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José M. Irizarry, Nandita Batra ©

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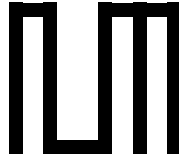
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ENSAYOS / *ESSAYS*

SWEET ARE THE USES OF TRAGEDY: DEATH AND THE MAIDEN'S 'ALMOST ARISTOTELIAN' TESTIMONY

Kimberly Rostan

In 1990, Chile began its rocky transition back to democracy after General Pinochet's regime relinquished most of its governing power. That same year, Ariel Dorfman returned home to Chile after seventeen years of exile and wrote *Death and the Maiden*, a play which confronts audiences with the harrowing story of Paulina Salas and the nation which devastated her.¹ The action of the plot is set around the moment when, fifteen years after the government mandated her rape and torture, Paulina is convinced she recognizes the voice of the man who raped her while playing Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" in the background. Compounding the horror of this traumatic memory, Paulina is both unsupported in her attempts to speak of it and, having been blindfolded, unable to produce empirical evidence to confirm her account.

In beginning to piece together Paulina's story, Dorfman found that "rather than a novel, what needed to be written was a play" (Afterword 73). Specifically, he explains that this play that "needed to be written" is a tragedy in the formal sense (74). In the midst of Chile's stunned silence, something about this literary form in particular answered Dorfman's basic desire to acknowledge his nation's painful past:

I felt that *Death and the Maiden* touched upon a tragedy in an almost Aristotelian sense, a work of art that might help a collective to purge itself, through pity and terror, in other words to force the spectators to confront those predicaments that, if not brought into the light of day, could lead to their ruin. (74)

In this seemingly commonplace observation about tragic form, Dorfman espouses an expressive confrontation of terror that may also

¹ For a more thorough biography of Ariel Dorfman and an account of his oeuvre, see McClennen's "Ariel Dorfman." Also, as I explain later, Chile is not named specifically in the play.

be recognizable as a characteristic of bearing witness. An intrepid witness who refers to his work as “testimonial art,” this playwright, with titles to his credit such as *Speak Truth to Power*, also listens (McClennen, “Interview” 65). As a writer he listens, adjusting to the characters and letting them “surprise and disturb,” in order to speak—to “break the silence which was weighing upon so many of [his] self-censored compatriots” (Afterword 73). Dorfman’s rationale for the tragic form resembles the actual rhetoric issued by Chile’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC): “Only on the basis of the truth will it be possible to satisfy the basic demands of justice and create the indispensable conditions for achieving an effective national reconciliation.”² Whereas the Commission, also known as the Rettig Commission, failed to live up to the public witnessing and acknowledgment that this statement implies, Dorfman’s commitment to collective confrontation through tragic form reads like a witnessing manifesto.

My interest in Dorfman’s “forced confrontation” of pity and terror relates to the connection he forges between classical tragedy and testimony. In his rationale for this “almost Aristotelian” tragedy, Dorfman implicitly conjoins a classic literary form of tragedy with historic tragedy in a way that seems like it should be familiar—after all, the play concerns Pinochet’s regime of terror and unfathomable tragedy³—and yet it is not. The reasons *why* his form is not more familiar compose an interesting narrative on their own, a set of historical anxieties about tragic form which open into vital meditations on bearing witness.

Entering this longstanding and often contentious engagement with tragic form, Dorfman revisits the formal tragedy as an ancient genre that is not only suitable for bearing witness but also innovative within a contemporary understanding of testimony. *Death and the Maiden*’s investment in the notion of confrontation links it to testimonial discourse; the term “confrontation” that Dorfman invokes to describe tragedy suggests a state which simultaneously includes

² This excerpt is available in Wessbrodt and Fraser. See “Preamble Paragraph No. 2 of Supreme Decree No. 355 (April 25, 1990), in 1 *National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation, Report* at vii (1991), qtd. in Weissbrodt and Fraser 601.

³ I am aware that many Chileans would disagree with the unconditional description of Pinochet’s rule as a horrific period in Chile’s history. For all the murders, torture, and rape he encouraged against political foes, the country still appeared stable in many respects as it prospered and developed major social improvement programs. For more extensive coverage of this perspective, see “Memories of a Coup” in *The Economist*.

both the violence that is the object of witnessing and the violence that is incurred and expressed by the subject who bears witness. This burden that Paulina Salas bears, and which audiences confront, binds the play crucially to the discourse of testimony.⁴ Moreover, classical tragedy's sophisticated understanding of heroic agency and innocence, its explorations of justice, and its inherent awareness of form in response to atrocity are well-suited to the questions Dorfman raises about official and personal responses to lived tragedy. In addition to the play's commitment to these identifiable aspects of witnessing (seeing) and testimony (expressing), *Death and the Maiden's* forays into metatragedy expand and interrogate classical tragic form in inventive ways which further bear the imprint of trauma.

Even among critics who concentrate on the narrative aspects of history or on art which bears witness, there has been only occasional critical mention of the connection between tragic form and historical tragedy. Effectively, tragic form has been dismissed as a potential site of serious testimony. One use of tragedy that *has* received attention is historian Andreas Hillgruber's *Two Kinds of Ruin: The Shattering of the German Reich and the End of European Jewry* (1986), which claims that the Wehrmacht's destruction at the hands of the Russian army during the winter of 1944-45 could be appropriately emplotted as a "tragedy" (42). Hayden White suggests that Hillgruber's account of this "tragedy" not only isolates and ennobles this small episode in Nazi history, but also minimalizes the rest of his historical account focusing on the destruction of European Jewry. White, whose revolutionary historiography acknowledges the narrativity of historical writing, therefore counts tragedy among the less plausible story-forms for emplotting history.⁵ Literary scholar Michael Bernard-Donals makes a similar assertion about Hillgruber's account, stating that "this is an emplotment of the events of the Holocaust—events that we have access to only through documentary evidence and artifacts—that flies in the face of our understanding of the events themselves" (32).⁶

⁴ Some of the most well-known writers in this discourse include Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman, Maurice Blanchot and Dori Laub, to mention only a few.

⁵ White reasons that "the choice of a mode of emplotment can justify ignoring certain kinds of events agents, actions, agencies and patients that may inhabit a given historical scene or its context." Also on White's list of genres that fail to represent historical tragedy are "comic, epic, comic fable, romance, pastoral, farcical" (38). See Steiner's *Death of Tragedy* for a related questioning of whether or not formal tragedy "hallows" historical tragedy.

⁶ It is crucial to note that White's dismissal of the tragic is thoughtfully complex. He is by no means suggesting that the tragic form should not be used. Rather he is critically considering how tragedy's generalizable plot elements can shape historical narrative in inappropriate ways which guarantee its own failure.

Non-academic audiences—as well as other artists—have expressed similar anxieties about using aesthetic forms for lived tragedy. In her own creative account of the South African TRC, author Antjie Krog relates a conversation with Ariel Dorfman during the Commission hearings on the matter of artistic representation in general. Their exchange echoes the earliest debates about Holocaust witnessing and memory, going all the way back to Adorno's oft-quoted and frequently decontextualized remark about the barbarity of poetry after Auschwitz:⁷

"I was speaking to Ariel Dorfman about this when he visited South Africa. The Truth Commission in Chile was held behind closed doors—so the stories were not told in public. Yet he writes these stories. I wanted to know—isn't it sacrilege to *pretend* you know? My experience tells me that there is no way you can begin to imagine the language, the rhythm, the imagery, of the original stories [...] Then Dorfman said his work is a sort of mixture—some of it is what he's heard, and some he makes up. So I asked, 'But isn't that a sacrilege—to use someone else's story, a story that has cost him his life?' He looked at me, and then he said: 'Do you want the awful truth? How else would it get out? How else would the story be told?'" (313)

Krog's question about sacrilege is relevant, and seems to have been on the mind of Dorfman's reviewers as well, who were scathing about the parts of the play which were "overly stylized" (Morace 142) or "too dramatic," or "elegant and sterile" (Weales 21)—both points of form which may have something to do with an audience's array of expectations for testimonial literature. According to human rights activist and international TRC expert Jose Zalaquett, in its home country of Chile, Dorfman's artistic endeavor itself was considered a tragic event, for its heavy tread into silent and "sacred" territory (Interview). Dorfman's preoccupation with form may inadvertently breach decorum for audiences who feel the aesthetic and the atrocious to be radically irreconcilable.⁸ In this era of testimony, the distinctly aesthetic, formal character of Greek tragedy appears to be strangely-seated in relation to the tragic.

⁷ These debates about authenticity, memory and truth in witnessing are treated by Felman and Laub in *Testimony* as well as in *Probing the Limits of Representation*, ed. by Saul Friedlander, to name only two.

⁸ Kristine Stiles's commentary on art's witness to atrocity is intriguing: "the most immediate example is Goya, the disasters of war, where he dealt with horrific images of destruction and violence in a realistic way. But throughout time, art has always addressed the most problematic of human experiences [...] It's only in the mid- to late nineteenth century that we get this idea of beauty as something that's pleasing. And I think it's the ultimate formalist folly (qtd. in Tinari 20)

In reconsidering the case against formal tragedy, I want to address two formal elements of tragedy which have made critics uneasy when they are used to portray suffering.⁹ To appreciate Dorfman's use of tragedy, it is crucial to recognize the fallibility of these protests. Regarding the first of these formal elements, one need only think back to the controversy over Hannah Arendt's statements about Jewish leadership during the Holocaust to understand how the idea of a "tragic flaw," or *hamartia*, impinges on what has been culturally protected as the space of the victim.¹⁰ Since Paulina is a rape victim, searching for her responsibility in her own suffering is particularly problematic, as is the possibility of an audience taking comfort in such responsibility. Instead, *hamartia* should be considered as Dorfman uses it to emphasize Paulina's particular agency and to support her claim to speak. Her full range of emotion as a character gives her dignity and, furthermore, gives a renewed sense of Hannah Arendt's assertion in *The Human Condition* that suffering is an action (190).¹¹ The second critique has been that tragedy's ennobling of a hero either "hallows" suffering or glorifies cruelty¹²—even genocide, according to White's understanding of the tragic plot. This objection has been disarmed in rigorous contemplations of tragedy by A.D. Nuttall and C.S. Lewis, but the basics of tragedy ingrained over centuries do not topple overnight. Joining centuries of debates between scholars who observe tragedy's complexity rather than its rote definitions, Nuttall suggests that the "celebrated magnitude of tragedy" *overtly* propagates a lie and "sublim[es] pain through the low magic of a formal usurpation, glorifying the inglorious" (84-85). He moves the "hallowing" away from the mimetic and toward the formal, citing its obvious structural "*imposition of grandeur on stories of suffering*" (84).¹³

Against this history of objections to tragedy as a form, my reading of *Death and the Maiden* re-imagines the formal tragedy as an important site of traumatic witnessing rather than an anathema to it. For Dorfman, the tragic mode is a site of confrontation, one which I am situating parallel to the traumatic confrontation of witnessing and

⁹ I exclude emotional *katharsis* from this list, as this concept has been questioned and explored for its potential to bear witness more than the others—both as a direct confrontation of horror and a feeling of unsettling and uncertainty at tragedy's end.

¹⁰ See Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

¹¹ For a fuller example, Arendt writes: "Because an actor always moves among and in relation to others, he is never merely a doer but always and at the same time a sufferer" (190).

¹² See George Steiner's *Death of Tragedy* for an example of this critique.

¹³ In this respect, Nuttall echoes the way White nearly comes to terms with the tragic "imposition."

its indelible imprint on narrative testimony. *Death and the Maiden's* most crucial affinity with classical tragedy, therefore, may be the unsparing emotional confrontation that is the origin of emotional catharsis in Greek tragedy. The play's confrontation unfolds in a country Dorfman describes as "probably Chile but could be any country that has given itself a democratic government after a long period of dictatorship" (Cast of Characters). Against this ambiguous national landscape, Paulina and her husband, Gerardo Escobar, struggle with their country's past in disparate ways. Gerardo works as a government-appointed Commissioner toward a modicum of truth and public reconciliation while Paulina expects fuller investigations and justice for all victims. More than anything, tragic form and traumatic experience in this play share the simple longing for a frame to work through tragedy and a boundary for pain.

Dorfman's "almost Aristotelian" tragedy actually compounds two tragedies. The performance involves both Paulina's offstage tragedy that has been silenced for years by the impossibility of justice, and an onstage tragedy in which Paulina seeks justice in ways that are perceived as unjust (the hero's tragic flaw). The tragic drama begins when the man Paulina accuses of raping and torturing her, Roberto Miranda, appears on her doorstep quite by accident after giving a lift home to Paulina's husband Gerardo. Gerardo, a nationally renowned lawyer, has just returned home to inform Paulina of his appointment to head the President's Truth Commission. Like Chile's actual Rettig Commission, Gerardo's commission could invite testimony from murder witnesses and from family members (widows, mainly) of the "disappeared," but could not investigate crimes like Paulina's that did not end in, or intend, death. The Chilean Truth Commission's refusal to name and indict any of the perpetrators it investigated in 1990 was largely due to the fact that Pinochet, the authoritarian state's former "Father of Chile," maintained a powerful presence in the military and Senate long after his overthrow.¹⁴ Paulina's character enacts the unredeemed frustration and silence of the remaining victims when in the presence of her husband, in her own living-room, she holds Dr. Miranda at gunpoint and forces him to confess to the crime he

¹⁴ For an in-depth discussion of how the coup came about and for a description of its aftermath from a variety of perspectives, see Mary Helen Spooner's work, *Soldiers in a Narrow Land: The Pinochet Regime in Chile*. Additionally, there are excellent scholarly examinations of El Poder Feminino and right wing women's activism in Maria de los Angeles Crummet's article, "El Poder Feminino: The Mobilization of Women Against Socialism in Chile" and Margaret Power's book, *Right Wing Women in Chile*. For further discussion of the role of right wing women in calling the military to action, see Power 229-47.

denies committing. Making a monumental rhetorical choice to leave Paulina's accusation unresolved, Dorfman leaves the audience uncertain to the last—Paulina's identification of her rapist's voice can never be corroborated save by that person's own admission, and even that, when given, is held up to question because it has been coerced at gunpoint.

Death and the Maiden depicts a failure of witnessing which is all the more tragic for Paulina as it occurs in an official forum for testimony. The Truth Commission which hears testimony is centered on the needs of men—Paulina's husband Gerardo, Pinochet, the new President, and uncounted dead husbands. Stretching its portrayal of democratic justice to the extremes of gender conventions, Paulina, who has been tortured and raped because of her association with Gerardo, is not allowed to speak before Gerardo's commission. In the midst of her husband's and her country's impulses toward silence and anonymity, her traumatic memories erupt. For his part, Gerardo resists listening to Paulina talk about her trauma in their private home, with the repeated refrain: "Don't interrupt," or "don't go on, Paulina." "Stop Paulina." While the Truth Commission is chivalrously promoted as a forum for the widows of dead men ("the disappeared") to bear witness, Paulina is urged to be silent, to foreclose her testimony. It is in the play's sustained response to this silence that we can begin to appreciate its commitment to testimony within the tragic drama.

Death and the Maiden recovers this important presence of testimony that is missing in the early scenes of the play by registering silence and uncovering buried memories. Having described himself as listening for his character's purging voices, or the voice of the other, in order to script them, it follows that Dorfman is particularly savvy, or reflexive, as a playwright in response to Paulina's stifled voice—and that he is particularly vociferous when he cannot "hear" his characters. In a similarly direct mode, the play confronts the dangers of cultural amnesia and coercive reconciliation. In the following passage, Paulina senses she is being asked to forget, and to put a hopeful spin on still-painful memories:

GERARDO: [...] Look at you, love. You're still a prisoner, you stayed there behind with them, locked in that basement. For fifteen years you've done nothing with your life. Not a thing. Look at you, just when we've got the chance to start all over again and you begin to open all the wounds...Isn't it time we--?

PAULINA: Forgot? You're asking me to forget.

GERARDO: Free yourself from them, Paulina, that's what I'm asking.

[...]

PAULINA: And we see him at the Tavelli and we smile at him, he intro-

duces his lovely wife to us and we smile and we all shake hands and we comment on how warm it is this time of the year and--?

GERARDO: No need to smile at him but basically yes, that is what we have to do. And start to live, yes. (38-9)

In the midst of developing the tragic plot Dorfman foregrounds this appearance of national unity bought at the cost of individual silence. Frequently, formal tragedies feature a hero's "tragic fall" back into the collective or the everyday; however, Paulina's reintegration via silence makes her falsely symbolic of a renewed democracy—her suffering has barely been acknowledged by her husband, much less reintegrated into a public. While the benefits of healing a nation's present seem obvious, *Death and the Maiden* recognizes that silencing a person's past in the meantime is counteractive. As the future of her marriage—and in this play, her country by extension—is increasingly laid on Paulina, she incurs blame from Gerardo who is a powerful voice of the new democracy.

As a performance, *Death and the Maiden* conducts a visual and aural "trial" which foregrounds the importance of witness testimony. As a playwright, Dorfman reminds us that witnessing is an intimate act wherein the audience is forced to hear testimony in close proximity to the person giving it. To reiterate Dorfman's own words, the play "force[s] the spectators to confront those predicaments that, if not brought into the light of day, could lead to their ruin" (74). This dramatic confrontation forces an audience to witness in precisely the manner that Paulina's husband Gerardo and Dr. Roberto Miranda are eventually forced to witness Paulina's personal testimony. In the intimacy of a theatric space, the audience is hostage to Paulina's account of her rapes and ongoing weeks of torture. The performance is thus simultaneously intimate and public—like Paulina's living room, it is both domestic to the point of being cloying and as public as opening night. In other words, to observe Paulina's story of torturous subjection, the audience is forced into an intimate position of witness.

Certain century-old debates about the tragic genre, if we unpack them, seem to center on precisely this issue of confronting horror. From Nietzsche's (and later George Steiner's) suggestion that tragedy is dead and has been replaced onstage by sappy, redemptive ideologies, to Kaufmann's idea that tragedy lives in its continuum with dark comedy, the ongoing agonistics over the structure of tragedy belie any textbook certainty offered by the likes of Aristotle's *Poetics*.¹⁵ Moreover, a central point of contention has been the question

¹⁵ Critical works on tragedy by Northrop Frye, Walter Kaufmann, George Steiner,

of whether a tragedy should consist only of the tragic phenomenon itself, or whether it may also include a mode of understanding, redeeming or reconciling with that tragedy. In tragedy vs. philosophy, the purely tragic argument belongs to Nietzsche—who considers that optimism is antithetical to tragedy—and to George Steiner who states that “where there is compensation, there is justice, not tragedy” (4). The general idea in play here is that our exposure to “the tragic” should not be mitigated by attempts to rationalize it, justify it or reconcile with it.¹⁶ These theorists seem to transfer testimony’s concerns about truthful representation and authenticity onto form. That is, they conflate the classic form of tragedy with the content of tragedy, as if by altering the form of classical tragedy one also altered the classification of the event as tragic at all. Although I would not encourage the generic conservatism within the context of those older debates, from a witnessing standpoint, the preservation of a mode which haunts, mourns irresolutely, or bears the imprint of the traumatic can be valuable for testimony.

As in other tragic dramas, Dorfman’s play foregrounds and problematizes the ultimate unknown—suffering. Tragedy features the blindness before insight during which the possibility of truth dangles out of reach; in these moments preceding final insight or a Sophoclean recognition scene (*anagnorisis*) we can do no more than acknowledge suffering without having understood it. From the moment Paulina suspects Dr. Miranda, to the time when she holds a gun to his head in her own living room and threatens to use it, *Death and the Maiden* is rife with uncertainty and contradiction. As certain as we are that Paulina has suffered, it is impossible for her to verify that the man she accuses is the correct one without having seen him (fifteen years earlier) under her blindfold, and even more complicated to do so when she takes on the role of an oppressor. In her authoritarian mode, she repeats the revolting phrases and abuses to Roberto Miranda that presumably were used against her in prison:

“Hey, don’t you like our hospitality? Want to leave so soon, bitch? You’re not going to have such a good time outside as you’re having with me, sweetie. Tell me you’ll miss me. At least tell me that.”

Nietzsche, and Aristotle have been useful sources for gleaning a basic overall understanding of the tragic genre and its history, should the reader care to investigate further.

¹⁶ Nor did Steiner recognize epistemological doubt, for instance in Samuel Beckett’s plays, as an element of tragedy. His view prioritizes tragic insight, or awareness, in the conventional sense because it in some way produces suffering; for Steiner, insight and suffering are simultaneous—the awareness is painful.

Paulina begins to slowly pass her hands up and down Roberto's body, almost as if she were caressing it. (38)

Because she uses the language of the torturer, it is not even possible to say with absolute certainty how much responsibility she feels for her own actions in the play. In the dominating role, Paulina coerces a confession from Roberto, which we observe being transmitted first from Paulina to Gerardo, then passed on from Gerardo to Roberto, and finally recorded onto a cassette tape. Through all of these layers of memory and re-narration, the witnessing audience has no alternative but to remain in this testimonial limbo. In bringing the unknown to the fore, the tragedy confronts a crucial aspect of testimony; as elucidated in Shoshana Felman's and Dori Laub's landmark work, testimony reveals the limits of what one person can comprehend (166-167). Only in that failure to comprehend can we realize that which cannot be realized—the limits of logic which these events surpass and a consciousness of that failure.

While certain traditional elements of tragedy are fruitful for exploring the challenges of testimony in *Death and the Maiden*, the weight of Paulina's traumatic burden places an untenable strain on the classical form. In a thoughtful negotiation of its genre, the play both employs tragic forms, locating the play in the tragic genre proper, and disrupts them in its adherence to rhetorical strategies for witnessing. The most prominent instance of Dorfman's formal innovation in *Death and the Maiden* takes place at the finale. The ending turns against the grain of tragedy when, as the play concludes, the disoriented audience is given no sense of closure, insight, or recognition. According to A.D. Nuttall, formal tragedy traditionally falls into a "majestic sequence" which produces some degree of insight, compassion, or awareness before the curtains draw closed; regardless of the actual subject matter, the sense of understanding itself gives a paradoxical pleasure (98-101). *Death and the Maiden* refuses audiences the base satisfaction of this sequence and offers displacement and disorientation instead; the moment of blindness turned to insight in Sophocles's *Oedipus* remains a blindfolded memory in Dorfman's play.

Much to our frustration, perhaps, audiences are not finally privy to the knowledge of whether or not Dr. Roberto Miranda is the guilty man. In an unprecipitated change of course, Paulina has transformed from a gun-wielding powerhouse to a complacent politician's wife attending a public concert as the curtains open on the final scene. The audience is neither certain Paulina has not shot Miranda, nor sure if it is Miranda, his ghost, or Paulina's memory of him that materializes at the final concert attended by Paulina and Gerardo. Furthermore,

during the play's finale the entire audience faces a mirror lowered before them, while a spotlight roams searchingly from person to person. Not only are we refused answers to the persistent "whodunit" questions, but we are also pinpointed ourselves by a high-beam for self-recognition, displacing the "tragic insight" forever outside the play. In refusing us comprehension of those unknowns, the play approximates the open wound of Paulina which, like the audience, finds no closure.¹⁷

Death and the Maiden withholds solace from Paulina as well as from the audience.¹⁸ Although the ending shows Paulina holding hands with Gerardo, the salve is superficial—her glance moves to rest on a shadowy and persistent image of Roberto Miranda. The glimmer of optimism in this concert ending is rendered false when Schubert's "Death and the Maiden" begins to play, with Roberto's figure looming close. The unresolved ending pulls back the hope of those surface signs of redemption—the couple together, gazing forward—leaving the hollow shell of unfulfilled anticipation. Even more disturbing than the image of Paulina standing off to the side of the stage alone during Gerardo's political speeches is the eerie picture of her smiling hollowly, her tragedy unacknowledged. The play refuses to allow Paulina's smile and forward gaze to be perceived as redemptive by audiences. Without this redemptive closure we are left in limbo where it is only to have a pure witnessing response. By undoing tragedy's built-in protections from pain, the play draws the form of tragedy ever closer to its suffering subjects. *Death and the Maiden's* decomposition of the formal tragic sequence, which might have offered some solace in its familiarity and authority, leaves us at the utter bottom of tragedy.

In addition to its innovation within the genre of tragedy, *Death and the Maiden* substantially informs the genre of testimony. In the contemporary "era of testimony" which has its beginnings in Holocaust studies,¹⁹ when a work bears witness to a tragedy, audiences are called upon to witness, listen, and even to suffer shock or confused helplessness. As the notion of testimony has extended from the courtroom to fictional work and memoir, we are becoming

¹⁷ Nuttall reads *King Lear* as another exception to this majestic sequence, as it intentionally disorients Lear's understanding and cognition regarding tragedy after the fact, 81-105.

¹⁸ "Solace" forms a homonym with Paulina's surname, "Salas."

¹⁹ Shoshana Felman makes this statement in a collection of essays about the Claude Lanzmann film *Shoah*.

more and more experienced in this second-hand witnessing practice, which inevitably—and importantly—tends to train our attention to the *representation* of the event: We ask, is it accurate? Authentic? Realistic? Or, as better questions and more complex understandings have emerged in recent scholarship, we ask: Does it somehow convey the trauma of the event in its unimaginable excess which overwhelms the individual? Does it “bear” witness to the unspeakable? Inherent in all of these questions about representation is a fundamental concern about the ethics of reading, hearing or writing about testimony. An important aspect of testimony, Shoshana Felman points out, is that it is “impersonal,” or “beyond the personal, in having general (non-personal) validity and consequences” (166).

Dorfman’s theatrical testimony models a crucial counterpart to this necessity to convey collective atrocity’s magnitude and terror. The play demonstrates how an individual may form a traumatic remainder that is not always accounted for when the event is represented in a way which fulfills its terrifying and world-shattering obligation to an audience. In staging a classic tragedy, Dorfman brings the personally embodied story of Paulina into focus while still maintaining the shocking largesse of horror. Emotional confrontation, shock, intimacy and heroic-proportioned attention to the personal in the midst of the “bigger picture”—these basic attributes of tragic theater set Paulina’s story into relief, so to speak, against the larger war her country waged against its citizens. Whereas some critics contend that a classical tragedy ends with the hero’s reentry into the larger community²⁰—that “bigger picture”—this play undermines that impulse with the ambiguous and discordant ending discussed above. Dorfman’s “almost Aristotelian” tragedy refocuses what contemporary discourse calls “the event” so that it fits inside Paulina’s living room. In this way, he channels what Nuttall refers to as Aristotle’s requisite “bigness” in tragedy through the voice of Paulina, who reminds us that the very possibility of expressing magnitude and scale originates in its relation to smallness, the limited space of one person.

As I have suggested throughout, Dorfman’s play is responsive—it adapts tragedy to the tragic. His incorporation of the formal tragedy into the aftermath of Chile’s national atrocity gives prominence to a form which “confronts.” At the same time, his handling of form encourages an interrogation and confrontation of itself—a fitting tribute to the complex problem of narrating experience that is not one’s own. By showing the limits of tragic form where the insightful and cathartic sequence must break down, Dorfman makes the tragic play more

²⁰ See Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*, for example (32).

devastating and—importantly—more devastated. As the tragic form itself suffers, it bears important witness to the trauma and the emotional effect of the suffering it cannot quite contain.

Recognizing the play's meaningful refusal to give insight or permit judgment concerning Paulina's story is an important approach to *Death and the Maiden*, and quite unlike that of one reviewer who described it as a "whodunit."²¹ Without that understanding, one misses the play's redirection toward alternative insights and re-envisioning justice, a redirection which faintly echoes the theoretical discourses of transitional justice surrounding truth commissions. Alternatively, *Death and the Maiden* might be viewed as foregrounding conventional justice, since as a performance it conducts a form of trial. The connection between a trial and play would not be unprecedented: Hannah Arendt, for example, consistently refers to a trial as classical tragedy's equivalent in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Dorfman's play may appear to look for conventional justice—certainly Paulina does—as it considers first an eye-for-an-eye style of justice, and then an approximation of a legal justice in the idealized scenario of a confession. I understand the play as a series of justices evolving in performance, which indicates the potential for more responsive forms of justice after a national atrocity. Paulina's tragedy demands a more public space for testimony which has fallen through the cracks of national tragedy. The play's vision of evolving justice is not without impossibilities of its own, which have to do both with issues of representing trauma in language, as well as with the uncertainty that substituting one justice for another will not simply create new oversights. Regardless, the play focuses on witnessing the tragic, giving us Paulina's testimony as social, political and aesthetic scaffolding falls left and right.

Paying attention to form in the face of dire political violence therefore prioritizes the *processes* of truth-telling, justice, and emotional response which emerge from trials and truth commissions as they do from formal tragedy. Such attention to form forces us to recognize that a tragedy may tell us as much about the response, aftermath and survival of an event as it tells us about the event itself. Though it may seem counterintuitive, what this classic form brings to light in *Death and the Maiden* is how a historical tragedy's culminating moments are frequently perceived to follow rather than coincide with the tragic event. This is in part because, as Walter Kaufmann notes, suffering the

²¹ Two reviewers were aggressively critical about what they considered to be the play's emphasis on the "whodunit" and its psychological thriller aspect. See Disch 643 and Weales 21.

unimaginable is exceeded perhaps only by the unthinkable possibility of surviving it (386).²² In other words, while it is common to associate post-tragedy, the day after, or the aftermath with an “offstage” or the un-dramatized, that assumption does not necessarily hold in classical tragedies. An indispensable part of tragedy, the question of aftermath, response and testimony is as much a part of the stage action and plot as it is a part of the audience’s take-home state of catharsis and contemplation. I make this point primarily because it helps reestablish testimony, emotional response and catharsis as not simply a byproduct of the dramatic stage, but a subject it deems worthy of exploration directly onstage.

Tragedy—and the critical debates surrounding it—exposes audiences and artists as witnesses struggling not only to represent, or find language for horror, but also struggling to simply “take it in” or respond in other ways. Our considerations of tragedy are as often about its rhetorical effects, from pity and terror to pleasure or fascination, as they are about the quality with which it memorializes and represents an event. In Aristotle’s observations, witnessing tragedy (through the form of tragic drama) involves explicit attention to effect and audience. One of the oldest forms for dealing with atrocity and acknowledging suffering, tragic drama reminds us that witnessing may take a form, be it a tragic play or Truth Commission, in order to produce confrontation—not to evade it.

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²² This sentiment is expressed frequently by survivors of the Holocaust, as well; see Giorgio Agamben’s *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 89 or Terrence Des Pres’s *The Survivor*:

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“OTRA VUELTA DE TUERCA”: “SILVIA” COMO ENIGMA Y GÓLEM DE PALABRAS

Lilia Dapaz Strout

En una entrevista, al hablar de su relación con lo lúdico, Cortázar expresa:

...El juego, como lo juegan los niños o como trato de jugarlo yo como escritor, corresponde a un arquetipo, viene desde muy adentro, del inconsciente colectivo, de la memoria de la especie. Yo creo que el juego es la forma desacralizada de todo lo que para la humanidad esencial son ceremonias sagradas. (Yurkievich 117)

“Silvia” (Cortázar 81-92) oculta un episodio de la memoria colectiva: el rescate del abismo de la Kore, la doncella prisionera del Hades. Comparte la simbología asociada con el bosque y la fertilidad y el nombre evoca a la mítica virgen vestal (violada por Marte) Rhea Silvia, la Reina Silvia, diosa menor del bosque, madre de Rómulo y Remo, los mellizos amamantados por una loba.

Hombre solo, Fernando, protagonista y narrador, no sabe cómo contar algo de lo que no está seguro de si ocurrió. Algo que “me obliga a escribir lo que escribo con una absurda esperanza de conjuro, de dulce gólem de palabras.”¹ Como a un gólem, Fernando, doble del autor, da vida a Silvia, cuya invisibilidad emerge en un asado entre amigos. El cuento se vincula con el proceso de la elaboración

¹ Gólem es una palabra hebrea para el hombre sin forma, la tierra amorfa o *hyle* de la cual Adán fue hecho antes de que el alma le fuera infundida. No puede hablar porque fue creado por el hombre, no por Dios. No tiene género, ni alma, ni inclinaciones buenas ni malas. Es un sirviente místico mudo, pasivo y protector que sigue las órdenes de su amo a quien sirve. Los que dicen que han creado gólems se consideran los más justos, santos y espirituales y poseedores de una capacidad creadora semejante (no idéntica) a la de Dios. El gólem ha sido interpretado como símbolo del alma. Véase Gershon Sholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*. El gólem equivale al homúnculo de Paracelso, que como el oro es equivalente al *self* o sí mismo. Sobre el *homunculus* hermafrodita, Mercurio, el inconsciente con todas sus apariciones, véase Carl G. Jung, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, *An Inquiry into the Separation and Synthesis of Psychic Opposites in Alchemy* y Carl G. Jung, *Aion. Researches into the Phenomenology of the Self*.

del texto que es creación literaria y testimonio del renacimiento del autor/narrador/personaje, que experimenta, con la tarea de escribir, una iniciación a un estado más alto de conciencia. La confusión de lo que desea transmitir se expresa con palabras como humo, sombra, niebla, absurdo, pesadilla, fantasma, esfumándose y términos de incertidumbre y vaguedad. Empieza con una situación a la vez simbólica y real, una comida entre amigos alrededor de una mesa redonda, una celebración. El ambiente es un patio rodeado de árboles en medio de la noche y de la naturaleza. El nombre de alguien, presente pero invisible, es arrojado al espacio familiar. Silvia se repite en el campo de los niños pero se escamotea su aparición, como si fuera algo disociado y elusivo que desea contacto con el mundo de los mayores. Embrujado y fascinado por esa presencia fragmentada que creyó ver, Fernando, un intelectual destacado, insiste en la caza de esa imagen huidiza. Intrusa inasible y apenas vislumbrada en medio del fuego del asado y la oscuridad, será la obsesión que lo moverá a resolver el enigma de su furtiva aparición. Empieza para él un pasaje que cambiará su modo de ser. Se embarca en un viaje que lo enfrentará con los fantasmas y monstruos en su interior. La iniciación se continuará en un asado en su propia casa, también en el Luberon, zona mágica de la Provenza.

Hay un testimonio del primer asado al que fue invitado el profesor de la Universidad de Poitiers, Alain Sicard, en el cuento Jean Borel, que asistió con su mujer, Liliane y Renaud, su hijo de dos años, del que se ocupaba Silvia, quien cuidaba a los otros niños. Según Sicard, al día siguiente se encontró con Cortázar, quien le entregó unas cuartillas: “Silvia” (Berger).² Lo que significa que el asado en lo de Fernando, que culmina con la visión de Silvia, dormida en su cuarto, nunca ocurrió y fue sólo imaginado por el confundido narrador aunque un detalle sugiere la casa de Cortázar en Saignon: el cuadro de un amigo en una pared de la sala. El nombre del pintor es clave que señala el éxito de la búsqueda: “Julio Silva.”

Fernando flota entre dos mundos, es soltero, vive solo. Los intelectuales lo admiran y por su reputación, Borel quiso conocerlo—motivo del asado—para invitarlo a su universidad, invitación que no aceptó, según él por culpa de Silvia. En la conversación revela un gran conocimiento de la música, el arte y la literatura del momento y una capacidad de comunicación a nivel intelectual. Sin embargo,

² En la entrevista con Berger, Sicard cuenta que asistió con sus hijos pequeños al cuidado de una jovencita muy guapa. “Tras la fogata, Cortázar veía pasar su silueta que le parecía probablemente maravillosa pero no sabía quién era.” Cuando se volvieron a ver al día siguiente, ya había escrito el cuento inspirado en esta situación.

dice de sí mismo que es mal educado y por eso no se acercan a él. Esa auto-evaluación sugiere una falla en su capacidad de relacionarse con el “Otro” por el lado de los afectos. Deberá ser iniciado y será “Graciélita, la gacelita, la sabelotodo”³ la guía para educar e iniciar a este “sonso,” “bobo,” “tonto” “loco” como repetidamente lo llama. Ella siente que necesita explicarle sobre temas de sentido común, como que Renaud se hace caca en sus bombachas porque sólo tiene dos añitos. Ella lo ilustra sobre los secretos de la tribu, esa sociedad paralela creada por los hijos de los amigos. Han establecido su propio campo de juego, se han separado del mundo de los adultos y han retrocedido al tiempo primigenio de los aborígenes primitivos de América, ya en su versión sioux, charrúa o tehuelche, con alguna nota de galorromano. Le informa sobre la situación que se vive en el territorio sioux. Álvaro es Bisonte Invencible y tiene a Lolita, su hermana, prisionera. Lolita es su amiga y ella debe salvarla. Renaud salta de un bando al otro porque es muy chico, sólo tiene dos años, repite. En el juego, ella es “la reina del bosque.” Es un verdadero diablo y funciona a la vez como hermeneuta y psicopompo en la iniciación de Fernando.⁴

Como en comidas anteriores, se pone en marcha la *massa confusa* de la batahola de platos y tenedores, el campo de batalla de los indios, los canteros de flores pisoteados y la disminución de la

³ Graciélita, asociado con Gracia, es el agente de la redención de Silvia, de la que forma parte en ese cuaternio con Lolita, Álvaro y Renaud. La cuaternidad del concepto del alma y el conflicto entre el 3 y el 4 de *El Timeo* de Platón se halla implícito en el cuento. Aunque Graciélita, Lolita y Silvia parecen entidades separadas, son variantes de un mismo arquetipo: la virgen, la doncella. Es la femme/enfant, la mujer niña de los surrealistas. Graciélita es intercesora entre Silvia y Fernando. Actúa como su ayudante, como un hada madrina. Es el personaje más complejo y activo. Desde que Fernando aparece, lo toma del cuello con sus manos llenas de barro y no lo larga hasta que le señala la presencia de Silvia. Al seguirla, Fernando empieza una nueva fase, se aparta de los intelectuales. Por el gacelita, asociada con el ciervo, se vincula a la luna, en la faz de Artemisa, la desmembradora. La luna se menciona al final como solución de una adivinanza. Como las hadas, maneja hilos y le regala el mantel en punto cruz al final de la empresa a Fernando. La cruz es un símbolo de unión. Antes le había dado un pensamiento, gesto de amistad que combina afectos y el pensar y que sintetiza el resultado del proceso. Fernando está listo para la etapa final al confesar que ha visto a Silvia.

⁴ Desempeña el rol de psicopompo, “guía del alma” y de hermeneuta porque le explica cosas. Viene de Hermes, el Mercurio, que cuando se escapaba, volvía loco a los alquimistas y había que empezar de nuevo la obra. Graciélita tiene una misión y no puede revelar cómo lo va a hacer. Mercurio es una cuaternidad (Cirlot 256-9). Graciélita coopera con Fernando para restaurar su alma dividida y recuperar los sentimientos. Es la cara externa de Silvia oculta en la sombra. Se describe el proceso de una manera muy agradable (Edinger 48).

conciencia por el consumo—quizá en exceso—de bebidas alcohólicas. La noche, la oscuridad, las sombras, las caídas de los niños, las heridas, las vendas, el tajo en el pie de Álvaro (la mutilación ritual), la sangre, las bolas de barro, los excrementos del bebé y la necesidad de hacer pis de Graciélita, entre otros detalles no tan simbólicos, todo alude al mundo de abajo, el de la realidad de todos los días, pero apunta a un descenso a la materia, una versión cotidiana del caos primigenio, del Hades, desde donde surge el nombre de Silvia como una aparición, visible sólo para Fernando, el artista visionario que ve lo que otros no ven. Una amiga invisible inventada por los niños, cuya realidad defienden y los adultos aceptan como fantasía y locura que los tiene hartos. Y Fernando, “la víctima nata,” cae en la red. Hechizado e hipnotizado deja “el timón” del segundo asado imaginario en manos de Raúl, para embarcarse en el viaje que tiene mil caras: viaje nocturno por el mar, Jonás en el vientre de la ballena, descenso al Hades o a la inconsciencia, a la parte desconocida de su ser, para sufrir la iniciación del héroe enfrentado con el dragón. Un rito de pasaje que en la psicología profunda de Jung es el proceso de individuación, la unión consciente/inconsciente, luego del descenso a la matriz para renacer. Es también un *opus alquímico*, un *ludus puerorum*, juego de niños que culmina con la visión del tesoro difícil de alcanzar en su propio cuarto: la peligrosa virgen de los cabellos de oro.

Fernando, un héroe cultural, no mata al dragón, sugerido en el pelo, “medusa de oro.” Convierte su experiencia en arte: el cuento que leemos. Recolectado en estado de ensoñación, “Silvia” describe el instante en que el poeta/artista/alquimista es poseído por la inspiración y la creación, la *theia mania*, la locura divina, entusiasmo o delirio (del que habla Platón en el “Fedro”), a partir de algo que se levanta dentro de sí, fuente de belleza y verdad para el artista. Jung llama “ánima”⁵ al arquetipo de la vida, porque anima al hombre a lograr metas a pesar de su tendencia a no hacer nada. Narrado con espíritu lúdico, no transmite angustia ante el enigma de Silvia, la

⁵ El ánima aparece al principio asociada con la imagen de la madre, luego pasa a una mujer desconocida a la vez deseada y temida. Representa los componentes femeninos de la personalidad del varón y la imagen que él tiene de la naturaleza en general. Es decir, el arquetipo de lo femenino, asociado con la fertilidad y la vida (Véase Emma Jung *Animus and Anima* passim). Aquí Emma Jung expresa que en la tradición celta el otro mundo, no se presenta como el mundo de los muertos, terrible y asustador, sino con un carácter jovial, sin lágrimas ni sufrimientos expresos (71). Silvia es más un pícaro duendecillo que un diablo, no produce miedo, y su intermedia, Graciélita, es deliciosa. En Cirlot, obra citada, la asociación del ánima con la luna puede traer significados negativos, destructivos y fatales (207-208).

escurridiza, siempre detrás de Renaud, nombre francés que incluye a *regis*, rey, en Reinaldo y significa zorro. Expuesto a un gran peligro, la locura que le auguran los adultos, el desmembramiento órfico/dionisiaco, se deja llevar por la sabiduría de los niños. Dividido, será a la vez el héroe y el dragón, que debe vencerse a sí mismo para unir los fragmentos y lograr su identidad.

“Silvia” revela el estado de ánimo del héroe, el enigma que emana desde su propio ser, como un espíritu que lo atrae como un magneto. No es un cuento de terror, la atmósfera es de incertidumbre y misterio. ¿Perturba? Sí, a Fernando, doble del autor que vuelve a dos de sus obsesiones: una, la pareja hermano/hermana, variante rejuvenecida de la figura materna, y al tema del incesto, el descenso a la matriz para la expansión de la conciencia y renacer. El lector acepta la aparición como natural, no ve en ella a un fantasma, sino la expresión del impredecible deseo que lo atrapa en el juego creado por los niños, para quienes Silvia es real. Hasta los mayores participan, aún con su negación. El lector se siente estimulado con la atmósfera del cuento, que transmite la perplejidad del héroe ante la aparición numinosa de la joven dormida en su cuarto, un motivo repetido en los cuentos maravillosos, donde la doncella embrujada espera la llegada del príncipe que la despierte de su sueño o pesadilla y la libere del dragón que la posee.

“Silvia” combina lo cotidiano y personal con elementos transpersonales del inconsciente colectivo, típico de la literatura visionaria. Para saber cómo es Silvia, de quien no se dice mucho, excepto el color de su pelo dorado y pechos y muslos seductores, debemos mirar a las otras niñas y a los que creen en ella, porque: “Silvia son los cuatro.” Sabemos qué es lo que hace Silvia. Empleada para cuidar a Renaud, es el ángel maternal y tutelar de todos, pero viene cuando quiere, cuando alguien la necesita. Ese alguien incluye a Fernando, que también la ve. Y a partir de entonces para él “es sobre todo Silvia.”⁶

El contacto con los niños activa esta imagen dormida dentro de sí por represión o carencia. Es una *iniciatrix divina*, una aparición que le señala lo que hay de único dentro de sí, su lado secreto, el oro, el tesoro escondido en lo más íntimo, en medio de la sombra. Reclama su atención para salir de la oscuridad. Es un heraldo del sí mismo o centro del alma, la piedra en la alquimia. Compara a Silvia

⁶ Cuando el texto dice al comienzo de la recolección: “es sobre todo Silvia” (Cortazar 81), “*todo*” describe un momento muy riesgoso, de peligro de extinción de la luz de la conciencia, la posibilidad de ser absorbido por el inconsciente.

con una estatua y existen unos minerales, *silvina*, *silvita* y *silvinitas* llamados así en honor a la Reina Silvia, lo que muestra la intuición del autor en la tarea de nombrar a los personajes. La aparición de la hermana interior, secuestrada, la *soror mystica*, emerge asociada desde el comienzo con el oro, el árbol y el fuego, como una llama, como un llamado a la aventura para embarcarlo en su liberación, la de él y la de ella. El tema de la hermana secuestrada ocurre en el campo sioux donde Álvaro tiene a la suya, prisionera. Clave entre los cuatro, Álvaro, a quien su madre llama mitómano, tiene un diálogo con Fernando durante el juego del barrilete. Allí aparece Lolita.⁷ Ha salido de la prisión de Bisonte, doble de Álvaro, un buen augurio, pero todavía éste muestra su machismo al rechazar y criticar la participación de Lolita en el juego, asunto de hombres al parecer. El incidente sirve para hacer una alianza entre él y Fernando, el nuevo Cara Pálida, quien aprovecha para preguntarle por Silvia y sólo conseguir evasivas, porque las respuestas no deben venir de otros, y nadie puede ayudarlo. El juego del barrilete involucra imágenes de

⁷ Lolita (la prisionera de Bisonte Invencible, un monstruo, animal totémico, doble de Álvaro) su nombre viene de Dolores, una de las advocaciones de la Virgen María, la Virgen de los Dolores, que alude a su condición de Dolorosa, expresa el sufrimiento de la doncella cautiva, el alma. El diminutivo también se conecta con un famoso personaje, la pre-adolescente de la novela del mismo nombre, *Lolita* de Vladimir Nabokov, publicada en Francia en 1955, que cuenta la historia de un hombre mayor, Humbert, que se enamora locamente de una niña de 12. Para hacer un análisis exhaustivo del texto, debemos considerar los nombres de los personajes, porque la esencia de una persona está en el nombre. El autor les da mucha importancia, porque cada uno cualifica al personaje y sugiere un tema. Los epítetos, los sobrenombres, los juegos de palabras esconden una verdad que contribuye a delinear a cada participante y en especial a Fernando ("seguro y valiente en la paz") a quien califican, y es el candidato a la iniciación en la que todos participan. Una vez realizada la iniciación, ocurre la separación, el alejamiento de todos, excepto Graciélita, que resume en su totalidad el principio femenino recuperado, con toda su capacidad de creatividad y sentimientos, verdadera hada que hasta sabe manejar los hilos (como Álvaro los del barrilete). Por eso le regala el mantel hecho por sí misma, en punto cruz que, asociada con el 4 es el símbolo de renacimiento y felicidad a los que se agregan todos los significados de la mesa. El proceso que empezó con una comida en una mesa redonda termina con una alusión a la cruz y se insinúa la cuadratura del círculo. Los nombres son importantes porque proveen cualidades implícitas con un sólo golpe de magia. Hay un verdadero zoológico y varios se relacionan con animales: Raúl con el lobo por derivar de Rodolfo, y Renaud con el zorro, ambos animales iniciadores y el primero desmembrador, aunque asociado con la luz. Graciélita, la gacelita, con la gacela y el ciervo. Todos de un poderoso simbolismo. Liliane (que contrató a Silvia como niñera) la madre de Renaud (el rey y zorro) asociada con el lirio, alude a la pureza del alma que se ha librado de la sombra que la oscurecía, por eso actúa al final junto al simbólico Niño, Renaud, subiendo las escaleras rumbo al baño. Hemos usado Gutierre Tibon, *Diccionario de nombres propios*, passim. Queda pendiente el simbolismo de los números y de los colores, en los que no nos podemos detener aquí.

elevación con el manejo adecuado de los hilos, un control necesario para evitar el enredo con las ramas de los árboles. El juego posee un efecto mágico para ayudar el ascenso de la Kore desde la materia y alejar los espíritus malignos. Imágenes de elevación aparecieron en las plumas que coronan las frentes de los sioux.⁸ En francés volantín o barrilete se dice *cerf-volant*. Cortázar, traductor en varios idiomas, poseía una capacidad de asociación y de juegos de palabras que se producían de manera inconsciente.⁹

¿Quién es el ciervo que se quiere remontar con un buen manejo de los hilos? Al hablar de las niñas, notamos que el texto se construye con la técnica del montaje usado en el cine y la fotografía. El montaje y las interrelaciones y conexiones entre ellas, permite ir de lo conocido para revelar lo desconocido y ayuda a descifrar al personaje invisible, Silvia. Graciélita, la más conspicua, luce una inocencia infantil mezclada con una capacidad secreta de seducción y sabiduría que la hace un personaje mercurial. Es un doble de Silvia en esa trilogía que forma con Lolita. La identificación ocurre cuando dice que ella es “la reina del bosque,” rango que tiene Silvia por derivarse de Rhea Silvia. Graciélita también lo es, por gacela, considerada “la reina del bosque.” Cuando Fernando juega con las palabras y hace de Graciélita una gacelita, la transformación del nombre propio en común y diminutivo, reduce su tamaño, y sugiere que representa realidades interiores que el ojo no puede ver. Son diminutivos imaginarios e introduce un símbolo muy rico asociado no sólo con la caza: el ciervo famoso por su gracia.¹⁰ La gacela o

⁸ Las plumas corresponden al elemento aire y al viento y comparten significados con los pájaros. Se asocian con la altura, la elevación, la ligereza, lo liviano, el vuelo, el espíritu y la inspiración. La pluma de escribir, con la palabra, el Verbo. Relacionadas con el simbolismo lunar y los rituales de ascensión, representan entidades de carácter intuitivo e invisibles, el pensamiento y las fantasías. En algunas tribus sudamericanas “pluma” se agrega para describir algo que no es una realidad física, sino psíquica, que no existe en la realidad externa (von Franz, *Interpretation of Fairytales* 48-49). Ha comenzado una nueva etapa del proceso: el ascenso desde la nekya inicial del descenso al mundo de abajo. Las plumas se vinculan con el poder y la corona de los reyes y del Papa (Chevalier y Gheerbrant 33).

⁹ El juego del barrilete, como el de la rayuela, tiene desde antiguo un valor ritual. Elevar barriletes era una ceremonia para ahuyentar los espíritus malignos (Chevalier y Gheerbrant, vol. 1, 313). Con este rito se contribuye a la liberación de la Kore de la materia, de la prisión del inconsciente, levantándola hacia la conciencia (Frazer 33-74).

¹⁰ Por el juego de palabras, Graciélita se convierte en gacelita y asume todas las características de este grácil y ágil animal, famoso por su ligereza, asociado con el aire y el viento. Corre mucho y nadie la puede alcanzar. Representa la sensibilidad juvenil y juguetona, la belleza, sobre todo por sus ojos. Se le atribuye una agudeza

siervo es mensajero de las hadas en el folklore y en los sueños, del inconsciente. Es el psicopompo para los celtas, el rol de guía de Graciélita/Silvia para Fernando.

La caza de Fernando de Silvia es la inversión de la caza de Silvia del zorro, Renaud el niño divino, otro entre los cuatro fragmentos que forman parte de Silvia. En este juego de dobles, Renaud es el centro del alma de Fernando, el sí mismo, el "Rey." En medio de la ceremonia del barrilete y al ver la alianza entre Fernando y Álvaro, Graciélita, con la argucia de que necesita hacer pis y simulando que no conoce el camino al baño, pide a Fernando que la lleve, de donde bajará con la ayuda de Silvia. Y allí en una escena mágica, antes de entrar al baño y cerrar la puerta con el pestillo, le señala a Silvia, dormida en su cuarto. El montaje de escenas ofrece una situación a la vez bella y escalofriante, una inmersión peligrosa en el inconsciente colectivo que empieza a cegarlo, a tragarse la poca luz de la conciencia que le quedaba, enfrentado con el peligro de la serpiente/dragón del cabello de medusa de Silvia que le quita el habla. Y sólo puede musitar "Silvia, Silvia...". Al dragón no hay que molestarlo cuando duerme, sino sobrepasarlo con astucia (von Franz, *Individuation in Fairytales* 46). La ayuda viene sincrónicamente. Y es la sabiduría del inconsciente, la voz de Graciélita, que grita: ¡Silvia, Silvia vení a buscarme! Y se rompe el maleficio: el tesoro oculto se aparta del dragón. "Pasó a mi lado sin mirarme" confiesa Fernando. Ha liberado a la prisionera aunque no ha matado al dragón ni la mirada de la medusa lo ha petrificado. Cuando desciende ve a Graciélita que baja y a Liliane que sube al baño con Renaud en los brazos, que ha sufrido "el porrazo de las siete y media". "Ayudé a consolar y a curar" dice, sin tomar conciencia del cambio y usarán... mercurocromo. Silvia no está, se ha esfumado.

visual fuera de lo común y algunos la consideran símbolo del alma. Se asocia con el árbol de la vida por el parecido de su cornamenta con las ramas y conoce el secreto de la auto-regeneración. Se la asocia con la sabiduría y el ascetismo. La gacela o ciervo simboliza un factor inconsciente que muestra el camino a un evento crucial ya sea el rejuvenecimiento (cambio de la personalidad) o el viaje hacia el más allá o aún la muerte. Al igual que Mercurio, el ciervo comparte el símbolo de la luz y los del mandala (el círculo y la cruz) (von Franz, *Interpretation of Fairytales* 87). Su aspecto negativo aflora cuando el consciente tiene una actitud desfavorable hacia él. Artemisa, la famosa cazadora, una de las tres formas de la luna, a menudo se transforma en ciervo, es decir que el cazador y lo cazado, son idénticos. Artemisa destruye al que se le acerca mucho (Hillman 108). Es una diosa muy negativa con los que no le rinden homenaje o servicio. Con ella se asocia el mito de Acteón despedazado por los perros que la acompañan.

El descenso de Graciélita, su compañera en el proceso, que resuelve enigmas y enseña sabiduría, el verdadero basilisco del cuento que con su mirada ha infectado a Fernando para exponerlo a la experiencia interior de Silvia, es muy importante. Ahora ascienden Liliane y Renaud. Asociada la primera por su nombre con el lirio, sugiere: 1) el inicio de la primavera cuyas primeras flores son los lirios del valle; 2) la renovación del iniciado, su rejuvenecimiento y renacimiento; 3) la recuperación de la pureza del alma, por la desaparición de la mancha que la oscurecía, la serpiente/dragón. Renaud, esconde al Rey, es el lapis, la unión de los opuestos, la piedra filosofal, el centro místico del alma. Como si acabara de nacer, lo curarán con mercurocromo que se usaba para sanar el ombligo del recién nacido, hasta que cicatrizara. Es el niño divino de la alquimia.¹¹

Fernando convertirá la experiencia en arte: el conjuro que es el cuento. Como un gólem, Silvia, *cervus o servus fugitivus*, ha respondido a la voz de su creador/a, su amo. La estratagema de Graciélita de la necesidad de orinar e ir al baño demuestra una vez más que al oro/Mercurio que volvía loco a los alquimistas íse lo encuentra en la letrina! (14).¹²

¹¹ En un cuento en el que se regresa al mundo de la infancia para embarcarse en un "juego de niños" como llamaban los alquimistas a su difícil labor, no sorprende que el centro del alma, el self, esté representado por un niño eterno aunque se diga que tiene dos años. El dos no funciona como número y pasa a significar "lo otro", la "otredad" según von Franz (*Individuation in Fairy Tales*, 26). El niño es el símbolo más poderoso del sí mismo porque es el producto de la unión de lo masculino y lo femenino, la unión de los opuestos, lo consciente y lo inconsciente, la coincidencia de los opuestos. Es la meta del opus. Es símbolo del Rey, y lo oculta, como astuto zorro, en su nombre, Renaud. El niño expresa el ansia de la regeneración de la personalidad (el rejuvenecimiento) y es una prueba de un arquetipo que vive en el fondo del alma humana. Pero al desván onírico, según Bachelard, "siempre se sube" (*Poética del espacio* 4-37). Y la pareja de Liliana (lirio, atributo de la dignidad del rey que es el niño) madre y Fernando (el iniciado) rodean al "niño divino", en la cercanía del baño al que se asciende por las escaleras. Renaud apareció cargando desde el principio sus bombachas sucias. Y allí está la paradoja a la que nos referiremos en la nota 14.

¹² Jung, en *Simbología del espíritu*, expresa que los textos alquímicos recuerdan que Mercurio "in sterquiliniis invenitur" y que lo más bajo del Mercurio debe entenderse como símbolo de lo más elevado y lo más elevado como símbolo de lo más bajo. Principio y fin se dan la mano (93). En Cirlot, bajo "excrementos" leemos que lo más despreciable se asocia con lo más valioso, motivo que aparece en las leyendas y cuentos folklóricos, de ahí la asociación de los excrementos con el oro (94-95). En la alquimia se partía de la zona más baja de lo real para llegar a la más alta. La escritura cortazariana quiere incorporar el cuerpo, lo suprimido, lo reprimido por eso alude a lo censurado, a los deshechos del cuerpo para una reconciliación del cuerpo con el alma. Al mudar el escenario al baño coincide con Virgilio, que en uno de sus

El cuento, un rompecabezas, termina con una adivinanza cuya solución es la luna. Una de sus caras, Artemisa/Diana, la desmembradora, que tiene de acompañante al ciervo, ha recibido la ayuda de la gacelita, para iniciar a Fernando y liberar a su *soror mystica*, Silvia, de la prisión: su propio cuarto, su alma.¹³

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Epigramas expresa: "Aurum in stercore quaero," y con Paracelso, que consideraba al excremento como "el hilo de la vida." "Silvia" incluye, como Tomás Moro en *Utopia* las cuatro necesidades fundamentales del hombre: 1) la comida 2) la atracción sexual 3) la de orinar y 4) la de defecar.

¹³ El mito de Acteón transformado en ciervo por Diana o Artemisa y destruido por sus propios perros (el aspecto vengador de la diosa como luna nueva) parece haber sido la causa de llamar al *lapis* filosófico como *cervus fugitivus* (Jung, *Mysterium coniunctionis* 159). El ciervo es símbolo de rejuvenecimiento. Hermes/Mercurio es un fuego invisible que obra en secreto. Es evasivo, se le llama también *servus* (sirviente). Es un contenido inconsciente que aparece cuando el intelecto debe ocuparse de una magnitud desconocida y le falta autocrítica. A esta sustancia se la llama también espíritu y alma. El ánima asociada con Mercurio representa el principio de *eros* y media entre la sombra y la conciencia. Dios tramposo y juguetón, Mercurio se mueve entre las cuatro partes fragmentadas para producir la luz del nuevo día.

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THE CONSERVATIVE, THE TRANSGRESSIVE, AND THE REACTIONARY: ANN RADCLIFFE'S *THE ITALIAN* AS A RESPONSE TO MATTHEW LEWIS' *THE MONK*

Vartan P. Messier

It is widely recognized that there are two stages in the development of the Gothic. The first one established by Radcliffe, which was molded to popular favor, labeled "terror-Gothic" and/or "loyalist," considered "feminine," and drew its inspiration from French sensationalism and Elizabethan Dramatists. The second one, embodied by Lewis, was influenced by the German *Shauer-Romantik* (horror-Romantic), labeled "horror-Gothic" and subject to much controversy, for even though it was regarded as more daring, innovative, and more "masculine" (Watt 84, 87), it also acquired a reputation for being immoral and scandalous, obscene and perfidious, seditious and revolutionary (McEvoy vii-xi).

Within the specifics of the Gothic genre, Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* stands in sharp contrast to the more popular novels of Ann Radcliffe. To this effect, James Watt contends that Gothic fiction is "constituted or structured by the often antagonistic relations between different writers and works" (6). The contrast between the two writers is obvious in their approach to the Gothic, and more particularly, in the explicitness of content and in their use of certain Gothic conventions. There is also a notable difference in their perspectives regarding the contextualization of their work and its socio-political implications. T.J. Mathias describes Radcliffe as "the Shakespeare of Romance-writers" and "the first poetess of Romance fiction" (qtd. in Tompkins 248), and in extensive praise, J.M.S. Tompkins argues that the author was very conscientious about the way she crafted her novels in order that they "could be enjoyed by statesmen and head-masters without embarrassment" (249). She also belongs to that first wave of Gothic writers that Watt identifies as "loyalist" for their nostalgia for the historical heyday of England's feudal medieval past (68). In Radcliffe's novels, a strong sense of virtue and morality systematically prevailed

and to downplay the element of shock and horror, which were sure to arouse controversy, the supernatural was always given a rational explanation. Elizabeth Napier observes that she is “careful to provide rational explanations for most of her mysteries and often engages in self-conscious disclaimers about the nature of any supernatural or overly romantic events she describes” (66). Having witnessed the adverse critical reception of the genre, Radcliffe was aware that the inclusion of certain Gothic devices had drawn rebuke from the critics. “She did not contemplate violence with pleasure,” Tompkins notes, “even though she was aware that [it could] ... deepen and enrich a romantic setting” (253). Rather, it is the absence of the grotesque that seemed to provide Radcliffe’s prose with a sense of dignity, a self-consciousness which was the result of cultural exchanges with the arbitrators of literary merit and her prospective audience; as Watt points out, “Conservative critics and reviewers generally found Radcliffe to be a highly readable author, who stood out from her contemporaries in terms of both the skill and the morality that her work displayed” (110). By carefully considering the potential reception of her work on the contemporary literary scene, Radcliffe was cautious to select material that would not come under attack from the institutions of cultural power—writers and critics—which, in turn, would ensure the reputation of her work and secure its place in the canon of popular literature. In referring to the various critics who reviewed Radcliffe’s work, Watt suggests that they perceived her as a loyalist and a conservative, a “political innocent” whose romances were not considered subversive and were a form of entertainment that allowed one to transcend the anxieties of the particularly unstable socio-political context of the period: “Radcliffe’s exceptional reputation in the 1790s and 1800s was at least partly dependent upon the fact that her work was seen to provide a legitimate form of diversion or recreation at a time of obvious national crisis” (128). While Radcliffe’s strand of Gothic fiction pleased many reviewers and critics, the reputation of her work did not withstand the criticism of ensuing ages regarding its lack of commitment and its failure to innovate. In his biographical essay, “Life and Writings of Mrs. Radcliffe,” Thomas Talfourd complains about her admiration for “every species of authority,” and her conservative perception that “some established canon of romance obliged her to reject real supernatural agency” (qtd. in Watt 124). Similarly, Sir Walter Scott argued that her deliberate choices to please her audience confined her to write in a low genre, suggesting that her achievement was limited even according to her own standards (*Lives* 229). What Scott suggests is that while she strove for the sublime by using the conventions of “terror,” her insistence on framing the

supernatural was a failure to appeal to the imagination.

Nevertheless, as Watt suggests in his assessment of Radcliffe as a “proto-feminist writer of the ‘female Gothic’” (107), she remains an important figure in consideration of feminist approaches to literature, in particular as she illustrates the typically “restrained” female writer who only gained critical acclaim by following the prevailing ideological hierarchies of class and gender. With regard to this last point, in her book titled *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic*, Michelle A. Massé points out that for many female writers and readers, the Gothic represents the reproduction of a culturally induced trauma: “[Women’s] social contract tenders their passivity and disavowal of public power in exchange for the love that will let them reign in the interpersonal domestic sphere” (18). Hence women were able to affirm their cultural identity by abiding to a set of strict socio-cultural conventions that the Gothic plot faithfully reenacted. Drawing from a variety of novels where the heroine is relentlessly persecuted, Massé argues that this identity is at times reliant upon what appears to be a masochistic drive, which could be representative of attributes that are socially valued the most in a woman: “self-sacrifice and self-abnegation” (42). Radcliffe, then, embodies the archetypical persecuted female of the late eighteenth century, whose writing further reinforced the conventions of the patriarchal social order.

In contrast to Radcliffe, Lewis is considerably more daring and strives to break established boundaries of content and form, as well as the conventions of morality and accepted political ideologies. By making unprecedented use of transgressive elements, his strategy is one of unconcealed, unadulterated shock and horror. Watt dubs Lewis an “*enfant terrible*” (5) who strove clearly to distinguish himself from other writers of the genre, arguing that “Lewis accentuated the sensationalism of his source materials, and supplied a cynical commentary of his own, thereby making *The Monk* a licentious yet also innovative work by the standards of contemporary criticism” (84). Nevertheless, twentieth-century critics were not the first ones to acknowledge the novel’s innovations. At the time of *The Monk*’s publication, the Marquis de Sade praised Lewis’ work, claiming that in an age when “everything seems to have been written,” in order “to compose works of interest” it was necessary to “call upon the aid of hell itself” and, in that respect, Sade claimed that *The Monk* “was superior in all respects to the strange flights of Mrs. Radcliffe’s brilliant imagination” (114, 109). Anna M. Wittmann shares a similar view by arguing that *The Monk* is a particularly remarkable novel in the Gothic genre:

M.G. Lewis's *The Monk* marks a major turning point in the history of the English Gothic novel. Here for the very first time a truly nightmarish vision emerges. Demons and specters take on the form of human beings; at the same time, they are no more dangerous and destructive than the demonic within man Unnatural disturbances in the natural order are, in the earlier English Gothic novels, signals of human transgressions that must be righted. They not only create the characteristic thrills of Gothic horror, but also forward the eventual victory of good over evil. The network of evil is far more complex in *The Monk*, where it invades the very foundation of moral order. Concurrently, the supernatural no longer serves to warn and champion the good and to destroy the evil. (67)

It is precisely *The Monk*'s transgressions regarding the "foundation of moral order" that triggered the outpouring of outraged reviews. Like others such as Ernest Baker, Tompkins shares Wittmann's view. However, she also aligns herself with Lewis' contemporaries in describing the novel as "scandalous" (278) and by stating that the novel marks a transition from the "delicacy," "dignity," and "moral dignity" of Radcliffe's novels (245), a transition characterized by "heavy-handed grotesqueness" and the absence of a "discernible moral framework" (277). Unlike Radcliffe, Lewis does not tone down the transgressive elements of his text by providing either an explanation for the supernatural or a subtle suggestion of horror. Lewis' text is truly uncanny in the Freudian sense; Tompkins argues that the author works by "sudden shocks" (245), while Baker suggests that "the daring and frankness" that Lewis uses in his grizzly depictions make all other authors seem shy and that he leaves the accumulation of horrifying accounts to be digested by the "sensitive minds" of his readers (209). Probably the most distressing aspects for the critics and reviewers were the various horrifying accounts of gore and the explicit scenes of violence and aggression, such as the descriptions of Agnes' awakening in her cell where she was sentenced to end her days after the discovery of her pregnancy (403), the birth and death of her baby (411-3), and the gruesome killing of the Prioress of St. Clare by a mob of angry rioters during the raid on the convent:

At length a Flint, aimed by some well-directing hand, struck her full upon the temple. She sank upon the ground bathed in blood, and in a few minutes terminated her miserable existence. Yet though she no longer felt their insults, the Rioters still exercised their impotent rage upon her lifeless body. They beat it, trod upon it, and ill-used it, till it became no more than a mass of flesh, unsightly, shapeless, and disgusting. (356)

In an extended way, these depictions echo Bakhtin's concept of the "grotesque body," especially in what he considers to be the dying body's "comic presentations—hanging tongue, expression-

less popping eyes, suffocation, death rattle” (*Rabelais* 353). Equally disturbing is the disclosure of Ambrosio’s sexuality as he fantasizes about Matilda and the Virgin Mary (67) and renounces his vows of celibacy by satiating his lustful desire with Matilda:

Ambrosio was in full vigour of his Manhood. He saw before him a young and beautiful woman ... He sat upon her bed; His hand rested upon her bosom; Her head reclined voluptuously upon his breast. Who then can wonder, if He yielded to the temptation? Drunk with desire, He pressed his lips to those which sought them: His kisses vied with Matilda’s in warmth and passion. He clasped her rapturously in his arms; He forgot his vows, his sanctity, and his fame: He remembered nothing but the pleasure and opportunity.

‘Ambrosio! Oh! my Ambrosio!’ sighed Matilda. (90)

While these episodes are capable of producing shock because they can be considered as transgressions of sexuality in the religious order, they are not nearly so disconcerting as when the monk rapes Antonia:

... the Ravisher threw himself by her side: He clasped her to his bosom almost lifeless with terror, and faint with struggling. He stifled her cries with kisses, treated her with the rudeness of an unprincipled barbarian, proceeded from freedom to freedom, and in the violence of his lustful delirium, wounded and bruised her tender limbs. Heedless of her tears, cries and entreaties, He gradually made himself Master of her person, and desisted not from his prey, till He had accomplished his crime and the dishonour of Antonia. (383-384)

While Ambrosio’s rape and subsequent murder of the young girl (391) aptly displays the taboo-breaking properties of transgression by literalizing the interconnection between sex and aggression, what can be substantially more shocking is that since Antonia is later revealed to be no other than Ambrosio’s sister (439), the rape is also incestuous.

On another level, the lack of a “discernible moral framework” as many critics argued, could be attributed to the fact that although Ambrosio is captured by the authorities of the Inquisition, his death is not the result of a due-process of justice carried out by the corresponding institutions, but by the Devil. While the figure is itself rather troubling, the entire episode could be considered to be subversive for it puts into question the plausibility and the efficiency of the legal system. As Watt suggests, “*The Monk* literalizes the figure of Satan ... and consequently severs the connection foregrounded by *The Castle of Otranto* and the Loyalist Gothic romance between supernatural phenomena and the workings of providence or justice” (89).

Interestingly enough, Radcliffe was so horrified by *The Monk* that she wrote *The Italian* as a response to Lewis’ novel. Watt notes that

"in *The Italian* ... Radcliffe clearly took account of the criticism leveled at contemporaries such as Lewis, and sought to reinstate some of the more innocent properties of the romance genre" (9). Radcliffe mostly concentrated on reworking Lewis' subplot of Raymond and Agnes, with the monk playing the role of the Baroness' advisor. Apart from the substantial alterations to the plot, she tacitly removed some of the most scandalous aspects of the novel; as Syndy M. Conger argues in her essay "Sensibility Restored: Radcliffe's Answer to Lewis's *The Monk*," it seems fairly clear that Radcliffe saw *The Monk* as transgression against her own notion of sensibility ... (114). On one level, she totally neutered *The Monk*'s obscene and immoral aspects by removing the disturbing accounts of Ambrosio's sexuality. For instance, she substituted Lewis' incest episode of Ambrosio's rape and murder of Antonia by having Schedoni spare Ellena when he realizes that she might be his daughter. The contrast between the two texts can be seen in these next excerpts. The first one is taken from *The Monk*, when Ambrosio enters the chamber in which he will later assault Antonia.

Gradually He felt the bosom which rested against his, glow with returning warmth. Her heart throbbed again; Her blood flowed swifter, and her lips moved. At length She opened her eyes, but still opprest and bewildered by the effects of the strong opiate, She closed them immediately. Ambrosio watched her narrowly, nor permitted a movement to escape him. Perceiving that She was fully restored to existence, He caught her in rapture to his bosom, and closely pressed his lips to hers. (Lewis 380)

The second excerpt is from Radcliffe's novel: having kidnapped Ellena to prevent her marriage to the Baroness' son, Schedoni is about to kill her in order to carry out the mischievous plan he and the Baroness had conceived:

... vengeance nerved his arm, and drawing aside the lawn from her bosom, he once more raised it to strike; when, after gazing for an instant, some new cause of horror seemed to seize all his frame, and he for some moments, aghast and motionless like a statue ... When he recovered, he stooped to examine again the miniature, which had occasioned his revolution, and which had lain concealed beneath the lawn that he withdrew. The terrible certainty was almost confirmed... he called loudly 'Awake! awake! say, what is your name? Speak! speak quickly!' (Radcliffe 271-272)

Both scenes share a number of similarities, notably the *mise en scène* and the characters (Antonia and Ellena correspond to Ambrosio and Schedoni respectively, who are both mischievous monks). Yet while Lewis' Ambrosio shows no sign of restraint in yielding to temptation, Radcliffe's Schedoni is suddenly held back by the realization that Ellena might be his daughter.

In addition, Radcliffe diminishes the sensationalism of Lewis' story by eliminating all the references to Satan and other "irrational" supernatural elements. As Watt argues, "*The Italian* assumes the readability of the superficial and reasserts the transparency of good and evil" (118). Moreover, whereas *The Monk* can be read as a work of social criticism, by writing *The Italian*, Radcliffe completely diffuses the subversive threat posed by Lewis' novel:

Radcliffe's qualified defence of the Inquisition, along with her presentation of the familial society at the Convent of Santa della Pieta, arguably constituted *The Italian*'s most overt response to the liberal, and suspiciously 'jacobin' politics of *The Monk*'s anti-Catholicism. Any hint of direct engagement with political controversy is finally dispelled, though, by the 'general gaiety' of the festive romance ending... (Watt 118-119)

Not so surprisingly, contemporary critical reception of these two texts differed considerably, and an interesting overview of their respective evaluation can be drawn from taking a look at Coleridge's reviews of the two novels. While at first Coleridge announces that *The Monk* is "the offspring of no common genius" and celebrates the originality of the tales of the Bleeding Nun and the Wandering Jew, as well as the character of Matilda, the tone of his review changes quickly when he announces that "the errors and defects are more numerous, and (we are sorry to add) of greater importance." He claims that *The Monk* conferred no pleasure and that Lewis had displayed an "ignorance of the human heart" and had committed "mistakes in judgment" and "taste." These claims were based on his view that on the one hand, the supernatural was sensationalist in the extreme, and that on the other, the text was gratuitously horrific, immoral, obscene, and blasphemous. Voicing the defects of the novel allowed Coleridge further to discredit the value of *The Monk*. He adds that

[T]ales of enchantments and witchcraft can be 'useful': our author has made them 'pernicious,' by blending, with an irreverent negligence, all that is most awfully true in religion with all that is most ridiculously absurd in superstition.

This last statement implies that his objections are more ideological than aesthetical, a point he clearly makes in the following remark: "We have been induced to pay particular attention to this work, from the unusual success which it has experienced." Yet Coleridge's view seems to be not only situated in the concern of the literary elite to regulate cultural production and distribution, but in attempting to reaffirm the boundaries between high and low culture that appeared to be dissolving: "[N]or must it be forgotten that the author is a man of rank and fortune. Yes! The author of *The Monk* signs himself a LEGISLATOR! We stare and tremble." Indeed, what alarmed

Coleridge the most was the prospect that England's upper classes were participating in the production and distribution of works that had been perceived to be unsuitable for an educated audience and to contribute to the vulgarization of English taste. Moreover, Coleridge's review of *The Monk* pointed to its transgressive character by claiming that Lewis exceeded the "nice boundaries, beyond which terror and sympathy are deserted by the pleasurable emotions." As mentioned earlier, in writing *The Italian* as a response, Radcliffe sought to defend and reassert the role of these boundaries, and in his review, Coleridge concludes, "*The Italian* may justly be considered as an ingenious performance; and many persons will read it with great pleasure and satisfaction." Nevertheless, Coleridge's evaluation of Radcliffe's novel was not entirely positive, for he lamented her lack of originality within the larger framework that it announced the decline of her favored genre, the romance. Indeed, Coleridge's review appears at a moment in Radcliffe's career (1798) when the perception of Radcliffe as a successful writer of romances was being superseded by other more negative perspectives regarding her craft—mostly, according to Watt, because she was writing in what was considered an unimportant and minor genre and lacked originality, systematically employing identical literary devices over and over (Watt 125). On the other hand, Lewis' boldness had a more enduring quality: his "daring" originality was constantly celebrated and *The Monk* set precedence for further works of so-called "horror Gothic." As Watt points out, Lewis' text established an unparalleled standard of boldness which would later influence the likes of Scott and Maturin (92).

While Conger claims that the distinction between Radcliffe's and Lewis' approaches to the Gothic can be attributed to their different notions of "sensibility," I would argue that the conceptual differences between the two authors can be more directly and accurately considered with regard to the distinction between "terror" and "horror," and that between mere titillation and transgression respectively. This distinction has been reaffirmed by critics such as Robert Hume, but it was first formulated by Radcliffe herself in her essay "On the Supernatural in Poetry":

Terror and Horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them. I apprehend that neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one; and where lies the great difference between terror and horror, but in uncertainty and obscurity, that accompany the first, respecting the dreaded evil?

By referring to figures of the great literary tradition, Radcliffe makes a case regarding the justified use of terror as a literary device by outlining its didactic purposes. For her, the “obscurity” and “uncertainty” of terror allow the reader to explore the elevating possibilities offered by Burke’s theory of the “sublime.” In contrast, she discards horror for its “annihilating” capacities; according to her, the reaction it provokes does not propel the reader into a shock of imaginative contemplation. Her distinction between terror and horror contains interesting correlations, for it echoes the Aristotelian belief regarding off-stage and on-stage representations of violence, an argument succinctly articulated by Percy Shelley in his Preface to *The Cenci*, in which he claimed that on-stage violence deformed the moral purpose of “the human heart” (239-240); in other words, that the rational for depicting violence could not possibly override the moral imperatives of artistic production. In addition, it is interesting to note that Radcliff resorts to the earlier figures of the “Great Tradition” to confer on her work an authoritative quality and to dissociate it from the scandalous work of Lewis and his followers. However, her argument regarding the “annihilating” properties of horror are misconstrued, partly because of her own vested interests in distinguishing her own strand of the Gothic and partly because of the same close-mindedness that characterizes moral imperatives regarding the content of works of horror in general and Lewis in particular. Radcliffe is correct in assessing that Terror and Horror differ drastically in the type of reading experience they trigger. Horror does precisely what Terror does not; it literally “shocks” the reader, it provokes a visceral response to some type of “uncanny” or “unsettling” account. Freud considered the Uncanny as a fundamental aspect of aesthetics theory dissociated from theories of the beautiful and the sublime, and he perceives some distinct merit in the disclosure of uncanny events and the emotions they trigger in the reader. Furthermore, in contrast to terror, horror does not relegate the reader’s experience to some type of intellectual contemplation but rather, it directly confronts the reader with the content: it narrows the distance between the text and the reader; creating a rapprochement between reading as an intellectual activity and reading as a physical experience. It is precisely this type of rapprochement—triggered by a visceral response—to which Georges Bataille refers in his preface to *Le Bleu du ciel* [*Blue of Noon*]:

Le récit qui révèle les possibilités de la vie n’appelle pas forcément, mais il appelle un moment de rage, sans lequel son auteur serait aveugle à ces possibilités excessives. Je le crois : seul l’épreuve suffocante, impossible donne à l’auteur le moyen d’atteindre la vision

lointaine attendue par un lecteur las des proches limites imposées par les conventions.¹

As I have demonstrated in a another context, for Bataille, this experience, an intrinsic property of the transgressive and what he calls “*Erotisme* [Eroticism],” is essential in reaching a state of consciousness where *jouissance* [bliss] and *savoir* [knowledge] conflate (128-135). In the case of *The Monk*, therein lies the power of horror, for it blurs the boundaries between signifier and signified, between language and experience, and becomes a focal point where both become intertwined.

Whereas Radcliffe carefully aims to gently entertain her reader by providing a moral framework, rationalizing the supernatural, and merely suggesting an idea of terror, Lewis literally “attacks” his audience’s senses and sensitivity. By doing so, he relegates the burden of decision to the reader, forces him/her to question his/her own concept of civic and moral conduct and to confront himself/herself with titillating transgressions of the established norms imposed by society. The novel’s depictions of sex, murder, and incest fully exploit the transgressive role of the erotic. Furthermore, by exploring the dialectical possibilities between sex and violence in both the structure and the content of the narrative, Lewis unleashes the potential of Eroticism suggested by Bataille, for these depictions not only break taboos and social guidelines, they also question the system of meaning in which they originate. In other words, the language of sexuality becomes the language of political subversion. In *The Monk*, the suppression of Ambrosio’s lustful desires, as orchestrated by the mechanics of institutional power, imposes a pattern of repression that is destructive to both the repressed individual and those who surround him. Thus, *The Monk*’s perceived “failures” (its lack of moral framework, its “obscenity,” the explicit combination of sex and violence, etc.) do not diminish the novel’s standing as an important work of both the Gothic and transgression. Quite to the contrary, as these specific aspects become more intensely scrutinized by various generations of critics, *The Monk*’s literary qualities are constantly being reappraised. Not only is its subversive potential fully revealed—as it denounces both the mechanisms of repression imposed by various forms of institutional power and the inherent hypocrisy of the very same institutions

¹ The text which reveals the possibilities of existence is not necessarily compelling, but it calls for a moment of rage without which the author would be blinded to the possibilities of excess. I believe it: only the experience which is suffocating, impossible, gives the author the means to reach the distant vision expected by a reader who is fed up with the limits imposed by convention (Translation mine).

that preach social morality—but it also explores the Bataillelean push towards the “limitless possibilities of being.” While Conger considers that Radcliffe’s response to Lewis is “a creative reformulation of some of the Gothic’s genre other possibilities,” I would argue that the possibilities opened by the transgressive properties of *The Monk* are in fact far more extensive. As Antonin Artaud would put it, “I cannot remember in any other text seeing images ... that, in their aspect as images, haul after them a veritable current of promising life *comme dans les rêves*, of new existences and infinite actions” (translation mine²) (12).

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² je ne me souviens dans aucune autre lecture vu arriver sur moi des images ... qui, dans leur aspect d’images, traînent après elles un véritable courant de vie prometteur comme dans les rêves, de nouvelles existences et d’actions à l’infini.

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THE REPRESENTATION OF LEPROSY AND WAR IN *THE SAMURAI'S GARDEN*

Claire Manes

In 1937, Japan invaded China. In that same year Sachi, a resident of the fictional leper village of Yamaguchi, Japan, returned to her hometown of Tarumi for the first time in forty years and told her story to Stephen Chan an outsider from China. The two seemingly unrelated events, one historical and one fictional, are skillfully woven together in Gail Tsukiyama's book *The Samurai's Garden* written and published some forty years after the episodes at a time when Japan was making some reparation for its actions in the Sino-Japanese war and for the unnecessary incarceration of leprosy patients in Japan.

The novel written by Gail Tsukiyama, herself an American of Chinese Japanese ancestry, relates the coming of age of young Stephen Chan, a Chinese youth who is in Japan recuperating from tuberculosis. The story, according to correspondence with the author, "explores themes of illness, courage, beauty and isolation against the reality of war" (email March 31, 2001). Lonely in his new surroundings, Stephen admits to "thinking [of] my time in Tarumi [like] a quiet resembling death" (Tsukiyama, 4). That loneliness and emptiness open him to the invitation offered by Matsu, the caretaker of Stephen's ancestral beach home, to "visit a friend who lives in a small mountain village near here" (23). Matsu explains that "Yamaguchi was a small village in the mountains also called the Village of Lepers" (23). Once in Yamaguchi, Stephen initially recalls stories of China "where lepers had always been feared and shunned [...] forced to live on the streets, left to beg or eat rats, while they simply rotted away" (24). He soon becomes curious rather than fearful, however, and is rapidly captivated by Matsu's friend Sachi whose face on the left side not only showed the ravages of the disease but also revealed a right side which was "the single most beautiful face I'd ever seen" (27). Stephen's enchantment with the woman "who had instilled a sense of richness and mystery in Tarumi" (31) leads him during his time in Tarumi to discover the woman behind the veil.

In his ensuing pilgrimages to Yamaguchi and in Sachi's brave returns to Tarumi, Stephen discovers not the disabled resident of a leper village, but a woman with a story. This story recorded by Stephen, himself an outsider, subverts the notion of leprosy as a stigmatizing condition which leaves its supposedly unclean sufferers as outcasts. Tsukiyama through Stephen's journal does not shirk from harsh descriptions of the disease, but she manages to reveal a woman who though physically scarred by her condition and lost to her family and fiancé has made a life for herself and her soul mate husband Matsu, a resident of Tarumi and a man free of leprosy and leprophobia. The author depicts a woman who "let[s] go of the past [by] facing it again" (130) and ultimately appears in Tarumi "in the bright light of day" (207). Not only does Tsukiyama subvert the prejudice against leprosy in her story of Sachi, she further undermines it by paralleling Sachi's story with the gradual revelation/deception about the Sino-Japanese war which figures in her novel as a discordant chord. Tsukiyama in her book develops both horrors, leprosy and war, as she presents the story of Sachi spiraling into light and the story of war barreling into darkness. This paper proposes to analyze the treatment of both tropes as they develop in the novel *The Samurai's Garden* and to suggest that despite centuries of prejudice against leprosy the book valorizes the woman Sachi and decries the war as the new leprosy.

The analogy works. Leprosy and war share some common elements: secrecy; small eruptions that ravage bodies, families, villages, and countries leaving people disabled, isolated, and alienated. However, there are differences as well. Leprosy in its effects on others is neither more nor less than a slightly contagious disease. It preys mysteriously on a small minority of people whose genetic makeup lacks immunity to the condition. Contrary to prejudice and erroneous notions about the disease, it is not caused by sin or dissolute living; sufferers of the disease do not choose or cause their condition. In Sachi's words, it is the disease that does the choosing (129). War, however, represents a more complex contagion that is on some level chosen. Ironically, leprosy for much of human history has been the more feared condition. "Leper" is a term of opprobrium; "warrior" is a designation of valor. Tsukiyama by setting the story of Sachi at the brink of the Sino-Japanese war juxtaposes these two eruptions, subverts long held attitudes toward leprosy, and offers readers the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about the condition.

Tsukiyama uses as her narrator Stephen Chan, an outsider himself who experienced alienation in China both because of his good looks (34) and his tuberculosis which engenders isolation and looks of shock at his appearance (25). In Japan as the war with his country

progresses, he also experiences the position of the reviled outsider, a position familiar to those with leprosy. Stephen's journal recorded from September 15, 1937, through October 29, 1938, gives him the "opportunity to find [his] own way" (3), but the time also enables him to record Sachi's story which she tells for the first time in more than forty years. It is that story and Stephen's fascination with it that subvert the prejudices about leprosy that folklorist Alan Dundes would characterize as "folk ideas [...] the unstated premises/which underlie the thoughts and actions of a given group of people" (Dundes, *Folk Ideas* 95-96).

Folk ideas about leprosy include fears about its contagion, notions about victims losing limbs, and tasteless jokes about the dissolution of the victims' bodies. Such unsubstantiated and erroneous ideas about the condition have led to the isolation and stigmatization of Hansen's disease patients and have made the term "leper" representative of a reviled outsider. However, the Yamaguchi residents that Stephen meets and their community that he writes about reflect a far different image and represent more closely Dundes's notion of a folk as, "*any group of people whatsoever* who share at least one common factor[...and who] have some traditions which it calls its own" (Who, 6-7, author's italics). Marcia Gaudet in her writing about Hansen's disease residents in Carville, Louisiana, shows them to be a "true folk community [...] isolated from the rest of the world with their own traditions, celebrations, stories, and views of the outside world" (192-193). Gail Tsukiyama's novel depicts a similar community, a village created in the late 1800s, "[w]hen some of those who had the disease [and] were no longer wanted by others in town, [...] took what few belongings they had and went up into the mountains, hoping to die peacefully. Away from the cruelty of the healthy" (23).

As Tsukiyama's story progresses it reveals the village of Yamaguchi as a community with its own old timers, narrative traditions, and festal celebrations. Although Yamaguchi is a fictional village, such communities did exist in Japan in the early 1930s. Susan L. Burns in her essay "From Leper Village to Leprosarium: Public Health, Nationalism and the Culture of Exclusion in Japan" describes one such village, Yu no Zawa, which began in the late 19th century near, but isolated from, the hot springs town of Kusatsu. In 1902, "Yu no Zawa had a population of 126 people, which included thirty-two married couples. Five children had been born there in the preceding year. The residents worked at a variety of professions" (112). This village could be Carville, Louisiana or Tsukiyama's Yamaguchi, Japan where "[M]en were gathered in small groups sipping tea and talking while others worked in small gardens, and women sat mending clothes"

(24). All three villages exhibited characteristics similar to any other small village, but all are different in that their residents were forced there because of leprosy that left them stigmatized in their home communities.

This condition, leprosy, happened gradually appearing first as a “rash...no larger than a yen coin” (134), a “rash...that wouldn’t go away” (78), but eventually spread. So insignificant was its initial appearance that the early victims of the disease “thought it was nothing” (78). It was a condition that had “been incubating for years before it showed its face” (136). Once it became visible, however, the unaffected “wanted the affected ones sent away from them” (136). Many chose suicide “to end [their] misery and restore honor to [their] families” (137); others fled to the village of Yamaguchi. Although the condition was slow moving and subtle, it was virulent in the physical and emotional devastation that it caused its victims.

War, too, in Tsukiyama’s novel has small beginnings before it erupts into the conflict and violence that lasted through the end of World War II. As Stephen first describes it, it seems small and relatively innocuous. His initial account simply notes “the news came over the radio that the Japanese had captured Tientsin and surrounded Peking” (4). The journal entry seems as insubstantial as the small rash that first appeared on Sachi’s arm or the rumors of Yamaguchi village seen as “a place for our kind in the mountains” (136). Both Hansen’s disease and the Sino-Japanese war in *The Samurai’s Garden* begin with minor eruptions and stories told through rumors and third parties. Neither condition initially presages the horrors that ensue, but both rapidly develop into full-scale devastation as the seemingly innocent rash of leprosy “won’t go away” (134) and the Japanese begin “swarming all over China” (14).

The rash on Sachi’s arm grows and spreads to her face finally leaving her severely scarred and veiled. The rash that is war also grows from seemingly innocuous reports on the radio to descriptions that scream for attention. It “escalates” (83) and becomes “insane” (84). The Japanese war efforts are “fierce” and leave the “carnage of death and destruction” (85). Implicit in the term carnage is the sense of physical destruction, a casualty of both leprosy and war. Tsukiyama’s description of Yamaguchi residents with “stumps of [...] arms” (121) and “heads and hands bandaged” (24) parallels the devastation of war. There are “Chinese losses, whose numbers were so large, so unreal, that it would take the shrill voiced woman on the radio days to count them all” (194). The numbers of war dead far surpass the victims of leprosy in Yamaguchi, but both images

testify to the physical destruction of the nameless victims created by both contagions.

The contagion of leprosy and war is rapid, physically debilitating, and noisy. Sachi recalls that at her diagnosis “a terrible scream [...] filled my head, drowning all the rest of [the doctor’s] words” (135) and again a “scream [...] brought the entire village to the door of the shack” (141) when she first saw Michiko, a woman badly defaced by leprosy. The war, too, is announced with raucous, grating noise that fills the airwaves in Matsu’s home and assaults Stephen’s ears. The news of war “blared” (17) on the radio; was announced in a “high, scratchy voice” (30); and “interrupted” the “music from Matsu’s radio” (59).

Noisy eruptions in the case of both leprosy and war leave the victims not only disfigured but displaced and homeless. The war leaves its victims as refugees with “gaunt, desolate faces begging for money and understanding” (4) and “starving in the streets” (118). They appear like those people suffering from leprosy who “were forced to live on the streets” (24) as outcasts, victims of the insidious eruptions they did not control. Likewise both groups are forced to seek makeshift shelters of their own devising. Those with leprosy in Tsukiyama’s novel find a place in the village of Yamaguchi where they built homes “painstakingly pieced together with mismatched scraps of wood” (24). The Chinese refugees also “built their makeshift homes in the crowded streets of Hong Kong” (4). They are “make-shift houses made of whatever they can find, like wood scraps or cardboard” (118).

Not only are victims of both leprosy and war isolated by injury and dislocation, they are victims of a public secret as defined by Michael Taussig in his book *Defacement: Public Secret and the Labor of the Negative*. Their stories are public secrets “*which [are] generally known but cannot be articulated*” (5, author’s italics). Historically, the full truth about both Hansen’s disease patients in Japan in the 1930s and the Japanese atrocities in the Sino-Japanese war is only now gradually being revealed. Fictionally in *The Samurai’s Garden* in 1937-1938 both are secrets. Sachi’s family assumes she has died; she and Matsu hide their relationship from Kenzo, her fiancé who disowned her after her diagnosis; and the village of Tarumi does not reveal the leprosy in its midst. Matsu explains, “It was kept quiet among the local villagers. After all, Tarumi was a place for outsiders to come on holiday. If they’d heard about the disease, no one would return. We didn’t want to frighten anyone away” (29). Likewise the brutality of the war was kept secret. Iris Chang’s book *The Rape of Nanking*:

the Forgotten Holocaust records the “deliberate attempt [even until today] by certain Japanese to distort history” (13). Tsukiyama’s novel also testifies to the secrecy surrounding the Nanking invasion. Although Stephen learns about much of the war through raucous radio commentary that interrupts Matsu’s classical music, “there had been nothing on Matsu’s radio about the massacre” (97). It is a secret that Stephen learns a month later in a letter from his college friend King who writes, “I’m sure you’ve heard of the Nanking massacre [...] thousands of innocent Chinese men, women, and children have been killed and raped needlessly by the Japanese bastards” (97).

Secrecy and dissimulation also figure into the way some Hansen’s disease patients negotiate their stories. They recognize that those with war injuries are often valorized or viewed with sympathy, while leprosy patients may find themselves feared, reviled, or curiously objectified. They, too, are tainted by the notion that war images are perhaps a more acceptable presentation of their condition. Marcia Gaudet in her article, “Telling It Slant: Personal Narrative, Tall Tales, and the Reality of Leprosy,” recounts the experiences of those with Hansen’s disease who cover or explain their injuries with “responses [such as] ‘I was in an accident,’ or ‘I was burned’ or ‘War injury’” (197). One man’s story which “may be on its way to becoming a local legend in the extended Carville community” (197) illustrates one approach to explaining the injuries from Hansen’s disease. It is an approach that seems particularly relevant to this study.

As Gaudet relates it, Billy, whose hands were badly deformed from untreated Hansen’s disease, responds to those who question him with two stories, one the truth, the other a lie. He offers his listeners the option of choosing for themselves the real story. In relating his tale he notes that he clearly states at the beginning that the first story is a lie and the second is the truth. After he spins his lie regaling his listeners with his heroics in the Korean War, he tells them again, “Now that’s the lie. The true story is I got leprosy” (200). Invariably the listeners choose to or appear to believe the lie. Leprosy as an explanation for a disfigured body is perhaps too remote or too uncomfortable a reality to contemplate. War injuries seem to be more understandable and acceptable (199-203).

Tsukiyama uses a rather different tact in representing the carnage of leprosy and war. She graphically describes the injuries from leprosy without hiding their cause. She is clear sighted and unflinching in describing the devastation of untreated leprosy, but she also ameliorates her images. Sachi’s face is seen in its devastation, but according to Stephen, its “unblemished right side [is] the single most

beautiful face I'd ever seen" (27). By contrast the injuries from war in *The Samurai's Garden* are not personalized and they clearly depict carnage. Letters from home and accounts on the radio recount "Chinese...being slaughtered" (182) and "thousands of innocent Chinese men, women and children ...killed and raped needlessly" (97). The injuries from war and leprosy coalesce in Stephen's "saki-induced sleep that had me dreaming of Yamaguchi. Only instead of being in Japan, the village was in the midst of a bustling Hong Kong, the cars and crowds going about their daily business. And in the center of it all, I could see Pie passing out warm clothes and wrapping white bandages around Sachi and Hiro's eaten away limbs" (159).

War and leprosy are carefully paralleled in Tsukiyama's novel. Both start small, escalate, grow in secret, and leave victims and carnage, but as Tsukiyama presents the two conditions there are clear distinctions. The direction she takes in the development of her story clearly valorizes Sachi and leaves one reading war as the new leprosy with Stephen as its latest named victim.¹

Sachi, from the first, is seen not as a victim of leprosy but as a woman scarred by a disfiguring disease. She is a gentle, soft spoken woman, a gracious hostess and a good friend, sensitive to the discomfort and needs of others. She is the one who for Stephen "instilled a sense of richness and mystery in Tarumi" (31). She takes charge of her life, caring for her garden, serving Matsu and Stephen during their visits to her, and courageously returning to Tarumi forty years after she was exiled because of her condition. She tells her own story at Stephen's behest, but she tells it in her own way and in her own time. While she clearly acknowledges the pain that her condition has caused her, she is not identified by the disease. She has the "ulcers" and "white scaly scabs" (27) of untreated leprosy, but these are accidents of her appearance, not the essence of her person. As Stephen sees her, she is a woman of beauty and grace who captivates him and whose "damaged side of her face seemed to glow in the sunlight" (204). As Stephen portrays her, Sachi is more rhapsodized than reviled. Her numinosity seems to link her to the "*kami* [or life force of...] the sun known as the goddess Amaterasu" (French 200) and to a Buddhist legend related by Burns. In the "eighth-century

¹ Stephen is a victim of the leprosy of war; logically one could consider him a leper. However, the term leper is painful and odious to patients living with Hansen's disease and I am reluctant to make that seemingly logical step for fear of creating a new prejudice and contributing once more to needless pain. The parallel between the spread of leprosy and war seems clear in the book, but I do not believe that it is necessary needlessly to stigmatize war victims with a painful and prejudicial term.

empress Kimyo [...] offered to bathe personally one thousand people. [When confronted with the one thousandth person] a leper [...] he empress hesitated for a moment, but then proceeded to wash him with care. When she was finished the afflicted one emanated a bright light and revealed himself to be a *boddhistva* [a representation of the Buddha]" (Burns 106).

Sachi, a woman of beauty and grace has as her soul mate the warrior Matsu, her "savior" (139) and the "true *kami* of Yamaguchi" (125). As Stephen sees him he is a man who has "a strong face [...] like a samurai" (30). Tsukiyama describes this gentle man as one who is out of the fray of the Sino-Japanese war, but who possesses not only the face but the duty, devotion and steadfast loyalty of a samurai as aptly described in Thomas Cleary's text, *Code of the Samurai: A Modern Translation of the Bushido Shoshinshu of Taira Shigesuke*.² Like "the bridge [that] represented the samurai's difficult path from this world to the afterlife" (Tsukiyama 59), Matsu mediates leprosy to Sachi and the war to Stephen. He has lived with the reality of leprosy at least as long as Sachi but possesses no fear or revulsion of it. When the rash chose Sachi, Matsu promised to "take care of everything" (135), a promise he kept throughout Sachi's forty years in Yamaguchi. He knew before Sachi did about the existence of Yamaguchi, and from leprosy's initial appearance in Tarumi he accepted a young doctor's enlightened reassurance "that the disease couldn't be spread by simple touch" (29).

Matsu interprets the war to Stephen in the same patient, diligent way telling him early in the conflict that "Japan is like a young woman who thinks too much of herself. She is bound to get herself into trouble" (17). Although he cannot stop the spread of the war any more than he could control the spread of leprosy, Matsu does remain sensitive to Stephen's position as a young Chinese man in Japan learning about the invasion of his country through reports on a Japanese radio. When the "high scratchy voice coming from his radio had just declared another Japanese advancement in their struggle against Shanghai Matsu leaned over and played with the dial until a Bach concerto filled the room" (30). His is the wisdom and strength that carry both Sachi and Stephen. He plants a garden for Sachi when she is still "filled with anger and rage" (152). It is this garden that enables her "to relish the fact that its beauty was one that

² I found both Thomas Cleary's *The Code of the Samurai: A Modern Translation of the Bushido Shoshinshu of Taira Shigesuke* and Shannon French's *The Code of the Warrior: Exploring Warrior Values Past and Present* helpful for their analysis of the Samurai warrior tradition in Japan.

no disease or person could ever take away from me [...] I was no longer myself at all, but part of the garden” (152). Stephen too learns important lessons from Matsu who “moved slowly, meticulously to cut back the branch in just the right place.”

“Isn’t it interesting, Stephen-san,’ he said ‘how sometimes you must cut away something in order to make it grow back stronger? ...

‘It may seem lonely and barren at first, only to flower again in the spring’” (193).

The terse, stoical, reticent warrior Matsu continues in what may be his longest conversation in the book. Shaking his head at “the stupidity” of war, he continues “[W]e aren’t so different, humans [...] and plants. We are all a part of one nature and from each other we learn how to live....

‘I won’t say we humans don’t still have much to learn. Sometimes we love and hate without thought. ...But in the end, Stephen-san, you can only look back, hoping everything that happens in your life is for a purpose’” (193).

Although Matsu remains philosophical about both leprosy and war, Tsukiyama’s portrayal of the war represents it as an essentially virulent condition. By the novel’s end Sachi’s position as a reviled and condemned outsider has been subverted as she and Matsu have been linked with the Japanese belief in *kami* and with numinous revelations. Now a new villain, the “Japanese devils” (118), has appeared, and war’s virulent contagion has created a new victim. Stephen’s face now bears the mark of an outsider. The novel moves toward the light for Sachi who by story’s end has come again to visit in Tarumi, “daring all in the bright light of day” (207) and for Matsu who would “maybe eventually move to Yamaguchi” (209). Leprosy remains a reality for Sachi, but it is not her defining characteristic. Her face reveals her suffering, but it is also testimony to her courage and endurance. The stigma of leprosy has been subverted in Tsukiyama’s portrayal of Sachi not as its victim but as a courageous woman who happens to have a debilitating condition.

The face of Stephen, however, has been marked because of the war which barrels rapidly toward new destruction. This Chinese youth who had earlier attested to a charmed life and a face that was “too good looking” (34) is now “trapped behind the bamboo fence” (18). War has begun to separate him from loved ones as surely as leprosy ever did. Initially he experiences “stares...not only because I was a Chinese face in their village, but...also [because] there were very

few young men in Tarumi" (44). Earlier in China, he had experienced only the subtleties of the encroaching war as "small group of soldiers loitering in public places, rifles slung on their shoulders...appeared harmless" (5). By story's end, however, Stephen has become a victim of the leprosy of war. More and more he realizes he is the hated outsider and despite the refuge of Tarumi, he recognizes "it would just be a matter of time" (163) before he would have to leave. The "glare [that] cut right through [with...] a look so full of hate" (110), indicated to him that he was "amidst some kind of enemy here in Tarumi" (111). It was an enemy that no longer appeared "harmless" (5) but "menacing" (199). Tarumi has once again ceased to be a place of refuge for those with marked faces. It forces Stephen out just as surely as it forced Sachi out forty years earlier. No longer can he "be like everyone else" (196). Ironically now, however, he is very much like his beloved Sachi, for he too now bears a mark that is reviled and his awareness of his condition causes "an unexpected blow to my stomach" (202) every bit as visceral as Sachi's "scream" (135) when she first learned of her diagnosis. Stephen has become the new victim, an outcast and refugee, a Chinese enemy in the midst of the Japanese people in their own homeland and he now experiences "what it meant to be a ... disgraced one" (25).

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“FROM CELEBRATION TO REBELLION TO SUBVERSIVE SUBMISSION”: THE PROBLEM OF HISTORY AND LITERARY INTERPRETATION

José Jiménez-Justiniano

This book is the result of a necessarily incomplete study. I know in advance that its conclusion will be examined, discussed, and replaced by others, and I am glad of it. That is how history progresses and must progress.

- Fernand Braudel¹

William Shakespeare's Second Tetralogy (*Richard II*, 1 & 2 *Henry IV*, and *Henry V*), which retells the bloody story of the Lancastrian rise to the English throne, has attracted not only the attention of literary critics, it has also attracted the attention of other scholars interested in history and politics. It is these interests which have dominated the study of the plays since they were first staged.² And as time has passed and the critics have become estranged from the world of Elizabeth and Shakespeare, the use of historical information to interpret the literary texts has increased. Unfortunately, tangled up with this information were the preconceptions and limitations of the discipline of history. In particular, there is the belief that a well defined hegemonic culture exists at all times. The belief that there is a set of ideas and assumptions held as true by everyone at the time that the plays were written and staged has kept critics in a "Cold War" of sorts, with their commentary gravitating around two interpretive poles: one that sees the tetralogy as a morality play and one that sees no morality in the tetralogy, only the poetics of politics. This polarization very clearly responds to historical periodization, with one pole originating in a *medieval Christian* perception of the play and the other originating

¹ *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*. Trans. Siân Reynolds. New York: Harper and Row, 1972. Page 18.

² *Richard II*, the first play of the tetralogy, was first staged in 1595.

in a *modern secular* perception. Which of these realities do the plays belong to? What assumptions can we make about Shakespeare and his audience?

The problem with periodization is that time does not have any natural frontiers to delineate when one period ends and the other begins. While George Holmes, editor of *The Oxford History of Medieval Europe*, and C. Warren Hollister, author of *Medieval Europe A Short History*, place the end of the Middle Ages near the year 1500, leading medievalist Norman F. Cantor argues that in England the Middle Ages ended a hundred years before, around the time that John of Gaunt, “the last of the medieval knights,” died and his son deposed the anointed king. And even as Cantor provides this date, arguing for the importance of the political, intellectual and cultural focus of history, he points out that there are those who focusing on the economy seem to stretch these historical boundaries even further (217-219). Indeed, as seen above, the periodization of history is inaccurate and to a certain degree arbitrary. Despite criticism, the problem has persisted in the literary disciplines. Why does this problem persist?

The answer to this question is found in Cantor’s last observation: that by emphasizing a specific aspect of society, politics, culture or economy, the length and content of the period can change. The problem persists because most literary critics are only concerned with the symptom and not with the condition. They still view periodization as a problem with the division of historical time and have to a great degree neglected the historiographical problem of selecting the material that should be studied. What aspects or artifacts from the past do we consider historical? While we might not realize it, the selection of the material to be studied can predetermine the interpretation by highlighting certain aspects and elements of the literary text. Which-ever may be the case, the ultimate answers as to what is historical are as diverse as the resulting interpretations.

The problem of periodization and the selection of material were made worse by the existence of the historicist dichotomy which gives theoretical grounds to the interpretative polarization of the tetralogy. This article dismantles the dichotomy and proposes an alternative to it based on the confrontation of opposing material. Even though my discussion concentrates on the Renaissance and the works of William Shakespeare, the problems and the solution given here, I hope, will be pertinent for the study of any literary text.

Historicism

Historicism, the English translation of the German “historismus,” refers to the historiographical movement that developed in nineteenth-century Germany as a reaction to the expansion of the revolutionary ideas of the Enlightenment. In particular, this movement opposed the “Enlightenment Mechanism” (White 70). While the historians of the Enlightenment provided their readers with a succession of human types (something like historical periods), classified according to categories such as rational and irrational or positive and negative (67), the historicists, starting with protohistoricist Johann Gottfried von Herder, maintained that all historical periods are distinct. For them each person is unique and no moment repeats itself in the same way. It is in this complete heterogeneity that the historicists see true unity emerge: the unity of a process in which each phase—each individual person or event—contributes equally to the whole. The task of the historian was to address the particular by describing the formal cohesion that it shows with the whole (74-75). Historicists did this by empathetically assuming the position of their subjects and reconstructing their picture of reality (Gilderhus 43). These basic assumptions as proposed and defended by Herder inform to varying degrees the enterprise of historicists throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century.

The most influential of these historicists was German historian Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886). According to Hayden White’s study of the historiographical writing of the nineteenth century, Ranke’s historical vision could be characterized as following a comedic pattern, a series of conflicts that finally resolved themselves into harmony (167-168). In order to reach this resolution Ranke, like Herder, had to search for the unity that existed in the diversity of things. He achieved this through the establishment of two points of integration, the first was the nation and the other was Europe. The idea of the nation provided a governing mechanism for the internal adjustment of the relations between the State, the Church and the people, and the idea of Europe provided a governing mechanism for the adjustment of the relations between the nations (171). In other words Ranke argued for the existence of two frames that would allow the historian to study the different nation-states of Europe on their own and as part of an imaginary European totality. This freedom from the borders of any particular national history gave Ranke the chance to remain focused on the achievements of each century. He could avert his eyes from the failures of any particular nation-state and celebrate the achievements of European totality. While the reassuring aspect of his comedic vision

certainly contributed to its acceptance in a century filled with revolutions, it was the authority with which he endowed his historical works that left a lasting mark on the understanding of history.

Ranke and his followers through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries lived for the demands of absolute realism that were best expressed in Ranke's infamous remark that even though the historian's mission was to judge the past and instruct the present in benefit of the future, he did "not aspire to such a high office...[he]...only want[ed] to show how it had really been—wie es eigentlich gewesen" (qtd. in Gilderhus 44). The historian's detachment from the material of his work provided the growing discipline of history with a claim to objectivity that made historical tracts a valuable means for explaining the world. It was not long before this objective history rose to a position that was on a par with religion. Ranke himself reintroduced a moralistic perspective to historiography, arguing that "the finger of God" could be perceived in all the decisive moments of history (Fontana 129). By turning history into a discipline that satisfied the scientific sensibilities of the time without giving up the powerful sense of order provided by beliefs, historians were doing more than talking about what had happened with total precision, they were talking about what was supposed to happen, what had to have happened.

Acutely aware of the potential power of history as a discipline, the European states were quick to incorporate it into their systems of coercion. Even Ranke found himself directly under the service of the Prussian government when he was made editor of a short-lived, government-sponsored periodical published explicitly with the aim of attacking progressive ideas (Fontana 128-129). Yet, notwithstanding any deviation or protestation, Ranke and his numerous disciples continued to assume the role of high priests for the modern European states, creating their myths which were upheld as true and unquestionable by their authors' claim to an impartial approach and their privileged access through it to the divine. These constituted the "teleological narratives of progressive emergence," as Brook Thomas describes them, which justified European imperialism as well as the victories of individual nations (189). It was this form of historicism that provided the principal assumptions of historians during the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century.

Despite its apparent dominance of the field of historical studies in the first half of the twentieth century, Ranke's historicism was struggling to survive the brutal historical negations of its principal assumptions. The tragic resolution of years of international and ethnic tensions in two catastrophic world wars marked the end of the

European era, an unquestionable reality that disproved the optimistic belief in the comedic pattern of history and rendered the idea of Europe unfeasible. After 1945 Europe found itself in ruins; the European nations that had once been the principal political powers of the world now had to concede that position to the United States and the Soviet Union. And the division of the continent finally found an undeniable physical representation in the Berlin Wall. It was impossible for the historian following Ranke's assumptions to provide a satisfactory explanation for the post-war conditions of Europe and the European nation-states. Yet, it wasn't the collapse of the *status quo*, the idea of nation-states and Europe, which they had once served, that broke the historians' faith in their traditional approach: it was the horrifying acts of aggression witnessed in the last war.

In 1953 Isaiah Berlin gave a lecture, later published under the title of *Historical Inevitability*, where he condemned the condition in which historical studies found themselves at that time. Berlin points out the dangers of advancing empirical arguments for historical determinism: the belief that impersonal forces (like the so-called spirit of the age) curve human action relieves us from all responsibility. If the men and women in our past were the product of their milieu; if they acted in accordance with the system of values of their generation, then it would be unfair for the historian either to criticize or to praise them. And so the work of the historian has been reduced to the description of facts. Before this logic that tells historians not to "judge Charlemagne or Napoleon, or Genghis Khan or Hitler or Stalin for their massacre," or even Harry Truman for the atomic holocaust in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Isaiah Berlin responds: "to accept this doctrine is to do violence to the basic notion of our morality, to misrepresent our sense of our past, and to ignore the most important concepts and categories of normal thought" (76-77). It is clear from Berlin's lecture that objectivity had become a luxury that historians no longer had. Ranke's historicism had failed.

The Influence of Historicism on Literary Criticism

Relying on the assumptions of this influential form of historicism, the literary critics of the nineteenth century began to see literature as the reflection of an ordered reality provided by history. Among these critics the best known figure is Matthew Arnold. In his essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," Arnold places the influence of the context at the center of the creative act and charges the critics with the responsibility of creating an environment that is conducive to the birth of literary genius of the stature of Pindar, Sophocles, or

Shakespeare. English critics, according to him, needed to leave the pragmatism of the time in favor of the ideal (822). They needed to seek out objectively the best that was known in the “great confederation” of Europe to make it accessible (824). The function of criticism was to construct the milieu in which the artists could find inspiration and material for their work. Without this milieu of excellence the artist would not be able to create a masterpiece, no matter how talented he might be. For example, the difference between Goethe and Byron, two poets with great productive power, was the environment to which they had been exposed. Goethe had been “nourished by a great critical effort” that had allowed him to come to know “life and the world...much more comprehensively than Byron” and which had ultimately resulted in his poetry having much more endurance (809).

Although at a certain point Arnold claims that “for the creation of a master-work of literature two powers must concur, the power of the man and the power of the moment,” the premise that he pursues through his discussion is that a masterpiece “is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery”; the artist’s work consists of capturing the essence of an age (808-809). In other words, the ultimate goal of the artistic enterprise is to integrate a “current of ideas” found at a specific time and place. If the artist’s final product is essentially a condensed, heightened reflection of reality, then the best way to interpret great works of art is through the examination of the historical moment where the source of inspiration and the material can be found.

Walter Pater, who wrote *The Renaissance* some years after Arnold published his lecture, carries on a similar argument in which he explains with greater clarity what this conception of artistic endeavor implies for the critic. The function of the critic is to separate and analyze the means through which the personality of a character in a book produces pleasure, “to indicate what the source of that impression is, and under what condition it is experienced” (xxi). In order to accomplish this, the critic must not only examine the prominent personalities and their aesthetic charm or the results of the intellectual and the imaginative effort (the actual works of art) he must also attend to the general spirit and the character of the time. Pater was well aware that there are eras of “favorable conditions” in which “artists and philosophers...do not live in isolation, but breathe a common air and catch the light and heat from each other’s thought,” forming “one complete type of general culture” (xxiii-xxiv). The Renaissance was one of those periods where a unity of spirit affected all products and the study of any product called for the study of this unity. It is in this manner, through the views of critics like Arnold and

Pater, that the assumptions of historicism were introduced into the literary criticism of the nineteenth century. Their influence was so strong that even as the popularity of this historiographical school of thought waned among historians, they continued to influence literary criticism. E.M.W. Tillyard's *Shakespeare's History Plays* (1944) and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1946) provide examples of the less and most efficient uses of this tradition in the twentieth century.

Following the traditional assumption that great art is a work of exposition that captures the essence of the age, E.M.W. Tillyard performs an extensive survey of the intellectual material during the time of Shakespeare in order to paint what he calls the "Elizabethan World Picture," the picture of how Elizabethans saw the world, how Shakespeare represented this common vision of reality in the history plays. This picture included a medieval conception of the order of the world, the universe as the perfect creation of God, a unity in which everything had its place, and which was often found represented by images of a chain, a series of corresponding planes, or a dance to music (11). In Shakespeare's work, Tillyard points out, this conception of order is represented most clearly in Ulysses' speech to Agamemnon in his tragedy *The History of Troilus and Cressida*. Even though there is no matching acknowledgment of the harmonious order of the universe in the history plays, Tillyard argues that being part of the "thought-idiom of his [Shakespeare's] age," there is no way that he can avoid it; the "only way that he could have avoided that idiom was by not thinking at all" (8). In other words, a different conception of the world was inconceivable for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, and even if it were conceivable, to include such a perspective in his play would make them incomprehensible for his audience. Following the medieval conception of an orderly world, it becomes evident that Shakespeare's history plays, in particular the second tetralogy, which seemed to be ruled by disorder, are really an illustration of the movement towards a natural order. Hence, the cycles of history follow a moral pattern beginning with prosperity and ending with a renewal of prosperity and the disorder that is only found in between is the result of human actions (261-269).

While reconstructing the world in which the author wrote by performing an extensive survey of the intellectual material of his age seems like a legitimate use of history, Tillyard demonstrates the opposite. A significant part of *Shakespeare's History Plays* is spent discussing the historical material and here is where most of the argument takes place as he constructs a picture of the medieval inheritance of Elizabethan England. Unfortunately the discussion of

the historical material is fraught with inconsistency and prejudice. As we mentioned before Tillyard states that it is impossible to avoid the “thought-idiom” of the age, that to avoid it is “not to think at all.” However he later corrects himself by explaining that there exists an alternative to the “thought-idiom” that Shakespeare could have used, the doctrine of Machiavelli. He also admits that Shakespeare and his contemporaries were more than familiar with this doctrine and they very likely used certain elements of it (22). The very possibility that Shakespeare might have integrated Machiavellian thought into his work threatens Tillyard’s interpretation. The Machiavellian doctrine, which proposes that disorder is the natural state of man and that civilization is a matter of expediency, diametrically opposes the medieval concept of order that he contends the history plays reflect. Hence here is where there is the greatest need for argument, but surprisingly he withdraws from this topic after fewer than five pages of discussion, resting his case on the fact that Machiavellian thought was relatively new and was not institutionalized; consequently there is no need to pay much attention to him. In Tillyard’s own words, Machiavelli’s “day had not yet come” (21-23).

Tillyard’s almost desperate dependence on the monological “thought idiom” reveals the major problem of the historicist practice: that there is no complete general culture. In order to create the unified essence of an age the critics must favor the traditional conservative ideas and exclude any potentially subversive idea that might have existed at the time. For example, the ideas of Machiavelli had become accessible to educated Englishmen since 1560, when the works of the Italian were translated into Latin (Adams 237) and to the less educated class in the latter years of the century when unpublished English translations of *The Prince* circulated in England (Clegg 185). Shakespeare had the opportunity to read either one of these versions long before he wrote his first history play, *1 Henry VI* (1589),³ yet Tillyard excludes them effortlessly. The arbitrary delimitation of the intellectual milieu in which the author worked makes this survey suspicious to present day critics and historians who are very conscious of their intervention in the constructions of history. Indeed, the disregard shown here to a crucial counter-discourse calls into question the authority that the “Elizabethan World Picture” is supposed to have. From here it becomes obvious that Tillyard’s extensive historical survey is too limited, expressing only his own conservative view of the historical world, not the view held by those

³ The date for the first performance of *1 Henry VI* comes from Blakemore’s “Chronology and Sources” in the *Riverside Shakespeare* (48).

that lived in it. What is worse, his use of history is not only arbitrary, but, since he does not give the same level of importance to all of the material in his survey, it is also misleading. Thus he also falls into the historicist trap of turning motivated world views into a simulacrum of historical background.

Although the works of many historicists are afflicted with these problems, not all of them illustrate so clearly the flaws of their practice. In all fairness many historicists are able to deal with the problems inherent in creating this unified vision of age and construct strong arguments around it. For example, we find a more confident and efficient use of the historicist ideas of a spirit of an age in the interpretations of Eric Auerbach.

Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis* was written in Istanbul during the Second World War, but it was clearly shaped by the historicist's ideas that had circulated in Germany since the previous century. In his "Introduction to the Fiftieth-Anniversary Edition" of *Mimesis*, Edward Said takes note of these ideas, in particular those found in the works of Giambattista Vico and Wilhelm Dilthey. Vico, an eighteenth-century proto-historicist, argued that each age shared a set of features that was "appropriate to their appearance," and which determined the way—the metaphors through which the members of this society view and describe reality. For example, the knowledge of "primitive times" "is the projection of the barbaric mind—fantastic images of gods based on fear, guilt, and terror." This mentality had to be fully outgrown and a greater degree of abstraction and rational discursivity had to exist before it was possible for Plato to develop his thought. Therefore, to interpret the products of any particular age, to understand the expressions of the men and women of that time, we have to assume the mentality—the world view of the author: "living the author's reality, undergoing the kind of life experiences intrinsic to his or her life" (xii-xiii). Dilthey, who had a particularly important role in the historiography of the first half of the twentieth century, added a special emphasis on literature, explaining that in the world of the written text, the literary masterwork was preeminent. The lived experience of the age found so intensely in its literature could be recovered through erudition and a subjective intuition of the inner spirit of the work (xi).

Auerbach explains how this change in the academic vision of the time, a shift from politics to literature—to the mundane, made his massive work possible. He describes this shift as:

a transfer of confidence: [that] the great exterior turning points and blows of fate are granted less importance; they are credited with less power of yielding decisive information...[while]...in any random fragment plucked from the course of a life...the totality of its fate is

contained and can be portrayed. There is greater confidence in syntheses gained through full exploitation of an everyday occurrence than in a chronological well-ordered treatment which accompanies the subject from beginning to end...[confidence]...that the interpretation of a few passages from Hamlet, Phèdre, or Faust can be made to yield more information about Shakespeare, Racine, or Goethe and their time than would a systematic and chronological treatment of their lives and work. (547-548)

This approach was translated into a very specific “essayistic style”: beginning with a long quotation from a work cited in the original language followed immediately by a translation, from which “a detailed *explication de texte* unfolds at a leisurely and ruminative pace” that eventually develops into an insightful commentary about the relationship between the rhetorical style of the text and its socio-political context (Said ix-x). The approach and the consequent style that Auerbach followed in all the Chapters of *Mimesis* (and which New Historicism later adopted) allowed him to address the specific motifs directly in the literary text that he wants to talk about, without having to reconcile contradicting material or risk turning his study into a historical tract; without entering into arguments that might cost him the reader’s trust.

Relying then on the careful reading of principally primary sources and the use of his particular “essayistic style,” Auerbach was able to complete an extensive study of the representation of reality in literature, covering texts from Homer and the Bible to Virginia Woolf. *Mimesis*, Auerbach’s study, hinges on the change in the world view and the subsequent mixing of literary styles in the Renaissance, two changes that have a significant importance to the development of historicism and of course this project. In Chapter 13 (“The Weary Prince”) Auerbach explains that during the sixteenth century the Christian-figural view of human life receded, the belief that as part of an all embracing scheme of events that includes the Fall, Christ’s birth, the passion and the Last Judgment all earthly actions find their resolution in heaven was losing its power. The confidence that human conflict resolved itself on Earth brought a dignity and significance to human action that allowed it to be represented as tragic (317-318). However, the conception of the “everyman” as tragic is abandoned and tragedy is reserved for the aristocracy (314 & 328). Even in 2 *Henry IV*, a play in which the coexistence of the tragic or epic and the comic is the most evident and where, according to Auerbach, Shakespeare directly satirizes the strict separation between the sublime and the mundane, the characters from the lower classes are only represented in the comedic style (312-313, 328). Indeed, Shakespeare and his work are seen here as modern yet conservative.

He sees a world in which the idea of divine intervention has receded but where the values and the actions of the dominant class are still the only ones worth noticing, only the actions of the aristocracy are consequential enough to be deemed tragic.

As we have seen through the discussion of these examples the critics who practiced the older form of historicism in the twentieth century continued to see literary works as a reflection of their age. As a consequence, the major problems with this approach remained, especially the impossible task of establishing what constituted the spirit of the age was composed. In this lengthy process the critics favored the conservative values of the dominant class. In particular, Tillyard performed extensive historical surveys in order to demonstrate that the Elizabethans were essentially living in a medieval society and therefore the interpretation of Shakespeare's plays should take into account the presence of Christian doctrine and divine intervention. Here Auerbach differs significantly.

While Auerbach staunchly believes that literary works are a result of their age and an age is composed primarily of the conservative values found in the ruling class, he views Elizabethan theater and Shakespeare's plays as modern. This shift in the categorization of the age very likely comes as a result of the influence of a Marxist conception of history. The Marxist's emphasis on class relations and capital rather than in our relation to the divine saw a momentous change during Elizabeth's reign that loosely connected the men of that period with the men in the modern era. This change in the conception of the Elizabethan Age, from medieval to modern, reveals a very clear connection between Auerbach's work and that of the newer forms of historicism.⁴

Indeed, the reliance of *Mimesis* on periodization and its faith in the unifying spirit of each period connect it with the older form of historicism, but many of its distinctive characteristics are also present in the new forms that appeared during the 1980s: the view of the Elizabethan Age as early modern, which I have already mentioned, the essayistic style with its use of an opening fragment, later an anecdote, the scarce use of secondary sources (literary criticism), and even Auerbach's apologetic tone, starting with Andrew Marvell's line, "Had we but world enough and time..." revealed a self-awareness of the shortcomings of his work which can easily be seen as the antecedent of the New Historicists' scrutiny of their own academic effort.

⁴ In his Introduction to *The New Historicism Reader* (13-14) Veenser explains the various reasons why the Renaissance is the focus of the first new historicist and why it is viewed as modern by them.

In *Practicing New Historicism* Greenblatt himself acknowledges the influence that this work had had on those writing literary history in the 1970s, noting that they had felt an affinity for both its existential pessimism and its method, which they “self-consciously emulated” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 35). This connection makes Auerbach a transitional figure in historicism, providing the link between the old and new forms of historicism. However, this transition was not immediate; the conditions for newer forms of historicism to appear would not be present for another twenty or thirty years.

A New Form of Historicism

Like the older forms of historicism, the new forms which developed in literary studies during the 1970s and 1980s present such a diverse group of practices that when one makes an attempt to define them, to provide a definition that can explain what one refers to when using the term “new historicism,” we can only come up with a set of shared characteristics, such as the five key assumptions that Veeseer provides in the introductions to his two anthologies, *The New Historicism* and *The New Historicism Reader* (1994).⁵ Yet these assumptions do not provide a method or a theory that a critic might follow. To discover this methodology we need to limit our discussion to one specific form of new historicism, the form that is considered by most to be the referent of the term “new historicism,” Stephen Greenblatt’s *poetics of culture*.

On more than one occasion Stephen Greenblatt has made it clear that new historicism or the *poetics of culture* came about as a result of “an impatience with American New Criticism, an unsettling of norms and procedures, a mingling of dissent and restless curiosity” (Gallagher and Greenblatt 2). For this reason there is a need to designate a particular point of origin. Even though the restrictiveness of formalist methodology was the force that pushed him (as well as others) to search for an alternate approach towards literature, the theoretical principles and methodology that they transformed into a new practice found their origins in a series of historiographical and historical changes that preceded this critical “impatience” with

⁵ These assumptions are: 1) That every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices; 2) That literary and non-literary texts circulate inseparably; 3) That no discourse gives access to unchanging truths or expresses unalterable human nature; 4) That a critical method and language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participates in the economy they describe; 5) That every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes.

formalism. Probably the most important change was the fall from prominence of Rankean historicism in 1955 and the raise of other historical practices.

In *Main Trends in History* Geoffrey Barraclough describes 1955 “as the year in which the ‘battles for history’...were finally won” by the French school of the *Annales*, which replaced German historicism and set the agenda that future historians were to follow (35). French historian François Furet described the situation of those who worked in the field of history as amenable: historians constituted a homogeneous group; they easily found positions that gave them the time to read and write and their work was well received both at home and abroad. During the 1950s and 1960s the discipline became liberated, claiming that “history was to be freed to wander in every field” (1-2). This brought the topics and methodologies of the social sciences, economics, demography, and ethnology, to history (8).

The inclusion of ethnology in history was quite a radical change since the two disciplines were believed to have studied contradictory subjects. Ethnology studies primitive societies that do not have a written language while history studies humanity at a stage of civilization in which the written language allowed them to leave records that became the authoritative voice of the past. Yet with the realization after the war that modern civilization had lost its sense of superiority over the rest of the world, French intellectuals like Levi-Strauss, Barthes and Foucault undermined these authoritative voices and began to approach their own society as ethnologists had approached “primitive societies.” For example, Foucault set out to consider European culture from a Jivaro angle in an attempt to dispel its presence, any preconceptions and prejudices that he had of it, and turn it into a scientific object (Furet 31-35). Ultimately it was this perspective, the marriage of these two formerly opposed disciplines, which rejuvenated historical studies and caught the attention of the literary critics, who were looking for alternatives in approaching the literature that western culture had already canonized. Thus the French historians and critics of this time had a huge influence on new historicism and especially the poetics of culture. Among these scholars, the one who seems to loom the largest in the new history is Michel Foucault.

According to *The Archeology of Knowledge*, the summation and reformulation of his methodology, Michel Foucault makes it clear that the main objective of his career is not to impose a structuralist methodology on historical studies, but to uncover and fully apply the tools and concepts of structuralism that have naturally emerged as useful in this field. The use of structuralist analysis in the history

of knowledge would allow him to escape the anthropologism (or anthropocentrism) and the cultural totalities of history, to refrain from the use of world views or the spirit of an age (15-16). Foucault avoids the use of these concepts—concepts that traditionally predetermine the study of history, and so is able to break through the superficial layer that they created and examine the complex structure, the world of contradictions, beneath it. Unlike Ranke and his followers who only wanted to show how things had really been, Foucault wanted to discover how things could have been how they were. Consequently (as we said before) he ignored the authority of the document, of the content and the voice in it, as the final resource for historical research, and focused instead on the “archive,” “the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events,” and determines which of these statements and/or discourses is preserved longer. For him this system is the appropriate object of historical study. Here is where the discursive rules that explain the very existence and significance of any document, the reason and effects of the things said in it, are found (128-129). Then it is through the exploration of these archives that one can unearth the deep structure of discursive power as it comes into view, justified by tradition and reason, to regulate desire and define individuals within an age or any other totality. In traditional history, Foucault explains, contradictions are suppressed within a unity, a world view, with only unattended residuals of them left, which are then negatively described as “accidents,” “defects,” “mistakes.” Whenever they are mentioned in history, these moments of subversive individuality are contained, presented as the exception that proves the rule so that there really seems to be nothing outside the totality. A good example of this is Tillyard’s “Elizabethan World Picture,” which can only conclude that Shakespeare viewed the ideas of Machiavelli as abhorrent, trapping the creative genius of the playwright within the parameters of the dominant world view or discourse. Foucault, who knows that it is impossible to describe exhaustively the archive of a culture or a period (130), concentrated on the neglected irregularities, the contradictions that have been discussed above. His approach views these contradictions as ruptures in the continuity of traditional, causal history and attempts to ascertain the extent and form of the gap that these ruptures create between discourse practices. Through these fractures one can determine the form that each practice assumes and the relation that they have with each other (150-156). The result of Foucault’s “archeology,” the product of this method, is what Catherine Gallagher calls “counterhistories.”

“Counterhistories” refer to the attacks on master narratives and the historiographical methods that construct them. These attacks

presented themselves in a variety of forms during the 1960s and 1970s, from poststructuralist negativity, the recovery of the *longue durée* and the history of the losers, to the envisioning of counterfactuals and provisional worlds (Gallagher and Greenblatt 52-53). As we discussed above, Foucault's "counterhistories" in particular were created through the examination of the archive, the system that governs appearance and assimilation of contradictions within the traditional unity, yet the contradictions have received as much attention as the concept of the "archive." These contradictions, found very often in the form of anecdotes, are fragments that exist complete unto themselves without the need for history and so defy the historical successivity on which the master narratives of progress are established (49-50). More noteworthy perhaps is the fact that the chosen fragments are characteristically subversive. They are endowed with a sensation of terror and awe and pushed forward with the intention to shock. In Foucault's own words his works are "not a collection of portraits: they are snares, weapons, cries, gestures, attitudes, ruses, intrigues for which the words have been the instruments" (qtd. in Gallagher and Greenblatt 69). Hence the Foucauldian anecdote not only contradicted the totalities of historicism by its existence outside the master narratives, but, by virtue of its status as marginal discourse, its content as well, which evidenced a break with the social norms. Foucault never really seems content with just discussing daily life, which many other "counterhistories" do; he searches for those things that leave an indelible impression, and this is probably one of the reasons for the popularity of his work.

New historicism adopted all of these assumptions. It rejected anthropocentrism and the traditional periodization in favor of an "archival" system and the subversive gestures it contained. For the literary critics who have adopted this practice the author's personality did not play a major role in his creation of the text, he was nothing more than an impersonal medium channeling the social energies that exist in his culture. And the "period" had ceased to exist as a source of condensed, comprehensive information that could explain everything. Explanations for the literary texts came from the examination of the system, the network, what Greenblatt describes as "a shared code, a set of interlocking tropes and similitudes that function not only as the object but as the conditions of representation" (86). And like Foucault, new historicists paid special attention to anomalies in literary texts and in historical realities, following the circulation of energies from one zone (non-artistic/real) to another (artistic/fictional) (Greenblatt and Gallagher 12-13). The main deviation from Foucault's approach is in the way that the poetics of culture accesses the real in

the anecdotes, through the use of “thick description.”

“Thick description” is a term often used by anthropologists to refer to the sorting out of structures of signification, the process of locating any particular act within a network of cultural meanings. Among the anthropologists using this technique, Greenblatt identifies Clifford Geertz as a major influence on his critical approach. In *Practicing New Historicism*, he explains how the acceptance of distant cultures as texts, a written, narrative representation of an event, which allowed them to assume a privileged position over the members of that culture, came to them through Geertz and the structuralists rather than the historicists. And it was precisely this view of culture as a text that made it possible for them to discover through the interpretative strategies of literary criticism meanings that the members of that culture “could not have articulated” (8). Indeed, the use of “thick description” creates and discloses what Greenblatt calls the “effect of compression,” which is what allowed Auerbach “to move convincingly from a tiny passage to a sprawling complex text.” The anthropologist and/or the critic takes “bits of symbolic behavior” found in the anecdotes that he collects and branches out into the vast intricacies of the culture (26), the network: the complex system of meanings and life patterns. It is this technique, “thick description,” with its claim to reality—the reality of the mundane, that the poetics of culture uses to destabilize and reopen the readings of canonical works of literature.

Hence the poetics of culture is a combination of the Foucauldian perspective, Foucault’s sensibility—his attraction to the subversive, the “Geertzian” methodology of thick description, and Auerbach’s essayistic style. In practice, this new forms of historicism consists of mapping the circulation of social energy that enters and leaves the literary text at specific points, points that can only be described as anomalies: elements, events and experiences that cannot be explained through authorial intent or the influence of the spirit of the age. Critics like Greenblatt locate these instances in the artistic text and try to find a potential place of origin in the non-artistic texts by contextualizing and exposing its cultural significance through “thick description.” Let us consider an example from Stephen Greenblatt’s *Shakespearean Negotiations* that will both illustrate the practice and illustrate the new historicist’s characteristic view of the Renaissance as modern.

In “Invisible Bullets” Greenblatt explains the existence of untraditional governmental practices in William Shakespeare’s 1 & 2 *Henry IV* and *Henry V* by tracing them from the plays through Thomas

Harriot's "A Brief and True Report of the New Found Land of Virginia" to a "Machiavellian hypothesis" about the origins and nature of the relation between the divine and the state in Europe. Here he begins with a "thick description" of "A Brief and True Report" (an anecdote), connecting it with other texts that reveal how Harriot was inadvertently testing (and proving) with the Algonquian Indians one of the most subversive beliefs of his culture, that in every society, including those of Europe, the lawgivers resorted to divine authority to assert their laws. The true goal of religion was not salvation but civil discipline and thus the people who articulated these beliefs were jugglers and actors, an idea that is prominently found in the writings of Machiavelli (21-39). After showing the significance of this anecdote, the meaning that this document has in the context of its culture, he explains how this "significance" circulates through the plays featuring Prince Hal (or Henry V). This highlights the (hypocritical) performative nature of power and the recording of alien voices (40-56) found in both the anecdote and the literary text that ultimately question orthodoxy. Yet, according to Greenblatt the questioning of monarchical power in the plays is subsumed with the final rise of Henry V as an ideal king. It is impossible for *Henry V* to be "successfully performed as subversive...[since]...the very doubts that Shakespeare raises serve not to rob the King of his charisma but to heighten it, as they heighten the theatrical interest of the play"—an element that was also key in the reign of a monarch whose principal instrument of power was "privilege visibility" (63-64). Hence, through these plays Shakespeare confirms the disturbing hypothesis proposed by Machiavelli, while at the same drawing his audience to an acceptance of it (65), thus shattering the picture of Elizabeth's England that Tillyard had created for readers of the Second Tetralogy.

The recognition of the power of the Machiavellian hypothesis suggests that the Elizabethans possessed a sensibility, a skepticism in matters of faith that came from what Greenblatt describes as the existing "crises of doctrine and church governance, of the social function of religious belief" (24), which is intrinsically characteristic of the contemporary man who lives in a secular society, and, consequently, reveals Greenblatt's view of the Renaissance as modern. Such an approach which confessedly studies the period by analogy to contemporary experiences (Veese, "The New Historicism" 18) was common among most new historicists. In fact the reason that this period became the center of new historicist discourse may be found in the numerous potential connections that existed between it and the present. Critics saw in the Renaissance the origins of subjectivity and individualism, the origins of our disciplinary society, the moment

in which the rigid institutions and the hardship of the Middle-Ages gave way to new practices (13-14). This fascination with the potential modernity of the Renaissance and disregard of its continuity with medieval society soon created a new authoritarian totality that hides the former one. In the same way that Tillyard at some point avoided seriously discussing the potential influence of modern thought, Greenblatt avoids a serious discussion of the existence and potential use of the traditional material, so that for those who uncritically subscribe to new historicism the Renaissance becomes uniformly modern. Hence, notwithstanding their protest against the coercive totalities of traditional history, critics find themselves operating under similar restrictions as older forms of historicism did, unwittingly appealing to a totalizing world picture.

Albert Rolls exposes this problem in his book *The Theory of the King's Two Bodies in the Age of Shakespeare*, where he accuses the new historicists of arbitrarily imposing their beliefs on the Renaissance, arguing that all of the connections that Greenblatt makes in "Invisible Bullets" with the subversive elements of modernity can be made with the orthodox elements of the Middle Ages by substituting John Dee, the most famous English "magus" (magician) during Elizabeth's reign, for Machiavelli. Using Dee, who viewed science as a revival of the magical arts, Rolls is able to turn the correlation from early modern to late medieval (18-20). And even Machiavelli and the Machiavellian prince, Rolls goes on to argue, could be seen through the medieval perspective, as Bishop Gardener and Cardinal Reginald Pole did, the former praising him as an imitator of God who is both merciful and severe, and the latter by simply accepting his evil existence, which would inevitably facilitate the appearance of the Antichrist, in fulfillment of the scriptures (45-46). Yet, even after exposing the omissions of the new historicists and debunking its place of authority, he finds that he cannot return to the old forms of historicism and their orthodox perspective since they too are incapable of fully explaining Shakespeare's text—not to mention the fact that theoretically conscious literary critics today see this perspective as naïve. Here he gets to the real problem of his project and mine, the existence of an inadequate dichotomy of perspectives for the Renaissance from which the critic must choose. His solution promises a combination of perspectives—the acceptance of elements of both the modern and the medieval—yet it does not deliver. Even with its modern sophistication, the perspective he proposes remains essentially medieval and therefore it can only serve to illustrate the persistence of the dichotomy rather than to fracture it.

Rolls' attempt to combine perspectives and/or the elements of

different perspectives based on the traditional historical epochs in order to solve the problem of the dichotomy is naïve, since the very idea of an epoch, as we know from historicism, presupposes the existence of an all inclusive unity, a coercive spirit that denies the possibility of the contradictions that such a combination would create. Rolls' attempt here failed because he was looking for both the problem and the solution at the superficial level, discussing the result of the critical endeavor, in particular Greenblatt's "Invisible Bullets" and Tillyard's *Shakespeare's Histories Plays*, which are only the product of a very specific set of theoretical assumptions, a series of discursive rules that allowed their authors to come up with certain interpretations that would be accepted within their community. These rules and/or assumptions determine everything that the critics say or omit and it is here where both the problem and the solution lie. While at first glance the problem seems to be the result of historical periodization, we need to take notice that the newer forms of historicism have rejected the "period"—"the spirit of the times," as an inadequate form of organization, yet they have not been able to avoid the problem. New historicists have turned the Renaissance into a uniform part of the modern age. It is clearly not enough to consciously reject periodization, since the problem originates at the moment that the critic decides on the material that he will work with. Indeed, the principal characteristic of both schools of historical-literary criticism is the privileging of very specific sources and types of historical material: Rankian historicism privileged the State and the Church, while the new forms of historicism privilege the abnormal and the disagreeable: "accidents," "mistakes," and "defects." If we examine the examples discussed above, we will find evidence of this at the superficial level: Tillyard is able to present the Elizabethan society through their perspectives by paying more attention to the documents that supported such a view and marginalizing or completely omitting those that threaten it. Even the new historicists who reject the use of the spirit of an age end up creating a uniform Elizabethan world view through the uniform selection of the aberrant sources and the omission of others. Like the Renaissance authors⁶ that Greenblatt examines in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, the book where he first articulates the practice that would be labeled new historicism, the literary critics of the nineteenth and twentieth century have gone through "a shift from celebration to rebellion to subversive submission" (8). They have not escaped the totalities of history, the idea of the spirit of the age.

⁶ The "second triad" discussed in the book: Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare.

If our understanding of the past and our understanding of the texts themselves is to “progress,” we need to rebel again, to rebel against the totalities of new historicism.

Our rebellion lies above all in resisting the desire to privilege any particular type of historical material, using conflicting materials and honoring the contradictory systems of beliefs, giving equal or near-equal weight to each. Here, between the orthodox and the subversive, we will find the solution to the interpretative problem of William Shakespeare’s Second Tetralogy and any literary text written in the distant past. Here, in the contradictions, the conflict between belief systems, we will find the power that emanates from the literary texts.

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SIMPLEMENTE UNA ILUSIÓN: LA REALIDAD COLONIZADA EN LAS ÚLTIMAS NOVELAS DE EMILIO DÍAZ VALCÁRCEL

José Luis de la Fuente

1. Los manuscritos en Díaz Valcárcel, testimonio de la irrealidad

Las novelas de Emilio Díaz Valcárcel a partir de *Figuraciones en el mes de marzo* (1972) e *Inventario* (1975) se construyen por medio de textos e imágenes de segundo grado (Genette 1989) cuya autenticidad queda menoscabada por la historia. Aunque ya se apreciaba en el cuento “Otra versión de Raskolnikov” (Díaz Valcárcel, *Cuentos completos* 213), de *Napalm* (1967), no sucedía en el conjunto de cuentos de esos años ni en la novela *El hombre que trabajó el lunes* (1966). La asunción definitiva de las complejidades estructurales de la novela del *boom* hispanoamericano¹ y seguramente el contacto en La Habana y en Madrid con algunos autores del momento y su lectura analítica de *Tiempo de silencio* de Luis Martín-Santos hubieron de cambiar el rumbo de su narrativa, que se abrió al experimento y a la ironía, y se alejó de las rígidas normas que había respetado hasta entonces. Desde luego que también hubo de determinar el giro que adoptó la política puertorriqueña a partir de 1968, cuando accede al poder el partido anexionista y los intelectuales sienten amenazar su posición, como se confirmó pronto con las pretensiones de censura y la disolución de la Educación de la Comunidad (Díaz Valcárcel, *En el mejor de los mundos* 231). Los textos de segundo grado de las novelas de Díaz Valcárcel de entonces parecen esconder voces y mensajes que tratan de solaparse o de ocultarse tras seudónimos, anagramas y versiones como en un gesto inconsciente de autopro-

¹ También entonces Carmelo Rodríguez Torres asume las nuevas técnicas en *Veinte siglos después del homicidio*.

tección. Los manuscritos acogen el discurso de los rebeldes contra el sistema pero ocultan su autoría. Contienen el testimonio de la cultura nacional que el intelectual siente amenazada y así organiza y sostiene la memoria de la comunidad (Said, *Cultura e imperialismo* 335). Por otro lado, el escritor debió de sentirse tremendamente perplejo ante la situación que vivía su país. A lo largo del mundo surgían manifestaciones contra la guerra de Vietnam por la atroz ofensiva estadounidense y, en cambio, Puerto Rico optaba por el partido anexionista en 1968. Además, frente a la tragedia de los muertos vietnamitas, estadounidenses y puertorriqueños, una parte de la sociedad se recreaba en los mensajes benévolos y enajenantes de los medios de comunicación y votaba al anexionismo, mientras el independentismo se hundía al lograr los peores resultados de su historia. Más que nunca el intelectual había de dudar acerca de la auténtica realidad que vivían los puertorriqueños.

Si se observan las dos novelas citadas primeramente, en una, las cartas y otras informaciones que llegan desde Puerto Rico a Madrid, donde vive el protagonista escritor Eduardo Leiseca, reafirman una realidad que considera extraña. Los textos escritos corroboran la irrealidad en la que viven los puertorriqueños, atrapados en un mundo de apariencias. Y en la segunda, el protagonista acaba haciendo *inventario* de su vida y se convence del estrechamiento de la realidad isleña producto de los mensajes enviados desde la metrópoli y de los efectos de la mentalidad colonizada (Fanon 164-165, Memmi 139-149). La tarjeta que en *Inventario* insta a Germán a reunirse con sus amigos se convierte en un pedazo de irrealidad que existió únicamente en su imaginación: "... se preguntó si la amable tarjetita [...] había existido alguna vez" (Díaz Valcárcel, *Inventario* 207). La irrealidad de esos textos y sus mensajes demuestran el carácter del mundo del personaje. Los manuscritos se convierten en el espacio de la rebelión que acoge la voz de los intelectuales marginados (Said, *Representaciones del intelectual* 64), aun cuando el mismo juego metaficcional los trueca en territorios también ilusio- nantes: los manuscritos son igualmente manipulables por un editor o han sido redactados por un "historiador mentiroso" como la novela cervantina. Con todo, desde el ideario de Díaz Valcárcel, ante el convencimiento de la falsedad de los escritos históricos, periodísticos, mediáticos, en general, y de toda índole que se emiten en y hacia su país, los mismos textos liberadores, esperanzadores y rebeldes quedan disminuidos y reducidos a la misma condición de irrealidad. El intelectual que se siente encerrado en el estrecho espacio de su país por causa de la desatención que recibe su tarea reflexiva y su obra escrita, siente la necesidad de huir de la realidad a través de

los diversos medios de los que dispone. Entonces, se desatan los efectos de la lucha del intelectual frente a las consecuencias de unos mensajes que han disuelto la identidad de su país en un fárrago de meras ilusiones.

Las últimas novelas de Díaz Valcárcel inciden en ese aspecto, si cabe, con mayor diversidad e intención. No obstante, después de la estancia del escritor en España y su regreso en 1974, tras cinco años de estancia, y su inmersión en *Tiempo de silencio* de Luis Martín-Santos, lo que dará origen a su ensayo *Visión de mundo en la novela*, la obra de Díaz Valcárcel experimenta una acentuación de ciertos rasgos como el hostigamiento a que es sometido el intelectual y la irrealdad que vive su pueblo. Su estancia en Madrid, después de su paso por Cuba, le descubre que Puerto Rico no se circunscribe a la isla (*En el mejor de los mundos* 219) sino que posee extensiones que alcanzan a las dos orillas del océano. Paradójicamente, esta misma impresión debió de producirle una sensación acentuada del estrechamiento de su país, dados los graves acontecimientos que se vivieron entonces y que quedan reproducidos en la dramática entrevista que sostuvieron José Luis González, Pedro Juan Soto y el mismo Díaz Valcárcel, con René Marqués, refugiado entonces en Canóvanas. Cuando los amigos conversan acerca de las dificultades que han comenzado a experimentar en el trabajo a partir de 1968, Marqués exclama: “¡Hay que joderse aquí como nos jodemos los independentistas todos los días para poder hablar de lo que pasa en este país!” (226).

Ese cúmulo de experiencias literarias y políticas determinarán las novelas que redacte Díaz Valcárcel a partir de los años setenta y *Figuraciones en el mes de marzo*, que se convierte en el complejo y abigarrado germen del que partirán sus obras posteriores. Pero el impacto de *Tiempo de silencio* y la ciudad de Nueva York que había conocido en 1964, cuando viajó becado por la Fundación Guggenheim, determinaron su siguiente novela, que supuso un paréntesis acerca de la situación del intelectual puertorriqueño y de su lucha “contra folios” (206). En ella insistía en el problema de las apariencias de la realidad.

2. Dos miradas a Puerto Rico desde Estados Unidos

Las apariencias se concitan en *Harlem todos los días* (1978) resultan las conformadoras de la visión de Nueva York. La ciudad se ha convertido en la utopía del siglo XX y en la representación urbana de la modernidad, pero con frecuencia la novela hispanoamericana

y la puertorriqueña acaban mostrando la faceta más realista y dramática de la gran urbe, como se observa en el barrio que da título a la novela de Díaz Valcárcel. Sin embargo, la visión de Nueva York en la novela es también parcial, una simulación que procede de la ideología independentista y socialista del narrador, de la misma forma que es falsa la manipulación de los disparatados informes que se manejan en el momento en que son acusados los personajes principales de atentar contra el sistema y contra Estados Unidos. Cada visión escrita es inauténtica, a sabiendas de lo cual se ofrece una visión que contrarreste la metropolitana. La visión anticolonial busca un discurso descolonizado para describir la realidad que viven los puertorriqueños en Harlem pero también sirve para observar Puerto Rico. En esencia, es la visión de la isla desde Estados Unidos, de manera que Puerto Rico se contempla atravesado por la nostalgia y la lejanía de Gregorio, el boricua emigrante en Harlem. Pero la percepción de lo que ocurre a los personajes —Gregorio, Ale, Manolo, Iremita, Moira, Dino— en Nueva York tampoco es directa. Díaz Valcárcel explicó en sus ya mencionadas crónicas biográficas reunidas bajo el título de *En el mejor de los mundos* que la novela partió de un diario que redactó durante su estancia en la ciudad en 1964 y que aprovechó con posterioridad para la novela (156) y algunos de sus cuentos (176). El discurso resulta un asombroso ejercicio narrativo donde el narrador nos pasea por las calles neoyorquinas, escuchando varias lenguas (*spanglish*, sefardí, inglés, diferentes formas de español), enumeraciones, descripciones con un ritmo apabullante, diálogos, reproducciones de anuncios y letreros varios. De la calle ascendemos al apartamento de Ale y contemplamos su biblioteca, los títulos de los ensayos y otras obras, y se nos muestran los miedos y las contradicciones del progreso del mercantilismo. Sin duda, narratológicamente, Nueva York es como el Dublín del *Ulysses* de James Joyce o el Madrid de *Tiempo de silencio* de Luis Martín-Santos. Esta última ofreció años después a Díaz Valcárcel el molde estructural sobre el que podría ordenar las anotaciones de su estancia en Nueva York una década atrás, además de indirectamente ofrecer una metodología de raigambre sociológica para la interpretación de la narrativa al asumir el concepto de *visión de mundo* extraído de los ensayos de Lucien Goldmann (1971).

El mundo apariencial que se contempla en *Harlem todos los días* queda confirmado en el “Epílogo”. En éste nos hallamos ante una realidad de segundo grado, pues junto a los personajes evidentemente ficcionales, aparecen nombres como José Caballero Bonald, Alfonso Sastre —a quienes había conocido en Cuba en 1967 (*Taller de invenciones* 208)—, Fernando Quiñones, Aurora de Albornoz,

José Luis González, Pedro Juan Soto, René Marqués y tantos otros escritores puertorriqueños amigos de Díaz Valcárcel, quien homenajea a todos ellos en el final de la novela. Pero la aparición de éstos en la historia corre a cargo de Gregorio, narrador del epílogo. No obstante, en éste, él nos informa de la escritura de la novela a cargo de un tal Lecráclav. El texto ya evidenciaba en su construcción la presencia de un narrador cercano a la historia por las invocaciones a un narratario y por la proximidad a los mundos neoyorquino y puertorriqueño. El apellido en apariencia extranjero esconde, por tanto, al autor, al escritor que falta en la nómina anterior. Por temor a correr el mismo peligro que algunos de los personajes “subversivos” de la novela por causa de la denuncia que lleva implícita, oculta su nombre, porque Lecráclav es un anagrama anónimo: hay que leer Valcárcel, al revés. Díaz Valcárcel es el autor de un texto de denuncia, pero —ya convertido en personaje dentro del universo de la ficción— ante el temor a que le ocurra lo que a Aleluya, se oculta tras el anagrama. El componente metaficcional queda explicado por Gregorio. Cuenta que Lecráclav (Díaz Valcárcel) estuvo en España, que hizo amistad con él y “dijo que iba a escribir un libro de la vida en Nueva York” (*Harlem todos los días* 213). Gregorio le cuenta de los personajes y traza un preciso resumen de cuanto aparecía o va a aparecer en la novela. Y concluye:

... y me dijo cuando publique la novela te la voy a mandal así dice mientras el taxi lo espera para llevarlo al aeropuerto y dice que ya había escrito muchas páginas en la ciudad que la novela ya está clarita enterita aquí arriba en la azotea dijo tocándose la calculadora amigo así dijo sólo me falta sentarme y echarla afuera y me dijo por eso en este jodido instante de mi vida en que me despidió de ti querido Gerry puedo decir que ya la he terminado. (214-215)

El juego queda perfectamente trazado y con ello una pizca de humor que faltaba a sus primeras obras. Por otro lado, el tiempo de la lectura coincide con el de la historia y, fingidamente, con el de la escritura: terminan a la vez. La novela se crea dentro de la novela, con las informaciones que obtiene el autor, el conocimiento de los personajes y con la observación puntual de los lugares, de lo cual toma oportunas anotaciones que acabarán en la novela. Finalmente, cuando el autor apunta que ha concluido su obra, el lector da también por terminada su lectura. No obstante, fiel al compromiso asumido por su generación, la motivación de la escritura se advierte en los paseos por la gran ciudad: “caminamos medio South Bronx, él maldiciendo cómo viven los boricuas” (214). Como reivindicaba con ironía José Luis González en “El escritor” (168), el intelectual ha de vivir la realidad para mostrarla con la mayor fidelidad posible, para revelar la *visión de mundo* que surge de la sociedad en la que han

de insertarse los personajes y para cumplir con el valor social que pretende imprimir en sus novelas (*Taller de invenciones* 2-6).

Nuevamente la metaficción se ha convertido en el recurso por medio del cual se muestra la realidad en un segundo grado. Con *Harlem todos los días*, además, Díaz Valcárcel introduce su novela en esa otra parte de la realidad puertorriqueña que completa la realidad isleña y a la vez contempla más directamente la vida en la metrópoli. La fascinación por la ciudad alcanza a quedar reflejada por el uso de los recursos narrativos que, como apunté arriba, aproximan más la novela a la de Joyce o Martín-Santos, sobre cuyo *Tiempo de silencio* en esos años debía estar preparando el análisis que se publicará en 1982 con el título de *Visión de mundo en la novela*. Por otra parte, la inclusión del personaje-autor del manuscrito que se convertirá en novela redundante en el sesgo social que Díaz Valcárcel y su generación quieren imprimir a la escritura, que se convierte una vez más en el instrumento de reivindicación personal y nacional de la causa ideológica de su generación en unos momentos históricos complicados para el independentismo. No obstante, no faltan el humorismo y el juego apuntados más arriba.

En el mismo ambiente político hostil al independentismo, publica *Mi mamá me ama* (1982), una nueva indagación en la confrontación entre la realidad de Estados Unidos y la de Puerto Rico, aunque en el fondo debate la confrontación entre la apariencia y la realidad, entre las ilusiones de la mente del colonizado y el drama del entorno puertorriqueño e igualmente ya universal del mundo contemporáneo. En esta ocasión, el protagonista-narrador es un joven anexionista² que vivía en Estados Unidos pero que regresa a Puerto Rico, con su educación en lo viril y militar en el Adirondack College, para apoyar la campaña electoral del Partido Nuevo Progresista. Su visión de colonizado de la realidad puertorriqueña y de sus gentes, observadas bajo los parámetros de la vocación anexionista, resulta en una deformada interpretación de la isla, racista y clasista, que menosprecia a los puertorriqueños y se inclina sólo a los usos y costumbres de los ciudadanos del Norte, con los mitos procedentes de la cultura de masas y del llamado progreso. Como el título presagia, el tono de la narración será deliberadamente *naïf*, pues es emitido por un individuo que aún cree en esos mitos de la raza, la modernidad y el sueño estadounidense. La visión ingenua de Yunito queda reflejada

² Por fin, Díaz Valcárcel emprende —tras las versiones parciales de Laguerre en *El cauce sin río* y *Los amos benévolo*s— la tarea de novelar plenamente al anexionista puertorriqueño, de cuya carencia se quejaba René Marqués en “El puertorriqueño dócil (Literatura y realidad psicológica)” (169).

en un diario que pretende ser una investigación seria. Como la frase que los niños aprenden en sus primeras lecturas —“mi mamá me ama”—, las ideas de Yunito quedan menoscabadas por la auténtica realidad de la isla, alejada de los mitos y de la propaganda de los *mass media*. En un hospital a las afueras de San Juan, compone lo que llama “artículo, trabajo científico”, con “los resultados de la investigación social [que] terminarían publicándose en la *Student’s Review*” (16), por indicación de su profesor Michael Mason, cuyo apellido establece un vínculo simbólico más con cierto pensamiento norteamericano. La estructura depende, por tanto, de estas circunstancias: el narrador, su objetivo y la forma que imprime a su relato, dadas las circunstancias de la escritura. De nuevo nos hallamos ante una manera de comprender y explicar Puerto Rico en segunda instancia, a través del enfoque de un personaje que queda anotado en un diario. La visión anexionista resulta el extremo de la mirada del colonizado y aporta una perspectiva nueva en la contemplación de la realidad de la isla y de su relación con Estados Unidos. Ahora la perspectiva es, por tanto, radicalmente contraria a la que se apreciaba en *Harlem todos los días*, no sólo desde el punto de vista económico y social sino también espacial. En este caso es un puertorriqueño llegado del continente a la isla y no a la inversa. Es el reflejo opuesto del Lecrácav de *Harlem*. La indignación de Yunito no es diferente, en cambio, a la de Lecrácav, aunque en un sentido inverso. Es un mundo al revés que resulta una sátira que sólo puede producir la carcajada del lector ante las creencias del colonizado. No obstante, como Lecrácav, también Yunito queda sorprendido ante lo que observa de la vida criolla y cree preciso anotarlo en un diario, si bien en éste aspira a científico:

Claro que no pondré en blanco y negro todo lo que me pase por la cabeza. Este trabajo tratará sobre mis experiencias sociales en la Isla. Lo más difícil, desde luego, es prescindir de lo trivial y tocar sólo lo estrictamente objetivo —como corresponde a un trabajo rigurosamente científico— siguiendo como modelo el texto de John Martin *Sociología para todos los días*. (27)

Sin embargo, los resultados en el plano ideológico y político, y los efectos que ha de conseguir en el lector resultan evidentemente diferentes. La parodia satírica produce la hilaridad del lector y, por consiguiente, el menoscabo de la realidad aparente que retrata Yunito. Los modelos —la familia— y la educación del colegio no pueden proporcionar un análisis ni objetivo, ni serio ni maduro, como dicta el título de la novela (que, adviértase, a su vez es frase de Yunito) y del libro que le sirve de modelo, pues poca personalidad presenta el nombre del autor y menos el título de un libro que más parece de

auto-ayuda de supermercado que un riguroso manual de Sociología, que además ha logrado convertirse en un best-seller (como el otro modelo, *Vida positiva*, de Hal Glass), lo que redundaría en la idea de su precariedad científica. No ha de pasarse por alto que el análisis de Yunito, a pesar de su insistencia en lo investigativo, irá destinado, si se considera oportuno, sólo a una revista de estudiantes. Por otro lado, las apelaciones a un narratario plural al que trata con tanta familiaridad y al que confiesa asuntos tan delicados como su misoginia y su machismo, su simpatía por el nazismo y sus argumentos acerca del subdesarrollo genético de algunas razas que pueblan la isla, prueba su ingenuidad y no sólo su ignorancia y su ideario colonizado. La Constitución impide que exista el racismo, dice, aunque éste sea evidente en el discurso de Yunito. Y así, la parodia satírica brota de esas líneas y caracteriza a toda la persona cuando trata acerca de otras razas:

¿Cómo realizar un análisis sobre este aspecto de mi experiencia social y psicológica? He recurrido al libro de Martin, pero no ofrece solución alguna. Así que llego a mis propias conclusiones: carezco de prejuicios, como he dicho, pero ¿quién puede negar con toda certeza que ciertas razas tengan algún tipo de subdesarrollo genético que les impida comprender cabalmente el mundo que habitan?

Que nadie se sobresalte por lo que acabo de decir. Soy justo: no es que *no quieran* comprenderlo, sino que *no pueden*. No es, pues, una cuestión volitiva: no se trataría de una enfermedad de la voluntad, sino de una incapacidad racial, una especie de tara de la que habría que culpar a los genes, no a la gente. En vez de despreciarlos, pues, hay que tratar de comprender sus limitaciones. No es racismo, ya vimos cómo la Constitución habla de la igualdad de todos en este país. (31)

En el proceso de escritura de Yunito se comienza por la familia, por sus miembros, y continúa con el grupo social (el Partido y la clase alta), la nación (Estados Unidos) y el complejo propagandístico que conforma las ideas de la isla, donde encuentra a los puertorriqueños que le sorprenden por sus comportamientos y sus actitudes ante frases como: *¡Está en nuestras manos ser americanos!* (57). La comicidad surge del discurso *ingenuo* del ciudadano Yunito, cuya ignorancia emerge de sus modelos, sus ideas y sus actuaciones pueriles. Al final, se pregunta: “¿Tenía yo lo que llaman en *Sociología para todos los días* una visión estereotipada de la realidad?” (153). Bajo todo ello descansa un antiintelectualismo y una mirada infantilista propia de ciertos discursos estadounidenses (Verdú, *El planeta americano* 115) y de la cultura de la mentalidad del niño que alcanza a algunos adultos contemporáneos (Verdú, *El estilo del mundo* 56-8). Este discurso lo incorpora Yunito, cuyo nombre mismo —a diferencia de los

kafkianos de otras obras de Díaz Valcárcel— revela la mentalidad de la que brota su opinión y su alegato. Efectivamente, esta es la *visión de mundo* que emerge del discurso de Yunito, pero tal vez pueda ser tan estereotipado como el del editor, pero en un sentido inverso. Éste añade el capítulo último con el objeto de mostrar el contraste y que se advierta el sacrificio de la clase media puertorriqueña, de la mujer de la isla, tan alejada del modelo de la madre infiel e incestuosa que ha convertido a su hijo en un “muchachito” y además “raro”, como lo califica la Dra. Delgado en las páginas últimas. Si bien disponemos de la imagen ridícula y pueril de Yunito a partir de su redacción, ésta queda corroborada por esas palabras, pero especialmente por la manipulación de que es objeto su manuscrito.

Como en el *Quijote*, por tanto, se dispone de la figura de un editor que subraya los acontecimientos con un motivo ideológico y que construye una parodia satírica contra un modelo de discurso y contra un imperio que declina a pesar de la propaganda colonial, como se advierte en la obra cervantina. Como ésta, *Mi mamá me ama* es una parodia-satírica del discurso anexionista, y cuenta con sus modelos textuales (la sociología de supermercado), su manuscrito en la forma de diario (redactado por un personaje enajenado por los mensajes de la metrópoli y las fantasías de los *mass media*), y su transcriptor (el autor, que añade las cursivas), además de la visión pretendidamente realista de la visión de Puerto Rico en el capítulo final, con la intervención de la clase media. Nuevamente, Puerto Rico se revela como una apariencia, al ser observado a través de visiones parciales que proceden de manuscritos, de escrituras íntimas, aunque éstas pretendan posteriormente la publicidad. Pero lo más interesante es que tras la marcha de Yunito, un tanto apresurada, del hospital, su diario ha sido subrepticamente sustraído y después manipulado por un editor. Es un gesto contra el poder, contra Estados Unidos, el mercado, la clase alta, la educación anglosajona, el pensamiento único, y, en fin, contra los mitos del último siglo que han sido creados para la pervivencia de un modelo social, político y económico. El responsable de la sustracción del diario y agente último de la edición queda oculto y manipula desde esa posición disimulada el manuscrito de Yunito. Así, los disparates de Yunito pueden convertirse en el estereotipo del discurso anexionista, que permanece menoscabado desde sus orígenes, por los equívocos en su construcción y por la mezcla de interés económico, hipocresía social e ineficacia política que desprende el texto.

Las intervenciones del editor obran en ese sentido. Las cursivas en *Mi mamá me ama* guardan relación, como sucede habitualmente en la narrativa puertorriqueña, con el otro discurso, lo que ya se

apreciaba en los cuentos de José Luis González, por ejemplo, y en las novelas de Díaz Valcárcel; el caso de *Harlem todos los días* resulta paradigmático y próximo al de la novela de 1982. En este caso, hemos de ver a la figura del editor como el redactor *a posteriori* del diario de Yunito. Su ideología es sin duda opuesta a Yunito por el valor que adquieren los textos que se anotan en cursiva. Esta presencia se advierte, en primer lugar, por los paréntesis, que son las anotaciones de Yunito. En segundo término, por algunos vocablos en cursiva que sólo alguien más perspicaz pudo subrayar (Joset 104-105); pero también por las precisiones de carácter metaficcional que inserta Yunito a modo de recordatorio para la versión definitiva del texto, que mantiene el editor para mostrar la ineptitud y la simpleza del protagonista. Además, por los preámbulos igualmente en cursiva que ese editor extrae para encabezar cada capítulo, frente al que se anotan auténticos disparates y observaciones que califican al protagonista, a su clase y a sus correligionarios, por tanto; y, por último, el capítulo 14. No cabe duda, que la cursiva de nuevo nos indica la presencia de la otra voz. Esta otra voz registra los momentos de debilidad de Yunito cuando comienzan los efectos de la anestesia. Entonces, su discurso mezcla el inglés con el castellano, sin un orden lógico ni sintáctico (de nuevo la herencia del monólogo de Molly Bloom), pero en el que queda más en entredicho su discurso y la problemática más profunda que toca al complejo de Edipo, al incesto y a la frase que da título a la novela junto la letra de “*nuestro himno nacional. Oh say can you see by the dawn early light me lo cantaba mi mama que me ama para hacerme dormir cuando niño yo hundía mi cara mimosa entre sus tetas desnudas y me quedaba dormido perfectamente dormido durmiendo*” (Díaz Valcárcel, *Mi mamá me ama* 143). Este capítulo procede de la otra voz, del otro interventor en el diario. ¿Alguien de la clínica presente en el delirio de la anestesia? Podría pensarse en alguien del hospital, donde Yunito dejó olvidado su diario. No obstante, pudiera muy bien pensarse que posiblemente fuera la Doctora Delgado quien se lleva a su casa el manuscrito olvidado en el hospital y lo lee a José, a quien además hace partícipe de otras intimidades de Yunito, como consta en el capítulo 16, donde se cambia la instancia narrativa. De hecho, ella estuvo presente en la anestesia y, por tanto, presenciar a Yunito anestesiado y posteriormente añadir esas palabras en la edición del manuscrito. Estas conjeturas, sin embargo, resultan superfluas y secundarias; no contamos, como en otras novelas del autor, con un personaje que asume la tarea de ordenar los acontecimientos. En consecuencia, se advierte que quien escribe el diario —Yunito— no puede convertirse en el último responsable de un texto que le condena como hombre

y como ciudadano y que indirectamente vilipendia a su clase y a su partido a través de la parodia satírica. El palimpsesto no sólo es una técnica y las versiones textuales se van superponiendo una sobre otra, sino que en un siglo de incertidumbres el procedimiento del palimpsesto se convierte en la metáfora del estado de cosas en la isla —y el mundo— con respecto a lo que la realidad es: una mera apariencia sobre la que se superponen las diferentes versiones de quienes la contemplan, aun cuando mayoritariamente prevalezca la explicación del poder económico, político, mediático y, por tanto, cultural y ya nacional.

Por otro lado, los paréntesis son anotaciones al margen que sirven de recordatorio para una posterior revisión y mejoramiento del texto que ha quedado a disposición del lector. Pero la ingenuidad que demuestra con el léxico y otras apreciaciones sirven para minusvalorar a ojos del lector el punto de vista del redactor, cuya opinión queda definitivamente menoscabada por su mismo razonamiento, que en el fondo brota de la creencia en discursos pueriles tipo “mi mamá me ama”, sólo emitidos para niños en los inicios de su educación. Todo es propaganda, según puede apreciarse en las calles y en las familias, desde los textos infantiles hasta los mensajes electorales, la prensa y los *mass media*, al servicio de un sistema que trata de perpetuarse en el poder político para ejercer su predominio económico. En el fondo, Puerto Rico es un mercado; como en otras narraciones de Díaz Valcárcel, el *mall* es la metáfora del pretendido progreso. La vieja metáfora latina de la plaza pública sobre la que fijó su atención Bajtín (*Problemas de la poética de Dostoievski* 180-181)³ se ha transformado en el *mall* que fusiona el aspecto de reunión de gentes y de cruce de opiniones que poseía la metáfora europea con el talante comercial que definen, para las novelas de Díaz Valcárcel, las relaciones en el Puerto Rico contemporáneo. Aquí, como ocurrirá en *Dicen que de noche tú no duermes* y en *Taller de invenciones*, el *mall* es la síntesis de la nueva utopía y de las esperanzas más espirituales del puertorriqueño: “Plaza era como una iglesia porque allí la gente es feliz” (Díaz Valcárcel, *Dicen que por la noche tú no duermes* 69). El *mall*, como el banco, se consideran las nuevas iglesias donde acuden los puertorriqueños a diario en grandes oleadas. Extendiendo más la mirada, pueden ir advirtiéndose las mismas costumbres en otras sociedades occidentales que explican la dirección de esas modas y los destinos hacia los que caminan las relaciones en una era nueva.

³ En relación con lo carnavalesco, véase *La cultura popular en la Edad Media y en el Renacimiento* (Bajtín 9-10).

La narrativa de Díaz Valcárcel parte de Puerto Rico y sus denuncias resultan hoy ya válidas para sociedades muy alejadas que han ido incorporándose a la órbita comercial y social que emite del centro de poder del planeta. Estados Unidos se ha convertido en el modelo imitado por el mundo a instancias de su mismo empuje comercial, que dispone de un aparato propagandístico a escala planetaria. La narrativa de Díaz Valcárcel se torna, con el tiempo, en más universal, en la medida en que el empuje estadounidense va apropiándose de los mercados y que los dictámenes de las oligarquías económicas y políticas de muchos países van aceptando el patrón del centro y lo imitan.

3. El mundo de la ilusión y la disolución de la nacionalidad

Dicen que de noche tú no duermes (1985) ofrece igualmente una narración autobiográfica. El protagonista Jaime cuenta sus experiencias de una tarde-noche junto a su compañera Mari, con quien conversa acerca de su jefa Zoraida y otra serie de aspectos de Puerto Rico. Jaime se dedica a corregir memorandos de educación en una máquina estadounidense que, como muestra el capítulo segundo, carece de acentos y de eñes —lo que reaparece en *Laguna y Asociados* (12-3)—, metáfora de la educación y el pensamiento puertorriqueño, que indefectiblemente se han de amoldar a la forma de la metrópoli. Cuando Jaime recuerde en algún momento las consignas de esos memorandos, el texto se desprende también de las eñes y los acentos (*Dicen que por la noche tú no duermes* 123-124). No obstante, Jaime desea cambiarla por una máquina donde sí se marcan los acentos y las eñes (61). Sin duda, es esta máquina la que va a reproducir el discurso independentista y socialista que emerge de la voz de Jaime en sus diálogos con Mari y que se muestra angustiada ante una sociedad donde los libros de las bibliotecas son devorados por la polilla y que ha convertido al *mall* en el centro de una especie de nueva religión. Como denuncia el célebre poema de Ernesto Cardenal a Marilyn Monroe, que se cita, esa sociedad consume sus mitos a través de las ilusiones proporcionadas por los medios de masas, del cine o de la vellonera. Ambos medios, como sucede en otras novelas puertorriqueñas, ofrecen una realidad de apariencias, de ilusiones sobre las que se fundamentan las vidas de la clase media (Fuente, “Luis Rafael Sánchez y *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos*: hacia una sincrética narrativa musical” 245). De ahí la semejanza entre Marilyn Monroe y Mari, cuyos nombres no son diferentes intencionadamente. El conocido poema de Cardenal dice:

Como toda empleadita de tienda
 soñó ser estrella de cine.
 Y su vida fue irreal como un sueño que un psiquiatra interpreta y archiva.
 Sus romances fueron un beso con los ojos cerrados
 que cuando se abren los ojos
 se descubre que fue bajo reflectores
 ¡y se apagan los reflectores!
 Y desmontan las dos paredes del aposento (era un set cinematográfico)
 mientras el Director se aleja con su libreta
 porque la escena ya fue tomada.
 O como un viaje en yate, un beso en Singapur, un baile en Río
 la recepción en la mansión del Duque y la Duquesa de Windsor
 vistos en la salita del apartamento miserable.
 La película terminó sin el beso final.

Mari selecciona en la vellonera el bolero “Simplemente una ilusión” de Héctor Urdaneta que interpreta Chucho Avellanet y lo canta: “O es que vivo un mundo de ilusiones / Lleno de mentira y fantasía / y esa dulce voz es simplemente / simplemente una ilusión”. De él se extrae el verso que da título a la novela y que, como los otros citados muestra el mundo de ficción en el que viven los personajes, los puertorriqueños y el individuo de hoy. En el fondo, las vidas de Marilyn y de Mari se han fundamentado en ilusiones que cubren sus noches. Los comentarios del protagonista-narrador acerca del valor del poema del vate nicaragüense y de la vida de la actriz estadounidense coinciden con Mari, mutilada por su incultura, por la vulgarización y la plebeyización de la vida contemporánea,⁴ por todo lo cual ella también es “víctima de la voracidad capitalista” (*Dicen que por la noche tú no duermes* 85). Es también una realidad de segundo grado, no auténtica sino reproducida por otros medios de simulación. Así ocurre con el acontecimiento que hilvana las escenas de la novela y que la estructura de principio a fin: el próximo combate de Wilfredo Gómez que todo Puerto Rico aspira a ver por la televisión. La lucha del país se dirime en un combate de boxeo, a lo que se reduce, parece decir el narrador, la disputa nacional puertorriqueña. El resultado no puede ser más que la derrota, que se observa también en un medio de segundo grado: es un periódico, *El Nuevo Día*, lo que informa del desastre con un sarcástico “¡¡¡LA CARA DE LA DERROTA!!!” (*Dicen que por la noche tú no duermes* 177).

Como en tiempos de Hostos, un manuscrito es el arma de la auténtica y efectiva lucha nacional y su redactor, el guía que emprende ese combate a favor del país. Pero esa tarea cobra un nuevo

⁴ Según el concepto de José Luis González, en *El país de cuatro pisos* (93-94).

significado. La plebeyización del conflicto nacional a través del combate de boxeo se deriva de la atención general que provoca y de su legitimación última y definitiva por medio de la portada del diario. Además, la misma conversión de la pelea en el estructurador básico de la novela explica el valor que este tipo de lucha ha cobrado para el narrador, en el fondo también posicionado en una mirada posmoderna a la realidad que desdice la eficacia de la lucha por mejorar la situación de la isla. Es decir, Jaime está perfectamente integrado en un sistema que ha fagocitado incluso a las voces críticas, cuyo discurso se construye sobre las bases del sistema mismo.

Con todo, la novela se presenta como un ajuste de cuentas contra lo que Jaime repudia de Puerto Rico, a través de la sátira y de la caricatura, una vez más. Él tiene como vocación la escritura, pues afirma que construye relatos donde “satirizo a gente que desprecio sin miedo a fallar” (127). Es como el francotirador de la novela homónima de Pedro Juan Soto (1969). Esa vocación será definitivamente satisfecha con la redacción de cuanto ocurrió durante la noche que pasó con Mari, a la manera de un nuevo *inventario* de los dos personajes, sumidos cada uno en sus particulares *figuraciones* acerca de lo que sea la realidad puertorriqueña, pues en ninguno de los casos la mirada directa define al país ni a sus gentes. A Jaime le determina su visión socialista e independentista; a Mari, su asunción de los mensajes televisivos, del cine y de la música. Esta propaganda del sistema que conforma la *visión de mundo* de Mari, se opone, podría argumentarse, al discurso antisistema de Jaime, igualmente procedente de una cierta divulgación opuesta al régimen. Ambos, por tanto, son reproducciones de discursos de base procedentes de sistemas opuestos, pero el uno —el del narrador, Jaime— pretende calificarse de culto mientras el otro es popular —el de la mujer, Mari—, de raíz plebeya, como ocurre en las otras novelas de Díaz Valcárcel, quien a partir de *El hombre que trabajó el lunes* (1966), pero especialmente desde 1972 con *Figuraciones en el mes de marzo* (1982), nos ofrece ese modelo bifronte en lo cultural de contemplar a los puertorriqueños y, en definitiva, del individuo contemporáneo occidental.

Del proceso de escritura, en *Dicen que de noche tú no duermes* a veces aún quedan restos, con notas entre paréntesis, adicionales al texto (115), a la manera de *Mi mamá me ama*. Por otra parte, resulta interesante la discusión acerca de esta primera novela de Díaz Valcárcel, como toda la realidad, igualmente disfrazada por boca de los personajes. Mari defiende a la mujer protagonista mientras Jaime explica la obra, que titula como *La mujer que no trabajó el lunes* (57), donde aparece la inequívoca transformación de la realidad novelada

que conocen los lectores de Díaz Valcárcel. El nombre del autor, consta, es Oilime, de origen árabe (58). Esta ascendencia guarda relación con el autor del manuscrito encontrado —mentiroso, a decir del editor— de la primera versión del *Quijote*, con lo cual se pone el acento en la ficcionalidad de la historia. Sea como fuere, lo cierto es que regresa al procedimiento de apuntamiento del autor de *Harlem todos los días*, pues no cabe duda de que en Oilime hemos de ver, si leemos de manera invertida, Emilio, el nombre de pila de Díaz Valcárcel. El nombre, de nuevo, ha de ser visto a través de un espejo; es un reflejo del autor auténtico, lo que no puede responder más que al carácter de la novela: un reflejo de la realidad, pero siempre, como justifica el uso de la técnica del manuscrito, a través de la mirada del autor que esconde la publicación del texto.

La perspectiva del escrito no sólo viene condicionada por una visión política particular sino especialmente por el apego al Puerto Rico más tradicional, como puede advertirse en la nostalgia de Jaime por los abanicos de siempre en vez de la refrigeración más moderna que “llegó a falsear la realidad climática del país” (132) y en la destrucción del símbolo del toro —de raigambre hispánica, mediterránea—, presente en el célebre cuento de Abelardo Díaz Alfaro.⁵ El mundo de Díaz Alfaro reaparece en *Taller de invenciones* (1991) para mostrarnos el Puerto Rico auténtico. De nuevo, otro manuscrito representa el deseo de exponer una realidad que es mera reproducción de otro modelo y sobre todo de retornar atrás para analizar el pasado y preguntarse por qué es así el presente, por qué los valores puertorriqueños se han transformado para convertir al país en la diáspora o en el espacio donde se dirimen las dudas acerca de la nacionalidad: “¿es en realidad un país? ¡Hablemos en serio!” (*Dicen que por la noche tú no duermes* 132). El cierre de *Dicen que de noche tú no duermes* deja esa preocupación acerca del futuro que aguarda: “un país donde la imaginación no se utiliza para abonar las semillas del futuro” (177-178). Las novelas de José Luis González, Pedro Juan Soto y Emilio Díaz Valcárcel, o después de Luis Rafael Sánchez, Olga Nolla o Luis López Nieves, se plantean las mismas dudas. La mirada hacia atrás es inevitable y el manuscrito se convierte en la máquina del tiempo que sirve para el retorno al pasado, como la vellonera servía para olvidarlo, tal como vemos en “Cuatro selecciones por una peseta” de Ana Lydia Vega o en *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* del mismo Luis Rafael Sánchez, o, en fin, en la melodía de *Dicen que de noche tú no duermes*.

Aquí, el monólogo último es de nuevo un resumen de la historia,

⁵ “El Josco” (Díaz Alfaro 15-20).

un intento de revisar velozmente la historia, como en un inicio a su vez del recuento en que se convierte la redacción. El resumen es el eje que separa la historia vivida de la historia contada o escrita. Después, queda el silencio tras el cual se abre la experiencia de la escritura a la que se somete el protagonista. No de otra forma sucede en *Taller de invenciones*, donde Alfredo, un escritor fracasado, organiza un taller que reúne a un diverso número de alumnos de distintos gustos y preocupaciones. La novela se conforma de los comentarios acerca de la literatura, de autores, de obras y de técnicas, pero sobre todo de los textos que componen los alumnos a la manera de ejercicios sobre los que actúa Alfredo. En el pasado, Alfredo vivió de la escritura para la publicidad engañosa y la burocracia que pintaba un país idílico (23-25), y escribió un único libro —*Días imposibles*—. Pero en los últimos diez años, dada su imposibilidad de crear una obra artística, se ha dedicado exclusivamente al taller de escritura, que en los momentos en que se desarrolla la historia considera abandonar para regresar a redactar textos para los burócratas.

El manuscrito de Alfredo acoge los textos compuestos por los alumnos y los integra en la historia. Su manuscrito se convierte en la revisión del pasado y en un intento de explicación de los acontecimientos que condujeron a la crisis personal de Alfredo y a sus consecuencias últimas: la muerte de Misael el Escéptico. Además, los cuentos de los talleristas incorporan llamadas a la realidad del taller, sus técnicas y otras observaciones al director del mismo en forma de inserciones por medio de los paréntesis. En puridad, los cuentos —de carácter metafictional—, que constan en cursiva, resultan una metonimia de la novela, formada por un relato extenso en relación con la vida de su autor por la adición de unos comentarios, con frecuencia de carácter técnico y personal acerca de la escritura, que ha de ser, a decir de Alfredo, productor de las experiencias del escritor y con fundamento en la realidad que vive: “¡como si sus historias personales, las de los vecinos y amigos no tuvieran importancia!” (110). Esa idea de reflejar la realidad vivida es la consigna que una y otra vez repite Alfredo, lo que él mismo llevará finalmente a la práctica con la novela. Su sensación de ahogo y la necesidad de salir de lo que llama “ambiente estrecho, asfixiante” (122) le impulsa a escribir, pero, paradójicamente, no para huir —como aparentemente trata Joel con sus relatos de ciencia ficción o los demás con narraciones criollas o sentimentales— de esa realidad agobiante sino para denunciarla. Pero opta definitivamente por afrontar una novela acerca de una realidad de segundo grado, pues prefiere escribir sobre escritores aspirantes y no directamente sobre la realidad de su vida y la circundante, si bien éstas no queden excluidas:

En las próximas horas, mientras tomaba el fresco de la noche sentado en un banco de la plaza San José se preguntó si le sería posible concentrarse y hacer acopio de fuerzas para intentar empezar una novela corta tomando como punto de partida los sucesos del taller y esa cantidad de personajes (¿puestos allí por el destino para que se rehabilitara como escritor?) que se reunían con él las noches de jueves en el interminable verano de ese año. (123)

Ciertamente que no faltan reflexiones acerca de la realidad de la isla y en particular a los cambios que se han producido y han quedado reflejados en la filosofía de los *mall*, donde una Sagrada Familia pasea con la misma ansia consumista, dice, “como los consumidores comunes y corrientes, hacen compras de todas clases y disfrutan de la ilusión de la modernidad y bienestar y desarrollo” (134). Pareciera, como en las demás novelas de Díaz Valcárcel, que la nacionalidad puertorriqueña se ha disuelto en contacto con el consumismo y la propaganda, ante la creencia general de que lo moderno es consumir y sólo el estatus actual del país puede permitir la continuación de esa práctica. Contra esta ilusión, brota la escritura, que trata de convertirse en receptor de las nuevas costumbres que conforman el Puerto Rico contemporáneo. El manuscrito afirma la irrealidad de lo real, pues persevera en su ficcionalidad como texto y el escritor, como creador, arraiga en un ambiente donde las apariencias y las simulaciones muestran una realidad secundaria, no auténtica, sea esto por los medios que fuere. Ese carácter ficcional redundante en la inutilidad de la denuncia que lleva a cabo el escritor por la misma autoconciencia de la inoperancia de la escritura. Esto se debe por ser una creación indiscutible o porque el sistema contemporáneo ha eliminado la escritura y la lectura de las actividades humanas más o menos cotidianas. Nadie, por tanto, considera la opinión del escritor, que se agazapa tras manuscritos a veces apócrifos y con frecuencia en espacios donde se trata de hacer constancia de la incertidumbre de lo real o se pretende su revisión.

Por todo ello, la realidad que muestra Alfredo puede no ser la auténtica, pues ha emprendido la escritura para excusarse de un crimen o para expiarlo, o tal vez para dejar constancia de un suicidio al que ha conducido al excombatiente de Vietnam Misael el Escéptico, por causa de un exceso de realidad y por la misma claustrofobia que experimentaban otros escritores e intelectuales de las novelas de Díaz Valcárcel. Sin duda, la técnica del iceberg sobre la que tratan los personajes en el taller subyace a la explicación del caso de la muerte de Misael: con los datos aportados por el narrador, el lector debe averiguar si fue un suicidio, como se explica a la prensa, o un asesinato, como parecen dictar los indicios que surgen de la narración. Por supuesto, el estilo —según la crítica— de los cuentos de

Alfredo (60) y la materia de sus sueños acerca de peleas de gallos, anticipan el final de la novela, pues en éstos es la cabeza de Misael el Escéptico la que aparece ensangrentada. Además, finalmente, Alfredo aprovecha la ausencia de Misael para entrar en relaciones con Zuleyka y comienza a escribir acerca de esas experiencias. Primero, un cuento sobre la pelea de gallos que soñaba y que es el presagio del crimen-suicidio, como anticipo del género mayor, de la novela, donde da cuenta del taller de escritura y los acontecimientos últimos: “Antes de finalizar el año, Alfredo empezó a escribir frenéticamente una novela sobre el taller de narrativa” (155).

Una vez más, la narrativa de Díaz Valcárcel necesita del diario de un escritor para mostrar la realidad de la isla, a la manera de la sátira menipea recuperada en la última narrativa hispanoamericana (Fuente, *Más allá de la modernidad: los cuentos de Alfredo Bryce Echenique* 194-200), que acaba siendo una especie de muestrario de la realidad, con su variedad de tonos y estilos (Bajtín, *Problemas de la poética de Dostoievski* 167), donde el escritor escribe su diario y con frecuencia pretende su autoexclusión social por medio del suicidio. En una realidad carnavalizada como la contemporánea, la narrativa de Díaz Valcárcel pretende ser la advertencia de esa certeza, como se constata en otras novelas hispanoamericanas (Fuente, “Notas sobre la carnavalización en la última narrativa hispanoamericana”), y despliega los variados medios que el sistema pone en práctica para ocultar la realidad auténtica y mostrar una disfrazada sobre la que actúan los manuscritos del escritor. Éstos son también la metáfora de esa carnavalización de lo real a través de medios enmascarados. La última novela de Díaz Valcárcel insiste en este aspecto desde una óptica más acorde con los tiempos, al servirse, para su denuncia, del mundo de la publicidad y de otros medios más sofisticados que ha perfeccionado el mercado para transmitir las realidades que pretende infundir en el consumidor y en el sistema.

Finalmente, *Laguna y Asociados* (1995) cierra el ciclo novelístico de Díaz Valcárcel al trazar una nueva parodia satírica de Puerto Rico y de la sociedad occidental contemporánea, carnavalizada, en dependencia del mercado y en vías imparable de plebeyización, a través de la observación del mundo de la publicidad. Díaz Valcárcel pretendió ingresar en 1968 en ese ámbito por causa de la situación frustrante que experimentaba ante la penuria a la que fue sometida la actividad del escritor independentista tras las elecciones y el cambio de gobernación (*Laguna y Asociados* 230). En el proceso que se desarrolla en la novela, Greg —abreviatura del nombre kafkiano ya usado por Díaz Valcárcel—, el escritor protagonista, emprende un proceso autodestructivo ante su negativa a pertenecer a una

sociedad así. La técnica del iceberg que se explicaba en *Taller de invenciones* juega de nuevo un papel importante en la novela en dos sentidos, cuando menos: uno, más aparentemente insustancial, referido a la media roja que encuentra Greg junto a la cama y que cree de un amante de Jessica, y otro, referido a la narración misma, es decir, nuevamente en relación con su origen como tal texto. Dado que el personaje de Greg acaba en coma, puede pensarse que él no es el redactor de la historia. No obstante, muchos son los indicios de esa redacción, como se verá. Incluso podría considerarse un final metafórico el estado comatoso del protagonista en que lo deja el narrador a la conclusión de la historia. Si así no fuera, de todas formas, quedaría la posibilidad de pensar en la definitiva muerte del escritor —el comprometido con la sociedad y su país—, relegado por la realidad ilusoria de la publicidad y de la carnavalización de las costumbres, los discursos y las ideas. Por tanto, *Laguna y Asociados* marca el final de la trayectoria de la obra novelística de Díaz Valcárcel precisamente con la aniquilación del modelo de escritor —como producto de los agentes que desde hace décadas han intervenido en la formación de una sociedad plebeyizada— que él ha defendido desde sus primeras obras, especialmente desde *Figuraciones en el mes de marzo*. Una vez más, el escritor se siente excluido de una sociedad donde lo real ya posee poca importancia y todo —las personas, los objetos, las ideas, las creencias— son carnavalizadas a través de los medios de comunicación de masas a instancias de la publicidad. La realidad es un *jingle*, una teleserie o una crónica social de revista rosa, donde todo se maquilla y se metamorfosea como los guiones publicitarios, la personalidad de Stavros o los pacientes del cirujano estético. En este ambiente, la obra auténticamente creativa de Greg —“hace años que vive fuera de la realidad en su cuarto de Vallealto” (65)— es ignorada, incluso por su compañera Jessica. Siente que nadie se interesa en “la otra obra, la personal” (61), de modo que no le queda otra opción que el suicidio o la autodestrucción a través del alcohol.

Greg siente desde el principio de la novela la necesidad de escribir sobre la experiencia vivida, sobre su convivencia con Jessica, “pero el oficio de *copywriter* que redacta textos minúsculos para la tele lo ha condicionado: quiere decirlo todo en treinta segundos” (13). Greg ha escrito un poemario que destruyó, tras lo cual se prometió no escribir nada que no le proporcionara dinero. Aun así, ambiciona componer un texto acerca de su propia experiencia como publicista: “A veces Greg va a la computadora con la intención de escribir —no por dinero— de esas cosas y otras: algo sobre el mundo de la publicidad, pero sus dedos caen inertes en el teclado”

(48). No obstante, la necesidad de “escaparse de la dura realidad” (165) le llevó a escribir tres cuentos que gustaron a Jessica, en los que parodiaba estilos de moda, explica, y que con seguridad podrían buscarse entre las páginas de la novela. Por consiguiente, no cabe duda que algunos instantes se comportan como el pedazo de iceberg que asoma sobre el nivel de las aguas. Con frecuencia, los deseos de escribir sobre una situación concreta se corresponden con los momentos del texto:

Se sienta a la computadora decidido a escribir lo que siente en estos momentos: su creciente angustia puede ser utilizada para *copis* estilo *slice of life* en la campaña de moderación para La Coruña Imports, distribuidora de licores. Hay que estar en sus zapatos para comprender lo que pasa a un alcohólico cuando a su organismo le falta la dosis adecuada. Ese puede ser un tema para la campaña: elaborar un plan para demostrar que los excesos conducen al desastre... (55)

El lector incauto puede quedarse, por tanto, en la historia del escritor alcohólico angustiado que comienza a sentir celos de su pareja por el asunto de la media roja que encuentra en su habitación. Pero la realidad resulta más compleja, porque entre las líneas que tratan de la agencia de publicidad o de las relaciones de sus personajes, de vez en cuando se observa a Greg frente al ordenador con la intención de escribir, precisamente, algo que después va a encontrar el lector en la novela que tiene entre las manos. La realidad y la ficción se tocan en algunos breves instantes, de manera que hemos de entender lo leído como una existencia de segundo grado, como el manuscrito lanzado por Greg para vencer su desafecto con la realidad:

Enciende la máquina —esta vez el ‘piip’ no atrae a Jessica—; abre un nuevo *file* y se prepara para escribir una narración, estampa, poema, ensayo o lo que le salga escribir para emborracharse con las palabras y vivir en un mundo que pueda controlar a su gusto. Teclea el título “La media roja”, y se queda pensando qué poner en la primera línea. (131)

Puede suceder que esa intención metaficcional coincida con el desarrollo de la escena, es decir, que Greg considere escribir acerca de la escena que vive, lo cual logra unos efectos de mayor inquietud acerca de la interpretación de las instancias narrativas y, por tanto, de la autenticidad de la narración:

Greg advertía en Alejandro lo mismo que en los otros: cada cual se expresaba según su profesión y sus intereses. Pensó que de tener tiempo y la mente clara para la narrativa escribiría un relato de cada uno de ellos. Le surgían multitud de ideas cuando comenzaron a exponer sus puntos de vista, mezclando lo que escuchaba con lo que imaginaba. (172)

La novela contiene una amplia variedad de textos y de estilos que se adecuan a la circunstancia que relatan: escenas dramatizadas, narración pura, pastiches, del periodismo rosa y de otros modos discursivos, entrevistas, poemas, escenas o estampas y otras formas que explican la variedad de un ambiente abigarrado y carnavalizado. Conforme se avanza hacia el final de la historia, se observa que Greg mantiene su intención de escribir sobre sí mismo y su ambiente. El círculo se cierra; el escritor se ha escrito a sí mismo y ha sellado su destino como tal escritor al dejarse desahuciado para la realidad. Con todo, el carácter auténtico de la realidad queda igualmente menoscabado al entrar a formar parte de una ficción novelada. En medio de una borrachera desmedida, Greg vuelve a enfrentarse a la realidad creada:

Sentado a la mesa intentó trabajar en la computadora. Quizá podía sacarle partido a la sensación de adormecimiento en todo el cuerpo: se sentía espaciado; le gustaba su torpeza al mover las manos, al caminar: era otro mundo, en el que dominaban las sensaciones extrañas e imprecisas, parecido probablemente a uno de esos paraísos artificiales soñados por ciertos poetas. Bien valía la pena escribir algo autobiográfico, un testimonio sobre su vida de poeta, un texto que lo ayudara a conjurar los maleficios que lo habían abatido en los últimos tiempos. Comenzó a teclear viendo inmediatamente en la pantalla el resultado... (214)

Se siente en otro mundo. El alcohol parece abrir la posibilidad del manuscrito, ahora por el intermedio de la informática. El ordenador posibilita la transformación de la realidad para convertirla en el escrito que testimonia el fracaso. Greg lo enciende y surge el traslado al mundo de la ficción. El resto pertenece a la ficción que se crea internamente como metáfora del final del escritor sensible y comprometido con la realidad contemporánea de Puerto Rico.

4. Simplemente una ilusión: la realidad colonizada

Memmi explica que en el desarrollo de la colonización el colonizado acaba por adherirse a la colonización, precisamente como resultado de ésta (148). La colonización le deja fuera de la historia (156) y vive en un mundo ajeno al devenir histórico, ajeno a sus raíces y a su entorno. Frente a ello, el intelectual emprende una lucha anti-colonial que significa tratar de establecer distancias con respecto a la cultura del colonizador, manifiesta Fanon (164). La misma vellonera se convierte en el instrumento de la transmisión de la cultura plebeya que no sólo representa a lo vulgar sino que enajena al ciudadano al mantenerlo en una ilusión incommovible, pero de la misma manera actúa la publicidad, el cine, la prensa y, en general, los productos

de los medios de comunicación de masas. Con todo, la letra de la canción “Simplemente una ilusión” precisamente subraya ese carácter enajenador del ensueño. No obstante, en la actualidad ha de comprenderse que, dada la victoria del capitalismo de consumo de origen estadounidense desde la Segunda Guerra Mundial, no sólo Puerto Rico sino el mundo occidental todo, ha pasado al que Verdú llama capitalismo de ficción, que ha creado “una segunda realidad o realidad de ficción con la apariencia de la auténtica naturaleza mejorada” (*El estilo del mundo* 11). Frente a esta forma que resulta, además de ilusionante, enajenante de la verdadera realidad que para el escritor independentista y socialista vive Puerto Rico, surgen los manuscritos, que de forma indeleble exponen el problema pero que paradójicamente pueden subrayar su índole artificialmente creada, su carácter aparente. La realidad ha quedado definitivamente disuelta o cuando menos la apreciación de ella, como resultado de la incertidumbre de los mensajes coloniales de los *mass media* y el discurso procedente de la metrópoli. Además, como ha insistido la narrativa hispanoamericana en las últimas décadas, la mentira es lo corriente hoy y el sistema ha convertido a la verdad en una mera abstracción que raramente se practica.

La función del intelectual es señalar que la realidad se ha convertido en mera representación. Para el intelectual socialista que siente que su país es una colonia sometida a una metrópoli y que las diversas formas de capitalismo no sirven a la educación y al bienestar del pueblo, el manuscrito es el único vehículo para la rebeldía. Como dice Adorno, escribir es el espacio en que puede vivir el escritor, porque quien carece ya de patria encuentra en el escribir su lugar de residencia (91). Y así es porque, como añade Said, el intelectual es el marginado, el que carece de voz y de representación, el impotente (*Representaciones del intelectual* 117) frente a las fuerzas del sistema. Es precisamente después de 1968 cuando Díaz Valcárcel necesita representar la realidad; no contarla sino representarla a través de textos secundarios a la manera en que se produce actualmente la realidad, cuando con la victoria de los anexionistas sienten los independistas amenazada la cultura nacional por medio de la censura y la presumible liquidación de la división de Educación de la Comunidad del Departamento de Instrucción Pública, que había sido creada a la manera de México y otros países hispanos con el fin de intercambiar desde la capital y los intelectuales experiencias y estilos propios de la población rural y tradicionalista de Puerto Rico, además de promover campañas de alfabetización y emitir mensajes de resistencia al sistema. La marcha de José Luis González a México, de René Marqués a Canóvanas, de Pedro Juan

Soto a la Universidad y de Díaz Valcárcel a Madrid auspiciado por el Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña, evidenciaban los cambios en el sistema, que al intelectual no debían de dejarle perplejo pues en los momentos de mayores protestas por la guerra de Vietnam el pueblo puertorriqueño apoyaba a los estadistas. Por ello, la obra de Díaz Valcárcel, que experimentó un giro desde fines de los sesenta e inicios de los setenta —como se aprecia en primer lugar en *Figuraciones en el mes de marzo*—, se acentúa en lo que se refiere a la conciencia de la necesidad de acentuar la incertidumbre de lo real. Los autores que redactan los manuscritos no pueden más que subrayar su ficcionalidad a pesar de la apariencia realista, pues aunque la textualidad parezca subrayar la realidad de los acontecimientos paradójicamente se convierten esos espacios en otra muestra de la simulación de lo real. Con todo, lo que queda acentuado es la ilusión de realidad que se produce sobre el individuo como producto de los mensajes de los medios de comunicación de masas a través de la propaganda como primer efecto del capitalismo de ficción.

Cuando en los años 70 Emilio Díaz Valcárcel emprendió la tarea de escribir acerca de *Tiempo de silencio* de Luis Martín-Santos, pretendió explicar la obra a través de su inserción en la sociedad española y de las clases sociales (*Visión del mundo en la novela 7*). Adoptó el término *esfera* del mismo Luis Martín-Santos para referirse a las diferentes clases sociales que intervenían en *Tiempo de silencio* y esas relaciones entre las diferentes clases daban lugar a la particular cosmovisión del escritor español, que había completado una panorámica de la sociedad española de la posguerra. De la misma manera, Díaz Valcárcel, luego del cambio de óptica narrativa, pretendió a lo largo de sus novelas una observación de la realidad puertorriqueña a través de la indagación de las diversas clases y grupos políticos que dieran cuenta de una sociedad en trance de cambio o, en ocasiones, urgidos, a su modo de ver —y el que creía de una parte del mismo Puerto Rico—, de un giro que transforme el estatus de Puerto Rico y la personalidad de los isleños, aunque algunas consultas electorales contradijeron esa opinión. El método de Lucien Goldmann le sirvió a Díaz Valcárcel para confirmar la responsabilidad del grupo social en la estructuración y coherencia de la obra, a pesar de la evidente aportación del escritor en el proceso de la escritura, a través de la cual responde al medio, a la sociedad y a las ideas de su entorno (1). De esta forma, se consideraba que la ideología subyacente al grupo y al escritor emergía del hecho literario al atender a la *visión de mundo* que presidía la novela (14-15). Esa cosmovisión vendría ofrecida por el héroe novelesco, conflictivo y problemático (16), con frecuencia representado en la narrativa de Díaz Valcárcel por

un escritor que reflexiona acerca de la realidad puertorriqueña y que, como exponía Goldmann, acentuaba su relación con los otros miembros de la sociedad y de ésta abocada al consumo (24). El héroe, para Goldmann (25) y para Díaz Valcárcel, era el individuo marginado que mantenía unos “valores auténticos” diferentes de las sociedades orientadas hacia la producción para el mercado (*Visión del mundo en la novela* 4). De esta manera, prevalecen las cualidades económicas y el prestigio del dinero por encima de los sentimientos y otros valores tradicionales. En este ambiente, el héroe marginado se convertía en la conciencia de la clase burguesa en la que surgía la forma novela desde la que precisamente ese héroe emprendía su lucha (5). Por tanto, por su *visión de mundo* el héroe creaba un universo imaginario que se dirigía hacia la estructuración social hacia la que tendía —piensan— la sociedad (Goldmann 6). Al indagar en la red de relaciones que muestra la obra se explica, por tanto, no sólo al individuo sino también a la sociedad en el sentido estimado por el escritor, convertido éste en la voz del grupo social que representa. Bajo esta perspectiva, Díaz Valcárcel trataba de explicar *Tiempo de silencio*, la sociedad española y lo que llama el *ser español*, en su análisis de la novela de Martín-Santos. Sin duda, en sus narraciones elaboró un procedimiento analítico semejante para mostrar el Puerto Rico colonizado y la sociedad puertorriqueña, para averiguar qué es el *ser puertorriqueño*. Desde *Figuraciones...*, pero especialmente desde *Harlem todos los días*, Díaz Valcárcel expone a un héroe en lucha contra una realidad social y política de extraordinaria incertidumbre como efecto de los vaivenes del proceso colonizador.

En Díaz Valcárcel, en su análisis de la realidad colonizada y la posible irrealidad de ésta, más allá de la censura del capitalismo de consumo, que resulta evidente, la censura se dirige más al capitalismo de ficción. Es decir, la denuncia apunta con más decisión a la propaganda de los medios masivos que han transformado, a su modo de ver, la cultura nacional y que ha provocado que el pueblo de Puerto Rico se haya instalado en la ideología y las costumbres del país colonizador renunciando así a su propia nacionalidad. Ésta ha quedado reducida a la persecución del emigrante en *Harlem todos los días*; al estereotipo ridículo y racista pintado por Yunito en *Mi mamá me ama*; al combate de boxeo de *Dicen que de noche tú no duermes*; a los *jingle* de *Laguna* y *Asociados*, que produce un escritor que, como el país, tiende al suicidio simbólico; o al frustrado profesor Alfredo, que también había vivido de la escritura para la publicidad engañosa y la burocracia que pintaba una isla idílica conforme a la propaganda colonialista de la metrópoli y de los sectores anexionistas de Puerto Rico. Cada personaje y los discursos

novelísticos, corroborados por la historia de ambos, inciden en el difícil debate contemporáneo de la realidad y la ficción, la verdad y la mentira, pero subrayado por el problema de la nacionalidad, lo que convierte a aquellas disputas en más intensas, necesarias y urgentes. El intelectual es el loco y marginado, pero a la vez se constituye en un héroe. A éste le compete liderar la lucha armado de manuscritos con el objetivo de revelar que —a pesar de la misma contradicción del texto escrito, que puede también ser manipulable— los puertorriqueños, como el hombre occidental todo, tal cual sintetiza la canción de Héctor Urdaneta, vive, simplemente, una ilusión.

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NATION AND MIGRATION: EMIGRATION AND EXILE IN TWO CUBAN FILMS OF THE SPECIAL PERIOD*

María Cristina Saavedra

In his introduction to *The Cuban Filmography, 1897 Through 2001*, Alfonso J. García Osuna poses the important question of how best to define the elusive term “Cuban film.” Those critics who might place Cuban cinema in a completely separate category quite often see it merely as a foil to Western values and culture—the antithesis of capitalist, bourgeois societies. Such a view, García Osuna argues, reduces a complex medium into a convenient reflection of the hegemonic society’s own worldview (6). Yet to see Cuban film as solely a variant of the Western tradition would be an equally reductive and ineffective characterization. Within Cuba itself, he adds, the prominence of cinema in post-revolutionary Cuba has been seen by many Cuban intellectuals as an “Americanization of culture,” one that has displaced or usurped the status that Cuban literature had enjoyed world-wide (6-7).

This discussion points to the complicated mutual history between the US and Cuba, one that goes much farther back than the 1959 revolution. As Louis Pérez notes:

Cubans and North Americans occupied a place in each other’s imagination and in their respective fantasies about each other. They intruded on one another as the national character of each was in the process of formation, which is to say that they entered each other’s national consciousness and henceforth the character of each would retain permanent traces of this encounter. (6, qtd. in Banet-Weiser 161)

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The US and Cuba “[re]entered each other’s national consciousness” in a decidedly dramatic way after the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emigration crisis that occurred on the island. Known in Cuba as the “Special Period,” the era heralded by the 1990s brought unprecedented hardships and shortages of even the most basic necessities, largely but not exclusively, as a result of the Soviet Union’s inability to continue to bolster the Cuban economy. Undoubtedly, the lack of support from the Soviet Union was largely to blame for the mass exodus at this time, but internal problems on the island, the on-going US trade embargo, and the US’s own special immigration policies toward Cubans up to this time surely abetted the increase in *balseros* [rafters] as well (Masud-Piloto 134).¹ Curiously, this pressing issue of migration had been an “elephant in the room” of sorts in Cuban cinema after 1959. But the crisis of the Special Period not only brought the figure of the *émigré* into the foreground, it also drew on that figure to help bolster its own sense of nationhood at a time when it seemed the dream of revolution might dissolve.

Two films in which emigration is a principal theme, Julio García Espinosa’s *Reina y rey* [Queen and King] and *Miel para Oshún* [Honey for Oshún] directed by Humberto Solás, focus on the return of the exile of the 1960s and 1970s—a more distant figure than the *émigré* of the 1990s. Directed by two of Cuba’s most prominent directors, these films share not only the common theme of Cuban emigration, but also capture on celluloid a similar view of Cuban nationalism.

Los balseros

Through the likes of CNN and other networks with global reach, the world has been privy to an on-going televised drama off the shores of the Florida coastline that became all too familiar in the decade of the 1990s: the scene of men, women, and children desperately clinging to life on what remained of a make-shift raft. It is a sight that inspired pathos but also a growing sense of ambivalence regarding the status of those individuals who are willing to risk all to reach US shores—a form of reality television that did not readily provide a simplistic reading of the situation. Recent changes in world politics have resulted in a reappraisal of the standing of Cuban exiles in this

¹ Following the Mariel Crisis, the accords signed with Cuba guaranteed that the US would issue 20,000 visas annually. The agreement was renewed in 1987, but the actual number of visas up to that time had not come close to the 20,000 per year quota. Between 1985 and 1994, the US had issued 11,222 visas, a mere 7.1% of the quota amount, while it had admitted 13,275 Cubans who had entered the country illegally.

country. Thus, to this seemingly made-for-television nautical saga was added the maneuvering of US Coast Guard ships around the balseros as part of the carefully choreographed dance of current immigration policy toward Cuba commonly referred to as “wet feet/dry feet.” Once welcomed as refugees of Communism, Cubans attempting to enter the US illegally by sea now find themselves in less accommodating circumstances. But this exclusive immigration policy nonetheless guarantees that Cubans fleeing the island who manage to make it onto US soil (the “dry feet”) will be eligible to apply for legal residency. If, on the other hand, they are intercepted at sea by the Coast Guard, they must be returned to Cuba unless they can prove that they are indeed political refugees in need of asylum.² Even these immigration guidelines become equivocal, however, when it comes to the issue of Cuban immigrants. Nothing could have made that more clear than the media circus that accompanied the rescue and subsequent plight in Miami of Elián González, the six-year-old boy found floating on the ocean on an inner tube in 1999.³

The changes in US immigration law regarding Cuban immigrants were precipitated by the Cuban migration crisis of the 1990s, when the issue of illegal rafters took on special significance. According to US Coast Guard statistics, the number of balseros rescued at sea began to rise sharply at the beginning of the 1990s after an extended period of relatively low figures in the 1980s. The number of people rescued jumped from 467 in 1990 to 2,203 in 1991, with the figures rising steadily in the following years, reaching a staggering 37,139 in 1994, a pivotal year in Cuban migration (Masud-Piloto 140).

From May to August 1994, incidents of violence rocked the Cuban capital. In August, a small riot erupted in Havana, and several boat hijackings in the previous months had grim outcomes. People began to look for ways to leave the island by any means possible.

² The 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act made Cuban émigrés eligible for permanent residency as well as citizenship under less stringent conditions. While migrational links between Cuba and the US can easily be traced to the nineteenth century and before, the sudden jump in Cuban immigration is most evident after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Indeed, between 1959 and 1990, more than one million Cubans emigrated to the United States. It should be noted that the first waves of immigrants to the US (those who came before 1980, and in particular those who left in the 1960s, were markedly different as a group from subsequent immigrant waves. The first groups were largely made up of members of the upper and middle classes, professionals, and business people.

³ For an in-depth discussion of the Elián González case in the US media, see Sarah Banet-Weiser, “Elián González and ‘The Purpose of America’: Nation, Family and the Child-Citizen.” *American Quarterly*. 55.2 (2003): 149-78.

On August 5 when Fidel Castro addressed the nation on Cuban television, he lay blame for the violence squarely on the United States, issuing the ultimatum that if the US “failed to take serious measures to guard their coasts,” Cuba would essentially open its borders for all those who wanted to leave the country (Masud-Piloto 137-38). The US, of course, did no such thing. There can be no doubt that those who decided to leave had been encouraged by the fact that the US had up to that time welcomed as political refugees those individuals who had “stolen a plane, a boat, or [even] committed murder” in order to reach US shores. These individuals had been offered asylum regardless of the crimes they might have committed in their singular pursuit (Rodríguez Chávez 44; 46). As a result, August of 1994 became a record-setting month for Cuban migration to the US.

The Clinton administration, fearing another massive exodus of Cuban refugees not unlike the Mariel boatlift of 1980 when some 125,000 refugees entered the US, took immediate and unprecedented action. On 9 September 1994 the US signed a new migration accord with Cuba. Under this new agreement, the US would no longer accept rafters found at sea attempting to enter the country illegally, except in those cases where they made it to US shores before being intercepted, but it would continue to accept up to 20,000 Cuban émigrés a year, as per the quota set in the 1980s (Masud-Piloto 102; 134).

These new Cuban émigrés, unlike most of their predecessors, took to the waters not because of direct opposition to the government; rather, their primary motivation appeared to be what many of their compatriots in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean seek: a way to ease the burden of scraping together the essentials of daily life. Ideology, it would seem, took a back seat to the pragmatic concerns of a population in distress. As one individual interviewed in a survey of émigrés in 1994 put it: “I didn’t have and do not have any problems with the Castro regime or the Revolution. ... My choices were to leave with my children or starve” (Eckstein and Barberia 807).

In the aftermath of the rafter crisis, Cuba also made some changes in its policy toward returning émigrés. Familial ties across the Florida Straits continued to grow, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to subject families to the stringent rules for visitation that had existed. At the same time, and of equal importance, those visiting relatives brought important revenue to a nation that was strained to the limit (Eckstein and Barberia 811). In the mid-1990s, Cuba removed the quotas for émigré visitors and allowed pre-1970s émigrés to use

their US passports to enter the country. Cubans in exile, previously vilified as *gusanos* or worms, became known officially as “fellow countrymen who reside in the territory of the US,” and were no longer referred to as counterrevolutionaries and traitors (Fernandes 154). This re-configuration of the figure of the *émigré* seemed a logical step as the legal migration between the US and Cuba increased to highs not seen since the late 1970s. Eighty percent of first-time travelers to Cuba were from the group of exiles who had left the island after 1980. These more recent groups tended, quite naturally, to have more family connections (Eckstein and Barberia 815). It is against this backdrop of mass expatriation that Cuban cinema takes up in earnest the subject of Cuban emigration.

Cinema, Migration, and the National Imagination

Exiles are—by virtue of the fact that they stand between two cultures—political subjects.⁴ Whether the homecoming is a permanent repatriation or merely a temporary visit to a now lost homeland, the return of any Cuban to his native country must be understood, at least in part, as a political act. As such, exiles are subjects of interest to the national imaginary—subjects of those media that by virtue of their power to represent reality, whether on the small or the large screen, are laden with the visual tropes that suitably support a nationalist project.

For its part, Cuba has been keenly aware of the power of such media, having singled out cinema as one of the most important instruments both for the dissemination of ideology and as an important weapon against the hegemonic world view being framed on the small screen of the world news media. As has been well documented by film historians, the development of film as an arm of the Cuban revolution became a huge priority for the new government. Just months after guerrilla forces took power in 1959, the ICAIC (the Cuban Institute of Film Art and Industry), came into being in March of that year. Soon after, the meager film production of no more than 150 films in the entire 60 years preceding the revolution, swelled to a production of 112 full-length films and 900 documentaries in only the first 24 years of revolutionary government (Burton 126).

In spite of the prodigious output of the ICAIC, very few films had dealt with the issue of emigration. In fact, in the thirty years following the revolution (i.e., up to 1989) only one fictional feature-length film,

⁴ I borrow this notion from Sarah Banet-Weiser 162.

Lejanía [Distance] in 1985, and one documentary *55 hermanos* [55 brothers] (1978) take on emigration as a central theme.⁵ The overwhelming wave of emigration in the 1990s would change the reluctance to deal with emigration, as the exigencies of reality lay claim to cinematic production.

In her essay on the topic “La mirada de Ovidio. El tema de la emigración en el cine cubano de los 90” [The gaze of Ovid: the theme of emigration in Cuban cinema of the 90s], Désirée Díaz offers an explanation for the exclusion of such a pressing reality. In spite of widespread emigration from the island, she argues, “the most propitious conditions for a truly unprejudiced analysis of a situation that involved a great many emotions and wounds, and in which virtually everyone sees himself reflected, did not yet exist...” (Díaz 40).⁶ This at once explains the inability of filmmakers to deal with the theme of emigration head-on, as well as the number of movies that opted to touch on the theme only obliquely and lightly.

Clearly, the issue of emigration was quite a delicate one for Cuban filmmakers, and one, as she states, that involved the question of

how to investigate and reactivate the basis of Cuban nationalism and represent and testify to the revolution’s humanism, while still including those areas of social reality that in fact create a fissure in the revolutionary project: emigration, and the family conflicts that surround the decision to leave. (Díaz 39)

One of the primary factors that operated against the representation of the émigré is the marginalized status that such a figure had in the early years of the revolution. Known as *gusanos* and *vendepatrias* [turncoats] during the first waves of migration, émigrés became outsiders from the moment the decision was made to leave the country. In addition, the historical vilification of the figure of the émigré condoned by the central government made the topic of emigration something of a “third rail” for filmmakers, and the ICAIC was an institution that had customarily exercised a great deal of self-censorship, so much so that the central government had rarely stepped in to censor its productions (Fernandes 107).⁷ Still, as the phenomenon proliferated

⁵ The theme of emigrations and exile in Cuban film is discussed extensively in Désirée Díaz, “La mirada de Ovidio. El tema de la emigración en el cine cubano de los 90,” *Temas. Cultura, ideología, sociedad*. 27 (2001): 37-52. and to a lesser extent in Ana M. López, “Greater Cuba.” *The Ethnic Eye. Latino Media Arts*, ed. Chon Noriega and Ana M. López. (Minneapolis, Minn.: U of Minnesota P, 1996): 38-58.

⁶ Here, as elsewhere unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own.

⁷ Among the rare exceptions were Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s *Hasta cierto*

and touched more and more lives, the question became not how to represent the Other as much as how to represent the “Other Among Us.”

In times of adversity, the impulse to solidify the idea of nation takes on greater urgency. One might argue that the uphill climb to national self-identity in Cuba has been on-going since the revolution started, since the new revolutionary society had always been under siege from outside forces. The definition of nation, as James Snead has argued, depends in part on the idea of cultural distinction or difference:

One could classify various national cultures both in terms of the tenacity with which coverage was maintained and the extent to which one culture projected an image of radical difference—defined as “national” or “natural” superiority—from another culture. (Snead 235)

Thus, the need to establish a sense of what is essentially Cuban, or *cubanía*, and the sense of exceptionalism that comes with identifying as a Cuban becomes a cultural priority. Exile represents a sense of loss of nation but also of identity, for leaving one’s country also represents leaving behind part of the essence of who we are.

The idea of nation furthermore implies a need to create a collective worldview—that is, a way of seeing the world that excludes others while also binding together those within. Timothy Brennan says it best when he defines nationhood as not only a political formation, but

a formal binding together of disparate elements. ...[O]ut of the multiplicities of culture, race, and political structures, grows also a repeated dialectic of uniformity and specificity: of world culture and national culture, of family and people. ... [I]n Franz Fanon’s statement ... “[I]t is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows.” (Brennan 62-63)

At the beginning of the 1990s, the ICAIC went through a period of upheaval in several areas, as did other Cuban institutions.⁸ Because of the financial hardships the ICAIC faced with the beginning of the Special Period, it gained a considerably greater autonomy from the state due to the restructuring process, but compared to its previous output, it was reduced to making only about one or two feature films a year—and those, with foreign collaborators (Fernandes 124).

punto [Up to a Certain Point] (1984), and the 1991 film *Alicia en el pueblo de las maravillas* [Alice in Wondertown] directed by Daniel Díaz Torres, which was withdrawn from Havana theaters shortly after its debut.

⁸ See Paulo Antonio Paranaguá’s discussion in “Cuban Cinema’s Political Challenges.” *New Latin American Cinema, Volume 2, Studies of National Cinemas*, ed. Michael T. Martin. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1997).

Nonetheless, the high costs involved in filmmaking meant cinema had to be much more closely aligned with the political leadership than other art forms, and as has been noted, a considerable part of the hegemonic project of building nationhood through art had been assumed by cinema (Fernandes 88).

Humberto Solás, the noted director of *Miel para Oshún* [Honey for Oshún] (2001), one of the films that focused on the theme, expressed this idea in a recent interview when he said, “[I]f you are unable to create a cinematic image of the nation, you cannot, in the modern world and among the polity, project nationhood” (Martin and Paddington 12). And in what is surely the best known Cuban film of the 1990s, *Fresa y chocolate* [Strawberry and Chocolate], the burden of defining an inclusive national space is a prominent theme. As Emilio Bejel comments, the two protagonists—David, a young, staunchly Marxist student and Diego, a disaffected homosexual—find mutual ground precisely through their nationalism (158, qtd in Fernandes 145). Indeed, nationalism is a recurring theme in the 1990s, whether films focus primarily on the Cuban diaspora, or as in the case of another popular film, *La vida es silbar* [Life is to Whistle], they do not.

But the challenge lay in the representation of the nation in film that would allow for a dialogue with the exile Other without allowing the figure of the émigré or exile to fracture the nationalist project.⁹ In the two films under close discussion here, *Reina y rey* [Queen and King] (1994), which was made precisely at the height of the Special Period, and *Miel para Oshún*, the idea of nation is brought out through the narrative representations of the émigré as either a conflicted or tormented figure and/or one whose sense of self-identity has been shattered. In the case of *Miel para Oshún*, the figure also appears as an individual haunted and deeply scarred by the specter of loss.

Reina y rey

Julio García Espinosa’s *Reina y rey* represents the figure of the émigré as one whose values are profoundly antithetical to the revolution. It employs a stereotypical view of the Cuban émigré who fled to Miami in the first waves of emigration for primarily political reasons, although those reasons are never explicitly stated in the film. The

⁹ Another fictional film produced after 1990 dealing primarily with emigration was Pastor Vega’s *Vidas paralelas* [Parallel Lives] (1992). *Mujer transparente* [Transparent Woman] (1990) is made up of five segments, the last of which takes up the issue of exile.

blatant materialism of the middle-aged couple who return to Cuba after decades in exile might lead one to conclude that one of the main motivations for their flight might well have been the loss of property after the revolution.

The story revolves around a working-class woman named Reina, who worked before the revolution as a maid and nanny for an upper middle class couple. When the couple immigrated to Miami with their young son, they left Reina the sprawling, modern house they had occupied in Havana. Now Reina, whose name means “queen,” lives there alone with a small mutt she calls Rey, or king. The film has a rather slow start during which García Espinosa paints an elaborate portrait of Reina’s daily struggle to make ends meet, as she grapples between using her rationed food allowance for herself and for her beloved pet.

In desperation, she tries to give away the dog and even considers taking him to the pound, until one day the difficult choice is made for her after Rey runs off on his own. Here the early influence of Italian Neorealism on García Espinosa, who was a student at the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia in his youth, is apparent in both content and ideology. Reina’s character is drawn from Vittorio DeSica’s *Umberto D* (1952), whose protagonist is likewise a lonely old man living alone with his dog. Finding himself in dire circumstances following the War, *Umberto D* also tries to get rid of his dog, and even attempts suicide. In the same way that Italian Neorealism moved away from the movie-land world of the *Cinecittà* and brought the camera out to the streets in an attempt to capture the real poverty and devastation left in the wake of the Second World War, García Espinosa captures that desperation in the character of Reina, following DeSica’s original themes of old age, solitude, and the lack of communication between characters.¹⁰

The despondent Reina lies awake at night waiting for Rey’s return, until one morning a knock on the door brings an unexpected development. Carmen and Emilio, the former residents, have come back to Cuba after a twenty-year absence with the ulterior motive of taking Reina with them back to Miami. The contrast between Reina’s unassuming, authentic manner and the shrill, affected character of Carmen is quite evident, as it is meant to be. From her first appearance, Carmen comes off as a caricature of the Miami Cuban who returns to Cuba overflowing with all that materialistic culture has to

¹⁰ See Vittorio DeSica’s comments on *Umberto D* in the documentary made for Italian television in 2001, *Così è la vita* [That’s Life], directed by Sandro Lai.

offer. "Want to see what Santa Claus brought?" she asks Reina just minutes after she and her husband enter the door. Through her loud and histrionic behavior, Carmen is presented in such an unappealing light that she is instantly dislikeable. Her outward appearance is merely the wrapping for her equally repulsive values. A hint of her racism is evident in her news about Emilito, her son, who is married to a woman Carmen describes to Reina as "blonde, blue-eyed, from a good family—what more can I say?" Indeed, Carmen has said it all in the description that implies that her son has found a more ideal mate in Miami than he might ever have found in Cuba.

No sooner have they toured the house than Carmen proceeds to re-colonize it and assert her former position. When they are standing in the master bedroom (now Reina's bedroom), Carmen asks Reina if she would not mind letting Emilio and her sleep in their old bed again.

Now the two visitors begin a whirlwind tour of some of the most famous tourist spots in the capital: the Plaza de la Catedral in Old Havana, the capitol building, the Tropicana nightclub—all with Reina in tow. Here the film explores another important and recurring theme in the experience of returning exiles: the experience of viewing the place from the perspective of a nostalgic past. And it is here, perhaps, that the film is at its best.

If there is any doubt at this point in the viewer's mind as to the motives behind the couple's desire to take Reina away from the dire circumstances in which she is living, they are dispelled in two critical scenes. The first takes place in the house of a neighbor named Rosa, who as it turns out, was a close friend of Carmen. Apparently, Rosa has been trying to leave the country legally for over a year with no success and is imploring Carmen to help her when the couple returns to Miami. Carmen's response leaves no doubt as to the value she places on friendship and human affection. Without a moment's hesitation, she responds in no uncertain terms that she simply cannot. "We aren't financially solvent," she tells Rosa. In other words, Carmen is not prepared to help her former friend escape the economic hardship she is facing, if it might imply that Carmen would have to sacrifice some of her own money to do it. Thus, it is evident once again that the Cubans on "the other shore" are not very admirable, to say the least. Carmen and her husband are only interested in helping out that particular individual who would benefit them personally: Reina.

Another key scene cements this image in the viewer's mind. In the evening, Carmen sits at her old dressing table in the bedroom discussing with Emilio their attempts to convince Reina to leave Cuba.

They speak of her as if she were a business investment, referring to the fact that she's still very healthy and strong, in spite of her age, and that she is someone they can trust. Emilio's main concern is that the terms of the offer be made clear: they would provide room and board, and Reina would in turn work for them as she had in the past. Concerned that they may not be able to get the necessary data out of Reina herself in order to begin the paperwork, Carmen suggests that Emilio visit Cristina, the head of the neighborhood CDR (Committee in Defense of the Revolution), who lives across the street. In the telling scene when Emilio visits Cristina, it becomes evident in the course of their conversation that Emilio had been romantically involved with Cristina in the past. Carmen surely was privy to this affair, as she urges Emilio to use that very connection to extract information about Reina from Cristina.

Not surprisingly, Cristina refuses to talk. In the end, Emilio admits to her that his request was merely an excuse to see her again and confesses that he "can't forget what [they] were to each other" and that he isn't happy in his life. The implication here is that when he left Cuba, Emilio also left behind the most genuine part of himself. True love and a more authentic existence were traded for the expedience and relative comfort of exile.

Reina, in the end, does opt for the genuine but difficult existence she has in Cuba, where she is no one's servant. In a subtle act of defiance, she tells Carmen that her real name isn't Reina, but Yolanda, evoking the title of a famous song by the Cuban singer Pablo Milanés. This song is heard playing on the radio at the beginning of the film when Reina is lying in bed with her dog Rey. Although "Yolanda" is a love song, it has an interesting last line that is heard as Reina stands at the window watching her visitors get in their car:

Si alguna vez me siento derrotado/Renuncio a ver el sol cada mañana/
Rezando el credo que me has enseñado/Miro tu cara y digo en la
ventana/Yolanda/Yolanda/Eternamente Yolanda.

[If ever I feel despondent/I turn away from the sun shining through
the window/ and look at your face as I sing the prayer I learned from
you/Yolanda, Yolanda, forever Yolanda]

At the beginning of the film, "Yolanda" was a song of love shared by Reina and her beloved pet, as they lay in bed in the lazy moments of the early morning. Now it becomes a metaphor for the love for Cuba—the Rey that Reina patiently awaits—and the struggle for survival itself becomes a rebellious nationalist act. One recalls José Martí's sense of nationalist pride when he suggested that "[o]ur wine may be bitter but it is our own wine."

Miel para Oshún

Humberto Solás's film *Miel para Oshún* deals with a more recent phenomenon in the history of Cuban emigration: the return of those individuals who left Cuba when they were children and decide to make the journey back as adults. The film approaches the theme of the émigré from the perspective of a man who left Cuba when he was only eight years old. Roberto, the protagonist, grew up in the US with his father, believing that his mother had abandoned him. One gets the sense that the father was adamantly opposed to the new regime, and he therefore made his son Roberto promise that he would never return to the island. Upon his father's death, Roberto decides to break his promise and do just that. After a 32-year absence, he returns to Cuba to search for his mother.

Like Espinosa in *Reina*, Solás opts in this film to profile the early wave of émigrés who left in the decade of the 60s and early 70s, but this time, his protagonist is not one of those who chose to leave. Roberto is one of the many of the so-called "one and a half generation" of Cuban-Americans who have decided once they become adults to return to the island in order to reconnect broken family ties and/or to make up their own minds about the country of their birth. In the black-and-white flashback at the opening of the film, Solás recreates the scene in which Roberto's father boards a yacht as the two make their frantic departure while the boy cries out for his mother. It is a scene that might evoke in the viewer's mind the unforgettable sight of the raid on the home of Elián González's relatives, when another child was whisked away seemingly against his will—a scene which presents the absolute inversion of the concept of nation here.

Immediately upon his arrival in Havana, Roberto makes contact with the cousin he had so loved in childhood, Pilar, who informs him of a deeply disturbing fact: Roberto's mother had never abandoned him. Because the mother refused to leave the island, Roberto's father kidnapped the boy and later invented the story of abandonment with which Roberto had lived his entire adult life. Thus, the film begins with the revelation of a lie, bringing into question other lies that might have accompanied Roberto's life in exile, and what follows is the quest to rectify this wrong and be reunited with the mother. This story resonates strongly with a parallel story that has captured the interest of other filmmakers and writers on the island, the airlift of the early sixties known as Operation Peter Pan, in which 14,000 Cuban children were brought to the US in a program coordinated through the Catholic Church in Miami. It was the subject of a Cuban documentary film *Del*

otro lado del cristal [The Other Side of the Glass] in 2000.¹¹ In the US, recently released CIA documents have rekindled interest in the story, primarily from the perspective of those individuals who were involved in the airlift. While Roberto was not one of the Peter Pan children, he nonetheless represents another émigré figure who is returning to Cuba with increasing frequency. Now a professor of Spanish and Latin American literature in a North American university and by his own description not a happy man, Roberto returns in an attempt to recover the life that was taken from him. Unlike Espinosa's Emilio, Roberto did not have a choice about leaving Cuba, but both characters nonetheless share a similar kind of unhappiness as exiles.

The film has traces of what some see as the influence of the increasing need for foreign collaboration in recent Cuban films. While such collaboration, as noted earlier, has allowed for a certain degree of autonomy, it also makes filmmakers beholden to another kind of pressure. Filmmakers now find themselves catering to foreign tastes for the exotic in Cuba. In particular, Afro-Cuban religious culture is de rigueur in joint productions. The Cuban actor Luis Alberto García puts it bluntly when he says: "[I]t is always obligatory in films made with non-Cubans to have a mulatta, salsa, lots of palm trees, and a scene of Afro-Cuban religion, which attracts most attention" (García qtd. in an interview with Fernandes 127).

Although Roberto is an avowed agnostic, his cousin Pilar insists on taking him to see a Santería priestess (her "madrina") to try to determine where Roberto's mother might be. From a trance state, the priestess tells them that the mother will be found "where the waters of Oshún (the goddess of rivers and female sensuality) meet the waters of Yemayá (the goddess of the sea and maternity)." Armed with this knowledge and the last known whereabouts of the mother, the two begin a journey with their driver across the entire country to the easternmost province of Oriente. So begin the travels that extend the film's mise-en-scène across the entire island (and thus the nation), through the popular genre of the road movie (Tomás Gutiérrez Alea and Juan Carlos Tabío's *Guantanamera* immediately comes to mind). After hitting numerous dead ends and endless problems with transportation so typical of road trips in Cuba, Roberto is ready to give up in frustration. He wanders aimlessly into an open square in the small

¹¹ Two books in English on the subject are *Operation Pedro Pan* by Yvonne Conde and Victor Andrés Triay's *Fleeing Castro. Operation Pedro Pan and the Cuban Children's Program*. The publication in Cuba of *Operación Peter Pan. Un caso de guerra psicológica contra Cuba*, by Ramón Torreira Crespo and Jorge Buajasán Marrawi, presents a decidedly different perspective.

town where he and his companions are staying and in a seminal scene of confession lashes out at a group of local spectators:

I don't know who I am ... if I'm Cuban or American. Act like an American. Marry an American. Have American children so they won't treat you like a worthless [shitty] Latino. You at least know who you are. Even though things may be bad here, even though you have problems, you understand yourselves. ... But not me. I am nothing.

What rings true is the fact that such stories do exist in the space of the imagined community of Cuba, in the space that is inhabited by Cubans both in and outside the island, and through film, the image of such a tormented existence is very powerfully manifested. Roberto to himself signifies what is most dangerous about leaving Cuba: a loss of self and the devastation of any hope of aspiring to a genuine existence. To return to Cuba is to be reunited with his mother in the most profound sense possible. It is to become once again, part of the Cuban nation. But even when in the end Roberto is reunited with his mother—and by extension with his patria, or homeland—he will always remain a mere simulacrum of what it is to be Cuban. The film's ending falters in its unabashed sentimentality and nostalgia, and also because here too, it succumbs to the pressure of exoticizing Cuba, for in the end we learn that Roberto's mother—the Cuban Mother, and Cuba-As-Mother—is none other than Cuban Mulata.

It is critical to note here the importance of the female figure in Cuban film, particularly as she embodies the idea of nation. Marvin D'Lugo's reading of Cuban film leads him to conclude that

[w]hile the allegorical condition of women as embodiments of a concept of nation has been sustained, the female figure has emerged in Cuban films as the agency through which a new range of critical discourses about Cuban culture in general and the revolution in particular are enunciated. (156)

Indeed, Solás's use of the Cuban Mother as figuration for the Cuban nation is not entirely new. As D'Lugo explains, the women in *Lucía*, possibly the most important work in the filmography of Humberto Solás, embody the development of the Cuban nation from colonial times to the post-revolutionary period and function allegorically as "the 'site' in which the audience participated metaphorically in the process of national self-realization" (156). Roberto's mother, Reina, and Cristina all serve such a purpose in these films. All three characters are mulatas and represent the lower classes that the revolution embraced. Moreover, they are the figuration of a mestizo Cuba, one that represents the idealized mestizo nation of José Martí.

In *Miel*, Solás puts his Cuban audience in the untenable position

of trying to recreate a new identity out of a discourse of exile mired in nostalgia and loss, and at the other end of the spectrum, a representation of Cuba that is somewhat tainted by seeing itself as exoticized Other. As Cuban film critic Alberto Ramos puts it, Solás leaves the viewer with “the sad consolation that others’ misfortunes engender in us in order to distance ourselves from what is a less than enticing present.” One can easily extend Ramos’s observation to the final images of *Reina y Rey*. And he concludes: “[h]ere or there, in Cuba or in exile, whether besieged by material poverty or the entrenched solitude of the exile, the Cuban will always remain an agonized being; it appears to be the ontological curse ... that weighs upon this island” (26-28).

What seems to overcome a rather cynical view in these two films is the possibility that the years of loss and struggle from which Cuba seems to have begun to rise may present new “foundational fictions” for a new era. Both the exclusionary view of the exile presented in *Reina y Rey* and the view of the exile-as-victim presented in *Miel* appear to have been superseded in recent productions by a younger generation of filmmakers who treat the theme of exile and emigration from a more nuanced perspective. Gone are the simplistic stereotypes drenched in the emotional fog of the revolution’s early years. Films such as *Video de familia* (2001) and *Nada* (2002) seek to rework the old paradigms of exile and family to present a hopeful, if nonetheless complex and problematic, vision of the future. We are left with the feeling that there is a future Cuba for which it will still be worth living and an imagined community that will be able to embrace the expatriate upon her return.

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THE ACHE OF VICTORIANISM: L.P. HARTLEY AND KENNETH GRAHAME

Roger Craik

Less than half a century ago, everything suggested that L.P. Hartley (1895-1972) would be remembered as a distinguished, but not great, English novelist, as well as a short story writer and literary reviewer. In 1925 he had established himself as a Jamesian novelist with *Simonetta Perkins*, and after many other novels (he wrote sixteen in all and was at work on the seventeenth when he died) came *The Go-Between* (1953), generally considered to be his masterpiece, in which the middle-aged narrator Leo Colston looks back to a holiday he took at the age of twelve, in 1900, at the country house of a school friend's family, where he is persuaded to pass love letters between the school friend's beautiful elder sister Marian and her farmer lover Ted Burgess. Hartley lived long enough to see his novel made into a gratifyingly successful film directed by Joseph Losey, scripted by Harold Pinter, and starring Julie Christie and Alan Bates. Posthumously he was still to the fore in the late 1970s when the BBC serialized his trilogy *Eustace and Hilda* (1941-47). But since then he is spoken of little, and *The Go-Between* is remembered, if at all, as the book-of-the-film, rather than the book in its own right. Now, of all the books that Hartley wrote, only *The Go-Between* and a later, feeble novel, *The Hireling*, remain in print. If he were to have had any revival, it would have followed the publication of the only full-length biography of him, Andrew Wright's, with its claims that Hartley was a homosexual and possessed a lifelong but unrequited love of Lord David Cecil. The smatter of reviews of Wright's book, though, mainly written by friends of Hartley, were not only discouraging to the biography but were resigned: all of them, some more than others, felt it necessary to explain Hartley to a world that they knew does not know him. Reading these notices, one senses that Hartley's day is done: in the closing years of the twentieth century there was no place for his novels, warmed as they are by Georgian, Edwardian and Victorian suns. The world of Hartley's fiction, of public schools, of privileges

and servants and class distinctions, is distant from the technological and increasingly business-minded England of today, and lingers as recognized anachronisms rather than part of that country's cultural fabric. Sadly, not even the great virtues of Hartley's novels—his universal themes such as the transition from childhood to adulthood, the destructiveness of emotional and sexual relationships, and the self-withering trait of keeping one's love hidden—have been able to preserve his novels in a century he came to loathe and which Philip Larkin bemoaned in one of his later poems, "Going, Going":

And that will be England gone,
The shadows, the meadows, the lanes,
The guildhalls, the carved choirs.
There'll be books; it will linger on
In galleries. . . (Larkin 189)

These are Hartley's fears too, and they have come true. Consequently, of all the injustices meted out to Hartley the cruellest is that his most famous sentence, "the past is a foreign country: they do things differently there," has become true of his own past and of himself.

The handful of critics who have written on Hartley concur with Peter Bien's general assessment that "Hawthorne and Brontë [Emily] are ever-renewed sources of inspiration, while Henry James remains more in the background as a teacher whose lessons have been fully absorbed" (14-15). Giorgio Melchiori has established beyond doubt that Hartley drew on Hawthorne's story "Rappaccini's Daughter" for his description of the Deadly Nightshade, the poisonous plant that so fascinates Leo Colston in *The Go-Between*. Later, in 1966, Richard Allan Davidson makes an unconvincing claim for the influence of Graham Greene's short story "The Basement Room" (1936).

The greatest and by far the most far-reaching influence on Hartley's *The Go-Between*, however, has gone unnoticed. He is Kenneth Grahame. The book in question, lauded by Swinburne as "well-nigh too praiseworthy for praise," and which was prescribed as compulsory reading for English parents who "will understand their children the better for doing so" (qtd. in Green 104), is not *The Wind in the Willows*, but *The Golden Age*, published by a curious but perhaps significant coincidence in 1895, the year that L.P. Hartley was born. A collection of stories written about children but intended for adults, *The Golden Age* reverts to the Wordsworthian and Blakean ideas of children as "illuminati" whose perception is far superior to that of the unimaginative pleasure-stifling adults ("Olympians") who control them. The particular children are five orphans living with an aunt and visited by various grown-up friends of the aunt. The book made Grahame famous.

My original aims in this essay were first to establish *The Golden Age* as the major influence on L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* and then to explore how Hartley's reading of Grahame's book infuses and illuminates his own, but during the course of my reading and thinking about Hartley's and Grahame's now unfashionable books, another aim began quietly to assert itself, namely that as our own troubled century advances in its first decade, readers of this journal might be encouraged to take up Grahame and Hartley with admiration and pleasure.

It is with pleasure indeed that those familiar with Grahame's *The Golden Age* read the chapter "The Secret Drawer" in which the boy narrator finds himself in "a little used, rarely entered chamber." The boy is sensitive to the room's atmosphere:

There was something very feminine in the faint hues of its faded brocades, in the rose and blue of such bits of china as yet remained, and in the delicate old-world fragrance of pot-pourri from the great bowl, blue and white. . . But one other thing the room possessed, peculiar to itself; a certain sense of privacy—a power of making the intruder feel he was intruding. . . There was no doubt it was reserved and stand-offish, keeping itself to itself. (171-72).

Displaying an adult habit which Kenneth Grahame perceives so well as being particularly irritating to children, Uncle Thomas enters the room and approaches an old bureau, exclaiming "There's a secret drawer in there somewhere" but then dashes off to smoke, leaving the boy enraptured at the thought of a secret drawer but with no means of finding it. In vain he "explore[s] the empty pigeon-holes and sound[s] the depths of the softly sliding drawers. [He] becomes disillusioned":

I . . . felt over every inch of the smooth surfaces, from front to back. Never a knob, spring or projection met the thrilling fingertips; unyielding the old bureau stood, stoutly guarding its secret; if secret it really had. I began to grow weary and disheartened . . . Was anything any good whatever? In my mind I began to review past disappointments, and life seemed one long record of failure and non-arrival. (177)

Some minutes later, after the boy has mused upon the early evening sky, his fortunes change: "Hardly had I put my hand once more to the obdurate wood, when with a sort of small sigh, almost a sob—as it were—of relief, the secret drawer sprang open" (178-79). Grahame lets us experience the boy's disappointment at the contents of the secret drawer before he divulges those contents, and when he does so it is with a sensitive child's sense of increasing wonder:

And yet, as I looked again at the small collection that lay within that drawer of disillusion, some warmth crept back to my heart as I

recognized that a kindred spirit to my own had been at the making of it. Two tarnished gilt buttons—naval, apparently—a portrait of a monarch unknown to me, cut from some antique print and deftly coloured by hand in just my own bold style of brush-work—some foreign copper coins, thicker and clumsier of make than those I hoarded myself—and a list of birds'-eggs, with names of the places where they had been found. Also, a ferret's muzzle, and a twist of tarry string, still faintly aromatic! It was a real boy's hoard, then, that I had happened upon. He too had found out the secret drawer, this happy-starred young person; and here he had stowed away his treasures, one by one, and had cherished them secretly awhile; and then—what? Well, one would never know now the reason why these priceless possessions still lay here unreclaimed; but across the void stretch of years I seemed to touch hands a moment with my little comrade of seasons—how many seasons?—long since dead.

I restored the drawer, with its contents, to the trusty bureau, and heard the spring click with a certain satisfaction. Some other boy, perhaps, would some day release that spring again. (179-80)

The *Go-Between* opens as follows:

The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.

When I came upon the diary it was lying at the bottom of a rather battered red cardboard collar-box, in which as a small boy I kept my Eton collars. Someone, probably my mother, had filled it with treasures dating from those days. There were two dry, empty sea-urchins; two rusty magnets, a large one and a small one, which had almost lost their magnetism; some negatives rolled up in a tight coil; some stumps of sealing-wax; a small combination lock with three rows of letters; a twist of very fine whipcord, and one or two ambiguous objects, pieces of things, of which the use was not at once apparent: I could not even tell what they had belonged to. The relics were not exactly dirty nor were they quite clean, they had the patina of age; and as I handled them, for the first time for over fifty years, a recollection of what each had meant to me came back, faint as the magnet's power to draw, but as perceptible. Something came and went between us: the intimate pleasure of recognition, the almost mystical thrill of early ownership—feelings of which, at sixty-odd, I felt ashamed. (5)

Hartley's debt to Grahame is clear: Grahame's miscellany of objects, the child's treasure-trove, gives rise to Hartley's, and in particular the "twist of tarry string" occasions Hartley's "twist of very fine whipcord." Also, Grahame's secret drawer and Hartley's "small combination lock with three rows of letters" are both sprung open, as if in relief at revealing their secrets, by narrators who are musing and entranced, rather than trying. But it is not enough to speak merely of Hartley's debt to Grahame as if the former merely appropriates details from *The Golden Age*. What is fascinating—and, at its best, inspired—is Hartley's modifying for the needs of his twelve-year-old narrator, Leo Colston, the discoveries and reactions of Grahame's ten-year-old. This one instance is particularly complex. Grahame's narrator, who

is never given a name, thrillingly finds a secret drawer containing the treasures belonging to a child from the past. Hartley's Leo Colston, on the other hand, is in his middle-sixties, and the secret trove he uncovers belongs not to some unknown child but to himself as a child: the small lock that he cajoles open releases not, as in Grahame, initially unrewarding objects, but his diary which chronicles the traumatic events he underwent when he was nearing thirteen, and which account for the course of his life since then.

This opening scene, energetic in response to *The Golden Age*, is crucial to the novel. Grahame had written of a small boy who goes into a little-used room and is sensitive to its atmosphere and color, noting the "faint hues of its faded brocades, in the rose and blue of such bits of china as yet remained, and in the delicate old-world fragrance of pot-pourri from the great bowl" (171). He then finds a boy's treasure-trove and muses on it awhile before resuming a life of spirited games, of "warmth and light and laughter" (181). By contrast, such a future and such a room are precisely what Hartley's Leo Colston feels should have been his, rather than the dreary room which reflects the dissatisfaction-filled bachelorhood, with little life remaining, that he has chosen for himself: Leo's ruminations show him aware of the consequences and deprivations of the path he has chosen:

I should not be sitting in this drab, flowerless room, where the curtains were not even drawn to hide the cold rain beating on the windows, or contemplating the accumulation of the past and the duty it imposed on me to sort it out. I should be sitting in another room, rainbow-hued, looking not into the past but into the future: and I should not be sitting alone. (6)

The contrasts continue. One of Kenneth Grahame's many talents is that he writes exactly as a child thinks:

Was it any good persisting longer? Was anything any good whatever? In my mind I began to review past disappointments, and life seemed one long record of failure and of non-arrival. Disillusioned and depressed, I left my work and went to the window. (177)

As adults we might smile indulgently or even a shade ironically at the ten-year-old speaker as he snaps out of most of his mood and resumes his games, with all of his life ahead of him. But ten-year-olds do feel such sweeping fits of despair, and they can indeed feel old and hopeless: I remember doing so myself at the same age. Despair, though, is justified for Hartley's Leo Colston, who nearing the end of his life has no such future and who feels that "every object in the room spoke of the diary's enervating power, and spoke of its message of disappointment and defeat" and who experiences "a bitter blend of self-pity and self-reproach" (6).

To read Hartley alongside Kenneth Grahame is to sense the energy of Hartley's response to the earlier writer. Here, that energy is bitter. The boy narrator of *The Golden Age* is comforted to think that "a kindred spirit to my own had been at the making of it [the collection of treasures]" (179), and describes him as "this happy-starred young person." There we readers leave him, unknowing what becomes of him. But whereas the boy in Grahame is *imagined* as "happy-starred," Leo Colston *knows* that he himself was indeed so, full of grandiose ambitions for himself in the new century, and with a private hierarchical system of the zodiac to support him. Hartley has the aged Colson reproached by his twelve-year-old self for failing to take advantage of "such a good start": "What has become of the Ram, the Bull, and the Lion, the example I gave you to emulate? Where above all is the Virgin. . .?" (17). Here the aged Leo encounters in his younger self a figure who is at the same time Grahame's "kindred spirit" and yet not one: "kindred" literally by kin, but not kindred because Leo grew so witheringly away from his earlier promise.

I cannot emphasize enough that this chapter in Grahame is not just *an* influence on Hartley but *the* influence, and so I cite it again:

He too had found a secret drawer, this happy-starred young person; and here he had stowed away his treasures, one by one, and had cherished them secretly awhile; and then—what? Well, one would never know now the reason why those priceless possessions still lay here unreclaimed; but across the void stretch of years I seemed to touch hands a moment with my little comrade of seasons—how many seasons?—long since dead. (180)

"Then—what?" expects no answer; its wonder and lack of answer are its point. But for his part, Hartley does answer the question, and it is with the whole novel that he does so. The events chronicled in Leo's diary truncate his childhood and stunt his life—they and the withered life they create, causing the diary and the childish things to be abandoned, are the "what" that Grahame asks. What is more, Hartley has his novel confront and then refute Grahame's assumption that "one would never know now the reason why these priceless possessions still lay here unreclaimed": it is by reclaiming the diary and by coming to terms with its contents that Leo, even though he admits he "has not much life left to spoil" (21) can salvage and fructify the remainder of his life with kindness, with the fellow-feeling he so denied himself until then. Hartley thus takes Grahame at his word in a way the latter could never have imagined or intended anyone to do. And it is with bitter wordplay that Hartley on Leo's behalf exercises his imagination on Grahame's remark that "across the void stretch of years [I] seemed to touch hands a moment with my little comrade

of seasons. . . long dead.” That “void stretch of years” in Grahame is void simply because it is empty through being unknowable, but for Leo Colston “void” means spiritually empty and *known* indeed by him. And although Hartley surely realized that in “my little comrade of seasons long dead” the “dead” refers to the seasons, he saw the phrases, by transference, as relating to Leo’s spiritual death, related in the diary, after his holiday at Brandham Hall. In this light, Hartley has Leo “touch hands” with his former self not for “a moment” (as in Grahame) but for the years remaining to him.

From Grahame, too, Hartley took the leitmotif of the go-between. In “The Burglars,” a late chapter in *The Golden Age*, the narrator’s elder brother Edward idly repeats an anecdote told him by a friend:

“Bobby Ferris told me,” began Edward in due course, “that there was a fellow spooning his sister once—”

“What’s spooning?” I asked meekly.

“O I dunno,” said Edward indifferently. “It’s—it’s—it’s just a thing they do, you know. And he used to carry notes and messages and things between ’em, and he got a shilling almost every time.” (90)

Edward goes on to recount how the lovers quarrel, leaving Ferris to continue to receiving the money, giving fictitious messages. The account then trails off inconsequentially. In Hartley, go-betweening is anything but slight as Leo carries messages first from Trimmingham to Marian, and then, with serious consequences, between Marian and Ted, and lastly, over fifty years later, from Marian to her grandson, even though it is against Leo’s wishes: “‘Once a go-between never a go-between’ had become my maxim” (249). And, like Bobby Ferris in *The Golden Age*, Leo comes to gloss the messages that he bears: he tells Trimmingham out of kindness that a curt remark of Marian’s, meant curtly, was a joke, and claims that he has come to fancy himself “as an editor as well as a messenger” (115).

Both books have go-betweens serving the cause of “spooning,” a wonderfully dated and equivocally used expression, but the meanings of the word differs. When Edward declares that “there was a fellow spooning his [Bobby Ferris’s] sister,” the activity is innocent, however dubiously transitive it may sound to our ears. When asked what spooning is, Edward answers “indifferently,” and his hesitation (“It’s—it’s—it’s”) is the older child’s slight annoyance at not knowing and being seen to not know. Earlier on, the narrator had come across “spooning” but did not know it by name when he encountered

a pair of lovers, silent, face to face o’er a discreet unwinking stile. As a rule this sort of thing struck me as the most pitiful tomfoolery. Two calves rubbing noses through a gate were natural and right and within

the order of things; but that human beings, with salient interests and active pursuits beckoning them on from every side could thus—! Well, it was a thing to hurry past, shamed of face, and think on no more. (19)

Exhilarated by the glories of a windy morning in spring, the narrator finds that everything he meets “seemed to be accounted for and set in tone by that same magical touch in the air; and it was with a certain surprise that I found myself regarding these fatuous ones with kindness instead of contempt” (19). This reaction is out of character, however. Generally in Grahame children despise adults for spooning when they have so much freedom to do better things. But it is important to stress that spooning, even though it is “a thing to hurry past,” has for Grahame nothing to do with sex.

With Hartley, spooning has everything to do with sex, or, rather, it *comes* to the naive but curious Leo to have everything to do with sex. Early in the novel, when he reads part of a love letter from Marian to Ted, Leo is greatly disappointed that the two are in love, and, like any schoolboy of his age, despises demonstrations of love as “soft, soppy—hardly, when the joke grew staler, a subject for furtive giggling” (102). It is inspired by Hartley to have Leo’s view of spooning move, in the course of the novel, from one side of Grahame’s view to the other. In Grahame’s sexless world, spooning means merely billing and cooing, “natural” in animals but “shameful” (that is to say, embarrassing and unworthy) in people. That matter decided, the narrator continues to enjoy the childhood pleasures available to him. Leo, though, is seen to change. Initially, courtship means the unbearable silliness of

post-cards, picture post-cards, comic post-cards, vulgar post-cards, found in shops on the ‘front’: I had sent some of them myself before I knew better.

‘We are having an interesting time in Southdown’—a fat couple, amorously intertwined. ‘Come to Southdown for a good spoon’—two spoons with human faces, one very thick, one very thin, leering at each other. (102)

“Amorously intertwined” and “leering” escape him. But as the novel proceeds, Leo is forced to face “spooning” in a series of shocks. On being told by Ted Burgess that the latter’s mare “did a bit of spooning,” Leo’s reaction is as follows: “Spoonings! The word struck me like a blow. Then horses could spoon and a foal was the result. It didn’t make sense” (107). Of course the matter does not make sense to Leo because until now he has relegated spooning to “a kind of game that grown-ups played” (108), a silliness. The fact that animals spoon, and that they should subsequently (not necessarily

consequently) conceive, brings Leo to the brink of the realization that spooning has something to do with sex, a subject of which he is completely ignorant. Matters are made worse by Ted Burgess—who is explaining things to Leo by answering his questions—telling Leo that spooning is a consequence of “Nature” (106). The topic having most unobtrusively moved from horses to people, Leo asks “Could you be in love with someone without spooning with them?” (108) and receives the reply that “It wouldn’t be natural” (108). That spooning is natural and can lead to children advances Leo’s knowledge considerably but has him wondering about the mechanics, which of course are so traumatically revealed to him when at the end of the novel he is forced to see Ted and Marian making love. Grahame’s “spooning” has shifted in meaning between the two books, and in doing so epitomizes the difference between the ten-year-old nauseated by courtship yet sturdily uninterested in it (while recognizing that it is natural in animals), and the twelve-year-old who is coming across the facts of life as disturbingly “natural.”

Another term of Grahame’s that Hartley adopts is “Olympians” (applied to adults for their loftiness and incomprehensibly willful behavior). Initially, adults are godlike to Leo, and because he is used as a go-between his vanity soon has him nominating himself as Mercury. Dwelling on the idea, he preens: “The messenger of the gods! I thought of that, and even when the attention of the gods had been withdrawn from me, it seemed to enhance my status” (83). Thereafter, he is captivated by such images: “I was a planet, albeit a small one, and carried messages for the other planets” (86). As he becomes more and more aware of social class, those who live at Brandham Hall become “resplendent beings” (46), Marian “a goddess” (138), and even Henry the footman is seen to exercise “Olympian tolerance” (226).

Much of what animates *The Go-Between* is Hartley’s energetic responding to *The Golden Age*: the latter stands behind the former, at Hartley’s elbow, continually furnishing not just the atmosphere of a Victorian childhood but the opportunity to transform a ten-year-old’s views into a twelve-year-old’s. This two years’ difference is significant. Grahame’s narrator will despair of adults:

it was one of the most hopeless features in their character . . . that, having absolute licence to indulge in the pleasures of life, they could get no good of it. They might dabble in the pond all day, hunt the chickens, climb trees in the most uncompromising Sunday clothes; they were free to issue forth and buy gunpowder in the full eye of the sun—free to fire cannons and explode mines on the lawn: yet they never did any one of these things. (4)

Even when he realizes that he is no longer a child but has hardened into one of the very Olympians whom he despises and finds incomprehensible, his tone is sad, regretful: "Can it be that I also have become an Olympian?" (7). The irony in Hartley is that although Leo Colston *wants* to be an Olympian, he does so for the very reason that Grahame's narrator has grown out of: he envies Olympians for being "unaffected by any restrictions of work or family ties, citizens of the world who made the world their playground" (51).

However much Leo's vanity makes him feel adult, grown-up humour remains beyond his grasp. He would have agreed with Grahame that "the reason of a child's existence was to serve as a butt for senseless adult jokes—or what, from the accompanying guffaws of laughter, appeared to be intended for jokes" (27), and he would have sympathized, too, with his twelve-year-old counterpart who complains that a certain curate is "always saying things that have no sense in them at all, and then laughing at them as if they were jokes" (132). Unfamiliar expressions flummox Leo: told that "Mr. Burgess is a bit of a lad," Leo "noticed the Mister but the rest of the remark was disappointingly meaningless. Ted Burgess did not seem in the least like a lad to me" (85). Of course this is Hartley's means of presenting Burgess's reputation to Leo, but it is also pure Kenneth Grahame, as is Leo's reaction to Mrs. Maudsley's attitude to Marian, early in the novel: "Her glance most often rested on her daughter who usually sat between two young men. What did they find to talk *about*? I remember thinking" (35). Here Hartley is drawing on the chapter "What They Talked About" where Edward is bewildered by Selina and the Vicar-age girls: "I can't make out what they find to talk about" (130).

In Grahame's chapter "A Harvesting," the Rector bumps into the narrator, and, apologizing, says that the narrator "see[s] visions" (106), and adds: "you are hot, it is easily seen;—the day is advanced. *Virgo* is the Zodiacal sign" (106). These chance musings—hardly, one would think, in any way remarkable—must have resonated extraordinarily with Hartley, for from them he has Leo Colston's diary contain a picture of the Zodiac and its emblems. From this picture, in turn, Leo fashions for himself an ecstatic personal philosophy in which the adults around him become not only gods but zodiacal figures. Most notably, Marian Maudsley becomes "the Virgin of the Zodiac" (155). Moreover, as Leo becomes more and more taken with his system and more and more eager to wring self-delighting significances from it, Grahame's Rector's remarks on a hot day in *Virgo* become Leo's wondering to himself: "Perhaps Marian was the heat?" (228).

It is one thing for an excitable twelve-year-old in the heat of an

exceptionally hot summer to superimpose a zodiacal system on the adults around him, but it is quite another thing for him to put that vision to the service of a belief in the new century and then to invest his whole being in it. Early in the novel Leo confesses himself fearful that his illness will cause him to miss “the dawn of a Golden Age.” He adds, in explanation: “For that was what I believed the coming century would be: a realization, on the part of the whole world, of the hopes that I was entertaining for myself” (8). The more acute the strains of being a go-between, the more stridently egotistical Leo becomes: in his demands for “the realization of my Golden Age,” he insists merely on things “existing only for themselves and me” (218). But at this age, the age at which Leo is so zealously obsessive, the time of a Golden Age in Kenneth Grahame is past and that narrator is well on his way to becoming an Olympian. In this light, what is most disillusioning for Leo is that for all his hopes, he is simply too late to have a Golden Age. The one he mistakenly fabricates, and which destroys itself and him, contrasts painfully with the shared wonder-filled games that the children in Grahame’s *The Golden Age* enjoy. Nothing in *The Go-Between* suggests that Leo ever experienced such wonder, nor can he say, albeit with Grahame’s speaker’s wistfulness: “*Et in Arcadia ego*—I certainly did once inhabit Arcady” (8). Instead of living a fulfilling life in the twentieth century, Leo has lived a withered atrophied one in what Marian later calls “this hideous century we live in” (260). In 1953, the year of *The Go-Between*, this view was Hartley’s own.

It remains only to point out two further echoes from *The Golden Age*. One concerns Leo’s intuitive reaction to the Deadly Nightshade, *atropa belladonna* —

This plant seemed to be up to something, to be carrying on a questionable traffic with itself. There was no harmony, no proportion in its parts. It exhibited all the stages of its development at once. It was young, middle-aged, and old at the same time. . . . It invited yet repelled inspection, as if it was harbouring some shady secret which it yet wanted you to know. (177)

This splendid passage, one of the most memorable vignettes of *The Go-Between*, is Hartley at his best, and no one would consider it unoriginal. The belladonna, while being distinctively itself, also emblemizes all the Leos since it is “young, middle-aged, and old at the same time,” and thus the young Leo is looking at (and finally destroying) his current selves and future selves too. Yet the disturbing aura of the belladonna is not entirely Hartley’s own; it recalls Grahame’s “little used, rarely entered chamber” of “The Secret Drawer”:

But one other thing the room possessed, peculiar to itself; a certain sense of privacy—a power of making the intruder feel he was intrud-

ing. . . There was no doubt that it was reserved and standoffish, keeping itself to itself. (172)

Hartley is particularly good at suggesting the eerie, and he does so again in his description of the sight that Leo suddenly encounters on a bathing party visit with the family from Brandham Hall:

There was a black thing ahead of us, all bars and spars and uprights, like a gallows. It gave out a sense of fear—also of intense solitude. It was like something that must not be approached, that might catch you and hurt you. . . . We had nearly reached it, and I saw how the pitch was peeling off its surfaces, and realized that no one could have attended to it for years. (49)

Whatever this piece of river machinery is, it anticipates the Deadly Nightshade that Leo will see soon afterwards, but it is also remembered from “A Holiday,” the very first story in *The Golden Age*:

I raised my eyes, and before me, grim and lichened, stood the ancient whipping post of the village; its sides fretted with the initials of a generation that scorned its mute lesson, but still clipped by the stout rusted shackles that had tethered the wrists of such of that generation's ancestors as had dared to mock at order and law. (22)

The narrator is left to “hurry, homewards. . . with an uneasy feeling . . . that there was more in this chance than met the eye” (22).

Influence can be a beguiling subject for the critic, tempting him or her to educe correspondences where there are none. As Kenneth Grahame admonishes elsewhere, “Grown-ups really ought to be more careful” (*Dream Days*, 51). I am confident of all the influences I have discussed so far, but slightly less so of the Litany which in *The Golden Age* “dragged its slow length along” (64) and which has Leo in *The Go-Between* “having a bet with myself as to how long it would last” (63). Given the number of other borrowings from Grahame it is tempting to add this one too, but Leo's reaction to the Litany is that of any child of that age, and Hartley did not need Grahame to tell him so. There are also similarities in the two writers' description of being in the countryside: both speak of how it feels to enter a wood that is surprisingly thick and oppressive, and of how hot it then feels to emerge into sudden sunlight. Both speak—Hartley of a river, Grahame of a stream—of flowing water widening into calm pools (Hartley 47, 49; Grahame 54-56). Readers can judge for themselves the weight, if weight there is at all, of Grahame's hand here. Likewise, given the extent of Hartley's thorough knowledge of *The Golden Age*, one might expect him to have borrowed from its successor, *Dream Days* (1898) or even from *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), but the details in common are not close enough to constitute influence.

What is certain, however, is that Hartley knew Kenneth Grahame's life, and the lives of his family, through his reading of the one biography of Grahame available to him, Patrick R. Chalmers' *Kenneth Grahame: Life, Letters and Unpublished Work* (1933). Hartley's borrowings from Chalmers are not complex, nor does he exert himself on them: therefore they can be cited side-by-side with passages from *The Go-Between*. Here is a hitherto unpublished musing of Grahame's, discovered in an old ledger dating from Grahame's years at the Bank of England:

Worn and depressed by harrying troubles I dreamt that I sped south over the sea, to a sunny isle far south in the Atlantic. . . . My thoughts flew back to the faraway northern island, arena of strife and all the crowd of petty vexations. Now, how small they all seemed! How simple the unravelling of the baffling knots! How orderly and easy the way to meet them and brush them by! So that I, sitting there in the South, seemed to be saying to my struggling self in the North, "If I were you, how easily would I make my way through these petty obstacles! and how helpless and incapable you are in a little strait!" And myself in the North, put on defence, seemed to reply: "And if I were you, so would I—with your fuller knowledge, fuller strength. As it is, perhaps on the whole I do my best." And myself in the South, in justice forced to assent, returned, "Well, yes, perhaps after all you do your best—a sorry best, but as much as can fairly be expected of you." Then I woke, startled at the point to which my dream had led me.

Will it be like this again? Sitting one day on the dim eternal shore, shall I look back, see and pity my past poor human strivings? And say then, as now, "Well, perhaps, little cripple, you did your best, a sorry one though, you poor little, handicapped, human soul?" (37)

And here is the middle-aged Leo Colston arguing with his former self, the twelve-year-old self of the diary, with the same blend of condemnation, pity, loftiness, defensiveness, and, above all, sadness:

If my twelve-year-old self, of whom I had grown rather fond, thinking about him, were to reproach me: 'Why have you grown up such a dull dog, when I gave you such a good start? Why have you spent your time in dusty libraries, cataloguing other people's books instead of writing your own? What has become of the Ram, the Bull, and the Lion, the example I gave you to emulate? Where above all is the Virgin, with her shining face and long curling tresses, whom I entrusted to you'—what should I say?

I should have an answer ready. 'Well, it was you who let me down, and I will tell you how. You flew too close to the sun, and you were scorched. This cindery creature is what you made me,'

To which he might reply: 'But you have had half a century to get over it! Half a century, half the twentieth century, that glorious epoch, that golden age that I bequeathed to you!'

'Has the twentieth century,' I should ask, 'done so much better than I have? When you leave this room, which I admit is dull and cheerless, and take the last bus to your home in the past, if you haven't missed

it—ask yourself whether you found everything so radiant as you imagined it. Ask yourself whether it has fulfilled your hopes.’ (16-17)

Chalmers describes Kenneth Grahame carrying out social work in London’s East End:

At Toynbee Hall he was known and loved by all who met him there. A shy man, he fought off his shyness and sung, extremely badly (or so he said), but for large audiences, the extremely sentimental songs of the period. Moreover, as the occasional chairman at sing-songs, he would announce the names of numbers, at which he must have shuddered, without a visible tremor. (40)

—and in *The Go-Between* Ted Burgess sings to Marian Maudsley’s accompaniment, at the village hall after the Hall-versus-Village cricket match which is a great set-piece of the novel:

“Take a Pair of Sparkling Eyes,” announced Ted, as if they were the last thing one would want to take...

The new song was a sentimental one by Balfe. I don’t suppose it’s ever sung now, but I liked it, and liked Ted’s rendering of it and the quaver which threaded his voice. (133)

Chalmers also relates how Grahame’s son Alastair (known as Mouse) as young schoolboy sang at “a party for the village in the big barn at Boham’s (152):

He stood in the light, round him in the shadows sat the party, Newgate fringes and gaiters, shepherds, gamekeepers and carters, men and women of the down country. Mouse piped as sweetly as a thrush:

“Like silver lamps in a distant shrine
The stars are sparkling well
Now a new Power has come to the Earth
A match for the armies of Hell,
A Child is born who shall conquer the foe
And the armies of wickedness quell.” (152)

Hartley echoes this scene by having Leo sing the religious song “Angels ever bright and fair” in the village hall, to the teams from the village and the Hall, to similar acclaim:

*Angels! Ever bright and fair,
Take, oh take me to your care.
Speed to your own courts my flight
Clad in robes of virgin white
Clad in robes of virgin white.* (148)

Finally, Chalmers chronicles Kenneth Grahame’s years at the Bank of England (where he rose to the position of Secretary), and quotes Grahame’s friend, the artist Graham Robertson, observing of him:

"He had a marvellous gift of silence. . . He would slowly become part of the landscape and a word from him would come as unexpectedly as a sudden remark from an oak or a beech" (97). For his part, perhaps in discreet homage, Hartley gives Grahame a cameo appearance in *The Go-Between* by having Mr. Maudsley work at the Bank of England—he is "W. H. Maudsley, of Princes Gate and Threadneedle Street" (29)—and also has him sharing Grahame's characteristic of contented silence rarely broken by abrupt utterance: "'Hugh coming?' Mr. Maudsley asked, making one of his rare contributions to a conversation" (40).

What, in the end, do all these borrowings and influences amount to? How, in terms of illuminating the novel and adding to our knowledge of Hartley himself, do they measure up to what (leaving aside the thematic comments made by literary critics) might be termed the "autobiographical approach" to *The Go-Between*? For there is indeed such an approach, despite Hartley's reticence about himself or his novel's circumstances. From Adrian Wright's biography we know that Hartley never forgot the long summer days of 1900 which seemed to him to usher in a Golden Age "almost literally, for I think of it as being the colour of gold. I didn't want to go back to it but I wanted it to come back to me, and I still do" (Wright 7). We also know that in 1909, when he was thirteen, Hartley spent some of the summer at Bradenham Hall with his schoolfriend Moxey and Moxey's family ("Brandham" and "Maudsley" respectively in *The Go-Between*), and that, in 1971, he tearfully revealed that he had been made to follow the real-life Mrs. Moxey to the outhouses where in *The Go-Between* Leo Colston sees Ted and Marian making love (Wright 32-33). This detail, inconclusive as it is and divulged the year before his death, is as much as Hartley allowed himself, and it is doubtful that any further details will come to light. The only other claim is that Hartley had been somewhat of a go-between himself as an army postman in the Great War, a job which Adrian Wright characterizes as "An easy happiness. . . [which] brought him approval, the sure knowledge that people would be pleased to see him" (169). One wonders, though, how Wright can be so sure about that "sure" knowledge, especially during the Great War. In short, these scant autobiographical traces cast very little light either on *The Go-Between* or on Hartley himself.

The literary influences, though, are a different matter. The liftings from Chalmers are delicate (and possibly slightly sly) homage to Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age*, the great unacknowledged source which not only which played so great a role in bringing *The Go-Between* into being, but also galvanized the writing of it. But to talk of "influence" and "borrowings" is to fall far short of the importance

that *The Golden Age* held for Hartley. We do not know when Hartley first read it: it could have been in early childhood (many Victorian parents mistakenly construed it as book for children and gave it to them to read, and Hartley's well-to-do father had a large library). It could—although this is less likely—have been in adolescence; if so, one doubts how interesting Grahame would have been to Hartley then. How often Hartley reread it is also a matter of conjecture, but it seems to me improbable that he picked it up in adulthood and doggedly read it again and again by way of preparation for writing *The Go-Between*. To do so would be mannered, willful, not to say unnatural. Besides, Hartley wrote *The Go-Between* far more swiftly than any of his other novels, in a five-month burst, and he did so from “only the briefest of notes” (Wright 170).

Hartley was steeped in *The Golden Age*: the book, and all that it meant, became a part of himself. Only in this way can small details from Kenneth Grahame—the heat, the Zodiac, Bobby Ferris the go-between, the secret drawer—so unobtrusively spread into themes and motifs in *The Go-Between*. Hartley, this late Victorian who lived into the early 1970s, deploring the century for which he held such hopes, must, I suggest, have known Grahame almost by heart, from a very early age, from a lifetime of reading. Furthermore, Hartley's frequent re-readings of Grahame would not only bring back the childhood idyllicism that Grahame captures, but would recall to Hartley his *own* earlier readings of him, including the first time, when the boy Hartley lived so close to the time of *The Golden Age*. In this way he would relive in memory his own childhood, time after time, responding on the one hand with pleasure to the nostalgia that *The Golden Age* evoked in him, but on the other hand resenting the way that life, in particular the entire twentieth century, had not measured up to his earlier expectations. Towards the end of Graham Greene's life, one critic brilliantly wrote of him: “Only the books in the nursery never changed, never lost their original truth. In them was something that ought to be in life” (Pryce-Jones 121). Was Hartley thus? Did he, as a child or youth at most, take that “ought” in its simplest sense, but then, as he grew older, become jaundiced that life had not been as it “ought” to have been, that it had let him down? And did he react in both of these ways—sometimes one, sometimes the other, and sometimes both at once—to *The Golden Age*, a book that he regarded as a coeval, created in the year of his own birth, 1895, and ageing, to the very day, with him? This, of all the possibilities, is the most psychologically fascinating: *The Golden Age*, read at different stages of Hartley's life, would thus suffice the ageing man while making him once again the growing boy.

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MAR, AMOR Y MUERTE EN ATARDECER EN EL ATLÁNTICO

María Teresa Bertelloni

El título del último poemario de Manuel Figueroa-Meléndez, *Atardecer en el Atlántico*, nos sitúa en un espacio múltiple y uno en el que el mar, la muerte y la vida no sólo remiten a fenómenos concretos y comprensibles para todos, sino que funcionan también como metáforas de la interioridad apasionada del sujeto poético, creación que trasciende lo anecdótico de la vida cotidiana del escritor.

El atardecer, teñido ya de oscuridad, mientras el sol ha desaparecido y sólo queda su refracción, que crea la ilusión óptica de verlo morir poco a poco, sugiere la toma de conciencia del vivir propio como un espejismo, aún más desgarrador en presencia de la muerte del otro, sea el sol o una persona amada.

En la oscuridad que se acerca para envolverlo en el misterio, antiguo como la conciencia del sentido y significado de la existencia, el poeta toma el lugar del hombre y busca en las palabras, siempre mágicas, de la poesía, la inmortalidad negada a los seres vivos.

En esta colección de poemas, como sucede generalmente en todo escritor, el yo poético se revela, a menudo, como el mensajero del yo histórico y descubre la fragilidad de la máscara existencial que ni siquiera la poesía puede conservar intacta en la escritura.

Por ello nuestro poeta comienza, por el camino del dolor, con un poema, inspirado por la muerte del padre. La cercanía y persistencia de la pérdida lo lleva a prestarle la palabra para que éste se despidiera de los suyos, dejando así la puerta abierta al diálogo de las almas. Gracias a este subterfugio poético, a pesar de que la muerte del padre ha arrancado una de las raíces de la vida y de la historia del cantor, queda la seguridad de que los recuerdos no son sólo para los vivos, como dice en los últimos versos:

me voy de viaje
.....
con los recuerdos

con todos
contigo
para siempre.

El hilo del discurso sigue en el segundo poema pero, esta vez, se ha ensombrecido el aire, la niebla desdibuja las cosas y las personas mientras el viajero, que sale hacia la eternidad, tiene sólo la certeza de lo ineluctable, que, al final, acepta como un mandato de la vida:

regreso a la brisa de la sierra
al calor de la ensenada
al cauce de la quebrada
donde nunca se han pronunciado
las sílabas de la esperanza
regreso al aguacero del ocaso
a la neblina que traduce
con su misterioso brillo
los setenta y siete hilos dorados. (9)

Las pausas del discurso poético son dadas únicamente por el espacio que separa las estrofas, así éste no se interrumpe, fluye como la vida, sin interrupciones.

En el tercer poema el sujeto poético ha cambiado. Solo, en la contemplación de las olas que van tragando poco a poco la luz, el poeta camina espiritualmente por el sendero por donde el otro ya se ha ido hasta que se asoma, como él dice, al:

...umbral del misterio
en la melodía y el vuelo
de las mariposas
que anuncian la partida. (11)

La presencia de un nuevo sujeto en el poema señala un cambio radical. El padre se ha ido a convivir con el misterio, pero el poeta se ha quedado en el borde del abismo desde el cual el misterio acecha a los vivientes.

Nace aquí la pregunta necesaria y angustiosa: ¿qué es el misterio y cuál es su umbral? El misterio es el anonadarse del ser finito, el agujero negro que se traga la existencia, la infinitud de la noche sin luz. Misterio es esto y mucho más, pero ¿cuál es su umbral? Es un borde donde solamente queda una piedra afilada a la que agarrarse hasta que llegue el momento de deslizarse hacia la nada.

Mas el poeta transforma la piedra en palabra porque su intuición de lo absoluto se asemeja mucho a la iluminación del místico y, gracias a la palabra, que se le aparece en relámpagos breves e intensos, puede mirar hacia el misterio con una especie de exaltación. En efecto, cuando su voz se hace transparente escuchamos, muy lejano pero auténtico, el decir del ser. Es precisamente este

convivir, aunque sea una sola vez, con lo Absoluto, que le anticipa al poeta la posibilidad de alcanzarlo sin palabras. Su umbral es, pues, la palabra poética que le hace decir a nuestro poeta:

las horas se acaban
a las doce
en esta alcoba
en la que entramos
cuando pasamos del borde de la vida. (13)

Este poema es una meditación sobre la muerte y, a la vez, una mirada veloz al final futuro del yo que poetiza. Un descanso en el dolor de la pérdida del padre y una anticipación del propio final. El poema “VI” vuelve a la muerte ante los ojos en el momento del entierro, en la despedida:

El Viernes Santo
huele a olivo
.....
en este campo
en el que te despido
en el que te desprendes
de nuestras manos... (17)

Después de un último poema, el número siete, dedicado al día del sepelio en el que la muerte es vista como una guerra destinada a la derrota definitiva, aparece un poema que es, a la vez, una descripción del camino que cruza el pueblo amado por el poeta, y la trayectoria que lo enlaza con sus antepasados.

No hay duda que todos estamos atados, por un nudo inextricable, al propio lugar de origen, sobre todo si allí se ha vivido la niñez y la adolescencia, esa etapa en que empezamos a conocernos y a conocer a los demás, pero, para nuestro poeta, su patria chica es el centro de su pensamiento y de su vida y, desde allí, parten los diversos senderos que ha recorrido y los que recorrerá, para volver finalmente a la raíz misma de su razón de ser.

El poema VIII(21) cierra el momento del luto familiar y prepara una lectura interior e íntima. Se abre así un espacio hacia el mar, el amor y la muerte con el que se inicia la segunda parte del poemario. En ella se concretan los logros líricos de nuestro poeta. En muchos poemas la imagen luminosa hace enmudecer la palabra para dejarnos únicamente con la visión sugerente.

El poema IX sirve de introducción a la visión, a veces enigmática y, a veces, luminosa, pero siempre dramática, del amor y de la muerte, los temas clásicos y antagónicos que, aquí tienen como horizonte de infinitud el océano.

estas
 METÁFORAS
 son
 las
 ILUSIONES
 que
 alguna
 DEIDAD
 olvidó
 en
 el
 ÉXTASIS
 espumoso
 de
 la
 PLAYA.

(23)

El poema, escrito con versos breves señala un movimiento lento, por las pausas que impone el espacio en blanco, hacia el horizonte existencial que representa el mar, como lo he señalado en un escrito sobre Eugenio Montale.

El mar es, en efecto, una metáfora perfecta del continuo movimiento de la vida frente a la finitud del existente concreto. El poema contiene, además, cinco palabras en mayúscula —metáforas, ilusiones, deidad, éxtasis y playa— que forman un espacio imaginario en el que las metáforas son el centro y las otras los cuatro puntos cardinales.

Con esta introducción, que pone la lengua poética como punto de partida, el poemario nos introduce en la historia —o historias— trágicas del amor, tal vez la única historia que sobrevive.

En el poema “X” la espera paciente de la persona amada es recompensada, al final, con la fusión del recuerdo con el mar y el cuerpo recordado, en la oscuridad mágica de una madrugada en la playa, como dice el poeta:

en esta playa
 el recuerdo se confunde con la espuma
 con el viento y la sal
 con tu cuerpo en la orgía
 de aquella madrugada. (25)

Mas no es suficiente el recuerdo, no es suficiente el revivir lo vivido, porque la espera encierra la ilusión de una nueva realidad antigua, un renacer que borre la pérdida y la soledad y venza el tiempo y el silencio, como lo revela el intenso poema “XIV”:

te confieso que esperaba algo más
 que me obligara a renacer

con el mismo cuerpo
con la misma intensidad
del fuego y del viento
pero quedé atrapado
en esta mar de silencio
..... (33)

El poeta, que centra su creación sobre el tema del amor, siente, al mismo tiempo, la necesidad de preguntarse sobre el sentido del universo y del ser humano. Mientras que, en la recreación erótica prevalece una fuerte dimensión sensible, en la meditación metafísica domina la espiritual:

.....
si el soplo de aliento
fuese un momento en el vacío
yo no entendería el universo
ni el por qué nos han dejado
en este mítico fuego
consumiendo el balbuceo
de la humana razón. (41)

No se trata, sólo, de la esperanza que da la fe cristiana; algo enigmático se revela en algunos poemas, como si el poeta se sintiera parte de un ciclo amplio de vidas como cuando afirma que:

...hilos delgados
que rozan las paredes
que me queman y consumen
como sándalo ardiente
en el alféizar de una egipcia ventana (43)

o recurre a la mítica pitonisa para preverla y, al mismo tiempo, sentirla “lejana, mágica y transparente” como en el poema “XXII” (49).

En este poema la muerte ha perdido su dimensión de indescifrable horror para transformarse, en la mirada de la adivina, en una seductora sombra que espera al poeta para el abrazo infinito. La muerte es, pues, en esta visión gnóstica, la amante que nunca traiciona.

En la lectura lenta y concentrada del poema, el lector también pierde el miedo ancestral a la muerte y experimenta una inesperada y extraña quietud, que lo envuelve y lo consuela.

En el silencio desde el cual la poesía nace, el poeta busca la yuxtaposición de pasado y futuro en un presente inextinguible que cobija *eros* y *thánatos* como las dos caras de la existencia. Un poema, breve como un relámpago, así lo sugiere:

tu imagen
es la ausencia de un instante

en la esfera cósmica
del silencio. (59)

La palabra silencio se repite en estos poemas de dimensión mágica que aluden a una esfera de realidad otra, en la que se andan y desandan los senderos del tiempo y del espacio. En este silencio en el que se mezclan los mitos clásicos con los elementos de la naturaleza —sobre todo el agua y el fuego— escribe Figueroa-Meléndez este poema que anticipa el fin, incluso del silencio:

el silencio
es una de las llamaradas de este holocausto
que ahoga mi palabra
que disminuye la vida
como se transforma la madera
en brasas y cenizas
en la espesura del bosque (65)

El amor, perdido y dolorosamente deseado, sobre todo en la oscuridad de las noches sin sueño y en las tardes lluviosas en las que las cosas pierden los contornos conocidos, es el hilo conductor del canto que revela la soledad física y espiritual en la que vive el yo poético, después de la pérdida definitiva del tú amado, en la nostalgia sin fin de una realización que sólo el amor compartido concede.

Es emblemática, en esta dimensión del poetizar de Figueroa-Meléndez, la presencia de una palabra que César Vallejo usó para titular un poema trágico en el que su propia vida es vista como una enfermedad contagiada por un dios enfermo, ya que el estribillo “Yo nací un día/ que Dios estuvo enfermo.”, se repite con la añadidura del adjetivo “grave”. La palabra, procedente de la lengua quechua, es espergesia e indica una deshojación sagrada.

En el breve poema XXXIII la palabra espergesia es usada en forma plural como si el poeta señalara hacia un despojarse paso a paso de las máscaras que recubren el cuerpo y el espíritu, hasta llegar a la desnudez total.

Es un desnudarse lento y doloroso en el que la soledad exterior da paso a la soledad interior y, al final, quedan únicamente “las mil cicatrices” que encierran el paso al olvido, único remedio misericordioso para los males del vivir. Nuestro poeta no puede alcanzarlo y se siente, desesperadamente, atrapado en los recuerdos. Así, lo que fue un momento de plenitud amorosa en vez de transformarse en una palabra muere en la mudez del universo, como dice el poeta:

al compás de la música
del sándalo y el deseo
aquella tarde nos consumimos
bajo el agua...

y el silencio del cielo. (75)

Y desde el silencio llega el tiempo que abrió el sendero de los deseos, de los encuentros y desencuentros, de la búsqueda del sentido de la propia existencia suspendida, como dice Figueroa-Meléndez, “en la puerta del barranco” (79).

La vida humana se realiza entre la soledad del nacimiento y la soledad del salto final en la oscuridad de la nada. Entre estos dos puntos límites encontramos algunos momentos luminosos que dan sentido a nuestra existencia: el amor, la amistad, el saber, la creación artística, en todas sus manifestaciones e, incluso, el dolor que afirma la vida con más fuerza que cualquier otra vivencia.

Todos estos sentimientos constituyen el entramado en el que se apoya el mundo poético de Figueroa-Meléndez, pero, el substrato de dicha fundación es la intuición profunda, de carácter metafísico, del sinsentido del universo y de la vida, porque en esa intuición sólo existe, como un oxímoron, la nada. El poeta ha apresado, en un brevísimo instante de silencio, el vacío total y aterrador. Los poemas de nuestro poeta, ya sea de manera discursiva ya sea a través de la sugerencia enigmática, son el escudo frente a la caída final que lo acecha. En ellos el desgarramiento de los recuerdos amorosos es, esencialmente, una afirmación vital, como cuando canta:

este atardecer frente a la ventana
es una soledad húmeda de cristales
y los calados es una inquietante luz
que se apaga y se enciende
con los vitrales de la desesperanza. (83)

Es cierto que en este conjunto de poemas prevalece lo erótico y la falta de plenitud vital que concede al amor compartido. Es cierto que la pérdida del amor deja sin protección el yo entregado a la realización de una unidad dual que anticipa, en medida parcial como todo lo humano, una unidad con el Todo en la inmortalidad; pero también es revelador del poder de la palabra poética el poder evocar al otro yo en el sufrimiento causado por la lejanía buscada por él mismo y así recuperar, dramáticamente, el poder seductor de su propia mirada.

En el poema “XLI”, a través del decir poético, se siente y se transforma en el dador de luz. Dice el poeta:

es inevitable que sufras
desde una estrella que no riela
es inevitable que sufras por mí
por los claroscuros de la vida
por el recuerdo en la soledad

desde que permaneces a oscuras
desde el día
que apagaste
la luz que te daban mis pupilas. (87)

En el centro de la soledad y el abandono, el poeta encuentra su único consuelo: la palabra como manifestación sugerente de la presencia amada y aunque dure sólo un momento lo prepara para alcanzar el punto sin retorno que es su meta.

En el poema “XLII” en efecto, el cantor dibuja en la página en blanco una breve escalera de palabras que se termina bruscamente al borde del precipicio y, luego, se cae en línea recta. Así lo imagina y lo predice:

anoche
escuché
los pasos
con el ritmo
que anuncia

el
final
de
mi
vida. (89)

El dibujo de las letras negras sobre el fondo blanco del papel y los puntos suspensivos al final de la forma verbal “anuncia” justo antes del inicio de la recta vertical, sugieren un movimiento lento y angustioso y una pausa, sin esperanza, antes de la caída (89).

El sujeto poético conoce cuál será su último acto; lo sabe y lo anhela pero no todo es transparente: ni el momento ni la razón de la decisión y de la espera como dice en el poema “XLIII”:

no entiendo esta tarde
ni esta hora en esta plaza
donde llueven voces
que anuncian el final de mis palabras. (91)

Lo más doloroso de la muerte, lo que causa espanto al pensarla mientras se vive, es la cosificación de nuestro ser. El muerto es sólo una cosa que los vivos manipulan con hechos y palabras, sin misericordia y sin pudor, en la felicidad de sentirse vivos. Mas, en este poemario, la muerte es deseada y buscada como única amiga capaz de arropar para siempre, con su oscuridad definitiva, al hombre cuya palabra parece haber perdido el poder mágico de crear un mundo en el cual sobrevivir.

Es precisamente en la tensa espera de ese desconocido y pa-

voroso consuelo que el poeta transforma los latidos de su corazón en versos que lo anticipan:

esta línea es el eco del silencio
que traduce los misterios de la lluvia
en la piedra que corta
los cristales de la memoria
.....
es la línea que traza mi sombra
en la corona de luna de cristal azogada
que divide mi cuerpo
como ojiva de espejo
en el abismo de la alabarda. (93)

En esta poesía inscrita en la sombra, en la que la luz parece iluminar únicamente la desolación que vive en el cuerpo y en el espíritu del poeta, el abismo va adueñándose poco a poco de lo que fue y de lo pudo ser:

la soledad ya no deja la sombra
del amor inconcluso
por las transiciones del karma
ya no deja las huellas
ni las sonrisas amargas
sólo deja un vacío
que mi muerte atrapa. (95)

La trayectoria vital de todo ser humano se inicia dentro de un horizonte geográfico que va a determinar el ámbito en el que se desarrollará no sólo la vida sino también la creación. De allí, en el caso del artista, brota, como de un fuente, el universo ficticio, un mundo nuevo y original, que muestra las huellas de una forma particular de vivir las experiencias, que constituye la raíz de su sentimiento poético.

Los artistas que nacen en las islas, y especialmente los que viven cerca del mar, se mueven vital y emotivamente desde ese horizonte cambiante e inaprensible, la relación que se establece con el mar es ambivalente y dramática porque del mar viene la vida y la muerte y el vaivén de sus olas es semejante al camino de la existencia con sus misteriosos senderos.

Figueroa-Meléndez se ha movido en el espacio preferencial creado por el horizonte marino, ya en los momentos de alegría, ya en los momentos de infinita tristeza y desesperanza, y no es coincidencia que, en un poemario anterior titulado *Contigo he abierto el Paraíso*,¹ la portada y la contraportada del libro tengan la foto de un atardecer

1. Manuel Figueroa-Meléndez, *Contigo he abierto el Paraíso* (Manatí: Ediciones del Chorro, 1990).

en el Pacífico tomada por el propio autor. Pero en esa colección de poemas, a diferencia de la presente, la atmósfera es luminosa y astral y la poesía se sustenta no sólo en eros sino también en la creencia en un ciclo vital inacabable, donde el yo subconsciente puede ir purificándose y perfeccionándose hasta alcanzar el abrazo de la Totalidad.

En *Atardecer en el Atlántico* es otro océano el que llena la mirada del escritor, más rebelde, y el agua bienhechora se ha transformado en la pared imposible de escalar en esta etapa de su vida, porque no es sólo el amor que se ha desvanecido sino también la esperanza y, me atrevería a decir, incluso el deseo de transformar el dolor en estímulo de la creación.

Lo que el lector percibe, lo que oye latir, es la sangre de las heridas abiertas que se han transformado en una inmensa llaga de la que fluye la sangre sin parar, como un río de “tinta bermeja”. El poeta ha escrito una especie de testamento que no contiene “sus últimas voluntades”, según la fórmula clásica, porque no hay en él ninguna voluntad que no sea la de entregarse a la oscuridad eterna.

Dice el poeta en el poema “XLVII”:

he estado vagando desde entonces
con las lloviznas espinando mi cuerpo
ardiendo desde adentro
crepitando como aceite en el candelero
desmitificando mis aciertos
envejeciendo entre el recuerdo
muriendo frente a la lámpara y el silencio. (99)

Las imágenes arquitectónicas y un lenguaje salpicado de clasicismos se mezclan con imágenes eróticas enigmáticas y atrevidas, interrumpidas, raras veces, por un sentimiento de serenidad que alivia el terror de la muerte como el poema siguiente:

aquí
están
las
olas
serenas
a
mis
pies
con
el
sol
de
frente
iluminándome
en
el

último
segundo
de
vida.
(101)

Después de la serenidad el salto hacia lo desconocido en el abrazo líquido del mar amado en todas las latitudes. Canta el poeta en la despedida:

estas aguas que me aprietan
suben en espiral
me anudan la garganta
mientras que anochece
en la bambalina ilusoria
del último eclipse. (105)

Figueroa-Meléndez ha cumplido, con este poemario, un tiempo poético que se corresponde a su tiempo vital; ahora sus lectores esperamos un nuevo registro poético y vital que traduzca el dolor en alegría.

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BODY AS MENTALITY IN EDITH WHARTON'S *ETHAN FROME*

Tracy Wendt

In the introduction to *Ethan Frome*, Edith Wharton discusses her stylistic intention as an author to portray complex theory through relentlessly “simple” characters. Where “any attempt to elaborate and complicate their sentiments would have falsified the whole,” the characters’ representations are circumscribed through lack of education, finances, and communication reciprocated by their snowy, barren environment. The isolated figure emerges “scarcely more articulate” than his origins (4). Although bombarded with simplifying forces, the characters’ incapacity to express their “sentiments” “articulate[ly],” or possess strong communicative abilities, is one of the key strategies Wharton employs for a psychologically simple yet intense character who personifies his mute landscape. The townspeople first lack effective discourse, where conversation surrenders to colloquial language, brief description, and even silence. Wharton then parallels the characters’ stunted expression to restrained emotion, a pivotal reciprocity for her final dynamic. Finally, the characters’ emotionality, because they could not express it through verbal dialogue, cannot be experienced through internal monologue. Wharton does not lend lengthy introspective passages to Ethan’s philosophizing his emotions but, instead, renders his psychology through the language of the body.

In a life overcome by a treacherous, frozen environment and hard labor, awareness of the body’s needs supercedes that of the mind. Ethan’s physical deformity, Zeena’s ill health, and Mattie’s physical demise frame the text as focused, almost elementally, on bodily survival in an unforgiving setting. Going beyond the narrative device of having the characters’ bodies relay their thoughts (such as a blush expressing embarrassment or desire), Wharton instead applies the language of the body to reflection. Wharton is not using a physical reaction to express an underlying emotion but reversing the directional and recasting the mental/emotional within physical terms to

narrow her characters' psychological parameters. Wharton's hidden rhetorical strategy thus creates a new, subversive example of "environmental discourse." At the expense of limiting Ethan's "sentiments" to the only metaphor he's experienced, Wharton creates a character whose contemplative simplicity portrays the complex repercussions of a harsh, isolated atmosphere.

Wharton's introduction to *Ethan Frome* gives a synopsis of the "simple" character type she intends for the townspeople. While she later emphasizes their simplicity through *Frome's* themes of isolation, lack of education, and financial hardship, one can infer from the introduction's rhetoric that these more obvious elements are secondary to her deeper intention, as her word choice indicates, of their inability to communicate effectively. From the book's many simplifying themes, Wharton chooses to address discourse in her introduction:

It must be treated as starkly and summarily as life had always presented itself to my protagonists; any attempt to elaborate and complicate their sentiments would necessarily have falsified the whole. They were, in truth . . . scarcely more articulate . . . This was my task, if I were to tell the story of Ethan Frome . . . while an air of artificiality is lent to a tale of complex and sophisticated people . . . there need be no such drawback if the looker-on is sophisticated, and the people he interprets are simple. (4)

As an author, Wharton's "task" is to "treat" the characters narratively as their thematic life presents them. Meaning, because the townspeople live a "stark . . . life," an author who "complicates" their expression, or "sentiments," ultimately contradicts the story's true rendering and thus "falsifie[s] the whole." Wharton specifically focuses on communication to portray their simplicity. By choosing words and phrases like "sentiments" and "scarcely more articulate," Wharton points to verbal expression as her first, and possibly most important, venue for representing characters who lack "complex and sophisticated" properties. Wharton's "scheme of construction" is to portray "rudimentary characters" whose language would be naturally shaped, and therefore stunted, by their simple existence. While attributing colloquial language to small town folk seems an unnecessary explanation for Wharton to make, I believe this emphasis on inexpressibility develops into the characters' psychology as Wharton foreshadows a more complex narrative turn. She will ultimately inhibit their internal monologue to parallel a stunted external monologue by taking physical terminology, which reflects their life's focus on bodily survival, and apply it to their introspection.

Evidence of this development from external to internal dialogue must first be seen in regular speech. Wharton's characters' "senti-

ments” are in keeping with their necessary simplicity. The townspeople lack effective discourse, where conversation becomes less intelligible from colloquialism, brevity, and silence. Because Wharton frames the text with a narrator’s visit to the town and his attempts to understand Ethan’s story, the focus on recitation between people is immediate. Our narrator only picks up brief impressions of Ethan’s past from numerous townspeople’s disjointed stories: “I had the story, bit by bit, from various people, and, as generally happens in such cases, each time it was a different story [...] Nevertheless, I might have contented myself with the story pieced together from these hints” (9,13). The people’s stunted dialogue consists of “bit[s]” and “hints” and their inconsistent storytelling is “different” every time. Therefore, the narrator only successfully receives the story, and undertakes the continuation of the book, by physically encountering Ethan and his home. Critics recognize the dialogue’s brevity as resulting from the friction between a quieted internal self and the pull for external expression for the narrator’s and the text’s advancement: “A novel that is subtly informed [...]. The work is profoundly concerned with the problem of an interior story that cannot be told. The common critical aim is to complicate the function of Wharton’s narrator” (Hutchinson 220-221). Ethan’s coworker, Jotham, mirrors both the colloquial language and its small vocabulary when he tries to refuse Ethan’s invitation to dinner:

“I’m obliged to you, but I guess I’ll go along back.” Ethan looked at him in surprise. “Better come up and dry off. Looks as if ther’d be something hot for supper.” Jotham’s facial muscles were unmoved by this appeal and, his vocabulary being limited, he merely repeated: “I guess I’ll go along back.” (58)

Peppered with contractions (“ther’d”) and incorrect grammar (“I’ll go along back”), Jotham’s ineffectual first rebuttal towards dinner is lost on Ethan. As if Jotham cannot construct a second sentence that more adequately explains his exit, he returns once again to the previous (“I guess I’ll go along back”). Even in this instance we see Wharton expressing the characters’ introspective moments through the language of the body. When “Jotham’s facial muscles were unmoved by this appeal,” he is both emotionally “unmoved” by standing firm to his original decision as well as intellectually “unmoved” when he cannot maneuver in his mind for new words or phrases.

Jotham’s and the townspeople’s speech, an expression of their emotionality, suffers from environmental constraints. Their dialogue’s “unmoved” “bits” are the manifestation of a simplified life that creates “simple” people. Many of Wharton’s themes, more obvious than the rhetoric of her characters, are limiting forces on her characters. Most

of these forces elevate the body's needs to the highest degree, even above intellect. Once Wharton establishes the metaphor of the body as above the mind, it now trumps the mind's expression and recolors it in physical language. Hence, our characters' speech, which denotes their emotions, is stunted as their later internal voice, or actual emotions, also become reformed within the constraints of their environment. First, Wharton makes the necessary connection between a character's dialogue as a surface expression of his deeper feelings. As an author, she recognizes that the characters' limited discourse ran the risk of interpreting them as unfeeling and entirely ignorant. Consequently she presents Ethan early in the piece as a silent figure, taciturn not because of his lack of understanding or emotionality but from a lifestyle set in restraint. The narrator recognizes Ethan's simple language and tells the reader that it masks a complex psychology:

He never turned his face to mine or answered, except in monosyllables, the questions I put [...] but there was nothing unfriendly in his silence. I simply felt he lived in a depth of moral isolation too remote for casual access [...] I hoped this incident might set up some more direct communication between us. Frome was so simple and straightforward [...] Such tastes and acquirements in a man of this condition made the contrast more poignant between his outer situation and his inner needs, and I hoped that the chance of giving expression to the latter might at least unseal his lips. But something in his past history had apparently driven him too deeply into himself. (15)

Ethan's "monosylla[bic]" speech and "silence" is immediately paralleled with his "moral[ity]." Therefore, the narrator wants us to know that his silence does not reflect emptiness but, instead, mirrors very present yet muted morals. He possesses "such tastes and acquirements" that seem unfitting for an intellect isolated, physically and psychically, in a place "too remote for casual access." Because this comment immediately precedes the men's difficult journey in the snow where the weather prevents them from reaching their destination, "casual access" of Ethan and the landscape are juxtaposed to relay their interconnection. Ethan's "outer situation" and his "inner needs" are linked to a point at which climate, physical isolation, and ill education constrict his inner psychology.

Ethan explains his brief exposure to education that he abandons for Starkfield's small population, rough weather, and similar sense of desertion. His intellect, though still present, is consequently constricted: "There are things in that book that I didn't know the first word about," he said [...] 'I used to'" (15). Although the narrator knows Ethan has not been rendered completely ignorant because he "was sure his curiosity about the book was based on genuine interest," there is still a discrepancy between Ethan's previous and later abilities

(15). “More direct communication” and “expression” with Ethan beyond his “simple and straightforward” manner becomes impossible as Wharton, after giving her characters intellectual dimension, shows how it is restricted and somewhat lessened by their surroundings by making these shortcomings manifest in their speech. The final parallel between discourse, intellect, and environment occurs in the narrator’s first analyzed impression of Ethan: “He seemed a part of the mute melancholy landscape, an incarnation of its frozen woe” (14). Ethan is a “part” (or result) of the “landscape” (his climate and external forces) which leave him “mute” (or voiceless). Because Ethan “wouldn’t be sorry to earn a dollar,” has had “Sickness and trouble: that’s what Ethan’s had,” and “his loneliness was not merely the result of personal plight [...] but had in it the profound accumulated cold of many Starkfield winters,” his poverty, physical despair, and harsh climate leave him incommunicable (13-14). For Ethan’s survival, bodily needs dominate the intellectual as his introspection takes on physical description to reinforce his lifestyle’s limiting influence.

Wharton’s final stylistic device to portray simplicity is having Ethan internalize his voicelessness and only express his emotions in physical terminology. His psychology is not only constricted but reformatted within the only metaphor available to him in a physically trying existence. This method delivers necessary character insight while staying true to the theme of constriction: “In *Ethan Frome*, Wharton developed techniques to probe a character’s inner consciousness and incapacitating sense of isolation” (Singley 8). It is impossible to note the characters’ “consciousness” without coupling it with their general sense of “incapacitat[ion].” Thus, Wharton’s “technique” must reconcile the antithesis of explaining characters that cannot explain themselves. Wharton is not using the common narrative method of having characters’ bodies relay their emotions, such as a blush expressing embarrassment or desire. She is essentially reversing this device and applying the language of the body to reflection, not expressing reflection through the body. The common second technique allows the intellect freedom by using a physical reaction to express a greater underlying emotion that cannot be contained and therefore shows itself through the body. Wharton does not want such freedom for her simple characters and thus restricts burgeoning emotions by moving the body metaphor inward to the characters’ introspection instead of outward as a physical manifestation. The majority of her resultant word choices connote contemplation, not just unconscious emotion, to portray Ethan as a thinking yet inescapably constricted being.

Critics recognize this physical language as “speaking” for Ethan’s

consciousness: "Ethan becomes defined by the 'impulses near the surface' of his conscious responses. [...] The literary suicide, as Maragret Higonnet analyzes, is a metaphor for 'speaking silences'—a passion unexplored or unspoken, a mute and muted critique of sexual possibility. [...] Here, as elsewhere, Wharton substitutes the language of physical pain for the language of unfulfilled passion" (Singley 136). Ethan and Mattie's "unfulfilled passion," or feelings and emotions, are "substituted" for "the language of the physical." Hence, Ethan reads as a character with only "surface" expression, where his bodily "responses" connote mental realizations. His psychology is "unspoken," "mute," and "silen[t]" by adhering to this narrative template. While Singley argues the primary thoughts being suppressed are sexual, I believe she ignores Ethan's many scenes where he, albeit through physical language, nonetheless displays holistic, evaluative thought. He is aware of the numerous influences limiting his union with Mattie, including financial and moral circumstances. In the "suicide" scene, it is because of this hopelessness, reached by exploring his options (writing letters, borrowing money), that the final decision is reached. It is dangerous to limit Ethan's primary repressed emotion to sex because passion straddles the line between the psychological and physical. Therefore, when his emotions are expressed through physical language, it does not reflect a restricted mind but just the appropriate rhetoric for purely physical (sexual) thoughts. While "unfulfilled passion" may be Ethan's primary driving force, he nonetheless hints toward various other emotions and concerns which are not normally centered on the physical body.

Ethan's and Mattie's dinner scene applies physical wording to their questions of love for one another and subsequent conflicted emotions:

"Why, Puss! I nearly tripped over you," she cried, the laughter sparkling through her lashes.

Again Ethan felt a sudden twinge of jealousy. Could it be his coming that gave her such a kindled face? [...]

She nodded and laughed, "Yes, one," and felt a blackness settling on his brows. [...]

Her eyes danced with malice. "Why, Jotham Powell. He came in after he got back, and asked for a drop of coffee before he went down home."

The blackness lifted and light flooded Ethan's brain. (47)

Mattie's "laughter" denotes happiness she does not arrive at through rumination but, instead, only grasps as "sparkl[e] through her lashes." Ethan, in turn, "felt" his jealousy, not understood it. He wonders if his affection is reciprocated by analyzing Mattie's face, not her

words: "Could it be his coming that gave her such a kindled face?" When suspecting Mattie was visited by a suitor, Ethan's distress is described as "a blackness" he once again feels ("felt"), instead of a sadness he recognizes. It is impossible for Ethan's "brows" to express, or take on the look of, blackness. Wharton is not using Ethan's body to express his feelings because this image is too abstract. She purposefully chooses a physical expression that cannot be executed to differentiate how she imposes physicality on the mind, not the mind onto physicality. Putting the focus on Ethan's eyebrows, an almost physical semblance of the brain or just the feature most closely located, reinforces the theme of reflection. When finally "the blackness lifted and light flooded Ethan's brain," the darkness once associated with his brows is now likened to his mind, connecting the two images and their dynamic as one. When learning Jotham was the actual visitor, not a suitor, Ethan's happiness is a "light," an equally intangible image to blackness. It "flooded his brain," the closest Wharton will come to allowing Ethan a realization. She chooses the word "brain," not mind, to almost stay within scientific bodily terms and not enter psychological ones. Mattie's eyes "danced with malice," a figurative motion impossible to physically occur, as she consequently recognized Ethan's initial "scorn." Mattie's intelligent assessment of Ethan's feelings surrenders to the bodily realm of her eyes, not to dialogue or internal monologue.

Wharton comes full circle in a passage that traces her focus on reflection's physical rhetoric back to its original presence in discourse. Immediately following Ethan's regained happiness ("light"), the subject of Zeena arises and his intellect, described through bodily language, feels distraught and he is rendered inarticulate. The theme of inexpressibility resurfaces when Zeena is named:

Ethan, a moment earlier, had felt himself on the brink of eloquence; but the mention of Zeena had paralyzed him. Mattie seemed to feel the contagion of his embarrassment, and sat with downcast lids, sipping her tea, while he feigned an insatiable appetite for dough-nuts and sweet pickles. At last, after casting about for an effective opening, he took a long gulp of tea, cleared his throat and said, "Looks as if there'd be more snow." (47)

"On the brink of eloquence," Ethan almost grasps the capacity to speak philosophically to Mattie, not just through stunted conversational dialogue. He is about to break from his metaphor's constraints and reveal his emotions not in "simple and straightforward" language but in a newfound "eloquence." However, the subject of Zeena "paralyzed him." Wharton chooses the specifically physical word "paralyze" to abort Ethan's thinking as if his thoughts exist in

a strictly physical, not psychological realm. Because Ethan later becomes partially paralyzed with Mattie's physical strength also on this "brink," Wharton is not afraid to actualize her metaphors to reinforce their influence. Mattie "feels," instead of recognizes, Ethan's embarrassment. Accordingly, she feels, or experiences, this embarrassment through "downcast lids." Wharton links contemplation and bodily terms back to their root in dialogue when Ethan cannot find "an effective opening" and, from lacking communicative skills, gives a mundane comment on the weather. "Looks as if there'd be more snow" is not only a common expression about the weather but an inevitability for Starkfield. The comment is satirically biting in its obviousness yet tragically ineffectual for the true issues at hand regarding love, sex, finances, and marriage between Mattie and Ethan. Because there are not many options for the lovers and one cannot ignore legal and financial truths, it is almost poignantly astute to change a subject that cannot be rectified. Wharton's "simple" characters, by realizing their physical (symbolic of the actual) restricted life, seem to intelligently accept their limitations. Whether or not this is a conscious acceptance, Wharton's statement on the mind/body connection reinforces the subversive qualities of such absorption.

Ethan Frome is often coupled with Wharton's short story *Summer* because of the texts' numerous overlapping themes. Wharton writes, "The fact that *Summer* deals with the same class type as those portrayed in *Ethan Frome*, and has the same setting" often prompts critics to juxtapose their analyses (272). The texts share themes of environmental influence over self-definition, constricted realities, and inevitable capture: "The weather is warmer in *Summer* than *Ethan Frome*, but are not the two works the product of the same spirit of reductiveness in Wharton? [...] Escape for both Charity Royall and Ethan Frome is impossible" (Vita-Finzi 105). While these thematic similarities would seem to predispose Charity to Ethan's "reductive" physical metaphor, Charity's narrative expression is much freer and continually attributes her thoughts to her own understanding. Charity, while feeling both a liberating connection to the countryside and an oppressive one from her Mountain birth, is not intellectually circumvented through an environmental and, hence, bodily medium. While her naivete and limited education from her small town life results in a more "simple" interior, she is allowed to express that interior without symbolic constraints. Charity claims ownership over her realizations when Wharton uses philosophical, not physical, terminology for her main character. Comparing texts recognized as similar in this respect reveals a divergence in Wharton's stylistics that submerges Ethan even deeper into his physical self by contrast with a female counter-

part whose realizations, unfortunately, cannot free her either.

Psychology-based terminology describes Charity's mentality. While, as in Ethan's case, the environment limits Charity's understanding, Wharton instead describes these limitations directly, keeping them from "subtly" manifesting in other areas and undermining her character. Additionally, these limitations are paired, often within the same sentence, with Charity understanding a different aspect of the topic in question. Wharton describes Charity's rumination directly, not through a metaphor that subverts her control:

Charity was disappointed; but she understood. [...] Charity suspected him of being glad of the chance to make a little money [...] and she immediately guessed that the unwonted present—the only gift of money she had received from him—represented Harney's first payment. [...] She wondered what if he were musing on what Mr. Royall had told him, and if it really debased her in his thoughts. [...] And she knew it was out of regard for her that he had kept silent. (108,131,137)

Charity "understood," "suspected," "guessed," "wondered" and "knew" the various situations. These particular verbs show her domain over her own intellect, where she consciously recognizes circumstances instead of unconsciously displaying that recognition. Her understandings are direct, not expressed indirectly through metaphor. Additionally, Charity's contemplation becomes more layered and complex when she considers the "thoughts" and "musing[s]" of other individuals. She is not only able to think, but to think philosophically. Ethan does think but loses control over his thoughts through metaphor and its displacing dynamic. Charity, like Ethan, is extremely constrained by many forces, and her intellect suffers from lack of scholastic knowledge and varied experience. However, Wharton states Charity's shortcomings directly, often with Charity's own knowledge of her limitations.

Charity is aware of her deficiencies and gains at least some degree of power from that awareness. Additionally, Wharton often matches her confusion with realizations, subduing the severity of complete obliviousness: "Charity had only a dim understanding of her guardian's needs; but she knew he felt himself above the people among whom he lived. [...] She was blind and insensible to many things, and dimly knew it; but to all that was light and air, perfume and color, every drop of blood in her responded. [...] Charity was never very clear about the mountain, but she knew it was a bad place (101,131,106). Charity's "dim understanding" of Mr. Royall's and the mountain's specific relevance to her future leads her to difficult experiences in the end. However, she knows Mr. Royall "felt himself above the people" and the mountain "was a bad place," pertinent

information about Royall's superior status and subsequent feelings of entitlement to marry Charity as well as the mountain's ominous influence over Charity's return to her poor, ignorant past. Many of Charity's decisions show her reverting psychically, like returning to the mountain to face her animalistic birth and childhood as well as forfeiting her power over Royall to a "blind" marriage. However, some of the confrontations she consciously seeks out as she retains awareness over her emotional self: "But though her actual behavior may be regressive, her self-awareness, including ashamed bewilderment at her own behavior, shows how far she has developed in spirit. To complete her emotional education, she has after all, paradoxically to go back to her beginnings" (Walton 268). While seemingly moving backward in "regressive" actions, Charity is nonetheless "self-aware" of her "developed" spirit and emotionality, even when her decisions and resultant feelings are negative, "shame." This portrays an "emotional education" even within seemingly uneducated, poor decisions. Ethan never obtains dominion over his emotions because they are displaced to his physical, not mental, self. Most importantly juxtaposed are Charity's general "blind[ness] and insensibil[ity] to many things" against her more enlightened feelings toward nature, "but to all that was light and air, perfume and color, every drop of her blood responded." Inescapably connected with nature, Charity, like Ethan, finds her life defined by the environment.

Charity's association with the land is intrinsically antithetical because her "regressive" connection with the mountain matches her liberating bond with the landscape. While positive and negative environmental sketches holistically define her, Ethan remains one-sided (in setting and mentality) and cannot benefit like Charity in her summer surroundings. Critics view *Summer* as framed by its setting: "The emotional arc of this tale is figured by the landscape itself- the long vistas over the hillsides, the fragrance of wildflowers, the heat of the sun" (Singley 39). Charity's "emotional" self is "figured" by natural elements of "air, perfume, and color." While Ethan's physical contact with the landscape causes strife and ultimately disfigurement, Charity takes "pleasure" in the sensations of inviting grass and hills:

She loved the roughness of the dry mountain grass under her palms, the smell of the thyme into which she crushed her face, the fingering of the wind in her hair and through her cotton blouse, and the creak of the larches as they swayed to it. She often climbed up the hill and lay there alone for the mere pleasure of feeling the wind and rubbing her cheeks in the grass. (106)

This passage's language presents Charity as interacting with her surroundings. Ethan, however, is acted upon by his surroundings.

Hindered by the snow, his journey with the narrator must prematurely end, his home becomes an isolating prison, and his emotions are “frozen woe.” One could argue that the weather imposes a stationary life and fixed emotionality on Ethan. His one attempt to interact or use the landscape for his benefit results in an ironically crippling accident; almost a lesson against manipulating nature that leaves him even more succumbed to it. Nonetheless, Charity “loved,” “smell[ed],” “climbed,” and “lay” in her natural surroundings in no way victimized. Furthermore, her “pleasure” is so heightened by sensation, one might argue the scene is sexual in nature. The language is sexually charged by verbs that connote stimulation: “roughness,” “crushed,” “fingering,” “swayed,” “feeling,” “rubbed.” Also, the particular areas of Charity’s body that experience these sensations imply sex: “palms,” “face,” “cheeks,” and “through her cotton blouse.” If Wharton not only liberates Charity through the environment but sexually liberates her, *Ethan Frome*’s primary theme of sexual repression is even further intensified.

Summer includes *Ethan Frome*’s themes of difficulty in verbal expression and the body expressing interior emotions. However, like the shared environment theme, their use dramatically diverges from *Frome*’s. When Charity cannot communicate her feelings she is again aware of these limitations. She recognizes her silence and considers the consequences for her listener’s interpretation. *Frome*’s characters are not only unaware that the unintelligible “bits” of their stories are often contradictory but cannot predict they will not suffice a complete story to our narrator who ultimately abandons this dialogue altogether. Charity is also intellectually aware in scenes in which her body indicates her feelings. This is impossible for Ethan’s interpretation as only psychically present through his body. Additionally, only one part of Charity’s physicality expresses her emotions, so that her entire body does not become a primary theme from repeated and varied references. Charity cannot articulate herself yet is conscious of this failure: “She felt the pitiful inadequacy of this, with a sense of despair, that in her inability to express herself she must give him an impression of coldness and reluctance; but she could not help it” (206). Not directly addressed within *Frome* except from a more objective stance in the introduction, Wharton writes poignantly of the “pitiful inadequacy” and “sense of despair” in the simple characters of *Summer*. “[Charity’s] inability to express herself” is charged with emotional language where the reader too “piti[es]” this shortcoming. Critics will later argue that *Frome*’s lack of sentiment, either due to the author’s interjection or to the character’s interiority, is “relentless” and “cruel” (Trilling qtd. in Killoran 49). However, I relate this criticism

to others which insist that “sensibility” is present but in indirect ways (as in my theory on the physical body). Nonetheless, Charity, possibly like the author, is aware of and saddened by her “inadequate” communication. Allowing more intellectual depth for Charity, she analyzes the “impression” her silence will give. Charity is not only conscious of her silence, but the impact of that silence. Although “she could not help it” like *Frome*’s characters, she can contemplate it.

Similarly, Charity also “understood” a scene’s complexity when, viewing Harney from his bedroom window, Charity’s body reflects her feelings yet her mind is still actively addressed: “Charity’s heart sank. [...] Her heart jumped and then stood still. He was there, a few feet away; and while her soul was tossing on seas of woe [...] but something kept her from moving. It was not the fear of any sanction, human or heavenly; she had never in her life been afraid. It was simply that she had suddenly understood what would happen if she went in” (138,150). Only Charity’s “heart” reveals her emotions, unlike *Frome*’s many mentions of minute, almost inconsequential parts like “eyelids.” Charity’s feelings are rendered in larger metaphoric items, like the traditional “heart” and “soul.” These mentions are not meant to lend focus on her body but, because the two items are internal, point more towards her interiority and feelings than her external physicality. Even in a reference to Charity’s body the focus is redirected to her psychology. When “the mention of Zeena paralyzed him,” Ethan’s fear prevents further interaction with Mattie. However, Charity “had never in her life been afraid” and, unlike Ethan, “it was not the fear of any sanction” that precluded her contact with Harney. In these similar scenes of lovers in close proximity yet restraining their contact, Charity is much more liberated in her physical depiction and how she “simply [...] understood,” or exhibits conscious awareness of, the consequences. Ethan, while also understanding why he cannot interact intimately with Mattie, is nevertheless shown as recognizing this through his body by becoming “paralyzed.” Wharton employs many of the same themes in the two texts but *Summer* allows moments of direct introspection, enjoyment and desired contact with the environment, and the freedom to move in and out of physical metaphor. When read as lacking the opportunities *Summer* exhibits in the very themes the texts share, *Ethan Frome* becomes even more “paralyzed” by Wharton’s intentionally restrictive narrative.

In light of the freedoms *Summer* portrays, critics argue that *Ethan Frome* lacks this sensibility towards Ethan’s plight. The characters’ circumscribed interiority presents the reader with verbal and psychological brevity that leave the characters no room to solve problems and the readers no emotionality from which to build a connection.

Thus, Lionel Trilling states “the mind can do nothing with” *Ethan Frome* because Wharton finds “nothing to say of the events of her story” (qtd. in Hutchinson 223). The reader cannot analyze beyond the story’s concise instances because Wharton does not allow her characters or the narrator to analyze them. The text’s philosophical void inhibits the reader simultaneously with the characters. In addition, the lack of emotionality which (I argue as present yet projected through the body) constitutes a second critique against an author creating “morally inert” characters. However, a popular opposing argument focuses on the narrator as possessing, instead, the “sensitivity of a poet.” While the text realistically coincides with the harsh restriction of its environment, our narrator’s storytelling abilities differ dramatically from the rudimentary townspeople. Thus, *Ethan Frome* must be told through an outside party with eloquent “professional” skill that contrasts its simple subject matter. Therefore, the text is poetic, sentimental writing about sentimentally constricted people. While the two theories differ on the rhetoric’s ultimate impression, both recognize the inherent division between the narrator and the characters’ skills. This discrepancy stems from Wharton’s immediate premise in the introduction that “there is no such drawback if the looker-on is sophisticated, and the people he interprets are simple.” Therefore, critics analyze this narrative philosophy as either satirically written, or telling of Wharton’s decision to create an “outsider” narrator as a medium for the piece.

The first set of critical dialogues on *Frome* responds to the characters’ one-dimensional personalities, and their lack, as well as the narrator’s, of “sentiment:”

Ethan is ‘helpless as a child to combat the forces that bind him.’ [...] ‘Banality’ is the sum of Mattie’s personality. In Trilling’s view, ‘The mind can do nothing with’ Ethan Frome, since Wharton herself finds nothing to say of the events of her story: ‘nothing whatever.’ [...] A writer thoroughly suspicious of sentiment [...] barrenness [...] The passage had an immediate force, but since Wharton makes no attempt to place what it says, immediacy is all there is. The narrator, who would aid perspective, is invisible, leaving us to conclude that Wharton herself wants this moment to be an absolute explanation. (Hutchinson 223)

For this interpretation one must ignore the expression of psychological complexity through other media besides directly stated introspection. However, on a superficial reading (no less important than an analytical one), Ethan is “helpless” and “the sum of Mattie’s personality” is “banality.” Wharton has “nothing to say” philosophically about the characters because philosophy and introspection are not present, on the narratorial level, within the text. Therefore, “nothing

whatever” comes of “sentiment” in the characters and accordingly elicits only a sense of “barrenness” in the reader. Wharton “makes no attempt to place what it says” and, therefore, stilts the reader’s own analytical interpretation. Finally, the “narrator” does not “aid perspective” in this unsentimental, direct recitation. He is therefore “invisible” leaving only the “immediacy” of the scene’s factual happenings without an explanation of its more complex, layered implications. When “Wharton herself wants this moment to be an absolute explanation,” I argue that one must turn to the rhetoric itself for depth. In the short story, instead of dismissing its brevity for incompleteness or insubstantial characters, I find Wharton’s psychology encoded in the very “suspicious[ly] sentiment[al]” language critics decry. It is too extreme to label *Frome* as without merit: “Lionel Trilling, well respected in academia, tagged *Ethan Frome* a ‘dead book’ because he found it morally inert” (Killoran 49). While Ethan’s and Mattie’s demise is “cruel,” it is not without moral implications toward self-empowerment, self-fulfillment, and the valuing of one’s mortality. Also, it can be read as a sketch on the moral stance of Wharton’s society. Finally, if we must find morality within the text and not through inference, Ethan’s hesitancy to abandon his sick wife in poverty and borrow money under false pretenses reveals a moral side that, although not directly pondered by our narrator, is nonetheless thematically present. In conclusion, I place my argument against the concept of *Ethan Frome* as a “dead book” by referencing physical metaphor as revealing character psychology and “sentiment.”

However, I do not completely surrender to the theory of an all-expressive narrator argued by a second vein of criticism. These critics’ emphasis on sensibility, while correct, is not written as straightforwardly by Wharton as they imply. As stated before, it is indirect through environmental, bodily, and even animal metaphors. Arguing against “Odd structural patterns and unsatisfactory detail” in *Frome*, a second theoretical stance does not believe “the narration poses serious difficulty because ideally Ethan would tell his own story” but views the surrogate narrator as enlightening the storyline and its stylistics (Killoran 53). The once “invisible” narrator who complicates the narrative because “ideally Ethan would tell his own story” is conversely viewed as a highly skilled writer and undeniable presence. “Unsatisfactory detail” becomes “thoroughly informed [...] sensibility” when critics view Wharton as implementing an outside narrator, not a town member, to introduce a more elevated spoken and written voice:

For the close reader readily discerns that the engineer-narrator did not readily gather this story “bit by bit, from various people,” but having been inspired by a few bare hints and scraps of information, created

his "vision" [...] out of the stuff of his vivid imagination. In short, the narrator who presents himself as an engineer in the realistic framework of the novel is actually a writer in disguise with the technical skill of a professional novelist and the sensibility of a poet. (Brennan 261)

The "engineer-narrator" uses his more sophisticated standing, according to Wharton, to create a "vision" not a fragmented recitation. The narrator's "vivid imagination," while written into the "realistic framework" of the novel, extends beyond any other character's capability. He expresses Ethan's story almost in an oral format, directly to the reader, which is a fitting rendition against his less communicative company. While simple characters speak in "bare hints and scraps of information," our narrator "is actually a writer in disguise." Whether Wharton is writing herself into the text we cannot know. However, she continually divides the character and reader's abilities, both in the introduction and in her narrator's "technical" and "professional" skill. It is difficult to read her introduction as satirical when she immediately presents us with a sophisticated narrator who is reliable for the remainder of the story. While he cannot delve into character psychology, it would be both unrealistic and contradictory to Wharton's constrictive tone for him to reveal those interiors.

The question of Ethan's self-expression cannot be separated from the narrator's identity: "We have to deal here with an overt fiction within a fiction. [...] The account of Ethan's tragic love, in fact, is so thoroughly informed by the sensibility and imagination of its narrator that the story can be adequately analyzed only in terms of that relationship" (Brennan 265). The narrator's "sensibility and imagination" imply a fused relationship with the text, where it is "informed" through, and only through, this sophisticated voice. Ethan himself could be interpreted as divided into his actual, incommunicable self versus his unrealized future self—the learned, articulate narrator. Why Wharton must displace Ethan's story from him into the hands of another is controversial. Criticism asks if the subaltern can speak, so we must ask why Ethan is powerless to portray his own story. I argue that the poignancy of Ethan's story influences the narrator and, hence, Ethan's individual mark does touch the piece directly. While the narrator and Ethan physically interact, I believe there are emotional exchanges and understandings as well. Therefore, Ethan influences the narrative by impacting its writer. While the teller maintains narrative control, Ethan posits the emotional germ of the piece. Just as Wharton subscribes Ethan's feelings to physical metaphor, so does the narrator speak for Ethan's incommunicable past. Silent emotion passes through literary stylistics to gain a voice: "to convert intellectual and moral experience into the material of art, means that

the pictures of conscious and unconscious processes of story-telling are blurred,” Wharton explains (qtd. in Vita-Finzi 51). Therefore, while Ethan is not a “conscious” writer or even character, like our narrator, his “unconscious” influences the “story-telling” as well. In addition, because Ethan’s unconscious mind is continually expressed in a “material” realm, i.e., the body, it is consistent to manifest his “muted[ness]” in an indirect yet material narrative. The text must partly consist of Ethan’s voice because the body metaphor is the only language in which he can speak and the primary one presented to us. Therefore, when critics argue whether the writing is limited or expressive, whether the narrator and characters are distant or united, I argue they are both.

The physical self is a predominant metaphor of a text filled with illness and labor. Wharton’s characters internalize this focus, speaking in a more rudimentary manner and thinking within physical language. Because escape cannot be made psychically, Ethan’s and Mattie’s attempted suicide is fitting. However, Wharton does not release them from their bodies but plunges them deeper into its awareness through injury. Compared with *Summer*’s similar themes though liberating dynamic, Wharton appears even more intensely aware and purposeful in limiting *Ethan Frome*. Critics interpret this as being either a “morally inert” text or “thoroughly informed by sensibility and imagination.” Interpretive differences do concede that the narrator is divided from the text. I feel that in this division one can find a balance between absence of sentiment into restricted sentiment, and an all-knowing narrator into an influential yet character-driven one. These reconciliations are originally present and operating when Wharton portrays real and present character psychology filtered through literary metaphor.

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THE FEMALE GROTESQUE IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN CULTURE

Anna Kérchy

"If Barbie is a monster, she is our monster, our ideal."

(Anne DuCille 565)

Western culture's obsessive male gaze (Doane 180) seems always to have outlined the female body antagonistically: object of scopophilic desire and enigmatic vessel of life and death, sublime essence of beauty and abjectified (Kristeva 9), uncanny other against which the speaking subject can define himself. Tempting and threatening, sacred and profane, corporeality associated with femininity remains an unresolved paradox. This trend seems to accelerate radicalized in 21st century Western societies, interpellating the female body as simultaneously idealized *and* normativized, decorporealized *and* pathologized, eroticized *and* asceticized, producing via the impossible expectations of the engendered body discipline grotesque female bodies. Contemporary America is the hotbed of the female grotesque by being home of the anatomically deformed Barbie doll, the excessively skinny anorexic or the abnormally obese fast food junkie, of steroidized female body builders, of plastic surgery-addicts, of hyper-technological cyborgs, of maniacally stylized and designed, tattooed, pierced, dyed, shaved, "made-up" female bodies. This ever-expanding spectacular society of simulacrum (see Debord 3 and Baudrillard 10) hatching unrealistic, un/superhuman grotesque bodies elicits "female body dysmorphia" also known as "body image distortion syndrome" (BIDS), a new form of female malady (succeeding hysteria and depression) that nevertheless can be interpreted as a manifestation of dis-ease and as such a mode of radical transgression. Accordingly, the current grotesque body modifications may be read as body-controlling manipulations of the Foucauldian technologies of biopower (Foucault, *Power* 58) of the

dominant patriarchal ideology influenced by the economic interests of consumer society's major business fields targeting woman in the form of beauty industries. But they might also signify innovative technologies of the self (Foucault, "Technologies" 16), (re)writing the body as a mode of feminist empowerment, creating a subversive anti-aesthetic carved onto one's very flesh. The aim of this article is to examine whether these current forms of female grotesque are desperate attempts at the carnivalesque destabilization of the conventional social order and of traditional ways of seeing, enacted by victims of the inevitable scenario of the ideology of representation or whether they are, on the contrary, self-reflexive, ideology-critical subversions of woman warriors rewriting myths of "American beauty" and femininity via performative identities and heterogeneous, self-made selves in monstrous metatexts. Thus, the feminized body may be examined both as a point of struggle over the shape of power and a site of production of new modes of subjectivity. The paper, inspired by and relying on Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*,¹ analyzes the female grotesque body as it emerges in various business branches of the beauty myth, such as fashion, diet, fitness, plastic surgery body disciplining industries, and also studies subversive forms of the female grotesque in photographs by contemporary American women artists, Diana Thorneycroft and Cindy Sherman.

Mattel's Barbie doll, a more than 50-year-old toy with an unreached popularity, remains an icon of authentic white femininity, insidiously interpellating its young owners into Naomi Wolf's "iron maiden of beauty myth" (Wolf 30) embodied by the unchanging plastic mould of this anatomically deformed, biologically impossible, culturally mythicized collectible. The paradoxical femininity inscribed on Barbie's idealized and normative body certainly causes feminist concerns, as the trademark Barbie features are likely to be traumatizing for young women-to-be. Barbie's grotesque body is extremely sexualized, with her hourglass figure, big breasts, long thighs, full lips, and great hair she resembles an inflatable sexual prop destined to fulfill male desires, yet her sexuality is veiled, hidden, her pleasure zones are erased as she has no nipples, and her

¹ From Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1993) see especially the chapters entitled "Whose Body is This? Feminism, Medicine, and the Conceptualization of Eating Disorders," "Hunger as Ideology," "Anorexia Nervosa: Psychopathology as the Crystallization of Culture," "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity," and "Reading the Slender Body."

genitalia are also entirely missing (while Barbie's male counterpart, Ken and company have simulated plastic underwear with suggestive bulges). Thus, Barbie embodies both the stereotypical (and theoretically incompatible) whore and madonna image. Instead of being the traditional baby doll encouraging an easy identification or at most the rehearsing of parenting in little girls, she is an adult doll, a fashion doll, an insidious tool of the "ideological technology of gender" (De Lauretis 18), designed as a role model teaching didactic lessons about femininity, sexuality, corporeality, fashion and socially available subject positions. The "Mother Barbie" has a detachable prosthetic stomach, hiding a perfectly flat, desirable, "feminimized" abdomen. The "Presidential Candidate Barbie" comes with adorably feminine red, white and blue inaugural ball gowns, costumes worthy of her princess-like figure put on display. Alternative versions of Barbie, such as the black or the disabled Barbie, instead of rendering visible as an autonomous entity on its own right the marginalized other, contain and (re)interpret it according to the "logic of the same" by using the very same mold of the classic blonde, white, and beautiful Barbie, keeping the trademark long, silky hair and the flexible, feminine limbs, and merely changing the props and costumes, or the shade of the plastic used. Barbie remains Barbie, and so it would be, according to comic fan websites, were there more radical Barbie versions, such as the "Shock Therapy Barbie (car battery and wires included)," the "Homeless Barbie (complete with stolen K-Mart shopping cart)," the "Junkie White Trash Barbie (complete with needles)," the "Bulimic Barbie (feed her then make her throw it back up!)," or the Alcoholics Anonymous Barbie (with coffee mug and 12-step guide). My personal favorites of all the on-line suggestions, particularly highlighting the grotesque nature of Barbie, are the "Cadaver Barbie (with removable internal organs)" and the "Realistic Teenage Barbie (with flat chest, braces, and acne)." The collectible Barbie doll's paradoxical world is that of perfection and simulacrum, idealization and normativization, aestheticization and eroticization, consumption and anorexia (the Titanic Barbie turns actress Kate Winslett's roundness into culturally prescribed super-slimness).

As Anne DuCille has highlighted, Barbie is a gendered and racialized icon of contemporary commodity culture, engulfing cultural difference as a merchandisable commodity, framing Nigerian, Chinese, Indian or Eskimo female bodies in the mold of the prototypical Caucasian doll as "dye-dipped versions of the archetypal white American beauty" myth (553). In DuCille's view, the multicultural Barbie is a symbol and symptom of what multiculturalism has become at the hands of late capitalist commodity culture: a Euro-centrism that

apparently faces cultural diversity without the particulars of racial difference: consumerism and commodity culture ruling over intercultural awareness: profit orientation and marketability predominating over realistic representation of authentic and autonomous difference: othering, containment, universalization prevailing over heterogeneity, solidarity and veritable multiculturalism.

Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, while depicting the catastrophic effects of the white beauty myth on a black female child, also outlines a challenging subversion of the ideological process of consuming, containing, controlling/producing the other in order to reinforce the norm, the normalized self. Here, it is the marginalized heroine, a black little girl, Pecola who maniacally and cannibalistically devours food associated with icons of normative white femininity: gulping milk from Shirley Temple mugs, sucking on Mary Jane candies, she devours "that which is not-me" in order to give birth to her self, regurgitating, amidst the abjection of the subject (Kristeva 9), which finally leads both to her nervous breakdown, to the dissolution of the white Dick and Jane primer's narrative, constituting narrative cornerstones (de)composing the black feminist text, and to the thorough destabilization of the status of the other.

New editions of the eternal Barbie toy-doll collectibles and the changing trends of fashion-industry-parading mannequins mutually affect each other, to propagate doubly reinforced their sexist, racist, ageist feminine ideal associated with an image of beauty, power and success. Catwalks like beauty pageants permit merely touches of the exotic framed (black models have white bone structure, black skin is associated via stereotypical props as ethnic fabrics or jewelry with "racial features" as animal instincts), yet the beauty industry's obsession with the numericalization of bodies, identified by the numeric data of chests, waist, hips, height and weight uncannily recall the slave market's logic by relying on the objectification of the subject. Moreover, the corporeal parameters prescribed are pathological, causing the new disease of fashion models coined "vocational bulimics" (Bordo 66), which heightens an epidemic of anorexia among women in a country of overweight majority, and contributing to the apparition of perhaps the most shocking example of contemporary American female grotesque: 8-year-old Barbie alter-ego beauty queens going on diet: living patchwork dolls made up of stereotypical clichés of femininity, sparkling singular personalities speaking from the uniform mold of Barbie, uttering the compulsory lines wishing for world peace in a world that belligerently eliminates difference.

Symptoms of eating disorders induced by psychosomatic

illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa usually appear in young female patients, seriously frustrated by the social expectations of femininity associated with slimness and eternal beauty. The patient, unable to conceive her objective body image and tormented by unrealistic phantasmagoria of her irreducible obese corporeality, feels a compulsion to over-eat, elicited by obsessive thoughts about the desired food that paradoxically also provokes an emotional, psychic disgust in her. The patient becomes an addict of “binge and purge,” a compulsive devouring and disgorging of food, a recurring over-eating followed by (spontaneously or consciously produced) vomiting or diarrhea, which results in fatal digestive disorders, a drastic loss of weight at accelerated speed in excessive amounts, and may even lead to death.

As Helen M. Malson’s and Susan Bordo’s descriptions of the disease suggest, the major characteristic of the grotesque body of the anorexic and particularly the bulimic patient is a painful oscillation between the binary gender (op)positions (see Bordo 170, Malson 233, 239). On the one hand, drastically influenced by the patriarchal beauty myth, she *over-internalizes* the traditional masculine ideal of slender, suffering *femininity*, while, on the other hand she wishes to compensate for her lack of status and power in society, to gain empowerment, by *becoming masculinized*, synonymous with the agency of autonomous subjectivity, that is by accomplishing a triumph of the mind and the will over the ruthlessly controlled body. On the one hand, her disgust at disorderly fat, at erupting stomach, unwanted protuberances and excess flesh signals her *disgust of traditional femininity* confined to the domestic sphere and maternal nurturing. Her self-starvation, purging, self-purifying vomiting marks an *attempt to disappear as feminine excess*, to reach a complete disembodiment, a *dematerialization of* the threatening and the traditionally over-eroticized *feminine body*. The ceasing of female corporeal functions like menstruation and the appearance of masculine bodily attributes like facial hair are often heralded as a *triumph of masculine self-management, eliminating the pathological, fragile, emotional aspects of femininity* and gaining complete mastery of the self. In the meanwhile, she *embodies exaggerated stereotypical feminine traits* in an unlimited excess, becoming a caricature of the standardized visual image of the norm of feminine hyper-slenderness, “a virtual, though tragic parody of 20th century constructions of femininity” (Bordo 170). On the one hand, the patient obsessively *incorporates the stereotype of femininity as physical and emotional nurturer of others*, developing a totally other-oriented emotional economy, suppressing her own desires for self-nurturance,

hunger, independence, and considering self-feeding as greedy and perversely excessive via her strict control of female appetite. On the other hand, her compulsive over-eating marks her female hunger for public power, independence, sexual gratification, public space, autonomous will, and her insatiable voracity, her unrestrained consumption *stages exactly the stereotypically uncontrollable female excess*, uncontained desire, combined with all-wanting determination, and unbound free will. The bulimic's traumatic vacillation between compulsive over-eating and purifying vomiting, between insatiable appetite and ascetic self-starvation, between bingeing and purging, devouring and disgorging marks the paradoxically positioned feminine subject's vertiginous oscillation between the socially, culturally available gender positions, between the ideologically prescribed passive or excessive femininities and the always already masculinized autonomous self-mastering subjectivity.

According to Bordo, the bulimic body-politics reflects, besides the politics of gender, the unstable double bind of consumer capitalism's oscillation between consumption and production, non-productive expenditure and accumulative restraint, desire and its controlling containment (199). The neurotic bodies of anorexic or bulimic female patients also constitute texts making ideology-critical statements about the violently ambiguous social construction of femininity, while virtually and dramatically embodying the dizzying see-saw of the paradoxically interpellated feminine subject always already associated with corporeality and suffering, incompatible with the pleasures of masculinized agency, doomed to sway between mutually exclusive, antagonistically engendered identity positions, bingeing and purging herself in the passion of becoming a woman. In a recent trend elegantly designed, highly self-conscious pro-Ana (anorexia), pro-Mia (bulimia) and pro-ED (eating disorders) web sites, with names like "Anorexic Nation," "Invisible Existence," and "I Love You to the Bones," have become more and more widespread (today numbering around 400), constituting solidarious Internet communities, which feature extreme dieting tips, such as consuming only celery, diet soda and cigarettes; "thinspirational" slogans, such as "Anorexia is a Lifestyle Choice, Not a Disease;" photo galleries of emaciated women; and chat rooms where visitors share personal stories intended to help one another embrace eating disorders and reach their dangerously low weight goals² (Zwerling 11) .

² Suggestions found at the site "Good Anas Never Die" included: "Swallow two tablespoons of vinegar before eating to suck the fat out of your food; use Crest White Strips (you can't eat when they're on); make your mind think that the pain from being

Nevertheless, as Bordo points out, even though these “duly” modified bodies may suggest androgynous independence, by fulfilling their “challenging” aims and incorporating both genders’ archetypal traits, yet in a “*pitiful paradox*” their parody exposing the interiorized contradictions finally becomes a “*war that tears the subject in two*,” destroying her health, imprisoning her imagination. Body dysmorphic patients, unlike Judith Butler’s revolutionary gender-troubling performers (1-35), merely mark “*pathologies of female protest*” “written in languages of *horrible suffering*,” functioning “paradoxically, as if in collusion with the cultural conditions that produce them, yet reproducing them rather than transforming, precisely that which is being protested” (Bordo 174, 176, 177) .

Although female body builders seem to be very far from anorexic patients, as Bordo notes, their pleasure in the experience of embodiment, in building up the body is overruled by maniac fantasies of absolute control, perfection, purity, will and independence, realized through a masochistic, ascetic modification of the body, characteristic of anorexics. Accordingly, female body builders are compulsive exercisers, new puritans conceptualizing the body as an alien entity to be ruthlessly mastered, shaped, chiseled, constantly conquering physical pain, exhaustion, and bodily limits in the obsessive quest for the perfect body, which has more to do with a disembodied, purely aestheticized mental concept than the actual, materially present, corporeal reality. The muscular body is no longer an exclusive attribute of pure masculinity, or of the animalistic, uncivilized, uncultured proletarian, racialized, marginalized lower class; on the contrary, the finely built, muscled body becomes a symbol of intelligent (self-)managerial abilities, a glamorized cultural icon of androgynous, metrosexual yuppies workaholically “working out” in a body-fetishizing society of spectacle and simulacrum. As Bordo underlines, body building plays a significant role in the reinforcement of ideologically governed social fictions, consolatory illusions: it constitutes a fantasy of self-mastery in an increasingly unmanageable culture—in reality merely contributing to pathological disembodiment, body dysmorphia, a neurotic loss of

hungry is just really that you’re full; (and) water, water, water! . . . Remember no one can know about Ana, so if you stay hydrated, you are less likely to pass out.” “Metabolism shutting down, need advice!” began a recent entry on the “Pro-Ana Suicide Society” Web site’s chat room. “Okay, I’ve been doing the fast/restrict thing very meticulously for a little over a month now, and I’m nine pounds above my lowest weight ever. That was still way too high, but c’est la vie . . . However, I’ve been on about 150-300 calories a day and stayed the same for about one week now. Metabolism’s absolutely gone. I guess it’s time to refeed? How many calories do you recommend, and for how long should I do it before starting my ‘diet’ again?” (Zwerling 12-13).

the self—a fantasy of (self)transformation and rearrangement promising the effacement of social inequalities—in reality merely effacing non-normative, individual, cultural differences—a fantasy of alliance with culture against all reminders of the decay and death of the body—in reality merely submitting to the decorporealized, illusory, economically/ideologically manipulated icons of the ageist beauty myth. Annette Kuhn heralds the cinematographic representation of female body builders body as a source of scopophilic pleasures of the female gaze, allowing for the possibility of identification with strong women, challenging gender standards, an enabling experience shared by a solidarious community of feminist spectators (198). Nevertheless, Bev Francis and Diana Dennis, iconic American female body builders, seem to remain trapped within conventional gender norms, by keeping compulsory feminine corporeal features and props, such as make-up, great hair, long nails, sexy underwear, jewelry, stiletto shoes, staging the muscular body in stereotypically stylized feminine poses.

Another significant branch of the beauty industry is cosmetic surgery, perhaps the most radical form of contemporary feminine body management, producing paradoxically judged grotesque corporealities. *The American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, the most powerful cosmetic surgery lobby, understandably presents itself as a protector of difference and individual choice fighting against global homogenization, normative universalization. Yet, it is much more interesting that even many feminists regard cosmetic surgery as a feminist gesture synonymous with taking one's life into one's own hands, and consider the proposal to ban or regulate health-risking silicone implants as a totalitarian interference with feminist self-determination, choice and freedom. The problem is that cosmetic surgical interventions are becoming more and more ordinary and popular—shockingly, especially among women as young as in their 20s or 30s—usually reinforce the normative, idealized, ageist, racist, sexist beauty ideal (no-one wishes for a Jewish or African nose or Chinese eyes). Influenced by the “knife-styles of the rich and famous,” surgically transformed women paradoxically want “to become like” in order to realize oneself, to gain Angelina Jolie's lips, Liz Taylor's nose, Pamela Anderson's breasts, which are not natural given, but surgically created images, empty abstractions, hyperreal simulacra of ideal feminine features. The artificially reconstructed bodies fit into the contemporary compulsory omnivisibility of oversexualized bodies yet, lacking individual eroticism, they are also androgynous “cyborg” bodies—like Cher's or Michael Jackson's monstrous faces—plastic products of excessive surgeries. The plastic surgery industry sells

the illusory “postmodern construction of life as plastic possibility and weightless choice,” comparing easy and fast cosmetic/surgical interventions—such as tattooing of eyebrow/eyeline/mouth contour, collagen implants for fuller lips, breast enlargement, liposuction, cellulite management, botox treatment—to consumable, changeable fashion accessories enabling the rewriting of the image of one’s self. Nevertheless, the average plastic surgery patient or addict is probably very far from cosmopolitan multimedia performance artist, Orlan who uses cosmetic operations for self-conscious ideology-critical ends: having ideal traits of femininity carved on her very flesh only to deconstruct her autoportrait, this immaculate essence of femininity, by complementing it with features borrowed from alternative aesthetic ideals of foreign civilizations, squinting eyes, cranial protuberances and nose supplements of Maya and Aztec cultures (see Bourgeade 23, Orlan 51-80). Contemporary poly-surgical addicts, who “return for operation after operation in a perpetual quest of elusive yet ruthlessly normalizing goal, the perfect body” (Bordo 248), are very likely to become victims of their self-deconstructing, body-rearranging obsession, which leads to fatal consequences like the monstrous ‘cat-woman’ Jocelyne Wildenstein’s or the androgynous Michael Jackson’s facial decomposition and neurosis or to Lolo Ferrari’s painfully deformed freak-show body, her over-inflated 54G size breasts (each silicone implant weighing 6lbs 20oz, the equivalent of six pints of beer, as calculated by a men’s magazine), leading to her suffocation.

Despite the paradoxical interpretation of the contemporary American female grotesque body, photographers Diana Thorneycroft and Cindy Sherman have tried to provide subversive re-readings of grotesque femininity through their own daring and defaced auto-portraits.

Canadian artist, Diana Thorneycroft, in her 2001 exhibition, a survey of her last 10 years, tellingly entitled *Diana Thorneycroft: The Body, Its Lessons and Camouflage* explores issues of gender, identity, sexuality, (self)representation and their limits at the site of the troublingly denuded human body, a telling striptease of the artist herself. In her Untitled Self-Portrait series with Masks, she portrays herself as members of her family, hiding her face beneath masks made from relatives’s photographic portraits and using stereotypically engendered, emotionally loaded props like toy guns for the brother, kitchen utensils for the mother, and sometimes more radical appendices like plastic male sex organs, to costume her own androgynous body, which by transcending the compulsory feminine body-frame, becomes apt to enact shifting, heterogeneous identity positions, to challenge corporeal frames, gender limits, and contained desires.

Thorneycroft's *Self-Portrait in Field of Dolls* (1989) demythologizes the Barbie doll's unproblematic femininity by recalling the cruelty of body-managing practices through its presentation of a disillusioning and uncanny self-portrait: her own hopelessly vulnerable luminescent naked body, lying among denuded dolls, recalling victims of a mass massacre, addicts of the beauty myth, dazed by Sleeping Beauty's false daydreams—all mutilated by picture frames, floating out of the focus like vanishing selves. The *Doll Mouth Series* (2004) shows a collection of toy dolls' mouths represented in nauseating excess, where these premier plans of plastic female oral orifices perform a revision of the female body as they reveal beneath the mythical kitsch, miniaturized, infantile, light and pleasurable hyper-femininity a disturbingly erotic, tempting-threatening abject aspect incorporated by stereotypically feminine icons like the *vagina dentata*, the abject grotto-like, grotesque cave of the mouth of the womb, while they also highlight beyond the grotesque fragmentation, libidinal territorialization, objectifying *othering* of the female body the possibility of viewing female anatomy in its abstraction as an infinite sublime landscape, providing an other view. As Vivian Tors has pointed out, Thorneycroft's art is grotesque as it paradoxically combines stylistic beauty with repulsive content; it uses traditional artistic conventions to explore unconventional terrains, draws on autobiographical experience and obscures itself in overplayed, theatricalized stagings, photographs the photographer's own denuded body as an alienated other, arouses intense emotions and remains emotionless, melts an impartial objectivity into surrealistic dream scenes, while it generates volumes of questions and avoids authoritative answers (1729-30). Likewise, contemporary American photographer Cindy Sherman is heralded as a "quintessential postmodern artist" "advocating a deconstruction of the power-structures embedded in late capitalist patriarchal society" (Lemmon 2). She is applauded for "making pop culture image into a whole artistic vocabulary" (Galassi 4) and is admired as a feminist, boldly confronting issues concerning the female body, the male gaze, and the socio-cultural constructedness of femininity in ambiguous and eclectic series of photos all featuring herself. Already her 1978 *Untitled Film Stills*, on display since 1995 at the New York Museum of Modern Art, frames Sherman herself in shots from imaginary black and white B grade films of the 1950s, reflecting archetypal representations of Woman engendered by phallogocentric ideology, trapped in clichés like the sexy schoolgirl, the docile housewife, or the femme fatale. Sherman performs a feminist revision by providing a parodic and political repetition of the patriarchal icons of femininity, making ideologically interpellated female

spectators recognize their misrecognition, as she playfully acts out photographer/model/imaginary actress/mythical Woman/and singularly heterogeneously “a-woman” (De Lauretis 124) in her series of grotesquely defaced auto-portraits of simulated femininity, where the fictional selves’ gaze consistently transgresses picture frames and the borders of patriarchal imagination, violating representation’s limits, thriving for revision, a view from elsewhere, a view beyond. Her *Disaster Series* (shot from 1985 to 89) as well as her 1992 *Sex Picture Series* uses plastic surrogates, doll parts or prosthetic body parts to complement or substitute for her own, while she portrays female corporeal reality (dis)appearing among abject body fluids, like vomit, blood, and feces, tracing a violent disintegration of the body shattered by compulsory social fictions of femininity, sexuality, beauty, ageing, etc. The self-sufficient presence of the reassured, homogeneous, Cartesian subject is substituted by a grotesque subject in disappearance, mirroring the (dis)ease of the paradoxically and painfully positioned feminine subject, and reflecting a De-Manian defaced auto-portrait in the mirror of Sherman’s shattered glasses (see *Untitled* 1987). In her *Historical Portraits Series* (1988-90), Sherman casts herself again in archetypical feminine roles on simulacra of canonized masterpieces where she defamiliarizes representation by deconstructing familiar yet non-existent originals on her subversive copies, thus successfully creating a space for the heterogeneous ever-changing feminine self. Her most recent show at her New York gallery, Metro Pictures, still displays a series of mock-portrait images of herself in the guise of stereotypical women from California, like *The Personal Trainer*, *The Divorcee* or *The Neurotic*. Sherman’s auto-fictionalizing work is paradoxical as it uses conventional portrait techniques like setting the figure against a neutral background, yet she utterly depersonalizes her work by repeatedly performing a grotesque masquerade of photos consistently titled “Untitled”.

Both Thorneycroft’s and Sherman’s photography recalls Susan Rubin Suleiman’s concept of bifocal vision. The contemplation of these contemporary art works elicits a view that combines a restful, classicizing contemplation of a reassuring aesthetic ideal and a restless, contemporary struggle with and against an inventive, irritating, witty alternative anti-aesthetic (Suleiman 147). Their photography thus implies a parallel perception of traditional femininity and of (its) ironically grotesque, feminist metatext.

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POESÍA / *POETRY*

SOÑADOR

Es el inicio de la vida
es el palpar de un nuevo ser
es el principio de la imaginación
verdades que hay que reconocer.

Existen sueños en mil de fantasía
pensamientos que hay que lograr
sueños en oír por cada realidad
y pensamientos que hay que mostrar.

Una mente con una ventana de originalidad
una educación de sabiduría ideal
un trabajo de energía y no material
y sobre todo una dama sideral.

Una mente con lógico pensamiento
el poder de la palabra está enfrente
expulsar consejos alrededor
un tesoro que es ya aparente.

La educación con tecnología
tendrá perfección en las ciencias y las artes
muy lejos de mi origen
logrará fruto en los caminantes.

El trabajo de energía y no material
una transformación entonces de utopía
corolario al esfuerzo de generaciones
será ya el producto ese día.

Ella, la personalidad espacial
un rostro sereno y paciente

su mirada inteligente con luz
iluminará el mágico reino y toda mente.

Una creatividad en cadena
un hecho en poder de consejo
sin ayuda hasta la cima será
secreto del enorme modelo en manejo.

Con mis ojos puedo ver
las imágenes en toda área venir
apoyado por la perseverancia de la ciencia
con dramática dedicación hay que conseguir.

Para el paraíso terrenal
el mal hay que eliminar
toma forma de villano
pero con la verdad se puede exterminar.

Se logrará decir “no a la guerra”
el hambre algún día en el mundo terminará
será como una decoración de naufragios en evolución
y entonces las naciones sin fronteras se originarán.

El engaño y la mentira se podrán vencer
el conocimiento en las ciencias aumentará
la riqueza y el dinero no valdrán
el misterio mental aparecerá.

Surgirán ciudades sin atardecer
y como gigantes en el espacio se verán
los viajes galácticos serán fáciles de formar
y a la velocidad de la luz caminarán.

Fuentes sin final vislumbro varias
de energía en el núcleo será
un poco del sol de ayer conjugado
la vida eterna tal vez nunca se verá.

Como consecuencia, una estrella con espacio así
fácil una computadora puede aparecer
pero muy en el fondo consciente
el instinto humano hay que mantener.

A través de los años
los sueños habrán todos de verlos
tomarán forma propia en vida
y solo habrá que reconocerlos.

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RESEÑA / *REVIEW*

Walter Jost. *Rhetorical Investigations: Studies in Ordinary Language Criticism*. Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2004. 346 pp.

Mary Leonard

The title of this book makes clear its focus on rhetoric but does not signal to the reader its equally important engagement with philosophy and literary criticism focused on Modernism, nor its revisionary reading and championing of the poetry of Robert Frost as an example of "Low Modernism." As Jost discusses, the canonization of "High Modernism" by the New Critics in the years following World War II, elevated writers such as Eliot, Pound, Joyce and Woolf into the pantheon while dismissing more accessible writers like Frost as lacking the linguistic sophistication and philosophical complexity which would make them worthy of serious study. Jost argues that there is as much to unpack in the texts of populist writers like Frost as there is in the more arcane texts of the High Modernists, proposing that, rather than see the camps of High and Low Modernism in "opposition" to each other, we should conceive of Modernism as a "continuum of possibilities" and view the different approaches which fall under its umbrella in "apposition," in complementary juxtaposition.

Beginning in the 1970s, when feminists began to challenge the exclusion of many women writers from the Modernist canon, there has been a slow breaking apart of those rigid criteria which once excluded much of the rich and plural production of the Modernist period from serious consideration. Since then, Modernism has been defined and redefined against definitions of Romanticism, of Realism, Postmodernism, and the Avant Garde. Some have questioned whether it is even a useful term for describing the full range of literary and artistic production of the period. This book engages in this ongoing discussion by seeking to expand the definition of Modernism, not by focusing on issues of gender, race, or class, as has often been done, but by seeking to rehabilitate the literary value of that "ordinary" language first devalorized in the textually-focused analyses of the New Critics and then ignored in those poststructuralist readings which glamorously associated the hermetic or experimental language of the High Modernists with "subversion" and "revolution." For Jost, this resulted in a skewed critical accounting of the period which continues to require redressing: "the low now requiring greater theoretical definition, and the high a more practical reassessment."

Writing like Frost's, he argues, is clearly Modernist because of "its irony, its multiple perspectives, its ironic lack of controlling authorial

authority, its troping of traditional subjects and materials, its 'darker mood,' and so on." But since it is neither experimental nor concerned with the issues of cultural alienation typical of High Modernist texts, Frost and writers like him are better seen as "Low Modernists." In contrast to the difficult language often considered a hallmark of High Modernism, "Low Modernism makes language deceptively easy and pleasurable in order to entice us into tripping over connections we had habitually overlooked."

Instead of employing familiar postmodern or poststructuralist approaches, the author seeks to rehabilitate rhetorical theory as a tool for reading the function of this ordinary language in Frost, arguing that, despite criticisms levied by those in literary studies, "rhetoric is neither anachronistic or naively presumptuous on the one hand nor incipiently nihilistic (radically skeptical) on the other." Rather, that which he terms "rhetorical thought" in the poetry of Frost is "an instrument for disseminating information in a modern world" and "a means of taste and judgement of the *sensus communis* (Cicero) or the 'ordinary' (Wittgenstein) in an increasingly postmodern world."

A key concept Jost uses to define how Low Modernist texts function rhetorically is "epideixis," which he contrasts with "epiphany." Whereas Romantic literature privileged a transcendental "epiphany of being," High Modernist literature has been said to substitute for this an "epiphany of form." However, a persistent critical fascination with those illuminating moments of revelation and intense personal experience in this literature that have been defined as epiphanic, he argues, has resulted in the neglect of the "epideictic" function characteristic of Low Modernist texts. These latter foreground not the exceptional moment but rather the accumulation of patterns, premises, and rhetorical strategies that compose the fullness of everyday experience, and continuously come into play in our interpersonal relations and dealings with the world. Unlike the epiphanic, the "epideictic presupposes a fundamental identity of values and beliefs with one's interlocutors, so that it is not an adversarial relationship but a cooperative understanding." It is "the activity not of the nervous or enervated but of the energetic, not of the alienated but of the ambulant and ambitious." In Frost, speakers typically situate themselves epideictically in the world and with respect to others in the kinds of homely conversations which take place between husbands and wives, neighbors, or co-workers. In contrast to that literature which foregrounds alienation and exceptionality, the "unsystematic rhetorical metaphysics" that unfolds in these poems concerns itself with how speakers, despite their differences and disagreements, engage in the mundane task of creating meaning together.

Close readings of selected poems serve to illustrate characteristic rhetorical elements which are the building blocks of Frost's poetry: his tendency to focus on conversation rather than on oratory or soliloquy; his use of the first person singular and, particularly, of the first person plural; his exploration of the nuances of how we employ the rhetorical functions of naming, calling, saying, retrieval, reminding, and playing to continuously situate ourselves in our worlds and make sense of them; his emphasis on the importance of cultivating practical judgment, taste and *kairos*, the Greek principle of moderation, as tools for successfully negotiating life; his affinity for strategies of wit and inventiveness reminiscent of seventeenth century metaphysical poetry over the seriousness of much High Modernism; and his interest in the dynamics of everyday discursive forms like gossip, arguments, and jokes.

Rhetorical Investigations slowly advances its arguments via densely woven engagements with rhetorical theory, philosophers from Aristotle to the present, and literary criticism. This is not a book for the casual reader, nor will it be an easy read for literary critics steeped in the more usual debates about Modernism but unfamiliar with the body of rhetorical theory and the critical apparatus applied here. It *will* be useful for those interested in considering how this critical approach opens up alternative approaches to reading and interpreting texts like Frost's, and how, via its reconsideration of Frost's work, it participates in the ongoing debate about exactly what it is that constitutes a Modernist text.

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