from the janitor, John W. Francis, with a respectful request for an increase in pay.

At the bottom of the note, in pencil, a response: "It was not advanced!" in Thompson's handwriting.

Thus, Huff continues, "the 'self' projected in these documents is multidimensional, not unified" (508), as one would more or less expect of a persona in the examination of fictional discourse. And William Spurlin has noted that "identity [is] a site of shifting meaning, and subject positions . . ." (18). Where the reader and interpreter may be looking for unity of subjectivity, in fact, especially in the adolescent writings of the diarist, we may find instead an individual [re]searching a variety of identities. In the case of the diarist in the 1890 book, we find his good will varying according to those who make calls upon it.

Further, as Laura Thatcher Ulrich demonstrates in her examination of the diaries of Martha Ballard and as Huff has noted, diarists do not structure their work along one narrative line (as we are often accustomed to reading in literature) but into a fragmentation of stories and characters, with those moments of indeterminacy in which the details are known to the writer but fragmentary to the reader (Huff 510). A thousand details which seem unimportant crowd the text, and sometimes much of what is told seems trivial to the reader. Yet, as Ulrich as written, "The problem is not that the diary is trivial but that it introduces more stories than can easily be recovered and absorbed" (25).

However, Thompson like other diarists does organize his writing around "well-known story lines, especially travel and historical events" (Kuhn-Osius 172). For instance, in his searches for a vocation, he makes journeys to New York and Philadelphia, he takes a ship which travels around a wild, mid-nineteenth century Florida and stormy Caribbean, and he spends over a year making and selling shoes in Hallowell, Maine, ironically the home of Ulrich's diarist, Martha Ballard when Ballard was alive.

Each of the lengthy travel narratives is fraught with stories of dangers and misapprehensions of the writer, as well as the fragmentary stories of other passengers and travelers—the college boys who spend all their time drinking as they travel south to their homes or the ship's cook just two weeks off the plantation as a slave. These

extended lines of writing are more in line with readers' expectations from lengthy narrative texts, including both fiction and history.

Given those difficulties of reading and interpreting the diaries, nonetheless they speak to the concerns and the trends common to many New Englanders in the nineteenth century. One of the most frequent threads that one can trace through the diaries of Leonard Thompson Esq. from the first available to the last is the concern regarding temperance. Temperance was a major issue in New England and elsewhere during the first half of the century, and it was an issue often tied to abolition, although not in the diaries of either father or son.

Woburn had had an active participation in temperance issues; however, the town's citizens were by no means unified in their thoughts on the topic. The manuscript "Constitution for the Woburn Association for the Promotion of Temperance and the Suppression of Intemperance" (held in the archives of the Woburn Public Library) gives a vivid picture of the conflicts in the community. Merchants were in favor of personal temperance, but were by no means united regarding the responsibilities of a businessman insofar as selling or not selling spirits to make a living. The society itself dissolved within a few years over these issues, as well as differences between religious denominations, the Baptists forming their own temperance organization with other denominations divided over the use of wine in communion. In Woburn, even among the Baptists, this difference of opinion created dissent, with a group of parishioners holding views on this and other issues different from the leadership of the church eventually being requested to leave, then forming what was known colloquially as the "Jug Baptist Church" in Woburn.

The Thompson family was supportive of the temperance movement from the beginning, and many Thompsons signed the original constitution of the society or became members of the group. An overview of young Leonard Thompson's writing finds him discussing this topic frequently attending cold water parties and meetings, listening to temperance speakers both in the Sunday School, discussing the presence of the Washingtonians in the communities where he was employed (although he was not necessarily a participant in Washingtonian Society events as he came from a higher social class than many of the working people involved in that particular temperance movement), and in other venues. Although he does not speak of his drinking habits or even of his having tasted either wine or spirits, on several occasions of stress, we find him pledging that he will remain abstemious—once in the middle of a storm which threatened to de-

stroy the ship on which he was sailing off the coast of Cape Hatteras and on another occasion in the context of a temperance meeting in which he signs the pledge and hopes that he will have the will to do as he has pledged.

As a young store helper, he sees much to confirm his disgust for intemperance, and he relates at least one instance of public drunkenness which must have fueled the strong feeling general in the community. He eventually leaves an early employer at least partly because of his distaste for selling liquor, dispensing it into the containers brought by the customers—although there is some evidence in his writing that he was also not the most satisfactory employee in this particular endeavor.

He has good reason to feel uneasy regarding the subject of intemperance. In his later diaries, we find him attempting to ameliorate the condition of more than one family member who falls prey to an alcohol addiction. Sometimes Thompson's resources are engaged in attempting to dry out the inebriate; on other occasions, his financial support is necessary to supply sustenance to a family of alcoholics of his acquaintance, and yet he is always somewhat pessimistic about the reform of such unfortunates. One such instance is remarked on in his entry for April 13, 1898, "Justin returns from his term at Deer Island, his wife receives him kindly, but the old time appetite will no doubt return to curse him and torment his friends." At yet other times, the temperance spirit as revealed in Thompson's diaries seems to gain an anti-Irish, anti-immigrant tone, as in his notations for March 17, 1898:

> No Irish demonstrations except a rush to Mass for St. Patrick and St. Bridget. They take kindly to our soil which grows corn so freely as to make the whiskey cheap and strong, to give a loving, a loving cup on their often burial day, when they give their friends a kindly tuck in at the waiting cemetery!

Thompson's experiences reflect the turmoil of the nineteenth century over the subject of alcohol, as reflected in such surveys as Jack S. Blocker Jr.'s *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform*. Blocker states

> In pursuit of their reform, temperance reformers argued, pleaded, cajoled, confessed, denounced and declaimed . . . They formed associations at every level from the neighborhood to the nation. (xiv)

The long span of the diaries finds Thompson a participant in much of this activity. Moreover, it is the diary itself that seems to provide a moral anchor for this and other acts of self control through its span of over sixty years.

Martha Tomhave Blauvelt has described the diary of Sarah Connell Ayer, a nineteenth-century diarist from Newburyport, Massachusetts, as "The Work of the Heart" (577). In her article, Blauvelt demonstrates how Connell's daily writing reveals changes in emotional states and the way they are shaped over the course of approximately twenty years. Connell, according to Blauvelt, is trained in youth to be a woman of sensibility—controlling emotions, felling but not too much (578). The family virtue of the sentimental model was "harmony and contentment," which unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, Connell was ultimately unable to achieve (582). She records her emotional development in the course of her diary.

After her marriage, Connell converts to Calvinism, and her diaries seem to take a different tone. She uses the diary as a kind of spiritual check, a place to record her resolves, and it is her sense of human depravity ever needing correction that is revealed through her writing. The diary becomes, upon her rereading, a reprover, a corrective, a teacher, in which she records what she has learned from her husband and her church community.

In the same way, although much more moderately, the early diaries of Leonard Thompson Esq. function both as a place to vent emotions that must be controlled in the outside world and as an instrument of correction in which the writer may reveal lessons he needs to master. In terms of the home environment that Philip Greven posited for late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century American homes, Thompson's family is "moderate," where Connell's family is "genteel." Much more is expected of the children in the Thompson family—less effusive expressions of emotion, more self-control. While some of this may be gendered, certainly much of this is a result of the expectations of the moderates.

Greven describes the moderate family (which he contrasts with the genteel and the evangelical) as "authoritative," rather than authoritarian, and claims that this was a mode of family organization typical of many families in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. He briefly sums up this family life:

> Moderates shared the conviction that legitimate authority, parental as well as other kinds, was limited, that human nature was sinful but not altogether corrupted, that reason ought to govern the passions, that a well-governed self was temperate and balanced, and that religious piety ought to be infused with a concern for good and virtuous behavior as well as for grace. . . the dominant theme that recurs in the lives and writings of these moderate and authoritative families over the centuries is one of "love and duty." (151)

Thus, in Greven's system, where "genteel" families tended to let

nature take its course and children to learn by trial and error (or not learn) and where evangelical families tended to exercise authority by breaking the spirit of the children through physical punishment, these moderates assisted their children in learning to control themselves, to develop that harmony and contentment through temperance that is part of the eighteenth-century concept of sensibility.

Leonard's father's diary, the diary of a married man and then a widower of mature years, the years of Leonard's adolescent and early manhood, is extraordinarily bereft of emotional expression. Only in his later years, with the lingering death of his daughter in the late 1860s and his own approach to death in old age, is Col. Thompson eloquent about his emotions. The years of his son's youth are marked in his diary mostly by the recording of the daily events of his environ—births, deaths, fires, and political events. And this is a pattern that is true to a certain degree in the diaries of Leonard Thompson Esq.

As the diaries in the possession of the Woburn Public Library come to an end, Leonard searches for a bride and receives confirmation that he is to be married. All the diary writing prior to that event have a much more effusive quality, concentrate much more on the emotions of the writer. Subsequent to the marriage, as the diaries pick up again in the collection owned by this writer, Thompson becomes terser, does not spend a great deal of time worrying over his motives, thinking about his future. He reacts more to the immediate political environment, records much more of the prices of goods and the acquisition of material possessions, discusses the sermons wherever he attends church each Sunday.

By contrast, the diaries of the adolescent and maturing Thompson are filled with admonitions to himself. And unlike the diaries described in Blauvelt's article, the diary does not seem to be merely a place to record one's reactions and growth. The diary seems to take an active part in the process of development, just as active as interaction within the family.

Thompson's father is nothing if not supportive of his struggle for mature manhood and economic independence. On numerous occasions, his father helps him to find employment, helps him to weigh the offers made to him and determine whether the opportunity is right. On at least one occasion, his father refuses to back his participation in starting a store, not as a rejection of the son, but because he feels the venture has little chance to succeed.

Col. Thompson seems not to discourage his son from taking up any honest venture. He is willing to have him go to sea, and he is

willing to have him set up in a store. He bankrolls him on his travels as he searches for an opportune place to begin his economic career, helping him travel south to Philadelphia and New York, and sending him money just as his money is giving out. He helps Leonard find advantageous places to invest his savings. He supports Leonard when he practices the shoe trade, first in Ipswich, and then when he has the opportunity to go to Hallowell, Maine.

Clearly from Leonard's writings, he retains a love both for his home village and for his father and his father's home, even when he resents his father's remarriage and establishment of a new family. And while he expresses how strange it feels to come home and find a new baby sister (his half-sister), he eventually becomes as devoted to her as any other member of the family and mourns her death greatly.

But within the context of this economic struggle during the very perilous economic climate of 1837-1843 and later, a struggle to establish himself as an independent man, and eventually husband and father, there is also an internal struggle that informs his writing.

The maintenance of temperance is a part of that writing, but so are issues such as personal virtue and the search of balance in all aspects of life. Like Connell, he turns to his diary for assistance with this, but unlike her, he does not always discuss his emotions only. Instead, he frequently employs other writer's works to express his feelings on the changing of seasons or the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one. Indeed, a fairly substantial chunk of the writing of his diary is not his at all, but the employment of poetry that others have written, or maxims that he has discovered, to express his own emotional state. In a sense, his diary often functions simultaneously as a journal and a commonplace book.

And at the same time, his diary also becomes both a sort of panopticon and a disciplinarian, an instrument by which he internalizes the self control and temperance so central to his family values and through which he speaks to himself to assist in his own character formation. In his diary, he observes himself, makes notations of his thoughts and actions, especially his failings. He exhorts himself when he falls from the principles he is trying to develop, and he questions himself when he fails to achieve what he sees contemporaries achieving, as when his brother goes into a business partnership and seems to be doing well as a merchant and he himself has not yet found the career and business on which to stake his maturity.

In writing his actions and directing himself as to his physical and emotional reaction to them, he creates a text which sees into himself.

When he becomes his own audience, when he rereads what he has written, he both observes the actions he needs to change and reads his own exhortation to change. Little by little he directs himself toward the character formation and eventually the career formation on which his later wealth and position in society are founded.

For ultimately, after the years of struggle recorded in the Woburn diaries, he does settle down and becomes a merchant in his own town. Through his own inventiveness, he creates a new design which ultimately makes him a prosperous man, even in troubled economic times. He raises a family, he travels extensively, and he is elected to the General Court of the State of Massachusetts. Eventually, he becomes prominent local system, and ironically, much of his most devoted service throughout the last decades of his life is to the Woburn Public Library, the institution which ultimately holds and maintains the record of his struggles.

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ARIEL: LA RECONCILIACIÓN DE LO BELLO Y LO SUBLIME

Rosario Torres

El objetivo de este artículo es explicar cómo José Enrique Rodó reelabora los términos kantianos de lo bello y lo sublime, puesto que para desarrollar su obra *Ariel* utiliza, entre otros armazones ideológicos, dichos conceptos ideados por Immanuel Kant. Este texto del escritor uruguayo ejemplifica así la forma en que el modernismo literario latinoamericano se abastece de la filosofía romántica para presentar sus ideas. Tal mezcolanza de exponentes de épocas históricas distintas da cuenta de la significativa relación existente entre Romanticismo y Modernismo.

Alrededor de 1875, entre los autores hispanoamericanos se llegó a la conclusión de que el Romanticismo ya no era capaz de renovar más y como consecuencia se dedicaron a buscar nuevas formas de hacer literatura. El Modernismo surgió entonces como evolución de tal estética (compartían la libertad que para el Arte ganó el segundo movimiento), a la vez que se rebeló contra ella (ya que el Romanticismo se había apartado de su propio ideario estético y social). La transición entre ambas la lideró José Martí, mientras el Modernismo iba surgiendo consecuencia de la crisis mundial en el paso del siglo XIX al XX, cuando en multitud de campos iban surgiendo nuevos ideales y formas de pensar de considerable ascendiente en la filosofía y el arte (Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Tolstoy, el Simbolismo, Impresionismo y Wagner). Se buscaba lo moderno, el apoliticismo y la mezcla considerable de intelectualismo y esteticismo. Por aquel entonces, España vivía el llamado "desastre nacional" y ansiaba una transformación general, que pasó a reflejarse en Sudamérica, donde se acentuó la hegemonía de Estados Unidos, vencedor frente a la Península, y, al mismo tiempo, la reacción anti-norteamericana. La prosperidad económica y la creciente clase media se reflejaban en la vida intelectual, que cada vez apostaba más por la profesión de escribir (*versus* la llana vocación).

La renovación literaria se produjo primero en el denominado nuevo mundo, para llegar después a la Península.

En el campo de la literatura el Modernismo revolucionó la forma y el espíritu, a la vez que intentó entroncar las letras hispanoamericanas con las corrientes culturales universales. Se caracterizó por el cuidado y el refinamiento en la elaboración formal, la revolución métrica basada en una mayor libertad, el exotismo, la fantasía y la reacción contra el prosaísmo. A todo ello contribuyó sobremanera Rubén Darío, gracias al cual el movimiento alcanzó carácter internacional, con su desarrollo de los géneros que más perfección alcanzaron en el Modernismo: la poesía y la prosa ensayística. Este último fue precisamente el que utilizó Rodó en *Ariel*, donde se evidenció su herencia romántica al remitirse a la teoría kantiana expuesta en *Observaciones acerca del sentimiento de lo bello y de lo sublime*. Este ensayo es, por una parte, un tratado empírico del sentimiento en sus manifestaciones de lo bello y lo sublime y, por otra, un estudio del gusto. Este último rasgo entronca con la gran voluntad de estilo que rige la obra literaria modernista, deseosa de crear una forma de expresión renovadora.

Kant analiza a qué objetos se refiere el sentimiento, según la disposición del receptor para lo bello o para lo sublime. Según su teoría estética, se dan dos especies del sentimiento más delicado: lo bello (que equivale al entendimiento, la calidad, la forma, la limitación, el encantamiento y el adorno) y lo sublime (asociado con la razón, la cantidad, la ausencia de forma, la ilimitación, la conmoción y la sencillez). Además, a cada uno de estos sentimientos corresponde una serie de virtudes: en el caso de lo bello son adoptivas y consisten en la compasión, la amabilidad y el honor; a la sublimidad corresponde la virtud verdadera, que es la benevolencia. Pero Kant llega aún más lejos al identificar cada uno de estos sentimientos con los géneros: lo bello es propio del femenino y lo sublime del masculino, hasta el punto de que incluso la inteligencia y la virtud son bellas en la mujer, pero profundas y nobles en el hombre. El tema central de *Observaciones acerca del sentimiento de lo bello y de lo sublime* es así el sentimiento o el análisis del gusto, que equivale a la manifestación de los diferentes temperamentos. Las sensaciones de agrado o desagrado se sustentan en el sentido particular de cada hombre para ser por ellas afectado de placer o displacer, de ahí que Kant intente descubrir las posibilidades psicológicas de cada persona en las manifestaciones de su sentimiento fundamental. En su estudio, estos valores estéticos se mezclan con los morales hasta tal punto que resulta difícil distinguirlos entre sí: el aspecto moral y el

análisis de la validez de los principios está presente constantemente, mezcla que preside *Ariel*. De ello se deduce que Rodó no se adhiere por completo a la máxima modernista "El arte por el arte", ya que dota a su esteticismo de adoctrinamiento. Pártase pues de este punto para analizar la relación entre el escritor uruguayo y Kant, siempre teniendo muy presente que el hecho de que Rodó utilice dos conceptos kantianos no presupone que los suscriba por completo:

> Cuando la severidad estoica de Kant inspira, simbolizando el espíritu de su ética, las austeras palabras: "Dormía, y soñé que la vida era belleza; desperté y advertí que ella es deber", desconoce que, si el deber es la realidad suprema, en ella puede hallar realidad el objeto de su sueño, porque la conciencia del deber le da, con la visión clara de lo bueno, la complacencia de lo hermoso. (45)

En esta cita de Rodó queda condensado su concepto de la Estética. En un alarde de agudeza intelectual, el autor uruguayo idea utilizar *La Tempestad* de William Shakespeare y la teoría kantiana para comunicar su discurso modernista. El escritor establece un interesante triángulo teórico, cuyos vértices resultan ser Modernismo, Romanticismo primero (Kant) y Barroco (el Shakespeare tardío), que quedan íntimamente relacionados. Rodó empieza por tomar los personajes del dramaturgo inglés para llenarlos del idealismo trascendental kantiano. Curiosamente no identifica a su Ariel con una de las dos especies del sentimiento mencionadas, sino que mezcla las virtudes y las características de lo bello y lo sublime en esta criatura, tomando los términos kantianos para reelaborarlos. Ya al principio del libro, el escritor caracteriza a esta estatua alada que preside la sala del estudio donde se reúnen sus protagonistas como "la parte noble y alada del espíritu", "el imperio de la razón y del sentimiento sobre los bajos estímulos de la irracionalidad". Ante tal descripción, el lector conocedor de Kant podría concluir que, para Rodó, Ariel es el símbolo de lo sublime, puesto que para el filósofo de Konisberg lo bello comparte con lo sublime que ambos placen por sí mismos y que presuponen un juicio de reflexión. La satisfacción se refiere a conceptos y se enlaza con la facultad de la misma, mediante lo cual la imaginación es considerada en conformidad con la facultad del entendimiento o de la razón. Por lo tanto, los juicios de esas dos clases son particulares y se presentan, no obstante, como universalmente válidos. Hay entre ambos también diferencias considerables: lo bello se refiere a la forma del objeto, consistente en su limitación; lo sublime, al contrario, puede encontrarse en un objeto sin forma, en cuanto en él es representada ilimitación. Lo bello es la exposición de un concepto indeterminado del entendimiento y lo sublime lo es

de un concepto semejante de la razón. Puesto que Rodó escribe que Ariel es "el imperio de la razón y el sentimiento sobre la irracionalidad", resultaría tentador asociarlo con tal sublimidad. Pero mientras que para Kant esta especie del sentimiento va unida a la representación de la cantidad y lo bello a la calidad, Rodó en cambio se decanta por la belleza en lugar de por la sublimidad, ya que, frente a lo que considera potenciador de la barbarie o de la civilización (la multitud), prefiere el dominio de la calidad frente al número (característica propia de lo bello). Con este argumento sostiene, en parte, su antipatía por la Democracia.

Según Kant, lo bello y lo sublime se diferencian también en que lo bello conlleva un sentimiento de impulsión a la vida y puede unirse al encanto, mientras que el sentimiento de lo sublime es un placer que nace mediante una suspensión de las facultades vitales, por lo que adquiere mayor seriedad. Una vez más, Rodó aboga por lo bello, ya que lo concibe como inspirador de vida, tal y como lo percibía Kant: "De todos los elementos superiores de la existencia racional, es el sentimiento de lo bello, la visión clara de la hermosura de las cosas, el que más fácilmente marchita la aridez de la vida" (42). El escritor está convencido de que sería todo un motivo superior de moralidad el que propondría un cultivo de los sentimientos estéticos, de gran interés para todos, hasta el punto de que mantener que la forma más eficaz de conseguir que el ser humano decida cumplir con su deber es sentirlo estéticamente como una armonía (además de una imposición). A todo ello habría que añadir que, al mencionar conceptos como "encanto", Rodó apuesta por vestir a su ideal de convivencia, simbolizado en Ariel, con los ropajes de la belleza, la gracia y la amabilidad propias de, escribe, las razas que más admira, como la mediterránea.

Observaciones acerca del sentimiento de lo bello y de lo sublime establece como principal diferencia entre lo bello y lo sublime (si bien considera sólo lo segundo en objetos de la naturaleza) el hecho de que la belleza natural parece ser una finalidad en su forma, mediante la cual el objeto parece ser determinado de antemano para nuestro juicio, mientras que aquello que despierta el sentimiento de lo sublime podría parecer contrario a un fin para nuestro Juicio (sólo por eso será juzgado tanto más sublime). De este modo, sólo puede concluirse que un objeto es propio para exponer una sublimidad que puede encontrarse en el espíritu, pues lo sublime no puede estar contenido en forma sensible, sino que se refiere sólo a ideas de la razón. Se observa también la significativa influencia de estas nociones en Rodó, que las reelabora para optar por una opción

conciliadora: a la vez que expresa "Cierto es que la santidad del bien purifica y ensalza todas las groseras apariencias. Puede indudablemente realizar su obra sin darle el prestigio exterior de la hermosura. Puede el amor caritativo llegar a la sublimidad con medios toscos, desapacibles y vulgares" (44), reconociendo la nobleza de lo sublime, simultáneamente aboga por la belleza; cual indisimulado modernista, considera que así se realza el bien que se concede. Incluso llega a afirmar que quien puede distinguir entre lo feo de lo hermoso "lleva hecha media jornada" para distinguir lo bueno de lo malo y que en el futuro la ley moral será concebida como toda una estética de la conducta.

De todo ello se desprende que Rodó claramente se vale de la teoría kantiana para dar forma a su discurso, aunque para ello la reelabora. Frente a la dicotomía kantiana, el escritor uruguayo concilia lo bello y lo sublime. Según él, en el alma perfecta la gracia y la delicadeza del primero de dichos sentimientos irían inseparablemente unidas a la fuerza y la rectitud de la razón propias del segundo. De este modo, en las últimas páginas del libro vuelve a insistir en que "Ariel es la razón y el sentimiento superior. Ariel es este sublime instinto de perfectibilidad" (100) y llega a afirmar que es posible encontrar en una persona ambas características. Aunque Kant reconoce tibiamente que no se entiende que alguien carezca de lo noble y tenga lo bello, o viceversa, sino que más bien se supone que cada cual combina lo uno y lo otro, concluye que en cada sujeto tiende a predominar una de las dos, dependiendo del género, como se vio anteriormente. Rodó, por el contrario, está convencido de la posibilidad de unión de ambas especies del sentimiento, ejemplo de lo cual es el cuento oriental que inserta en *Ariel.* El autor uruguayo dota al rey protagonista no sólo de las características propias de un hombre (género al que, según Kant, corresponde la sublimidad), sino que también le atribuye cualidades específicamente bellas, como la amabilidad y la hospitalidad. Sirva esta última cita para resumir el punto de vista exhibido por el autor uruguayo y, a la vez, de colofón de este artículo:

> Yo doy al cuento el escenario de vuestro reino interior. Abierto con una saludable liberalidad, como la casa del monarca confiado, a todas las corrientes del mundo, exista en él, al mismo tiempo, la celda escondida y misteriosa que desconozcan los huéspedes profanos y que a nadie más que a la razón serena pertenezca (40).

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OBRAS CITADAS

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CINEMATIC GRAND NARRATIVES: SPECTATORSHIP AND IDENTITY POLITICS

Miguel Marrero

Towards the end of Richard Dyer's "Introduction to Film Studies," in John Hill and Pamela Church Gibson's edited text *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies* (1998), Dyer observes:

> The aesthetic dimension of film never exists apart form how it is conceptualized, how it is socially practiced, how it is received; it never exists floating free of historical and cultural particularity. Equally, the cultural study of film must always understand that it is studying film, which has its own specificity, its own pleasures, its own way of doing things that cannot be reduced to ideological formulations or what people (producers, audiences) think and feel about it. The first cultural fact about film is that it is film. (9-10)

This claim serves as an important foundation of "grand narratives" and the variables these narratives address: conceptualization, social practice, reception, history, and culture to name a few. In addition, critical studies of commercial cinema have quite often isolated film texts from both production and reception contexts, and some studies of film have not dealt well with film's material and formal specificities. Using Dyer's claim as a launching point, this article discusses the ways in which overarching "grand narratives" of film theory have dealt with identity politics generally, and how scholars have worked to integrate the work of the spectator into the historical and cultural particularity of the meanings and effects of film texts.

This article will show how recent film theory challenges grand narratives by integrating historical and cultural specificity, using Tomás Gutiérrez Alea's *Fresa y Chocolate* (1993) as an example. Its aim is to summarize current theoretical perspectives in order to open dialogue among film scholars to challenge a particular theoretical approach to cinematic narrative. Using *Fresa y Chocolate* as the subject for analyzing such cinematic approaches, this dialogue will serve to show how the importance of addressing issues of cultural, political, and gender specificity. First addressing Richard Dyer's introduction

and how critical studies of commercial cinema have often isolated film texts, the article explores the meaning of "grand narrative," addressing some of the foundational texts within the canon of film theory by exploring essays from *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings* (1990), edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen. It then explores feminist film theorists Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, and Judith Mayne who discuss psychoanalytical and cognitive forms of spectatorship and identity politics. After these foundational feminist forms of identity are discussed, the article examines Robyn Weigman, Patricia White, and Jacquiline Bobo's contribution to film theories of ethnicity, spectatorship, and identity politics. This study of ethnicity in film studies will lead to a reading of one of the most important texts on narrative film by David Bordwell and the problems addressed when applying Bordwell's grand narrative to *Fresa y Chocolate*, which constitutes very different forms of spectatorship and identity politics.

It is important to note that this study is an examination of various important approaches presented from theoretical texts. For example, Richard Dyer introduces film studies in his essay "Introduction to Film Studies" by explaining that all factors are taken into consideration when determining why a movement is worthy of study and what form it takes. However, the importance of this study is that "it matters" (3). Dyer then explores formal-aesthetic and social-ideological forms as an affirmation of "mattering." He explains that in formal and aesthetic discourse, film matters for its artistic merits and its "intrinsic worth" (4) and social and ideological discourse focuses on "film's position as symptom or influence in the social processes" (4). Both forms are included in overarching "grand narratives." The analysis is within the articles themselves. However, in order to discuss this form of narrative, it is important to define narrative and the difference from a more broadly focused grand narrative.

As "narrative" is defined as a story with a unified plot development and identity of the main character, with a linear structure containing a beginning and end, "grand narrative" holds a broader, more complex meaning. It refers to texts that define the world, civilization, culture, and individual. It is a master story that has a sense of authority on the topic it addresses. The "grand narratives" of film theory encompass foundational works within the canon of film theory, addressing general topics as commercial/mainstream/Hollywood cinema, film style, narrative, and spectatorship, and have developed into addressing more specific topics. This article will first focus on distinct topics such as feminist, queer, and Latin American film theory, contemporary forms that have revised traditional forms such as exploring the cultural rather than the historical elements of film analyses.

One of the most important books covering "grand narratives" is *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*. This text focuses on film language, reality, medium, narrative, artist, genres, psychology, society, and ideology. However it may be argued that although the essays in *Film Theory and Criticism* address historical particularity, they do not always focus on that of the cultural. For example, in the section covering film language, André Bazin's *What is Cinema?* covers the transition from silent film to film with spoken dialogue. Bazin argues against Sergei Eisenstein's discussion of being uncomfortable with synchronized dialogue calling for synchronized speech to be necessary towards the development of film. Eisenstein and Bazin's articles address the historical specificity of film theory. In contrast, Kaja Silverman's article *The Subject of Semiotics,* which was added to *Film Theory and Criticism*'s fifth edition, analyses "suture," a term developed by Lacan meaning "lack" or "absence" in relation to shot/reverse shot formation that focuses on the fictional character. Silverman uses Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) as her example of suture as the cinematic model. While Silverman explains that *Psycho* does not go to great lengths of covering "cuts" in its montage, she focuses on the cultural variables of "voyeuristic dimensions of the cinematic experience" (141). The first few shots that the spectator views at the beginning of the film follow Hitchcock's signature of focusing in on one's private space. The film's opening scene is of the protagonist (Marion) in bed with her married lover in her hotel room.[1] In addition, identity politics are evident with the gender subversion of Marion's murderer Norman, who is identified as his mother. Silverman observes that "*Psycho* not only ruptures the Oedipal formation which provides the basis of the present symbolic order, but declines to put it back at the end" (141). She continues by making it clear that the coherence of order "proceeds from the institution of sexual difference, and the denial of bisexuality" (141). Voyeurism and spectatorship are also a key element of Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema."

The article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," also a chapter of Mulvey's *Visual and Other Pleasures* (1989), is a groundbreaking article for feminist film theory. Mulvey uses psychoanalysis to analyze Hollywood cinema. She bases her analysis on Freud's term scopophilia, a desire to see. Mulvey explains that classical cinema presents a form of voyeuristic and narcissistic experience in its visual and narrative elements. The male and female characters follow active/passive gender norms. As the man is powerful and the woman powerless, the

1 We also see overt voyeuristic qualities in Hitchcock's *Rear Window.*

woman becomes the object of desire for the male character. Through this voyeuristic experience of women by men, cinema has offered a visual element suitable for male desire structured and canonized in the tradition of Western society. Furthermore, this objectification of women as the gaze of desire is transferred to the male spectator and arguably, the female spectator as well.

Both Mulvey's *Visual and Other Pleasures* and Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992) elaborate on Lacanian psychoanalysis and identity politics, focusing on the ego and the mirror image. Silverman explores the notion of libidinal politics through two psychic categories: the ego—also known as *moi*—and the fantasmatic. The first "provides the support for 'identity' or the 'self'" (3) and second "organizes and regulates unconscious desire" (3), both from Lacan's definition of ego. She notes that Lacan "purges that category of many of the meanings which it has accredited since the beginning of psychoanalysis, and … locates it emphatically at the level of the imaginary" (4). Silverman continues by arguing that Lacan's analysis of the *moi* "is the psychic 'precipitate' of external images, ranging from the subject's mirror image and the parental images to the whole plethora of textuality based representations which each of us imbibes daily" (4). The mirror represents the ego's image on the basis of the idealized image on the screen. However, this is not an overt action but a form of Lacan's analysis of mis-recognition, a narcissistic impetus. Thus, the voyeuristic/scopophilic gaze as well as narcissistic identification assess visual pleasure. However, Mayne in *Cinema and Spectatorship* (1993) takes a different approach, focusing specifically on theories of spectatorship that relies on 1970s film theory.

Cinema and Spectatorship is divided into two sections. The first section, "Theories of Spectatorship," explores paradigms that studied and critiqued examinations of spectatorship in the 1970s. In this section Mayne attempts to overview this comprehensive and critical field of spectatorhip, stating that some approaches are more useful than others: "One of the controversies in film studies today concerns the value of cognitivism, the study of knowledge and perception, in relation to spectatorship" (7). She believes that film studies, apart from psychoanalysis and interpretation, needs to be redefined towards psychology and schemata. She also asserts that "While some of the criticisms made of film theory in the name of cognitivism are accurate, others seem to me to involve a classic example of apples and oranges, in that the "spectator" envisaged by cognitivism is entirely different than the one conceptualized by 1970s film theory" (7-8). Mayne suggests that areas of 1970's film theory and spectatorship need to be revised, not completely re-analyzed.

These are specific to the areas that are inaccurate and/or contradict each other or, as Mayne explains, those that are a classic case of "apples and oranges" (8). However, through these analyses, ethnicity is not observed within feminist analysis. This analysis is among a discourse of feminist theory. Robin Wiegman's essay "Race, Ethnicity, and Film" addresses these elements of feminist theory, along with questions of representation of ethnicity, cultural specificity, and white male spectatorship in film by analyzing one of a variety of analyses undertaken, specifically race and ethnicity, white, heterosexual male spectatorship and identity politics.

Weigman presents common images, harboring stereotypes, such as the "good white man" in contrast to the Native American savage, Latino greaser, and African American rapist. Misrepresentations of women are also common, objectifying women of color as either desexualized or as exotic and loose objects. However, Wiegman argues that feminist scholarship has "altered the way film is studied and, arguably, produced (158)." "Race, Ethnicity, and Film" is divided into four sections: Defining terms (159), The stereotype (161), Textuality, spectatorship, and the 'real (164) and the present tense (166).

"Defining terms" offers the explanation to questions concerning the meaning of race and ethnicity. Coming from the Greek word, "ethnos," ethnicity has varied in meaning. Wiegman explains that contemporary definitions have differed from the original meaning, with 'pagans' defining race but ethnicity determined by "social constructions linked to the specific discursive spheres within which they are used (159)." Race transforms from a national to a biological identity. From the turn of the twentieth century to the 1960's, race and ethnicity have taken radical shifts in meaning. This separates race into African, Native, Asian, Latin American and other non-white groups while placing Jewish, Italian, and Irish Americans in the larger context of "whiteness" and defining these groups by ethnicity. She notes, "where ethnicity provides the means for differentiation based on culture, language, and national origins, race renders the reduction of human differences to innate, biological phenomena (161)." This phenomenon is a factor that distinguishes dominant and inferior representations of white and non-white groups. Wiegman explains that the division of race and ethnicity is problematic in terms of "expanding whiteness," and by film images representing racial groups as "homogenized figure(s) whose cultural and highly racialized physical differences serve as a background for the ideological production of the 'American' as of white European descent" (160). Portraying false images of regional non-white groups singularly stereotypes such groups.

Stereotyping of non-white groups has recently been the subject of analyses in the discourse of film theory. As Wiegman observes, "It is by virtue of this condensation that an image becomes a stereotype; its racialization is achieved by an implicit or explicit moral assessment concerning the group's inherent 'essence'" (161). Thus the stereotype of black as rapist becomes justified due to these representations in film, namely D.W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915). This stereotype of an African American male, played by a white actor in blackface, is a portrayal that threatens white viewers with the "horror" of miscegenation while comforting them with the results of such action. Wiegman explains that this role played by white actors as non-white actors "skirted" the Hays Code, which did not allow images of miscegenation. Also, concerning the white actor playing an African American role, Wiegman refers to Eugene Franklin Wong's definition, "role segregation." Wong's definition of role segregation or stratification is that "which non-white actors are, by virtue of their race, ineligible for certain kinds of roles, while white actors are able to move 'horizontally' into even those roles defined as black, Asian, Native American or Chicano" (163).

Wiegman is most effective in discussing the historical praxis of the stereotype when she begins discussing identity through two important Post-Colonial theorists, Homi Bhabha and Stuart Hall. These theorists show that stereotype's inaccuracy does not make the stereotype any less effective. Bhabha notes that "the stereotype is on a colonialized subject precisely through its distortion" (165). What Wiegman does not discuss is the idea that identity politics argues that images are defined by the white center, making the spectator view the "non-white" image in relation to dominant, white, heterosexual, male values.

Even though Wiegman presents an extremely important analysis of race and ethnicity, she poses a problem when she compares the study of race and ethnicity to Patricia White's feminist discourse in "Feminism and Film" (117-134). Although she asserts that "it is difficult to speak of the study of race and ethnicity as constituting a fully formed field within film studies" (158) she does not explain the idea of race and ethnicity being an inherent part of feminism and sexual orientation, especially when considering the white, heterosexual male spectator. While she is often bogged down by constructions of race and ethnicity through historical films and post-structural theory, she fails to discuss the films directed by African American directors like Spike Lee and the response towards the problem of the misrepresentations of African American women *by* African American women. There is a feminist discourse that argues that race and ethnicity and

feminist films are intrinsically tied to race and ethnicity. For example, the screenplay from the African American novel and novelist Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* (1983) became a film adaptation by director Steven Spielberg. Although the film continues to address identity politics, along with socio-political, historical, and cultural particularity that Alice Walker depicted, the spectatorship of the film shifted from the African American woman and academic arena to the white, heterosexual male (and female) spectator. The film also ignored the socio-political and historical, avoiding cultural particularity to be palatable to a mainstream audience. However, Jacquile Bobo's "*The Color Purple*: Black Women as Cultural Readers" in E. Deidre Pribram's anthology, *Female Spectators: Looking at Film and Television* (1988), examines the various reactions the film provoked within African American women, suggesting that many African American women as spectators "both identify with and defend Spielberg's version of the Alice Walker novel" (8). The notion of identity politics in the film becomes problematized by the textual analysis of the film "which reveals racist stereotyping and negative portrayals of Black people" (8).

Within the discussions of race and identity Wiegman does not mention the many films that portray gay and lesbian characters whose race and identity are inherent within their sexual orientation. As Wiegman discusses the problems of presenting interracial sexual interaction, she fails to discuss how not only feminist, but also contemporary and independent queer films pose these problems as inversions of the blurred stereotypes. These blurred stereotypes are evident in films like Channel 4's production of *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), where a white English male Daniel Day Lewis takes on a Pakistani lover, thus presenting cultural ramifications from both cultures. An international academic gay community embraced the socio-political, historical and cultural elements of the film, thus facilitating positive queer spectatorship and identity politics.

Wiegman, in the analysis of race and identity, offers a strong foundation to make race and identity, spectatorship, and identity politics an integral part contributing to the fully formed field within film theory. However, as discussed by Spielberg's film adaptation of *The Color Purple* (1985), which presents problems raised in spectatorship and identity politics, similar concerns can be raised by David Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction Film* (1985). Bordwell's text becomes even more problematic in comparison to spectatorship and identity politics in Latin American cinema presented in Latin American Queer films.

Bordwell presents an analysis of cognitive theory in more

traditional films referring to a term he coined as *fabula,* the "imaginary construct" progressively and retroactively viewed by the spectator. Pragmatically, the spectator is contributing to an active engagement and construction of a narrative through applying schemata, testing hypotheses, and making inferences while *syuzhet* refers to what is "phenomenally present," the "actual arrangement and presentation of fabula in the film," the "delivery of events, movements/actions, referred to as the plot" (50). So the fabula, although not present in the film, is built out of the syuzhet, that which is "present." Within the study of cognitive theory, such analyses deny the cultural, political, and gender specificitiy in queer films that discuss how traditional grand narratives are in contrast to identity politics. Relating such denial to Latin American queer cinema such as *Fresa y Chocolate*, the fabula would represent the Cuban Revolution of 1959 and the effects that have taken place by American cultural imperialism and the syuzhet would represent the lives of the protagonists (Diego and David) within the post-1959 regime.

Originally supported by the Instituto Cubano del Arte e Industria Cinematograficos (ICAIC), *Fresa y Chocolate* follows similar themes of Alea's concern with social, political, and historical dimensions of the revolutionary process in Cuba. Set in 1979, *Fresa y Chocolate*, an adaptation of Senal Paz's short story *El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo* (1991), takes place one year before the Marial Exodus. From 1960 through 1979 Cuban homosexuals experienced immense discrimination and censorship. In regard to working conditions for Cuban homosexuals prior to 1979, Alea explains that homosexuals were barred from certain types of employment. For example, Diego was barred from teaching since he would be in contact with young students who might be influenced by his sexual orientation. The film focuses on the two men: David, the naïve member of the Communist Youth League who secretly aspires to be a writer, and Diego, a gay intellectual who is not able to fulfill his dream of being a teacher because of his sexual orientation. Diego and David's first encounter was at the Coppelia ice cream parlor, an area notorious for gay cruising. Diego pursues David by making a bet with his friends to succeed in luring David to his apartment. Diego tells David that he has pictures of him walking out of Ibsen's *A Doll House,* which succeeds in convincing David to go to his apartment, thus marking the beginning of their shaky friendship.

Not unusually stylistic in form, but rather following the conventions of mainstream realist cinema, Gutiérrez Alea's film uses representations of music, political ideology concerning the Revolution, and the black market as major themes of *Cubanidad* that direct

the friendship between Diego and David. As Diego is attempting to show an exhibition of his friend's religious sculptures, David tells his militant roommate about the *maricon's* suspicious anti-revolutionary conduct. David is convinced to investigate Diego in order to frame him for his attempts to exhibit the sculptures. The tension between Diego's sexual orientation and David's homophobic indoctrination adopted by the Communist Youth League is presented throughout their contact. However, David begins to realize that Diego is a refined and cultivated man who is mature and conducts himself differently from David's perception of a gay man. There is also tension due to Diego's use of materials purchased on the black market.

David turns down Diego's imported whisky, tea, and china at first. However, he eventually accepts them. He is also curious about Diego's imported music and realizes Diego also reads Cuban literature (represented by his homage to Jose Lezama Lima), listens to Cuban music—namely Ignacio Cervantes—and prays, albeit humorously, to a Cuban altar. Their friendship strengthens when Diego offers to critique David's literature, and David later realizes that Diego and he have the same dreams and desires for Cuba. However, with Diego's activism against Cuban officials concerning the exhibit, he is stripped of all rights to fulfill his intellectual capacity and is therefore forced to leave Cuba.

Gutiérrez Alea uses Cervantes's music to foreshadow Diego's future. *Lost Illusions* refers to Diego's loss of illusions concerning his rights within the revolution. Diego lost his illusions of being able to convince the government to allow the exhibit to take place and his future as a professor and writer while in Cuba. He had participated in the literacy campaign and had been abundantly enthusiastic about the Revolution. Then the Revolution marginalized him. *Goodbye to Cuba* refers to Diego's eventual exile.

With reference to an analysis of *Fresa y Chocolate* by Bordwell's *Narration in the Fiction of Film*, even though the syuzhet/plot takes place post-Revolution, the Revolution and its effects have an impact on Cuban and Cubans and are the fabula of the film, instituting the encouragement of Alea's characters within the Cuban Revolution and the substance and awareness of the film. The Revolution would be universal for spectators in their construction of narrations of identity politics in their fabula.

The question of how narratives are able to be seen in films lies within Bordwell's assertions that the spectator constructs the story by way of perception-based inferential judgements according to *schemata* formed from the spectator's empirical and intellectual expe-

riences. Bordwell presents various forms of parametric, palimpsest, historical-materialist and classical narrations in his text. The theoretical gaps apparent in Bordwell's analysis is that his cognitive theory, although a useful tool for analytical examinations in films, poses two problematic assumptions between the spectator of the film and the lack of the spectator's identity. Bordwell also does not identify categories of gender, class, or race, or the largely Marxist audience for whom Gutiérrez Alea made films, iterating the importance of such comparative distinctions. The exploration and study of important "grand narratives" and the variables these narratives address is an ongoing process open to further investigation and analysis. Although grand narratives have often succeeded in isolating film texts from production and reception contexts, later theoretical works attempt and often succeed in resolving such isolation. These theoretical works exemplify spectatorship and identity politics in Latin American cinema comprised of constructs that are both complex and unique.

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IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE: THE MEANING OF COMMUNITY IN WORDSWORTH'S EARLY POETRY

Arnold Schmidt

In an anthology entitled *British Cultural Studies*, the authors address the construction of British identities in the context of today's post-empire multiculturalism. Catherine Hall, in her contribution, discusses the significance of race in Britain and asks the provocative question: "What difference does the history of being colonizers make to the constitution of British cultural identities?" (28). This recent book explores the development of twenty-first-century notions of "Britishness" in the context of the United Kingdom's increasing racial and cultural diversity. It identifies one place on a cultural trajectory, ethnicity and Britishness today, and proves a useful marker for readers investigating culturally tendentious texts from previous historical eras. In a sense, the poetry of William Wordsworth can be seen as an earlier part of this same conversation. He wrote as the sizable, but not yet dominant, British empire burgeoned to incorporate a wide variety of religiously, ethnically, and racially diverse peoples. Readers today can fruitfully interpret a series of works from Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* and subsequent collections in the context of their imperial moment, seeing the ways that they reflect the construction of British identities and the ways that Britain's imperial culture affected the poet himself. More specifically, the poet's narratives of abandonment and expulsion reproduce the social dynamic of forming and dissolving communities. Wordsworth's families serve as archetypes of these collectives, straddling public and private spaces. Examining the poet's images of "Other" families reveals his personal and cultural anxieties about English families. Such poems show both his public concerns that the agricultural and industrial revolutions have separated people from the land and from each other, as well as his private worries about family and finances.

Wordsworth's images of child abandonment would have had broad and potent ideological resonance for readers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in part because of the social

practices of the nobility and John Locke's writings about education. Eldest male children of titled families inherited a name and entailed property to pass along to posterity, a situation without parallel among the bourgeoisie. Consequently, the middle class came to see children's physicality as an inherited attribute comparable to the titles they lacked; healthy offspring could carry on the family name and consolidate whatever might constitute dynastic wealth. This led to increased interest in children's bodies and behavior, particularly as relates to issues of health and reproduction.[1] More relevant to my argument, Locke claims that children, born *tabula rasa*, develop ideas and words from experiences with material reality. Consequently, the family plays a critical role in early childhood development, with responsibility for the education that leads to economic and social advancement. By illustrating the advantages of a successful upbringing, Lockean educational theory implicitly identifies the deleterious effects of a dysfunctional family; abandonment can be traumatic.

The issue of abandonment proves a complicated one for Wordsworth. His poems regularly link separation with community, and works featuring solitaries, such as "The Old Man Travelling," "The Old Cumberland Beggar," and "The Female Vagrant," gain poignancy because these individuals once belonged to collectives from which they now find themselves excluded. Wordsworth valued community—local, cultural, national—and images of family abandonment in his poetry serve as metaphors for broader social alienation. Families abandoned by sailors and soldiers figure frequently as Wordsworthian images, evoking a sense of loss common to families whose members left to serve in the military or to pursue the empire's economic opportunities. Beyond their dramatization of social history, Wordsworth's poems about family abandonment must be understood in the context of the personal losses, by death or separation, that the poet experienced: of his parents, brother, child and lover. As a child, William felt profoundly abandoned after the deaths of his parents. These deaths produced a further sense of familial disconnection because the siblings, separated by resulting economic hardships, grew up apart. William also experienced separation when his brother John left to sail with the East India Company and ultimately died in a shipwreck. William's words upon hearing of

[1] For two important, but different views of this subject, see Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Vintage books, 1990), 121-7 and passum, and Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979) chapters 5, 9 and passim.

John's death, "the set is now broken" (Gill 240), convey his sense of loss and demonstrate the closeness of their family bonds.

Wordsworth's poems about family abandonment share motifs with other works. These explore economic themes and reveal the poet's anxieties about the state of his finances, which remained precarious until almost mid-career. As we will see, poems about abandonment and money link rhetorically with still other poems about ethnicity and religion, whose creation ironically depended on Wordsworth's support from the slave-trading community. In much of this poetry, pathetic portraits of women and children abound. These representational commodities evoke sympathy and locate the author, persona, and reader in a sentimental economy in which feminine and feminized characters circulate. Consider two poems written in Alfoxden in 1798 that appeared in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, "The Complaint of a forsaken Indian Woman" and "The Mad Mother" (Wordsworth*, Ballads* 108-110, 83-6). Both tell stories of abandoned mothers and their children.

Based on Wordsworth's reading of Samuel Hearne's 1795 *A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean 1769-1722, by order of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Wordsworth, *Ballads* 295), the "Complaint" tells the story of a sick, weakening Indian Woman left behind to die as her tribe migrates. Another woman now cares for her child, "A woman who was not thy mother." The Indian Woman, weary and cold, her fire dead, her food stolen by a wolf, sees death as imminent. "I feel my body die away, / I shall not see another day." Like the Indian Woman's "Complaint," "The Mad Mother" also tells the story of an abandoned mother and child. While her primitive community abandons the Indian Woman, the Mad Mother has been abandoned by her civilized husband.[2] Together with her husband and child, she had shared the community of family. Now, that family shattered, maternal bonds alone connect her with her infant, though this connection too seems threatened. The Mother dreams of "fiendish faces, one, two, three" pulling at her breasts, but wakes to see her son. "Oh joy for me that sight to see! / For he was here, and only he." Breast-feeding soothes her physically and psychologically; she says, "It cools my blood; it cools my brain; / ... Draw from my heart the pain away." She loves her son and urges him not to "dread the waves below, / When o'er the sea-rock's edge we

[2] I have eschewed the use of "scare quotes" throughout, but readers should recognize that my use of such words as civilized, primitive, and savage has some ironic valence.

go." Although she considers suicide, the poem ends with the pair searching for her husband in hopes of reconstituting their family.

The description of the Mad Mother links her rhetorically with the Indian Woman; in hair and skin tone, she resembles a Native American. "The sun has burnt her coal-black hair" and her "cheek" is "brown." As the Mad Mother wonders aloud about protecting her son, she offers to "build an Indian bower" in which they can sleep comfortably. Both abandoned women, concerned about their children, afford the reader opportunities for sentimental responses. Pathetic because of their maternal sorrows, they evoke empathy in the reader. Their difference, as psychologically or ethnically Other, transforms the reader's empathy into sympathy. Ultimately, however, while they differ from each other and presumably from Wordsworth's rational, white, implied male reader, they also share Native American characteristics and the less ethnically specific state of mind derived from maternal and individual loss.

Moreover, the poet views the Indian Woman through a colonial lens. The source of Wordsworth's inspiration, an exploration narrative, portrays the New World as one of savagery and wonder, a wilderness to be commodified. A note prefacing the poem explains abandonment as a phenomenon peculiar to Native American culture, as though the woman's abandonment would be incomprehensible without the disclaimer that identifies these people as, after all, savages. The distinction between savage and civilized child mistreatment collapses, however, in an era when local British officials, to keep down poor taxes, conveyed pregnant poor women across county lines so their children would be born in another jurisdiction. Remember also that bastardry increased significantly during the late eighteenth century, a statistic to which Wordsworth personally contributed. In his native Lake District, "the rate of illegitimate births was so high that...Cumberland and Westmorland earned the scandalous reputation of bastardry capital of England, with rates running 80 percent above the national norm" (Liu 255-6). Many of these fathers refused to support their offspring. Wordsworth wanted to support Caroline, the daughter he conceived in France during his affair with Annette Vallon, but the ensuing war and his limited finances left him unable to do so. For contemporary readers of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the image of maternal abandonment would have had a still darker side: the increasing reliance on infanticide as a method of population control. As Alan Liu indicates, the number of women prosecuted for infanticide in eighteenth-century Surrey equals the number of women prosecuted for all other types of homicide combined. By the nine-

teenth century, British infanticide had "swelled to account for one-fifth of all homicides in the population at large (almost one-half if we include children as well as infants)" (Liu 255-6).[3] Surely, this behavior proves no more primitive than that of the Native Americans.

If the "Complaint" represents uncivilized society, it also serves as a reminder of the ways in which turn-of-the-century British society violated moral strictures regarding infanticide and child abandonment. If the Mad Mother evokes a sentimental response when she contemplates suicide as her only option, she reminds readers of myriad mothers left behind by men who never returned from the military or colonial services, and whose families received little, sometimes no, government support for their sacrifices. Overall, we see the child abandoner as savage, powerless, and callous, all of which comes home for Wordsworth. He presents abandoned women and children as compassionate objects worthy of sympathy and implicitly condemns as uncivilized their abandoners, in whose company, if unwillingly, he belongs.

The *Lyrical Ballads* repeatedly distinguishes between the civilized and primitive, the reasonable and mad, the productive and indolent. Civilized people know the value of material things, as savages do not, a point made by explorers and exploiters beginning with Columbus, whose writings express his astonishment that indigenous people did not fetishize gold as Europeans did.[4] Images of difference in many of Wordsworth's poems express his anxiety about the legitimacy of poetic production as work in bourgeois society. In his 14 January 1801 letter to Charles James Fox, which accompanied a copy of the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth links selfhood and independence with property ownership. Contemporary political participation also required real property; only landowners, thought to have a permanent stake in society, earned a say in its governance.[5] This issue remains at the heart of Wordsworth's anxieties about community. How can he consider himself aesthetically and intellectually independent and part of the national collective without property? How can he write about public issues without

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[3] For further discussion, see Liu's chapter 6, "The Tragedy of the Family," especially 251-275.

[4] See in particular the opening sections of Fray Bartolome de las Casas, *The "Diario" of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America 1492-1493* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1989).

[5] For an extensive discussion of the relationship between political participation and property ownership, see Part II of J.G.A. Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

private capital? How does the written word itself become a tangible asset inheritable as property by succeeding generations, a concern which in part accounts for Wordsworth's aggressive pursuit of copyright protection for his work.

Abandonment also appears associated with Wordsworth's attitude toward money, particularly as it relates to identity, employment, and economic class. By the time Wordsworth had published the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798, his male siblings had established professional identities, Richard as a lawyer and John as a sailor. William struggled to balance his identity as a writer earning a living in a print capitalist society with the tradition of the vatic poet, to balance poetry for profit with poetry as Miltonic public utterance. The prefaces that Wordsworth wrote for his works complicated matters. They present his poetry as the product of a transcendently aestheticized lifestyle which seems incongruous with the notion of writing as a business, of writing which pays bills, as it did for Walter Scott and Lord Byron. Tragically for Wordsworth, questions of financial solvency became entwined with the deaths of loved ones; hopes and worries about economic independence became associated with the passings of his father, his friend Raisley Calvert, and his sailor brother John.

When William's father John died, Sir James Lowther, for whom he worked, owed the family money, a debt which remained unsettled for many years and caused financial hardship to the children left behind. William took care of Raisley Calvert, the sickly son of a friend, who left him a legacy on his death. John, who had given William part of his patrimony to help defray the costs of Cambridge, also took money from William for investment. After several money-losing voyages, John, finally a captain, embarked on what he had hoped would be the most lucrative passage of his life, the profits from which would find their way back to William and Dorothy. Instead, he died in a shipwreck in 1805 (Gill 13-36, 68-93, 212-287). This is not to suggest the insincerity of William Wordsworth's feelings for his father, friend, or brother, just that complicating his genuine affection, he likely felt concern for money, happiness for the independence its receipt would guarantee, and guilt for that sense of happiness.

Examination of "Gypsies" (Wordsworth, *Poems* 735) and "Song for the Wandering Jew" (Wordsworth, *Ballads* 178) reveals Wordsworth's concern about providing his own livelihood, particularly in another motif, the relationship between motion and stasis, here signifying production and non-production. The first, written in 1807 (Wordsworth, *Poems* 945), tells of a group of Gypsies the poet passes

as he walks along one day. As it so often does for Wordsworth, the road serves as a contact zone. The Gypsies form an "unbroken knot / Of human Beings"; they comprise a community. Indeed, those poems in which Wordsworth walks along, meets someone, and leaves to write a poem about their interaction, reproduce in microcosm the formation and dissolution of human society. The Gypsies' community appears static, however. Wordsworth walks for "Twelve hours", and when he returns, he sees the Gypsies exactly where he left them and "the whole spectacle the same!" Significantly, Wordsworth practiced a highly peripatetic composition technique; a great walker, he frequently composed while hiking.[6] Thus, walking becomes a mode of production; he moves through the world and transforms that experience into verse. The Gypsies, in contrast, remain static, and Wordsworth condemns their "torpid life" which produces nothing. Though the Gypsies differ from Wordsworth ethnically, this does not mark their most singular distinction from the poet. More importantly, static, they do not produce wealth, and therein lies the rub.

In contrast to "Gypsies," the "Song for the Wandering Jew" tells the tale of one excluded from community, whose curse prevents stasis by condemning him to wander the earth forever. Published in the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, the poem contains five stanzas. The first four describe fountains, a chamois, a raven, and a seahorse, each of which move, but also have a place of rest. The final stanza describes the Wandering Jew, who, in contrast, moves but never rests. He comes "Never nearer to the goal" and always feels "the Wanderer in my soul." The title of the poem, presented in the first person, suggests a song intended for the Wandering Jew to sing. Significantly, therefore, although the static Gypsies produce nothing, the Jew wanders and like Wordsworth, produces poetry.

These poems about Gypsies and the Wandering Jew portray people who for Englishmen like Wordsworth would be ethnic and/or religious Others, but as with the poems about the Mad Mother and the Indian Women, beyond surface distinctions, they can seem uncannily familiar. Wordsworth sees the Gypsies as idle and static, though shared idleness forms the basis of their community. They differ from him in their idleness, but resemble him in their need for

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[6] We find many examples in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* of her brother composing while walking. Probably the most famous describes the writing of "Tintern Abbey," which the poet claims to have composed in his head during several days travel, not writing it down until completing the draft.

community. In the "Song for the Wandering Jew," motion and production again serve as a basis for comparison. While the Gypsies remain static and unproductive, the Jew wanders and produces the song. The Wandering Jew differs from Wordsworth in his ethnicity and religion, but resembles him in his peripatetic mode of aesthetic production.

These images of the Gypsies and the Jew, of the Mad Mother and the Indian Woman, all serve to connect cultural anxieties about race and gender with the poet's personal anxieties about money, family, and identity. Wordsworth's writing required an educated bourgeois audience that valued art and independence, but which prospered in large part because of colonial and slave-supported industries. Wordsworth did not experience these contradictions in the abstract, however. His uncle and brother both worked for the East India Company, which according to John Keay, the public saw as having "in its gift a dazzling new array of appointments" by which almost anyone might "acquire such wealth as would sustain the comforts of opulence and the fruits of influence for several generations to come" (366-7). More directly, an offer Wordsworth accepted to live rent free in North Dorset at Racedown Lodge subsidized his early poetic career. The property belonged to John Pretor Pinney, "a very wealthy Bristol merchant and sugar plantation owner" (Gill 92) and participant in the slave economy with property in the West Indies. Pinney earned 35,000 pounds as a planter between 1764 and 1783 before returning to England to remain an absentee owner. Winifred Courtney describes Pinney as a "firm but humane" slave-owner. Pinney's instructions to his manager on how to treat slaves during an 1800 visit by pro-abolition Tom Wedgwood, however, undermine this claim to humanity:

> Do not suffer a negro to be corrected in his presence, or so near for him to hear the whip...point out the comforts the negroes enjoy beyond the poor of this country...show him the property they possess in goats, hogs, and poultry, and their negro-ground. (Courtney 249-50)

Intriguingly, in an 1801 letter to Robert Southey, Coleridge suggests that together with the Wordsworths, they might all become slave-drivers on Pinney's estate as part of the Pantisocracy scheme. Coleridge writes:

> Now mark my scheme!...Nevis is the most lovely as well as the most healthy Island in the W. Indies—Pinny's [sic] Estate is there... & perhaps Pinny [sic] would appoint us sinecure Negro-drivers at a hundred a year each, or some other snug and reputable office...Now I & my family, & you & Edith, & Wordsworth & his Sister might all go there...Do think about this! (Courtney 249-50)

Wordsworth published the *Lyrical Ballads* in Bristol, where the profits in that center of Britain's slave trade supported a thriving mercantile community. In a very real sense, then, the slave trade tainted the money that supported Wordsworth as he wrote his early, often politically radical poetry.

In the contemporary abolition debate, the theme of family dissolution became intertwined with general issues of gender and power. Women's abolition writings came to constitute a proto-feminist discourse, according to Moira Ferguson. Women writing anti-slavery novels increasingly used sentimentalism as a rhetorical strategy and underscored slavery's destructive disregard for the nuclear family. Authors frequently present heart-wrenching scenes of families broken up by slave traders, and, in particular, images of mothers separated from their children. In these novels, female authors plead the case for feminized Africans, who lack education, as well as economic and political power, implicitly pointing out the ways in which slaves resemble white women, also denied the same agency. Abolitionist sentiments found their way into enlightened conduct books, such as Mary Wollstonecraft's *The Female Reader*, an anthology designed for young women, which includes several stories about the abuses of slavery (Ferguson 186-7).

The connotative connections among the rights of slaves, the rights of women, and, in a pamphlet of the same title by Thomas Spence, "The Rights of Infants," underscores the ideological power resident in images of domestic abandonment. These conflicts become evident when we examine two more poems about expulsion from community, "Poor Susan," published in the 1800 edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* (Wordsworth, *Ballads* 170), and "September 1, 1802," published in 1803 in the *Morning Post* under the title "The Banished Negroes" (Wordsworth, *Poems* 578, 995). "Poor Susan" tells of a desolate young woman in the city, who hears a bird singing and thinks back on an earlier, domestic idyll from which she has been excluded. Susan "loves the cottage" and left it unwillingly. The poem closes by urging her to "return—to receive thee once more / The house of thy Father will open its door." The narrator does not specify the reason for her expulsion, but the three streets mentioned, "Wood," "Lothbury," and "Cheapside", situated in the City of London's mercantile district (Wordsworth, *Poems* 942), suggest an inappropriate liaison with a merchant or apprentice. By casting her out, her father shatters the community of the family; he violates the social rules governing paternal love and forgiveness, and instead heeds the laws of bourgeois propriety that constrain female sexuality.

The traditional hierarchies that gave fathers power over daughters also placed white races in dominion over those of color. In "September 1, 1802," the poet shares a boat with a "white-robed Negro," who along with other Africans has been expelled from Napoleonic France (Wordsworth, *Poems* 578). Although racially Other, she seems familiar, looking "like a lady gay, / Yet downcast as a women fearing blame." The closing sestet indicates that the beauty of her eyes, which "retained their tropic fire", and "the lustre of her rich attire...mock[ed]" her "downcast" state of mind. That is, the exotic appeal of her sexually alluring exterior betrays, by failing to conceal from the male gaze, her troubled emotions. The poem ends with a plea to the "Heavens" to "be kind! / And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race!" This plea to the "Heavens" and "Earth" calls to patriarchal Christianity, ammunition in both pro- and anti-slavery debates, and to Nature, invoking the "natural rights" discourse prominent in the abolition debate.

In these poems, we see Wordsworth's treatment of gender and racial difference, but again, as much connects these figures as separates them. The Wordsworthian narrator refers to the Negro woman as "the Outcast" and addresses the presumably white Susan as "Poor Outcast". Both women appear as objects of the poet's gaze and victims of patriarchy. The speaker, who presents Susan as infantilized, occupies the perspective of a caring parent, the good father who—unlike her own father—would forgive her unstated offense. The Negro, a victim of Napoleonic oppression, probably shares the narrator's implied anti-French sentiments. Still, the masculine, European response to the Negro's exoticism—"tropic fire", "rich attire"—eroticizes her, and the poet's benevolent condescension trivializes the agency that she exhibits in traveling alone from France to England. Furthermore, she occupies the feminized position of Africans generally, who, as represented in slave narratives, needed well-meaning whites to speak for and to validate them. Contemporary slave narratives generally contained prefaces and/or appendices written by whites testifying to the veracity of the slaves' statements, sometimes even inspecting the slaves' bodies to bear witness to scars from punishments.[7] In her reverie, Susan finds herself mocked by "the song of the bird", which reminds her of the safety of her patriarchal home, while the Negro's exterior allure mocks her inner sadness. Both women have been presented as though guilty of something. The Negro behaves as though "fearing blame,"

[7] See my article on "Slave Narratives" in the *Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1998).

but for what? Susan too finds herself excluded from the security of her home for an unspecified offence.

Finally, consider the ways that all these images—of abandonment and Otherness, of gender and race, of motion and stasis—converge in "The Affliction of Margaret," composed between 1800 and 1807 (Wordsworth, *Poems* 97). Margaret's son has left home; "Seven years, alas! to have received / No tidings of an only child" have left her distressed. Margaret has not abandoned her child, but been abandoned by her child, as, in a sense, was the Indian Woman. In "The Complaint," the Indian Woman saw something "most strange" as the tribe separated her from her child. The infant moved, "As if he strove to be a man, / That he might pull the sledge for me." An instant later, however, he again seems "like a little child", unable to rescue his mother, who remains left behind to die in the wild. More generally, like all of the female characters discussed here, Margaret lacks any family to aid her.

Although "Margaret" specifies neither the son's occupation nor destination, his mother's concerns prove telling:

> Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
> Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
> Or thou upon a desert thrown
> Inheritest the lion's den;
> Or has been summoned to the deep,
> Though, thou and all thy mates, to keep
> An incommunicable sleep.

The stanza's triplet suggests that her son works as a sailor, for she fears that he and his mates may have drowned at sea. He has gone to sea to help support his family, just as Wordsworth's brother John did, and in both cases, met with tragedy. To where might Margaret's son have been traveling? Her fear that he may be lost in a desert and eaten by lions places her son in Africa. While her son's possible captivity in a dungeon suggests to the modern reader that he may have been imprisoned for a crime, under contemporary criminal and civil codes, authorities generally did not imprison offenders except for debt. Besides, she fears he may be imprisoned by "inhuman men," presumably not British but savage. Perhaps Margaret worries that pirates kidnapped her son and held him for ransom on Africa's Barbary Coast, a fate not uncommon for European sailors who violated the principalities' territorial sovereignty. For example, in "1720 George I ordered an ambassador to negotiate a peace treaty with the Sultan of Algiers that resulted in the release of 296 British captives, of whom about one-twelfth were ships' masters" (Ferguson 15). What would he have been doing in Africa in the first place? Most

likely, her son worked in some aspect of the slave trade, as there existed little trade with Africa except in slaves or slavery-related commodities. In that case, her fears seem justified. Sailors viewed Africa as the most dangerous—and hence least popular—destination, because of the risks of dying from sickness or other causes. In fact, Marcus Rediker believes that a higher percentage of sailors than of slaves died in passage from Africa to Europe. Investors paid slave traders a royalty for each slave they shipped alive, but paid no such royalty for live sailors. Hence, owners over-manned slave ships to compensate for sailors' high mortality rate and to retain a crew large enough to put down not uncommon slave rebellions (Rediker 45-50).

Margaret, abandoned by her son, remains separated from the community of family. Like the Wandering Jew and others, Margaret produces a narrative as she tells her story. She remains static, but her concern for her son's fate, even if she fears learning of his death, "That I may rest", suggests emotional turbulence which constitutes psychological motion. Her son, on the other hand, as a sailor and slave trader, both moves and generates wealth. The narrative leads the reader to feel that Margaret, like Susan and the Negro, has committed some offense, in her case over-valuing material success. Margaret urges her son to return, whether "prosperous or undone," for now she has learned to "see with better eyes; / And worldly grandeur I despise." Their separation pains her, but she feels partially responsible for that separation because of the emphasis she placed on seeking wealth. As an abandoned mother, Margaret's sorrow over separation from her child echoes the sentimental tropes of abolition poetry which lament the pain of slavery-imposed family separation, as seen in Hannah More's "Slavery," for example. Her son, perhaps a slave trader, separates others from their family members, so his relation with his mother reproduces slavery's dynamic of family disruption.

"The Affliction of Margaret" evidences what should by now seem familiar Wordsworthian elements for representations of difference: community and abandonment, movement and stasis, gender and race. The characters these poems present tend to be feminized, without social or economic capital and with little agency: Jews, Gypsies, and slaves, abandoned mothers and children. In the "Indian Woman," primitive society abandons the woman, but as we have seen in "The Mad Mother" and "Poor Susan," members of civilized society also abandon and expel. While the Gypsies differ ethnically from the implied Wordsworthian narrator, they share his need for community. The Wandering Jew presumably differs religiously, but

shares a peripatetic composition style. The Negro, though presented as primitive and eroticized, demonstrates agency in the face of Napoleonic power. Margaret, blameless but indirectly supported by the imperial economy, perhaps mostly closely resembles the poet himself. In delineating these characters, Wordsworth relies on received notions of civilized and primitive behaviors, but his representational strategies for constructing difference fail to reify that difference, because of uncanny similarities between these scenes and the practices of nineteenth-century British society. Closer examination shows that, as Montaigne had observed two centuries earlier in "Of Cannibals," little differentiates the civilized from the savage.

On a more personal level, these poetic images of abandonment and expulsion evoke central issues for the poet, connected with the importance of community in his life and writing. The adult William carried with him the emotional scars caused by the childhood deaths of his parents and the separation from his siblings. He experienced that pain anew with the death at sea of his brother John. Moreover, the imperial war separated William from his lover and daughter. In that sense, the figures in the poems discussed resemble palimpsests, which, when examined carefully, reveal personal pain beneath anxieties about identity.

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CUENTOS / *FICTION*

MA READS

Translated by Ira Raja from the Hindi original, '*Ma Padhti Hai*' by S.R. Harnot, *Hans* (New Delhi: Akshar Prakashan, April 2002): pp 52-54.

I have gone to the village after many months. Ma lives there all by herself. The door of the house is ajar this morning. On most days Ma is up early and out of the house, the door shut behind her, doing outside chores. Her mornings are spent in the cowshed, feeding and watering the animals, milking the cows, throwing dung.

Even now Ma's not inside. I have walked into her room. The first rays of the morning sun fall in her room. Today, I am here with the rays. As intimate as her room seems, it also looks a little forlorn. But it's crammed with all kinds of things—in the same way as it is with the morning light. The wooden ceiling above has cobwebs hanging from it—a few flies caught dead in them. The walls are in a similar state—layers of cobwebs and dead insects pressed against them.

There are things scattered everywhere. Nothing is in its proper place. On the right side of the door, as you walk in, there is a clay pot for churning milk, covered with a dirty cloth. Ma must bring it here after she's done with the churning, next to the hearth. On the left side is a basket stuffed with unspun sheep wool. A few wads of wool sit on top of its pressed layers. A spindle is lying on the side. Date leaves are strewn in one corner and amongst them lie a few mats made from plaited date leaves. An old, small table, with a TV on it, is placed in another corner. Right next to the pillow is a canister with a shabby cover thrown over it, and a telephone on top. Insects have totally taken over the electric bulb. It's all discoloured.

From the wall, above the bed, hangs a strip of wood holding an oil lamp. A long line of soot travels all the way up to the ceiling. Ma probably lights it when there is a power-cut. There's the smell of *bidi* hanging in the room.[1] I look under the cot and find lots of bits and

[1] A type of cheap cigarette made from unprocessed tobacco wrapped in a leaf.

pieces scattered there as well—half-smoked *bidi* butts and burnt matchsticks. There's dried *anardana*[2] on a date board. A few gooseberries. Some walnuts. Five ripe, unpeeled cobs of corn tied together—the first corn from the harvest, perhaps saved for the deity. Several bundles carrying a variety of dahls . . . All these things live with Ma. They are linked to her; her friends and companions. Only I sit here amongst them like a stranger. They look at me as if they are trying to place me. At times I wonder if they are mocking me. Ma . . . home . . . courtyard . . . gate . . . fields . . . granary . . . land . . . property . . . they are all mine but how far away I have come from them! The sun has drifted beyond the edge of the terrace. The rays have gathered themselves up and edged into the courtyard, drawing away the light from the room . . . I can sense the darkness in this hour of the morning. It's much darker within me though, than it is without. Even though I am in Ma's room, sitting on her bed, soaking in the fragrance of her love, the sense of living away from home for years keeps that love from reaching me!

I don't even remember that I am carrying a 'packet'[3] of books in my hands. I have brought these as a present for Ma. To this day I have not given her a single book I've published. Nor have I been able to invite her to any of the release functions. Whenever a new book arrived, I had it launched by the Governor or the Chief Minister of the State, knowing fully well these people had nothing to do with literature. Exactly the way those who shout from platforms slogans about abolishing poverty have nothing to do with the poor. Or those writers, for that matter, whose pages exude the sweet smell of rural life but who have little to do with the dung and earth of the village itself. That is, an apparition, a false display. Or shall we say, it's like setting one's house on fire in order to watch the spectacle.

It wasn't as if I didn't want to invite Ma. Or that her memory wasn't constantly with me. But several fears had lodged themselves in my heart. I felt that the times had changed. How would Ma 'adjust'[4] amongst these big people!

To begin with, even her getting on to a bus is akin to inviting trouble. She'll start feeling sick right away. Will start vomiting. On finding some relief from that, she'll pull out a *bidi* and matchbox from

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[2] Pomegranate seeds.

[3] Appears in English in the original.

[4] Appears in English in the original.

her pocket, light it deftly under cover of her shawl and begin to smoke. A few puffs, and she'll start coughing so badly you'd think she was drawing her last breath.

If somehow or other she manages to reach the ceremony she'll be under constant scrutiny from the other guests. Her crumpled clothes, her plastic shoes will draw sneering looks. And the whole time there will be the smell of *bidi* on her breath. Her hair would be in a mess. Even though she'll keep her head covered with a shawl, strands of gray hair will hang untidily down, blades of grass and dry leaves caught in them. As soon as people find out my 'mother'[5] has come they'll approach her to offer their congratulations. They would want to talk to her. Some may ask her questions. Writers and journalist friends will of course seek information. I can't imagine how Ma would speak. She might say something quite foolish. And everything will be ruined if she gets a coughing fit in the middle of the conversation. And then if she feels the urge to smoke, she'll promptly light a *bidi* and start to smoke right there. When tea and refreshments are served she will obviously not be able to eat with a fork and knife. Everyone's attention will be drawn to her hands. Cutting grass, throwing dung, churning milk, chopping wood, baking rotis, her hands will be full of cracks . . . and they will also smell of cowdung and mud . . . people may not say anything to my face but they are bound to gossip . . . this is the mother of the great writer— utterly ill bred. . . . and even if I put up with all this, I'd still have to deal with harsh words from my children.

Lost in these thoughts, I lie down on Ma's bed. I feel my childhood returning. As if I am resting in Ma's lap . . . she is cradling me to sleep . . . it's been years since I have felt such love and comfort. My heart says I should lie still . . . never to rise.

I am surprised at myself that there is a village in my works, the whole gamut of village life, poor people, fields and granaries. And Ma. Her love . . . but I have come a long way from those certainties . . . a long, long way . . . Lying on Ma's bed, I start to search for the writer within me . . . but he's not to be found. He has many faces. And perhaps those faces are hidden behind a string of masks. To enhance my stature in an urban milieu and 'elite society'[6] . . . *to make a name for myself . . . to earn kudos from people* . . . But that achievement, honestly, has no relation to my true self. Unconsciously, my hand

[5] Appears in English in the original.

[6] Appears in English in the original.

reaches for the books lying on the side. The touch conveys me once again to the peak of my success. . . . So what if I didn't invite Ma . . . It's okay. Everything's okay. We are living in the twenty-first century. Why, then should we carry the burden of past traditions on our shoulders? Hills and villages, cowdung and earth, fields and granaries look good on the back of the printed page. In real life they are hell, they are . . . ? . . . And all said and done, I have come here to honour Ma! There are writers these days who have either split from their parents or handed them over to old age homes . . . I'll place these books at Ma's feet and seek her blessings . . . I will repent. She'll be happy to see what a great man her son's become? He's a writer . . . these books appear to bolster my ego even further.

I am caught up in these thoughts when my hand falls on Ma's pillow. I sense something hard underneath. Still lying on my back, I stretch my right hand to reach under the pillow. I am startled. I rise hurriedly and push the pillow to one side. It looks like a book. I pull it out and I am stunned by what I see. My eyes sink deeper into its covers. My breathing becomes laboured. As if all the blood in my body has frozen in the veins . . . This is *my* book. Like a madman I start to pull away the layers of raggedy linen next to the pillow and drag out all the books buried beneath . . . they are all mine. For a moment I wonder if these are the books I had brought with me, accidentally placed here next to the pillow. But my 'packet' is untouched. It's still with me. The copies by the pillow are Ma's own.

I take the first book in my hands. I turn the pages. Pressed between them are blades of grass, butterfly wings.

When Ma goes out to cut grass, she must sit there leafing through the pages of this book.

I pick up the second book. It carries the sweet smell of mustard flowers . . . I flip through and find yellow flowers stuck in places. There's also an occasional sprig of wheat in there.

When Ma goes to the fields to pick greens, she must sit there and turn its pages.

Now I pick up the third book. It's a novel I wrote. The fragrance of *Raat ki Rani* starts to fill the room. Suddenly, my eyes drift across the courtyard and I spot the plant. How tall it's grown! Its branches are spread in all directions. My mind wanders to the past. Summer nights, awash with the light of the moon, often saw Ma haul me on to her lap and tell me stories . . . Flowers from the *Raat ki Rani* are preserved between the pages.

Ma must sit under its shade and read this book on moonlit nights.

The fourth book is immersed in the smell of buttermilk and flour. The pages carry the impressions of fingers still sticky from dough. In places words have become illegible from butter grease.

Ma must look upon it while cooking rotis or churning milk.

The fifth book is now in my hands. Its pages have the whiff of the dark about them, the smell of *bidi* seeped inside. I observe the pages, turn them over. The words have dissolved and disappeared in places. In between is the residue of ash from a lit *bidi*. A dead firefly is stuck at one place.

. . . perhaps Ma holds it in her hands on a moonless night and reads. Perhaps, remembering me, she cries a little and then sits up, late in the night, smoking.

Now I drag the sixth book from under the pillow. I feel restless. I start to lose my calm. Beads of sweat form on my forehead. This book has several pictures of my father too. There's either Ma or myself in them. Ma must share her writer son's success with his father in her memories.

I put this to one side and start searching the pillow again. In the folds of the bed I find yet another book. I take it out. This is my seventh book. My surprise knows no bounds. This is the new book that was launched only a week ago. Its pages smell of cowdung. Impressions of dung-stained hands are left here and there. Strands of white sheep wool are stuck in a few places. Ma must sit in the cowshed, amongst the animals, and look at it.

My eyes are streaming. I can't remember having cried as much in my life before. As if this wealth, status and arrogance inside me were raining down on Ma's bed. Like a wretched bed-bug I feel I am sinking and drowning in its layers. Every pore of my body is filled with shock and shame. My head is falling between my legs. In spite of my pathetic state there is some comfort that I draw from crying which prevents me from sinking any lower. It seems as if all the objects in Ma's room are pouring their love into me, helping me regain my composure. I steady myself. Surprisingly, my heart feels lighter. Just as in my childhood, crying for some object, I'd drop off to sleep in Ma's lap and wake up without a trace of grief remaining.

Suddenly a voice breaks the silence.

'Dadi! Dadi![7] . . . Newspaper'.

---

[7] Paternal grandmother.

Ma is throwing cowdung. On hearing the voice, she promptly drops the basket and grabs the newspaper from the hands of the postman. I get up from the bed and look out from behind the door. He is Amar Singh Postman. His house is not far from our own. He visits Ma regularly.

Everything is becoming clearer. Ma is looking at the newspaper. And the postman is pointing something to her in its centerfold. Ma carries the newspaper inside and puts it down somewhere in the cowshed, and starts to throw dung as before.

I begin to assemble the books spread on Ma's bed and place them by her pillow. With my 'packet' of books in hand I walk out. I feel I am carrying a huge burden on my head. I feel ridiculed by all that is within me.

Having finished all her outdoor chores Ma is now about to step inside . . . I slip out, softly like a cat.

Ira Raja
New Delhi
India

POEMAS / *POEMS*

GRECIAN KEYS

Georgia Scott

I. Seductions

1

My mother and grandmother are singing
koo peh peh . .. . koo peh peh.
Their hands twirl like two globes

or two women in shawls
dancing the way Greeks do
close enough to know

a woman's perfume
the tilt of her head
the arc of her arms.

They sing.
They turn.

I am mesmerized.

2

Making the *kourambiedes*,
they ease the butter soft
with their hands. Like midwives
holding up their prize
shimmering and wet
they say "Look
and you will learn. Not like Americans
who need everything written down.

And I think, never my hands,
so padded and soft, bookish already.
I seek signs of their strength -
the bulge of blue vein like the sex of a man
that frightens and fascinates.

II. Visions

1

My tonsils like tired fruit, long past picking,
Weep
Bad juices.

Limbs stiffen.
Fever pitches.

The doctor's
"It should be done at once."

My mother's
"No."

My father's
Shoes in the closet.

The Bogie Man trying them on.

2

Under the clock at Filene's
this is where people meet
sisters,
aunts,
friends,
and cousins.

Why not a father?

From the age of five,
I have looked for the dead in crowds.

III. Riddles

1

I remember the house filling with strangers,
chairs and tables sprung up like mushrooms everywhere.

A man is on the toilet, trousers about his ankles.
I don't know who he is.

Taking out the napkins, I ask "Is it a party?"
No one answers. I raise up my arms.
In my first black dress, I dance by myself.

2

My mother, grandmother, and I -

Three heads of black hair and eyes.

Three shapes in black dresses.
Three ashen faces.

One with no front teeth saying “cheese.”

IV. Customs

1

Widow or not,
she belonged in the street,
shaking her maracas

with someone not me
dancing atop a bed into the New Year.

2

My mother in black, as is our custom,
years past her mourning, runs,
teenaged on the porch steps,
sandals slipping from her heels
and snatches a shawl from the kitchen chair
leaving cards with untold fortunes
and unfinished solitaire.

She runs to meet the neighbor in the darkness,
never seeing me

a child in the lilacs bordering both yards.

3

Afterwards she said
“I don’t know where you get your ideas.”

Then, “Have you eaten?”
“How long till *Dynasty*?”

With the dying, talk is practical.
I ask about Heaven. Who she hopes to see.

“Always your first one.”
She hands back my poems with a wink.

V. Beasts

1

The dog knew,
sure as he’d been told.
The room smelled of it.

He lay down very still
at the door. Sentry to our footsteps,
guarding the sickbed like a bowl

of food past decomposing
though once good, he gnawed
a sock that would go missing
trenched deep between his paws.

2

Mice had been our family joke
coming out for company
and expiring on the couch
poison drunk, feet and bellies up.

But when the young ones grew
wise or plain immune
they stayed away and got fat
and wouldn't return whatever we did.

So we bought ourselves some traps
set the springs and went to bed.

And woke to the squeals
of stomachs snared and guts revealed
eating our own for breakfast.

VI. Temptations

1

Alone with her, I couldn't resist.

What in life was so inviting
was no less in death.

I kissed the length of her legs

while they stretched
as if on the promenade already

someone ahead of me was waving.

2

Feeling the cushion gone
from her breasts, I turned

to her still spirited curls,
their deep night and endless perfume,

until I felt myself lifted free.

Like someone drowning who doesn't succeed, I wept
when I was returned to the living.

Georgia Scott
University of Gdansk
Poland

SANTIAGO MONTOBBIO

Arráez

Como tendría la soberbia fácil, jamás me la permito.

Pues capitán verdadero
desde pequeño fui, de otro modo más justo tenté yo
gobernar la vida, y es por ello
que no dejé a esa norma olvido.
Y para empezar
tan ingrata tarea por mí mismo
me disfracé harapiento y abjuré
de las medallas haciendo que el silencio
les dijera adiós levantándoles las cejas.

Fracasos por todo ello
me brindó el tiempo
y difícil de soportar resulta
su soledad injusta.
Pero tozudo
como en dañarme he sido
cada día pido perdón por crímenes
que merecen gran castigo.
Nadie sabe
quién los ha cometido.

Boceto del artista adolescente y jubilado

Como he tenido éxito, estoy completamente abatido.

Por primera vez nadie se queja de que me levante
a la hora de las comidas, en casa hasta se interesan por si escribo
y podrías dedicarte al teatro, la gente
que ha hecho dinero, uy, con lo de las giras:

bien se ve que mi familia
vive anclada en tiempos antiguos, pero
como he hecho siempre con todo el mundo yo les digo
que sí a cualquier cosa, hago ver que les atiendo
muy en serio y a veces
hasta les sonrío.
Pero no pienso
escribir más tiros.

Gris

Cenizo como de profesión he sido
he de decir no obstante
que conocí la vida, que recuerdo miradas
con vocación de lagos y también el modo
en que volvías crecida
para mi amor la dicha, aquella
campana oscura
que no teníamos
y la extraña risa
de la vida en
vida.

Después la derrota no nos deja ni cornisas
y así resulta que el ser (que sólo
es ser con otro) para siempre
es sido.

Pero aunque muy común se hace en él
la cobardía del olvido
todavía alguna tarde
madrugadas tengo
si en tu nombre abrazo
lejanías.

Acqua alle corde

Y si todo en el vivir se cumple
desierto y silencio ahora.
Desierto,
silencio, el corazón grande y abierto
para el nuevo artista que venga, el puño
cerrado y en la frente para el memo, has
dicho siempre la verdad, la vida te has jugado
en las palabras, no te detengas, si es preciso
en tu desierto y tu silencio el orgullo ten
de ignorar ahora el resto de la tierra.

Santiago Montobbio
Barcelona
España

RESEÑA / *REVIEW*

Physics as Philosophy: The Philosophical Import of Some Key Concepts in Physics, Halley D. Sánchez. Mayagüez: University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Publications Center, 2003, xii + 194 pages.

Anderson Brown

Professors have two basic sources of material for books: they can publish versions of their doctoral theses, and they can develop books from long-developed class notes. In this professor's opinion, the latter tends to be far the better method. There are many fine thinkers in academe whose audience is limited to passing classes of students, but if their notes and lesson plans continue to be refined over ten or twenty years, the product can grow very fine. Halley Sánchez has been teaching his very popular Philosophy of Science course at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez since the 1970s, and now comes his distillation of years of experiment presenting philosophically interesting aspects of the history of physics to undergraduates. This book will probably be most rewarding to readers with some physics who wonder what philosophers have to say about the field, and will be a good reference tool for teachers of the history and philosophy of physics. It will also supplement more general sources in the history of science. It is not afraid of formal notation, but is not so dense with equations as to frustrate the lay reader as is the case with so many books in this genre.

While arranged chronologically, it is really a survey of philosophically interesting points in the history of physics, as the subtitle states, rather than a comprehensive history. The first chapter, "Ancient Roots," has nice short discussions, notably of Pythagoras and Archimedes, but a more substantial discussion of Aristotle's influence unfolds later in the book. Sánchez believes that Aristotle and his medieval followers held back the development of physics by emphasizing sense-data (empiricism) over mathematical reasoning (rationalism). The great contribution of Descartes, following this line, was to open up a more mathematics-based mechanics, thus opening the way for Newton and (perhaps more controversially) the subsequent movement of physics increasingly away from "mechanical philosophy." The short study of Newton in chapter Four is useful for non-physicists (philosophers tend to overlook the centrality of Newton in philosophical discussions of his time), but the discussion of Descartes in chapter three is the high point of the first half of the book and should be illuminating to physics people who want to learn more about the role of philosophy and mathematics in Seventeenth

Century science. A more detailed treatment of Sánchez's brief for Descartes as corrective to Aristotelean Scholasticism could profitably be developed; perhaps we shall see this in the future.

The second half of the book does not have as clear a narrative structure as the philosophical agenda recedes and we are given a history of modern physics from field theory through relativity to quantum mechanics. Professor Sánchez has taken on the Herculean labor of offering short explanations of important developments in physics, from Michelson-Morley to Bell's Theorem, for generations of undergraduate students, and the reader who is also a teacher can only applaud his often deft sketches. However, there is a tension here concerning the identity of the book. Sánchez's real strength is in pointing out the philosophical significance of various famous experiments, figures, and movements in physics. The readers who will benefit the most from this strength are those who already have some familiarity with physics, and thus don't need a short introduction to, say, Maxwell's equations, or the famous arguments between Einstein and Bohr. Meanwhile, readers who are looking to understand physics today have a long shelf full of popular histories and explanations. For the moment, this book will be a useful supplement to students of the history of science who want to develop their understanding of physics, and quite a good source for students of physics who want to be familiar with the philosophical import of major developments. However, what Sánchez is really in a position to contribute, I think, is a book aimed at physics scholars who need a source of quick glosses of epistemological issues in familiar highlights of modern physics, and this is not (quite) that book.

A very nice feature of the book is a philosophical dialogue presented as coda, featuring the philosophers Al, Bob, Marty, and Van. The last two are meant to represent the views of Heidegger and Quine, respectively, but I confess it was not obvious to me who Al and Bob were meant to be. This is a well-written *faux* discussion of popular philosophical arguments, including the role of science in shaping social values and *vice versa*, "continental" relativism vs. "analytic" positivism, Plato's metaphysics (which seems to be rattling around under the whole text somehow), and Sánchez's cryptoKantian musings on subjectivity and the possibility of rational transcendence thereof. It is playful and interesting and, like a good professor with a couple of classes a year, shines in obscurity.

Anderson Brown
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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: 20 de enero 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 20 January 2005. See submission guidelines at **http://www.uprm.edu/atenea** for details about the format of manuscripts.

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Dirección:

Revista Atenea
Oficina de Publicaciones
Universidad de Puerto Rico en Mayagüez
PO Box 9280
Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681-9010

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